

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JANUARY TO JUNE 2021*

## KCR / RAILWAY



## Urban Resource Centre

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A-2, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, Westland Trade Centre, Block 7&8, C-5, Shaheed-e-Millat Road, Karachi.  
Tel: 021-4559317, Fax: 021-4387692, Email: [urc@cyber.net.pk](mailto:urc@cyber.net.pk), Website: [www.urckarachi.org](http://www.urckarachi.org)  
Facebook: [www.facebook.com/URCKHI](https://www.facebook.com/URCKHI) Twitter: <https://twitter.com/urckhi>

### ‘PR freight volume to double soon’

Federal Minister for Railways Mohammad Azam Khan Swati held a press conference at the divisional superintendent's office at the City Railway Station here on Saturday where he revealed that Pakistan Railways' freight volume will be doubled very soon.

According to the minister, at present the annual freight revenue of Pakistan Railways is Rs11 billion and that would be doubled. "If I cannot expand freight service, then Railways will break up and crumble," said the minister as he promised to enhance the Railways' freight earnings.

He said that it was one of his prime targets to completely overcome the losses of PR and transform it into a profit-earning entity.

Mr Swati said that he had earlier also visited the schools and hospitals, including the Hasan Hospital, that fall under the PR administration. He also shared his intentions of outsourcing the two in order to provide best educational and medical facilities to Railways' employees and their children.

In addition, the minister also visited the diesel shed at Cantonment Railway Station, City Station and various other smaller stations and halts that fall in the Karachi Circular Railway loop and the Green Line interchange area.

While replying to a question regarding encroachment on Railways' land, the Minister said that Pakistan Railways will not tolerate any kind of encroachment or squatters on its land. He also thanked the chief justice of Pakistan for stepping in to do the needful on the matter.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 10/01/2021)

### Rs10b worth encroached railway land vacated, Senate told

Railways Minister Azam Swati told the upper house of parliament on Thursday the officials involved in the encroachment of the railway land would be sent on forced retirement, while the opposition criticised the government for tabling the bill about Senate vote in the National Assembly.

The session was chaired by Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjrani. During the proceedings, the government side made it clear that the opposition would not be given the NRO – a reference to the political amnesty granted through the National Reconciliation Ordinance in 2007.

The railways minister said that police and railways officials involved in the encroachment of the railway land would now be sent on forced retirement. He added that since his becoming the railways minister, encroached land worth Rs10 billion had been vacated.

The opposition criticised the government's move to introduce a bill in National Assembly to change Senate election procedure without consulting the upper house. "Everyone wants to stop horse trading," senior PPP leader Raza Rabbani said. "But it does not mean that bills are imposed."

Sherry Rehman referred to the defeated no-confidence motion against the Senate chairman, saying that when it happened the ruling party did not object. "We want the election to be transparent. If you want to change the Senate election procedure, take everyone into confidence," she added.

Leader of the House Dr Shehzad Waseem said that the use money in the Senate election was "a fact". He added that the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) wanted the election transport. "We have also sought the opinion of the Supreme Court in this regard.

Senator Faisal Javed showed a document, saying that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have demanded NRO in writing. "The opposition should play the role of constructive opposition and support legislation in the public interest," he added.

Meanwhile, the Senate Secretariat Services Amendment Bill 2021 was unanimously passed, while the State Minister Ali Muhammad Khan introduced a bill for the establishment of the Pakistan Single Window of the ministry of finance. The chair referred the bill to the relevant committee.

The Senate chairman expressed displeasure the interior ministry's replies to the members' questions were not provided in time.

Later, Dilawar Khan, Mir Kabir Shahi, Senator Mushtaq and others took part in the debate on the presidential address to parliament.

They said that the president did not mention hunger, unemployment and inflation in his speech. They were also critical of the government's foreign policy, saying that no country was with Pakistan today, while the country continues to remain in the grey list of Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

They stressed the need for preparing a charter of economy, charter of democracy, charter of accountability to take the country forward. Later, Ashok Kumar pointed out the lack of quorum, therefore, the session was adjourned indefinitely.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 03, 05/02/2021)

### **KCR completes City-Orangi test run**

Prior to connecting the 14-kilometre track from the City Railway Station to Orangi with the operational Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) route, the Pakistan Railways carried out a trial run of the train on the track on Friday with relevant KCR officers and engineers on board.

The Pakistan Railways also clarified that all media reports pertaining to derailment during the trial runs or any other accident near Shershah were untrue.

A 30-minute break near Shershah was a major part of examining the operational parameters that was misconstrued as derailment or any other accident, the PR added.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 06/02/2021)

### **KCR made operational on 14km-long Orangi-City route**

Following last week's test runs, the City Railway Station to Orangi Station track of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) was made operational and accessible to the public on Wednesday.

The train, comprising six coaches, was being admired with awe by all the people on the platform at Orangi Station. The children there had not seen a train in their neighbourhood before the test runs. And now they were hearing that they can travel within the city and even further on this train.

"We never thought this station could be cleared for trains as there used to be such a big mess here what with all the encroachment and the weekly market that used to be held here. This is a great accomplishment. And then when the KCR train pulled up here earlier today, we thought we were dreaming," said Hamid, who had brought on board his wife and their three little ones to travel to their grandmother's house near Wazir Mansion.

