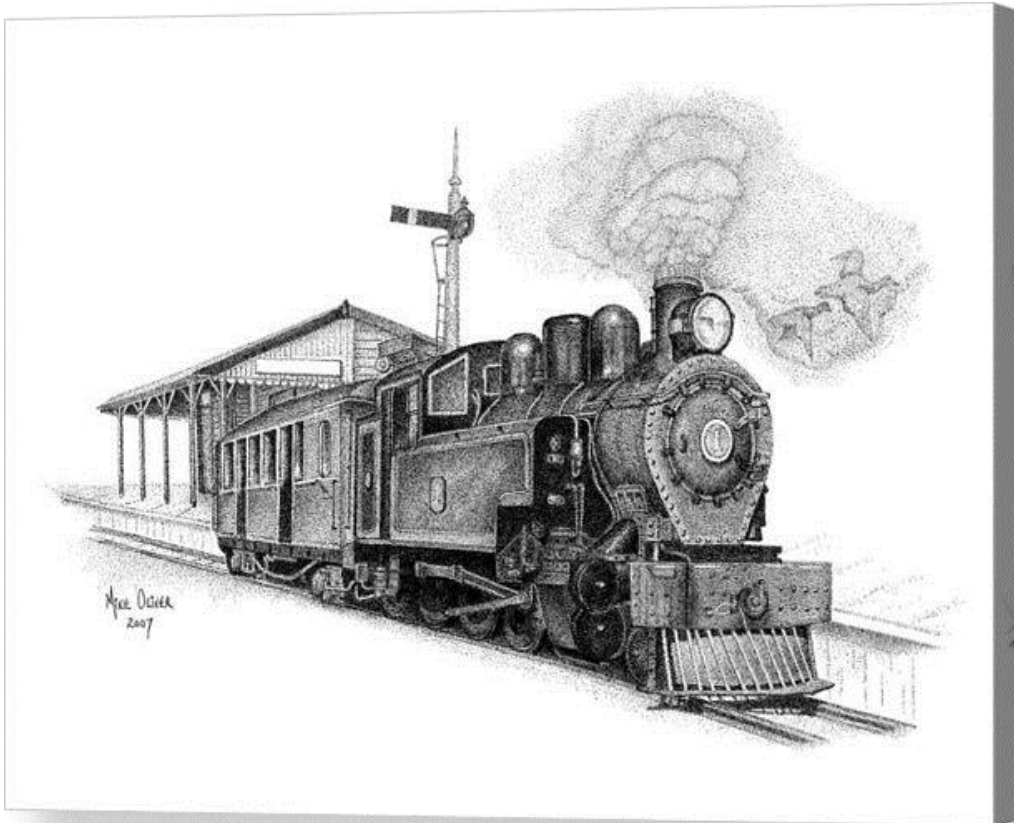


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JANUARY TO JUNE 2017

KCR RAILWAY



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'All hurdles to be removed for KCR's early revival'

Around 700,000 commuters would benefit from the revival of the mega project of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR).

This was stated by Sindh Minister for Transport and Mass Transit Syed Nasir Hussain Shah after a visit to the KCR route on Tuesday. He was accompanied by Karachi's Deputy Mayor Arshad Vohra.

The minister said all hurdles in the way of the KCR, including encroachments, would be removed with the collaboration of stakeholders. He said the federal and the provincial governments, as well as political parties, were on the same page with regard to the project.

He stated that it was the desire of everyone that the transport problems of Karachi be resolved at the earliest with the provision of decent and comfortable travel facilities for the people in the metropolis. Shah further said that the federal government fully cooperated in including the KCR, Keti Bandar and a special economic zone in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). He warned that no one should create hurdles in the way of the project.

(The News 19, 11/01/2017)

Work on new KCR feasibility report begins, says minister

Work on the new feasibility report of the Karachi Circular Railway has been started and it will be completed in two to three months, said Sindh Transport Minister Nasir Shah on Tuesday.

Briefing the media after a visit to various portions of the KCR route, he said the KCR was one of the mega projects of the city and after completion it would have the capacity to carry over 700,000 commuters daily and the transport problem of the city would be solved to a great extent. Deputy Mayor Arshad Vohra also accompanied the minister.