"I was born in Gulshan 13-D. When I was young, we used to have the local train passing through here, and my friends and I used to catch it during Ramazan just to kill time before iftar. Then when I started working, I would travel to Saddar and Tower on the local. The fare at the time, if I remember correctly, was eight annas," said Tariq, a senior citizen.

The rehabilitated track of 14 kilometres between Orangi and City Station entails six stations and 12 level crossings. Gazing out from the train's big windows, one could also see the semi-demolished structures that were encroaching Railways' land along with wild plantation. A lot has been cleared, a lot more needs to be cleared. At places, one also crossed overflowing sewers and stagnant water as the train moved past factories, warehouses, etc. The walls of some factories were so close that if one leaned out of the train window, one could touch them if one tried.

*'We never thought this station could be cleared for trains as there used to be such a big mess here'*

Each KCR coach has a capacity for 100 passengers with seating for 64 as 36 can travel while standing. The fare has been set at Rs30 per trip regardless of the distance to be travelled.

According to Pakistan Railways, at 4.15pm, the train, KCR-1 Up, departing from Orangi, will travel 14km while making brief stops at Manghopir, SITE, Shah Abdul Latif, Baldia, Lyari, and Wazir Mansion en route to the City Station. From there, after a slightly longer stop, it will proceed even further, covering another 60km towards Dhabeji. Traversing the same distance a second KCR train, the KCR-2 Down, will arrive at the Orangi Station at 10.10am.

One also noticed raised eyebrows and surprise on the faces of people who were not used to seeing an entire train running on the tracks. Many people waiting behind the closed barriers on their motorbikes and inside their cars at the crossings also smiled and waved.

On the occasion of completion of another important phase in the revival of the KCR project, the divisional superintendent of Pakistan Railways Karachi, Mohammad Hanif Gul, said that the loop line restoration of KCR, to also happen soon, would help redress the traffic woes of the people of this city. He also visited the KCR infrastructure of the remaining 16km loop line from Orangi to Drigh Road Station with the project director KCR Ameer Mohammad Daudpota soon after the resumption of the Orangi-City track.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 11/02/2021)

### **KCR fails again to attract Karachi'ites**

The Pakistan Railways partially restored the Karachi Circular Railway in November 2020 after more than two decades overcoming some of its shortcomings of the past.

This is the third attempt to restore the circular railway project. Unfortunately, the dwindling number of passengers depict that the project is most likely floundering. Due to the financial deficit, Pakistan Railways has reduced one train and restricted two operations to sustain the project for now.

Around the world, for the success of train projects components such as standard gauge, light rail and feeder bus services are considered mandatory. However, the KCR is running with a broad gauge and heavy engine. The speed of the train has also been

kept slow owing to the presence of short-distance stops. In the KCR, the number of passengers is abjectly low as it takes them a lot of time to reach a station due to the lack of a feeder bus service.

In November 2020, the Supreme Court had ordered the revival of the KCR on an emergency basis. Following which, Pakistan Railways scrambled to partially restore the KCR. This it did without a comprehensive plan. On the condition of anonymity, an official of the Sindh Transport Department said that the railways was not serious about reviving the project, it merely did so to avoid contempt of court proceedings.

The service was restored on November 19, 2020, from the City station to Pipri station. It is currently operating on the main line. It was learnt that the 44km-long loop of the KCR could not be restored immediately due to its dilapidated condition.

On February 10, Pakistan Railways had restored 14km of the loop from the City station to the Orangi station. Despite the train running through a densely populated area, the presence of passengers is minimal.

The KCR project was started in 1964 and completed in 1970. Almost 44 kms of track was laid up to Liaqatabad, Nazimabad, Orangi, SITE, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Gulistan-e-Jauhar and other areas. By 1980, the service was quite successful and millions of people benefited from it. However, due to a continuous increase in the population of Karachi, the demand for public transport also began to increase. Despite the demand, Pakistan Railways did not expand the project. On the contrary, the Sindh government issued route permits to minibuses under a new public transport scheme.

As the circular railway stations were far from people's homes and destinations, the number of passengers started to decline. In wake of the situation, the federal and provincial governments also made no efforts to preserve the circular railway. The KCR was finally shut down in 1999.

In 2005, under former military ruler Pervez Musharraf, Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had launched a plan to revive the circular railway. This also shut down due to a lack of interest from passengers.

In 2018, the Dhabeji Express was inaugurated by President Arif Alvi. This service was shut down five months later.

An official of Pakistan Railways, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that modern technology could not be immediately implemented for the restoration of the KCR, as it would require time and huge funding. "The federal government has allocated Rs1.8 billion for new bogies and engines."

Talking to Express Tribune, a Pakistan Railways spokesperson said that transport facilities, spread across 74km, are being provided from the Orangi station to Dhabeji under the KCR at present. "The remaining 30km loop will be gradually restored under phase-II and phase-III. The phases would require of the Pakistan Railways and the Sindh government to build necessary infrastructure including an underpass. The railways will also have to build an elevated track at one place."

The spokesperson said that due to the construction of the Green Line, the flyover above the circular railway track at Nazimabad has been demolished. Due to which, Pakistan Railways will have to construct an elevated track for the KCR.

Talking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Transport Department Secretary Shariq Ahmed said that the Sindh government would construct 10 flyovers and underpasses at various crossings to facilitate the KCR. "For restoration of the project, Rs5 billion have been allocated. The task has been assigned to the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), which is shaping the feasibility of the project." (By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 17/02/2021)

### **KCR operations restored between City, Orangi Stations**

The operations of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) were restored between City and Orangi Stations on Wednesday, marking the completion of an important phase of the rehabilitation of the KCR.

The KCR train, following the restoration of the service along the said track, will leave Orangi Station for City Station at 4.16pm, a covering a distance of 14 kilometres on the track passing through Manghopir, SITE Industrial Area, Baldia, Lyari and Wazir Mansion Station, will reached their destination.

From City Station, the train will leave for Orangi Station, arriving there at 10.10am.

The train comprises five coaches and can accommodate up to 500 persons.

There are six stations along the KCR route between City and Orangi Stations, in addition to 12 level crossings. The passengers will have a pay Rs30 for each trip, irrespective of stations of departure and arrival.

Speaking on the occasion, Pakistan Railways (PR) divisional superintendent in Karachi Muhammad Hanif Gul said the restorations of the train service would make travelling more convenient for Karachi. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 17/02/2021)

## **Railway infrastructure**

THE derailment of a Lahore-bound train near Sukkur the other day is yet another stark reminder of the government's utter failure to invest in the upgradation of the decrepit railway infrastructure to protect the lives of hapless passengers who cannot afford to pay for safer means of travel. Every time a tragedy occurs on the rail tracks, an eyewash of an inquiry is ordered, low- and middle-level railway employees are blamed for the accident and suspended, and the matter is swept under the rug. The families of the passengers who lose their lives in such accidents are left to fend for themselves. Accidents happen all the time and all over the world. However, a quick look at the long list of train accidents in Pakistan shows that the majority of these could have easily been avoided — and hundreds of precious lives saved — if the government had invested in the maintenance and upgradation of the infrastructure which at the moment consists of weak rail tracks, an erratic signal system and decaying rolling stock. Besides, the railway management has paid little attention to improving and enforcing passenger safety protocols. A preliminary inquiry, according to a TV channel, has suggested that the Sukkur accident took place when nine coaches derailed because of overspeeding and broken tracks.

How much money or effort is needed to ensure that the tracks are safe to run a train on? For long we have been told by successive governments, including the incumbent one, of big plans in the offing to improve the railway infrastructure and passenger service, but nothing has been done. The present government appears to have postponed all investments, even the ones immediately required to keep the trains rolling, in the hope of receiving Chinese investment in the ML-1 project. With the scheme having hit serious snags, it is time for the decision-makers to urgently start looking for other sources of money to repair and upgrade the railway infrastructure to prevent further loss of life.

(By Editorial Dawn, 08, 10/03/2021)

## **China assures Murad of inclusion of KCR, Keti Bandar projects in CPEC**

Chinese authorities have assured the Sindh government that they would pursue Karachi Circular Railway, Keti Bandar and other projects to officially include them in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)-related projects.

This emerged on Tuesday in a meeting between Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and a Chinese government delegation led by Beijing's Ambassador in Pakistan Nong Rong.

The other delegation members were Chinese Consul General Li Bijian, defence attaché Maj Gen Chen Wen Rong, consular Bao Zhong, deputy defence attaché Senior Col Ji Xinqi, Lt Col Di Weichao, first secretary Wang Xianfeng and third secretary Wu Linglin.

### **Financing request for KCR**

The chief minister told the delegation that on the request of his government the KCR was included in CPEC on Dec 3, 2016. The project was approved and included in 6th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC). He added that the project was approved by Ecnec at a cost of \$1.97 billion in Oct 2017.

*The CM says centre hasn't addressed KCR issues despite his multiple requests*

Mr Shah said that the KCR had been part of all JCC meetings and in all the meetings it was stated to be a feasible and viable project but there were major obstacles that needed to be removed.

He added that the obstacles included sharing of a framework agreement, sovereign guarantee by the finance division, concessional finance request to Chinese government by the federal government, right of way for KCR at common corridor between ML-1 and KCR.

He said that he had been requesting the federal government to resolve the issues, but the issues were still unaddressed.

"In the 9th JCC meeting the KCR was again discussed and it was resolved that the Pakistan side will submit the financing request to the Chinese side," he said and added it had not been submitted yet.

Talking about the current situation of the KCR, Mr Shah said that the federal government included two projects in the public sector development programme of FY 21, which were Rs1.85bn organisation of train on existing KCR alignment and revival of KCR Phase-II for Rs8.7bn.

He said that he had included three projects in the provincial ADP 2020-21, which include revival of KCR (CPEC framework) for Rs207.5bn, construction of a boundary fence along the KCR alignment for Rs2.3 million and construction of underpasses/flyovers on railway crossing along KCR route for Rs5bn.

The visiting delegation assured the chief minister that they would take up the KCR projects in the CPEC-related meeting.

### **Keti Bandar**

The chief minister said that Keti Bandar was located about 107km from Thatta city and 150km from Karachi via Gharo and it was very promising in terms of future prospects.

He said that the Keti Bandar project was an important part of the Sindh government's strategy towards developing the energy sector.

Mr Shah said that 4,000 acres of land had been identified for the project and a feasibility study was completed for installation of a 1,320MW power plant along with a railway line, coal jetty and allied infrastructure.