Giving some background of one of the major transport projects, he said earlier the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) had conducted various studies of the project and had shown interest in it. It had even submitted 46 recommendations/conditions, of which 45 had been accepted by the government, but later JICA backed out. He said a few days ago the government had again approached JICA to ask if it wanted to rejoin the project, but it declined.

He said it was a big achievement of the Sindh government that the KCR, Keti Bundar and a special industrial zone had been included in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects, after which chances of early completion of these schemes had become bright.

He said one of the biggest hitches in the way of the KCR was the numerous encroachments set up by unscrupulous elements along a major portion of the route. He warned the influential encroachers to remove their bungalows, factories and other illegal structures from the designated route otherwise legal action would be taken and encroachers would be evicted with the help of law enforcers.

He said the encroachers over the years had established illegal structures along and on a major portion of the existing railway track, and spaces reserved for stations and platforms. He said negotiations with the stakeholders and encroachers would be held but they would have to move away to clear the way for the circular railway. A handful of encroachers and their supporters would not be allowed to stop or delay this important project that was vital for the progress of the metropolis.

He said some groups (political, ethnic etc) were supporting the encroachers under the garb of extending support to poor people but in fact those groups were creating a big hindrance in the development and implementation of a project that would greatly resolve one of the major transport issues of city commuters, who will get a better and comfortable form of transport.

Mr Vohra said the KCR was an old issue of the city that had been lingering for the past several decades. He said it was good news for the Karachiites that work on this vital project had once again been started. He said he hoped that the government would take keen interest in this project and would implement it to help resolve the transport issue to a great extent.

He said encroachments were illegal and no encroachers or their supporters were strong enough to stop the government from taking a legal action of evicting them and removing their illegal structures from the government property / land to clear way for the project of public importance.

Earlier, the minister accompanied by the deputy mayor, Karachi railway chief Nisar Memon and Sindh transport secretary Taha Farooqui visited various places on the KCR route, including City Station, Lyari, Gharibabad, Baloch Hotel, Urdu Science College, Nipa bridge, Chanesar Halt, etc to see the encroachments as well as the condition of the existing railway track.

The KCR is a decades-old project and its initial cost was around \$700 million which over the years and after some changes in the route, had increased to about \$3 billion. As time passed the number of encroachments increased on and along the railway track, making the implementation of the project expensive as well as more difficult owing to resettlement issues. (By Bhagwandas Dawn 17, 11/01/2017)

Illegal occupation: '67 acres of KCR land under encroachment'

Out of the 360 acres over which Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) is spread, 67 acres are encroached upon, a railways official told Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah on Wednesday.



In the KCR loop, 47 acres are encroached upon while 20 acres are encroached on the main railways line, said Railways deputy superintendent for Karachi Nisar Memon. This encroached land has 4,653 houses and 2,997 other establishments, he said.

Around 20% of the KCR tracks are under encroachment, he pointed out, adding that the project can only be successful if these encroachments are removed. "Once the encroachments are removed, the project will start from Wazir Mansion, Kharadar, and will continue till DHA City, crossing Bahria Town," said an official who was present in the meeting.

During the briefing at New Secretariat, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah also approved Rs45 million to prepare a feasibility report of KCR. This report must be submitted in the Joint Cooperation Committee comprising representatives of both Pakistan and China as it is now part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. He also told additional chief secretary of development Muhammad Waseem to coordinate with the federal government for the sovereign guarantee.

Shah also directed Karachi commissioner Aijaz Khan to hold a meeting with all the deputy commissioners and work out a plan to remove encroachments from the KCR route and submit a report within seven days.

Encroachment

According to Transport Minister Nasir Shah, KCR has a total length of 43 kilometres of which 13.43km is on the railways main line and 29.69km on the KCR loop inside the city. The minister personally visited the KCR route on Tuesday and found encroachments along its route.