"A financial viability assessment and bid management report has also been completed and the transaction advice report is being awaited," he added.

The CM said that the project was part of CPEC framework since 2017. Earlier, the project was referred to the Joint Working Group (JWG) for consideration. "After completion of the studies, the project is now ready to be taken up in the main framework," he said.

The other projects that came under discussion included Thar coal energy, infrastructure, special economic zone, Dhabeji, socio-economic development projects.

The Chinese delegation said that their first CPEC project of 660MW Thar coal power plants was functioning successfully and on the same pattern all the CPEC-related projects would be completed on a fast-track basis.  
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 07/04/2021)

### SC orders KCR revival in 9 months

The Supreme Court (SC) directed the relevant authorities on Thursday to complete the restoration of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and hand over the project to the Pakistan Railways (PR) within nine months.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Gulzar Ahmed and comprising Justice Ijazul Ahsan and Justice Mazhar Alam Khan Miankhal, issued the directives while hearing the case pertaining to the KCR's revival at the SC's Karachi Registry.

At the hearing, Karachi commissioner Naveed Ahmed Shaikh maintained that the KCR track had been handed over to the PR after the removal of encroachments.

"If the encroachments have been cleared, what is delaying the restoration of the project?" the CJP inquired.

At that, the project director informed the court the 14-kilometre-long Orangi Station track, which had nine stations along its route, had been restored. Moreover, the PR secretary said the track between City and Drigh Road Station had also been made operational.

The secretary also stated that the contract for work related to the KCR had been given to the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO).

When the counsel for the FWO denied that the organization had been given the contract, the transport secretary contended that the work order in that regard had been issued with the approval of the cabinet.

"Rs25 million was sought in advance [by the FWO] for the projects' prefeasibility and the amount has been paid," the secretary said.

Irked by the information, the CJP remarked, "The FWO has not been assigned the job to make money. This project is in public interest and you are asking for money?"

Justice Ahsan also commented that the FWO should have completed the task for which it had taken Rs25m.

At that, the FWO commanding officer replied that the organisation had given four options to Sindh government and the PR and work on two of those options would be initiated.

Elaborating on the options, the transport secretary informed the court that 11 underpasses and one flyover were to be constructed and a final decision regarding the matter would be taken during a meeting on April 10.

"Do you have the relevant experience for this construction?" the CJP inquired from the FWO commanding officer.

When the officer replied in the affirmative, the CJP referred to a report submitted by the Sindh chief minister, in which the CM had maintained that the FWO did not have the expertise for the work in question.

Moreover, the counsel for the PR informed that court that a nullah in Gulshane-Iqbal was hampering the completion of the KCR's restoration.

#### Kidney Hill Park

Separately, a three-member bench, also headed by the CJP, issued notices to the Karachi commissioner, nongovernmental organization Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment and the Sindh advocate general in a plea pertaining to encroachments on Kidney Hill Park's land.

At the hearing, the CJP inquired about the removal of encroachments from Kidney Hill Park's land. The Karachi commissioner informed the court that 28 houses of Faran Cooperative Housing Society and Overseas Cooperative Housing Society had been constructed on the park's land and needed to be razed.

However, the counsel for the affected residents maintained that the houses were not built on park premises and even then, they had been marked with red crosses for demolition.

At that, the CJP remarked that the counsel was unable to convince the court that the houses were not built on the park's land. Besides, the petitioner, Amber Ali Lari, maintained that the residents of the two societies had expanded the boundaries of their houses, encroaching upon the park's land.

"The park's actual area was 62 acres and now it has shrunk to 58 acres," the petitioner said, and moved the court to order the removal of encroachments from the park's land.

Moreover, Advocate Khawaja Shamsul Islam said a shrine had also been built on the park's land, at which the CJP rebuked the Karachi commissioner.

Directing the relevant authorities to remove slums from the park' land, the court issued notices to the respondents and adjourned the hearing.

Separately, the court expressed annoyance over the Karachi commissioner's failure to remove encroachments from the city's parks. The court directed the commissioner to complete the renovation of Bagh Ibne Qasim and submit a progress report at the next hearing.

Additionally, the court also rejected the request of the residents of houses built on Kidney Hill Park premises to become a party in the plea pertaining to the removal of encroachments built on parks' land.

At another hearing, pertaining to illegal construction on Sharae Quaideen, the court issued a notice to the builder of Nasla Tower, seeking records of the residential building said to be constructed on a nullah.

The court also granted an extension to the Sindh advocate general and Karachi commissioner to give an explanation on the appointment of mukhtiarkar.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 09/04/2021)

### **Asad asks for marketing of KCR to woo private sector**

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Tuesday directed the departments concerned to initiate work for the marketing of the Karachi Circular Railways (KCR) project for private sector's participation.

Presiding over a meeting here to review the present status of the KCR projects, the minister also directed the Ministry of Railways and the Public Private Partnership (PPP) Authority to carry out a monthly progress review of the work assigned to the consultants to ensure that the tasks of the project were completed on time.

The KCR project director briefed the meeting about the progress of the the work. The KCR project was on track as per the approved timelines, he said.

Mr Umer was informed that the PC-Is of some underpasses and overheads along the KCR corridor were at final stages and work on some of them was expected to start next month.