Memon shared the details of encroachment along KCR stations. At Wazir Mansion station, 29.28 acres are encroached upon. From Wazir Mansion to Baldia 0.82 acres are encroached, 1.91 acres near Orangi Nullah, 1.44 acres from Orangi to Nazimabad, 2.36 acres from Nazimabad-Liaquatabad, 3.16 acres from Liaquatabad to Gilani, 2.05 acres from Gilani to Urdu College, 4.16 acres Urdu College to University and 0.91 acres from University to Depot Hill.

As for encroachment on KCR main line, 0.46 acres are encroached from Tower to Karachi City, 1.67 acres from Karachi City to Karachi Cantt, 5.837 acres from Karachi Cantt to Chanesar Halt, 11.77 acres from Chanesar Halt to Departure Yard and 2.63 acres from Departure Yard to Drigh Road.

For a long time, the revival of KCR was to be undertaken by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica). An eight-member resettlement committee headed by Karachi commissioner was supervising the project until Jica refused to go ahead with the funding as the government had failed to comply with its conditions.

Mayor orders removal of encroachments

Meanwhile, Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar directed the engineering department and other relevant officials to remove encroachments from footpaths and service roads in the city.

According to a press statement issued from Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), Akhtar met officials of the engineering department. Citizens have pedestrian rights in the Constitution and this is being violated due to establishment of encroachments, he said, requesting other landowners in Karachi to remove encroachments from footpaths and service roads located in their jurisdiction.

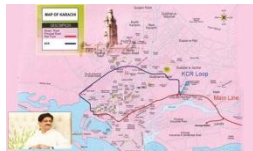
(The Express Tribune 13, 12/01/2017)

CM orders removal of encroachments from KCR route

Approves Rs45 million for project's feasibility report

Approving Rs45 million for the preparation of the Karachi Circular Railway's feasibility report, the Sindh chief Minister ordered on Wednesday the removal of encroachments on the scheme's route so that work could be started on it under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project.

During a meeting at the New Secretariat, transport minister Nasir Shah told Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah that the KCR project had a total length of 43 kilometres of which 13.43 kilometres were on main railway line and 29.69 kilometres on the KCR loop.



He added that he had visited the entire KCR route a day earlier and found encroachments along its route.

Railways Karachi divisional superintendent Nisar Memon told the chief minister that the total land required for the KCR project was 360 acres, of which 260 acres belonged to the Pakistan Railways and 100 acres were on the main line.

He added that the encroached area was 67 acres, including 47 acres on the KCR loop and 20 acres on the main line.

He said 4,653 houses had been constructed on the encroached land and there were 2,997 other establishments. Around 20 percent right of way of the KCR was encroached upon.

The Railways official said the project could only be started if the encroachments were removed from its route.

KCR loop

Giving details of the encroachments on the KCR loop, he said 29.28 acres were encroached upon at the Wazir Mansion, 0.82 acres from Wazir Mansion to Baldia, 1.91 acres near Orangi nullah, 1.44 acres from Orangi to Nazimabad, 2.36 acres from Nazimabad to Liaquatabad, 3.16 acres from Liaquatabad to Jillani Station, 2.05 acres from the Jillani Station to the Urdu College, 4.16 acres from the Urdu College to the University, and 0.91 acres from the University to the Depot Hill.

KCR main line

The encroachments on the KCR main line were spread around 20.647 acres which include 0.46 acres from Merewether Tower to the Karachi City Station, 1.67 acres from the Karachi City Station to the

Karachi Cantt Station, 5.837 acres from the Karachi Cantt Station to Chanesar Halt, 11.77 acres from Chanesar Halt to the Departure Yard, and 2.63 acres from the Departure Yard to Drigh Road.

The chief minister directed Karachi commissioner Aijaz Khan to hold a meeting with deputy commissioners and work out a plan to remove the encroachments from the KCR route and submit report within seven days. He also directed the finance secretary to release Rs45 million for the feasibility report of the KCR.