The secretary railways informed the meeting that the consultants who had been working on the feasibility study since January were expected to complete their job by mid-June. After the study, the process of hiring a private party would commence, which would be completed by September 2021, he was informed.

The minister said Karachi was in dire need of an efficient mass transport system. The KCR could play an important role in this regard, he added.

Those who attended the meeting included prime minister's focal person for Karachi projects MNA Najeeb Haroon, the PPP Authority CEO, KCR project director and other senior officials and representatives of the Frontier Works Organisation.

(By APP Dawn, 15, 05/05/2021)

### **Another train tragedy**

THE loss of over 40 lives in a [train collision near Daharki](#) in Sindh on Monday morning is a stark reminder of Pakistan Railways' abysmal passenger safety record and the unfulfilled promises of successive governments to revamp its broken infrastructure. The accident also raises questions about the incumbent rulers' commitment to modernising the poorly managed railway, and refurbish its aging tracks and erratic signal system for improving passenger safety.

Prime Minister Imran Khan [tweeted](#) that he was "shocked by the horrific train accident" and had ordered a "comprehensive investigation into railway safety fault line". Is that enough? We have heard such words so many times before that they have lost their meaning. Everyone is well aware of why train accidents happen and what needs to be done. But no one in the government appears to be bothered about fixing the problems. It is, indeed, unfair to blame the current government for the huge mess the railway is in today. Yet, it should not escape scrutiny for its own contribution to PR's decline by passing the entire buck to its predecessors.

Pakistan has a long history of train accidents caused by a decaying railway infrastructure. Apart from major accidents, scores of minor incidents of derailments take place every year but are not mentioned in the news. Most of these accidents occur because of dilapidated tracks, a faulty interlocking signal system, aging rolling stocks, etc. A look at PR's record would show that the frequency of accidents, including fatal ones, has increased over the last few years owing to decades of underinvestment in rail infrastructure and the absence

of passenger safety standards. The prime minister has repeatedly instructed the railway authorities to take steps to counter decades of neglect and ensure safety protocols, and to hold officials responsible for neglecting passenger safety, but nothing has come of it. Instead, the government has drastically slashed funds for railway rehabilitation in the last couple of years. Last July, it had promised additional funds for repairing the tracks and signal system, and purchasing new passenger coaches and locomotives this fiscal year. But the promise remains unfulfilled.

Political rhetoric aside, the administration appears as clueless about a revival strategy as any previous government. Apparently, it has been hoping that the promised Chinese investment of \$6bn in the Main Line-1, connecting Peshawar to Karachi, would save the dying railway. With China reluctant to invest its money in the project, the government does not have a strategy to fall back on to resuscitate the bankrupt department. With or without Chinese money, the job of putting the railway back on track will not be easy; it will take a long time, large investments and strong political will. Turning a company the size of Pakistan Railways is never easy. However, the government can always start by investing in the rehabilitation of the infrastructure to save lives.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 08/06/2021)

### **Railways knew about vulnerability of Sukkur division track: official**

Much before Monday's train crash near Daharki, Pakistan Railways authorities were informed about the vulnerability of the 900-kilometre-long up and down tracks of the Sukkur division, but to no avail.

The vulnerability of the entire track could be gauged from the fact that the point where the tragic accident took place on Monday was welded and PR authorities conducted a forensic audit of that joint of the track just two years ago and cleared it.

Speaking to *Dawn* over the phone from the scene, PR Sukkur division's superintendent Mian Tariq Latif said he had time and again brought into the notice of the top railways authorities the vulnerable condition of the entire track within his jurisdiction.

"There are around 6,000 joints on both up and down tracks in the Sukkur division and the point where the tragedy has occurred is one of the welded joints," Mr Latif said, adding that the entire track in Sukkur division had welded joints.

#### *Questions raised over the fate of ML-I project*

"I have only one welding machine and that too is substandard," he said, adding that the entire track needed rehabilitation.

He said he had been facing an inquiry for reporting these things to PR authorities. "A man with questionable credentials is conducting an inquiry against me," he claimed.

He said he had been writing to the PR authorities regularly ever since he assumed office.

PR Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Nisar Memon did not agree with the contention of Mr Latif and claimed that the safety of passengers could never be compromised.

#### **ML-I's fate unknown**

Opposition MNA Ch Hamid Hameed, who is a member of the Standing Committee on Railways, said that the federal government had not committed 15 per cent funds under the ML-I (main line) project. "The last meeting of the committee was scheduled in the office of Railways Minister Azam Khan Swati on his own request but he didn't turn up and it shows his seriousness," he added.

Minister Swati could not be reached over phone for comments. During his last visit to Hyderabad and different PR locations, the federal minister had said the ML-I project would change the destiny of PR.

#### **'Entire system needs rehabilitation'**

According to Ch Hamid, the ML-I project was worked out at Rs800 billion, but it had been slashed to Rs600bn now by the current government. "Chinese won't commit their 85pc funds for the project unless we [Pakistan government] commit our share of 15pc," he said.

The PTI government, he said, did not allocate funds for this project in the last three years so why the Chinese would come to rescue it? "The entire system needs rehabilitation and this we have debated in June 3 meeting of the standing committee," he said.

#### **Fast locomotives**

Ch Hamid, who belongs to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, attributed tragedies on railway tracks due to powerful new locomotives, which were not meant for passenger trains. "These locomotives were procured during the past PML-N government and these were solely meant for freight trains. They were supposed to be used for cargo purposes like carrying oil, coal, containers, etc.

But this government has attached them with passenger trains and there's a mismatch of speed between locomotives and old bogies." Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's Hyderabad MNA Sabir Kaimkhani somewhat tended to agree with Hamid.

"Why we are waiting for the ML-I alone when major train tragedies are taking place in the same Sukkur division near Ghotki. This strip has become a killer track. We need to invest on it without waiting for ML-I to save precious lives," he said.

He said that due to a delay in ML-I project other projects including that of Hyderabad railway station had been delayed as well.



He said there were instances when PR drivers tried to cover delays in the journey by overspeeding and this ended up in derailment or collision. "For how long the current government [can] keep blaming the past government for its own follies?" he asked.

However, PR CEO Memon said: "Speed restrictions are applied wherever the condition of the track is not satisfactory. They vary between 50km per hour to 80km per hour depending on the condition of the track."  
(By Muhammad Hussain Khan Dawn, 13, 08/06/2021)

### **Not an inch of railways' land in Sindh will be allowed to be sold, rules CJP**

The Supreme Court on Monday expressed serious resentment on Pakistan Railways (PR) over the recent accidents and reported plans to sell its land in Sindh and directed the federal government to take measures for its improvement.

The apex court ruled that the railways land would not be allowed to be leased out or transferred to any private person or employees, but only to be used for operational purposes.

A three-judge SC bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed also took exception to a statement of Railways Minister Azam Swati after the [recent Ghotki train accident](#) in which he said he was ready to resign if it would cover the losses and casualties in the accident.

Terming it an irresponsible statement aimed at discouraging passengers, the CJP said that the prime minister should look into it.

*Sindh govt, SBCA, cantt boards earn SC's ire; plea against demolition of houses along Gujjar, Orangi nullahs dismissed*

The bench also comprising Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin directed the attorney general to file a report in this regard on June 16.

The apex court was informed that 82 per cent tracks of railways were in a dilapidated condition and needed urgent attention as the Main Line-I (ML-I) project, to be executed by China under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), would take many years to complete.

The chief justice deplored that over 65 passengers had lost their lives and more than 100 were injured in the tragic accident, but the minister and railways secretary remained unmoved.

While expressing displeasure over the functioning of the PR, the CJP said that they recently heard a case regarding a train accident in Quetta and only a gatekeeper was held responsible for it and was transferred as punishment.

He remarked that the public transport was running on subsidies across the world, but apparently the railways officials were focusing on its land to sell it instead of improving its service.

During the proceedings, the bench was informed that the railways were reportedly planning to sell its land in Sindh and discussions were held to promulgate an ordinance in this regard.

The CJP said that the apex court would strike down any such move and observed that PR employees had encroached upon almost half of the PR lands on the pretext of housing societies.

The bench noted that the PR was approaching the apex court for removal of encroachments on its land, but on the other hand it seemed that the railways officials were evolving a mechanism to sell its land.

The CJP said not an inch of PR land would be allowed to be sold.

It questioned the manner in which PR's affairs were running and questioned the working of its officials asking the federal government to take measures to improve railways and ensure safety of passengers.

### **'Sindh govt being run from Canada'**

The bench also came down hard on the Sindh government over unauthorised constructions and encroachments on public spaces and ordered it to get vacated 36,000 amenity plots encroached upon in the city.

The apex court expressed serious resentment on authorities of cantonment boards for encroachments on roads and streets as well as illegal constructions in their jurisdictions.

The CJP remarked that the provincial government was being run from Canada by one Younus Memon.

He further said that the Sindh Building Control Authority was allowing unauthorised constructions against bribes.

The chief justice made these remarks during the hearing of a matter about a 15-storey building, known as Nasla Tower, built on a plot reportedly reserved for a service road and the officials concerned were trying to justify it.

He deplored that fake reports were being produced in court and backdated documents were being prepared, adding that development activities were taking place across the country except in Sindh.

Addressing Sindh Advocate General Salman Talibuddin, the CJP said what his government was doing as it was the responsibility of the provincial government to take action against such elements.

The CJP said that provincial governments had become more powerful after the devolution of powers, but they could not even clear a drain in the city during the last two years.

Justice Ahsan said that according to a survey, Karachi was among the 10 worst cities of the world.

The CJP asked the advocate general to inquire from the provincial government about its direction and plans and advise it.

#### **Land given to cantt boards not for commercial activities**

The bench also expressed displeasure over cantonment and military land director Adil Rafi Siddiqui for encroachments on roads and streets of Defence Housing Authority and unauthorised constructions on Chaudhry Khaliq-uz-Zaman Road.

The CJP asked him that the land had not been allotted for commercial activities, but only for cantonment purposes.

The commercial plazas are being built in DHA and there was no parking space, he said, adding that DHA Phase-I's streets were being encroached by a private hospital.

The bench directed Mr Siddiqui to file a report.

The CJP remarked that the Sindh government had launched the Sindh Education Reform Programme in 2014 and allocated a huge amount, but there was no fruitful outcome while the project of water purification also met the same fate as despite spending billions of rupees it was hard to find RO plants and people of Tharparkar were still facing acute shortage of potable water.