He said the feasibility report had to be submitted to Joint Cooperation Committee for the KCR's inclusion among the CPEC projects.
(The News 13, 12/01/2017)

KCR's eternal wait

THE Japanese aid agency's refusal to 'rejoin' the Karachi Circular Railway project is understandable. As disclosed by Sindh Transport Minister Nasir Shah, the provincial government approached the Japan International Cooperation Agency to revive the KCR but it declined — for reasons that seem obvious to all except those who had the gall to approach Jica. Japan's involvement in the KCR project is decades old. It studied the KCR, whose rusty tracks had been buried under tonnes of dust, made technical studies, completed the report, offered technical and financial aid and awaited official approval. The go-ahead never came. All that the Japanese had asked for was the removal of illegal construction, including bungalows and factories, on KCR land. This was too much for the provincial government, for many administrations came and went but none could remove the encroachments and ask Jica to go ahead with a project that would have given Pakistan's biggest city a modern mass transport system. Jica is not the only frustrated foreign agency that has received such treatment. In fact, as far back as 1996-97, a Canadian firm and a newly formed Indus Mass Transit Company signed an agreement with the federal government for building several corridors of elevated rail lines, but like the KCR the project never saw the light of day.

The truth is that no federal or provincial government has demonstrated the political will necessary to give Karachi a modern mode of transport. Lahore's example comes in handy. The Punjab government has received flak, much of it justifiable, for its 'mega' transit projects, but while some of these ongoing projects are indeed controversial and should be reviewed, several commuters also say they have benefited from transit systems in operation. Unfortunately, on Tuesday, Mr Shah said that a 'new' feasibility report on the KCR had begun. This is laughable. If the minister would dust off the files, he would find many such reports. The KCR doesn't need any more 'studies'; it needs political will, and that is lacking.
(Dawn 08, 13/01/2017)

Chinese team wants to survey KCR route

Sindh Transport Minister Nasir Shah has directed the officials concerned to arrange for a survey of the Karachi Circular Railway route for a visiting Chinese team and provide its members with relevant data.

He was talking to the Chinese team, including Yin Gang, Yong Yin and Cuidong Tian, that called on him on Tuesday.

He told the team that the KCR was one of the major projects of the city that would resolve the transport issue of the metropolis to a great extent. He said as the KCR had also been included in the CPEC projects, the government would like to take advantage of the Chinese expertise in the implementation of the project.

Earlier, the Chinese team asked the minister to arrange for a visit and survey of the KCR route and that technical experts of the railways accompany them so that they could get instant information.

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The visitors suggested that after the visit they would like to meet officials of the Pakistan Railways and other relevant persons to get more input about the project before they reached a decision regarding the project.

Mr Shah directed the officials concerned to arrange a detailed visit of the visitors with local experts of the KCR and also schedule a meeting between the Chinese team and local experts to further discuss the project.

He also asked the officials to provide relevant data regarding other transport projects, including the Brown Line, to the Chinese team so that they could also learn about it and see if it was of interest and if they would like to join in the implementation of the project.

He said that when all the transport-related projects were implemented, the transport issue of the city commuters would be resolved to a great extent.

(Dawn 18, 18/01/2017)

Encroachments major obstacle to KCR revival

Even after its recent inclusion in the list of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, the Karachi Circular Railway revival seems to be an uphill battle due to the heavy encroachment upon its route as no strategy has yet been announced for their removal despite the lapse of a deadline set in this regard by the provincial authorities, it emerged on Sunday.

As there are around 7,650 structures, including 4,653 houses, illegally built on 67 acres out of 360-acre land required for the KCR, the Karachi commissioner had been asked by the chief minister to design a strategy in consultation with deputy commissioners for their removal and submit its report by Jan 17. However, sources said, no such report has been submitted till date, while residents who have been living on the encroached land are in a fix about their fate.

Babu told Dawn that he grew up in a hut built on one side of the KCR tracks in Block 13-D of Gulshan-i-Iqbal. "We, children, took care not to tread on the track as the signal was down," he said while pointing to a rusty old signal pole up ahead. "There also used to be gates to stop the road traffic while the train passed through," he shared.

"Now I live here with my wife and seven children. We have also built a small temple in one of the huts for pooja. The local mosque also helped us by installing a hand pump after digging a well for water here," he gestured to a woman washing clothes near the hand pump.

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He said that he knew about Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and now the CPEC being associated with the KCR revival. "It is a good thing. But tell us where are we to go? We have been living here for years," he said.