The CJP also directed the senior director of the anti-encroachment department to remove encroachments from 36,000 amenity plots across the city and said that apex court had passed several orders in this regard in the past, but they were still not complied with.

#### **Removal of Pavilion End Club ordered**

The bench directed the local administration to remove the Pavilion End Club and end all commercial activities on the premises of the Aladdin amusement park in Gulshan-i-Iqbal.

It observed that the Aladdin park was converted into the Pavilion End Club and membership was being offered against fees along with other commercial activities.

It directed the Karachi administrator to immediately remove the club and other commercial activities on the premises of park and file a compliance report within two days.

The apex court further asked the administrator to develop the premises along with an adjacent plot, from where illegal construction was recently removed, into a park/green belt.

The bench further issued directives to the city administration to remove the KDA Officers' Club, a swimming pool and tennis court from a plot on Kashmir Road and open the land/playground for children.

The bench also directed the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) chairman and project director of the Greater Karachi Water Supply Scheme, commonly known as K-IV, to appear on June 16 after provincial officials said that the project had been taken over by the federal authorities.

#### **Plea of Gujjar, Orangi nullahs affectees dismissed**

The bench also dismissed an application of a number of people affected during the anti-encroachment operation for widening the Gujjar and Orangi nullahs and directed the authorities to continue the operation.

The lawyer for the applicants argued that their leased prosperities were being demolished and proper compensation had also not been offered.

The counsel submitted that the provincial and local authorities had planned to construct 30-foot-wide roads on both the banks of the nullahs without the permission of the apex court.

However, the advocate general submitted that the government was providing Rs20,000 per month rent for two years to the affected families and they would also provide accommodations in the Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme.

He further submitted that the process of construction of roads on both the sides of the nullahs was being planned and designed under the supervision of the National Disaster Management Authority after consulting NED University of Engineering and Technology.

The chief justice observed that the land around nullahs could not be leased out and the court had already passed an order about compensation and rehabilitation.

(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 15/06/2021)

### SC rejects plea against demolition on PR land

The Supreme Court rejected on Tuesday a plea challenging the demolition of encroachments on Pakistan Railways' (PR) land.

A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Gulzar Ahmed, and comprising Justice Aijazul Hassan and Justice Qazi Muhammad Amin Ahmed was hearing the plea on Tuesday. The petitioner's counsel said an anti-encroachment operation was being conducted on PR land adjacent to Frere Hall. He claimed houses with a legal standing were also being demolished in the process.

Speaking of his own case, the counsel contended that the land had been in the possession of his client for years. "An illegal occupation remains illegal even if it lasts a century," CJP Ahmed remarked to this argument. He directed the petitioner to file a separate case against the PR if he suffered any losses.

The decision coincides with the same-day release of the written verdict in which the SC stated that not an inch of PR land would be sold.

In the verdict revealed at the Karachi Registry, the SC said it had been informed that the federal government was evolving a mechanism to sell PR land in Sindh. It pointed out that a meeting, to this effect, was held at the Governor House.

The court ordered that railways land could not be leased, transferred or allotted. It clarified that the land would only but be used for the railways' operational purposes.

The SC expressed its annoyance at the railways minister for giving an irresponsible statement on the recent Ghotki train accident. The apex court dubbed PR's performance as unprofessional and unsafe for passengers.

The federal government was directed to terminate all incompetent officials and employees. The SC ordered the PR to provide safe and dignified travel for people. The apex court also ordered the immediate refurbishment of tracks from Khanpur to Ghotki and from Sukkur to Karachi.

It sought a report on PR's infrastructure and collective performance from the attorney general of Pakistan. The verdict was announced by a three-member bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Gulzar Ahmed.

#### Reply sought

Separately, the apex court sought a reply from the Sindh government over a plea challenging the regularisation of grade 16 and above government employees without a Public Service Commission. The petitioner maintained that the Sindh High Court had declared this manner of regularisation illegal. The court sought a reply from the government on the matter by June 16.

#### Rangers DSR reinstatement revoked

Moreover, the SC suspended the decision of the service tribunal to reinstate a Rangers deputy superintendent (DSR) who was accused of extorting a liquor store owner in Lyari.

The additional attorney general told the court that a committee was formed to investigate the allegations against former DSR Basharat Ali. He was terminated from his post in the light of the committee's findings. However, a service tribunal later ordered to Ali to be reinstated, he added. The court issued a notice on the plea and nullified the service tribunal's verdict. Ali extorted Rs60,000 from the store owner and later confessed to the same in a statement.

#### Water supply

A Supreme Court written verdict observed that neither cantonment boards nor the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board seemed capable of supplying water to residents of Defence Housing Authority and the rest of the city.

The apex court frowned upon the business of supplying water to locals through tankers in return for huge sums of money. It said the water on which these authorities are making money is supplied through KWSB lines. It stated Karachi faces a shortage of 1200 MGDs of water, as per the KWSB managing director's claims, while the K-IV project would only be able to compensate for 650 MGD of that shortfall.

Since the K-IV project had been taken over by the Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), the SC summoned the authority's chairperson and K-IV project director for Wednesday (today) to inform the bench about the project's status.

#### Stay orders annulled

The SC, in its written verdict, stated that interim stay orders, issued by the Anti-Encroachment Tribunal and Sindh High Court, against anti-encroachment drives on the Orangi and Gullar nullahs, are being disposed.

The National Disaster Management Authority, Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) administrator and Sindh government were directed to complete the anti-encroachment operations and extend the nullahs. It also ordered the compensation and rehabilitation of affected residents.

#### Freeing up land

The SC also directed the Karachi commissioner and authorities concerned to vacate the land of Kidney Hill Park and the plot near UBL Sports Complex by razing all illegal structures and encroachments by June 16.

A coercive order will be issued by the apex court in case the administrator fails to comply with the judicial orders, read the verdict.

**Demolition around waterpark**

Separately, the apex court ordered the KMC administrator and Karachi commissioner to submit photographs, attached with a report, to show that the Aladdin Water Park has been restored to its original condition.

The order read all debris must be removed by June 16 after razing the club and shopping centre structures. The court announced this decision when hearing the case against encroachments and illegal structures near Aladdin Amusement Park.

It stated the park was converted into a club and a shopping centre was established inside premises for commercial activities. The court clarified this was not the purpose for which the facility was constructed.

According to the verdict, the police department and the paramilitary force would provide assistance to authorities for the demolition operation.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 16/06/2021)

**SC wants speedy construction of overhead bridges, underpasses on KCR route**

The Supreme Court directed the Sindh government to complete the PC-I, contract signing and issuance of work order for the construction of underpasses and overhead bridges on railway crossings falling along the proposed route of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) within a month.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed in its order issued on Thursday further told the provincial government that all requisite financial resources be made available to the Frontier Works Organisation, tasked to execute the project, so that it could be completed as expeditiously as possible.

It directed the advocate general of Sindh to submit a report in this regard after a month.

In February last year, the SC had directed the Pakistan Railways to revive and operate the KCR within six months and also told the provincial government to build necessary infrastructure on the route to ensure that the KCR operation was not obstructed because of road traffic. In December the Sindh government had informed the Supreme Court that it had given a contract to the FWO for the construction of underpasses and overhead bridges.

*Gives Sindh govt month's time to complete formalities*

When the SC took up the matter for hearing, Advocate General of Sindh Salman Talibuddin filed a report.

The FWO lawyer pointed out that the feasibility report of the project was approved by the railways and it was forwarded to the Sindh government, but neither PC-I had been approved nor any contract signed or work order issued. He further submitted that funds had also not been released yet.

The bench confronted Mr Talibuddin and asked him to explain why the needful had not been done despite repeated and categorical orders of the court in which the timeframe for the completion of the project was also given.

The Sindh AG contended that the FWO in consultation with the railways had changed the scope and tenor of the project and submitted a feasibility report which required certain portions of the route to be elevated and certain branch lines to be connected with the main line.

He further maintained that the Sindh government was funding the project and it would go beyond the financial commitment made by it before the court.

However, the same was contested by FWO 494 group commander Brig Waqar and he submitted that in light of the apex court orders, they had conducted a survey of the KCR route with experts and consultants and found that it was not possible in certain areas to construct underpasses and bridges and the most feasible way to operate the rail in such areas was to elevate the track in order to cause minimum obstruction to traffic.

He further argued that the overall cost of the project would remain the same with an added advantage of minimum obstruction of traffic and displacement of people.

When the bench asked chairman of Railways Habib-ur-Rehman if the railways had technically examined the FWO design, he categorically said that it was examined by railways experts and found the design to be compliant with all engineering and technical requirements, which would result in the smooth operation of the KCR for the entire length of the project.

He further said that there was no additional financial commitment required from the Sindh government other than what it had committed earlier.

The bench said that after hearing all it was clear that the revised design was feasible, technically sound and acceptable to all concerned and would be successful.

The maximum financial commitment of the provincial government in the sum of Rs6 billion would remain the same, it added.  
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 18/06/2021)

**KCR rigmarole**

THURSDAY'S proceedings in the Supreme Court clearly demonstrated how divided the stakeholders are when it comes to giving Karachi a mass transit system worthy of a city of 20m. The Supreme Court's order was realistic and modest. All it did was to ask the Sindh government to finalise within a month such basic issues as the completion of PC-1, the signing of contracts and the issuance of work order so that construction could begin on underpasses and flyovers for the Karachi Circular Railway. After a court order as far back as early last year, the Sindh government had said it had given a contract to the Frontier Works Organisation to pursue the project. However, on Thursday the FWO counsel informed the court that no PC-1 had been finalised and that it had received no funds from the provincial government. The response of the Sindh advocate general was that the FWO wanted some changes in the plan and believed some sections of the KCR route needed to be elevated. A greater surprise was in store when the FWO's 494 group commander said that his organisation had consulted experts and come to the conclusion that it was not feasible to build underpasses and bridges in some areas and that it would be better if the KCR tracks were elevated on those sections.

Frankly, the court's concern notwithstanding, let us forget the KCR dream. After decades of discussions all we have is the bare truth made available before their lordships. The Japanese had offered all technical and financial help, and there were moments when the CPEC, too, appeared to be in the picture, but all we have now is a lack of consensus on the fundamentals among the parties concerned. The truth is the KCR project isn't backed by political will. In Lahore, we saw what political will can achieve by overcoming all hurdles. The KCR, too, can become a reality if someone had the will to make the dream come true. There is none.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 18/06/2021)