Encroachment by people on the railway land is a big issue to tackle. According to a survey carried out a few years ago by the KCR project management, there are thousands of people who have illegally occupied this land. There are plans to move them to another piece of railway land at Jumma Goth near Landhi and Bin Qasim where they would be given flats along with a sum of Rs50,000 per family.

The situation was not as grim before 1999 when the KCR was finally discontinued. The reason for the discontinuation was that the Pakistan Railways was said to be making a loss by running the trains all over the city with few passengers taking advantage of the facility. Another version suggests that private transporters conspired with some corrupt staffers in the railways to fulfill their desire to bag the bulk of passengers for themselves. Whatever, happened then, it led to the end of KCR followed by several failed attempts at reviving it.

Recalling the fond memories of the KCR, Manzoor Ahmed Razi, chairman of the Railway Workers Union, said he was the first one to issue a KCR ticket. "It was back in 1970. One year after joining the Railways as booking clerk at the City Station, I was posted at platforms number 5 and 6 in 1970. It being still a new thing, there were hardly any passengers then to take the train to travel within the city. That's when our general manager, vice chairman and two divisional officers formed a queue outside the ticketing window for tickets," he remembered. "The Pakistan Television was there to record the moment. I sold four tickets worth Re1 as each cost 25 paisa," he said.

Using trains as a means for short travel was the idea of former President Ayub Khan in 1962. At first the trains moving internally had the Landhi to Malir main line. By 1969 the track was extended to Wazir Mansion with a station named Wazir Mansion Station also coming about at the location. Following that came the train stations at Lyari, SITE and Korangi but all local trains wouldn't go beyond Wazir Mansion. "The people would complain that they can't get on a local train from the City Station so the Wazir Mansion track was extended to the Karachi Port Trust building near Tower. It was also called the KPT Station," he said.

Meanwhile, the City Station with its four platforms got two more platforms in 1970, platforms number 5 and 6, near the National Bank of Pakistan head office. "That was when the KCR, as we knew it, was complete," Mr Razi said, adding that KCR also used to concession tickets of Rs17 for travelling as much as one liked for a month. For students, it used to be Rs11 for one month. "And if you wanted to travel one time only, the ticket cost 25 paisa."

There were 28 trains for travelling the distance between Landhi and Malir Cantt. Moving upwards and downwards on the track made it 56 trips. Some 13 trains travelled on the rest of the tracks around the city, making it 26 trips up and down the tracks. "Not hundreds, but thousands of people used the KCR as a means of travel.

But things changed in 1999 when the concessions for frequent travelers were no longer on offer. And each ticket cost Rs10. "Then President Pervez Musharraf and his Minister for Communications and Railways Lieutenant General (retired) Javed Ashraf Qazi decided to just discontinue KCR after realising that the Pakistan Railways was losing money in running the trains as there were no longer so many passengers using them. They also thought that the locomotives could be put to better use," he said.

Later, the JICA was approached to help revive the KCR. But by then the tracks had already been buried under loads of garbage.

And where the garbage didn't accumulate, people encroached by building huts on and around the tracks.

The KCR track running along Sharea Faisal to the Karachi City Station, booking offices, station master's offices, meanwhile, are still intact. There is a 43-km line around Karachi, which could be dug out and cleaned up for use. Laying new tracks, to Surjani and New Karachi can also be done in less than a year. Former mayor of Karachi Niamatullah Khan also thought that the KCR could be revived by bringing in retired drivers of the Pakistan Railways. Loans have been lent by the World Bank and set aside for the project but it seems to be a non-starter, nevertheless. "Even with funds available from the World Bank, there was a tug of war between the city government, the Sindh government, the federal government and Pakistan Railways all wondering who should be spending the money. Now we have China stepping in, which is like a gift for the people of Karachi," said a source within the government. "But realistically speaking, even if this project is a part of CPEC, it would take two to three years to complete," he added. (By Shazia Hasan Dawn 15, 23/01/2017)

Murad orders fencing entire KCR route

Transport minister tells CM feasibility study of project underway

The Sindh chief minister ordered on Tuesday the installation of barbed-wire fences along the route of the Karachi Circular Railway after the removal of encroachments on it.

Murad Ali Shah was presiding over a meeting attended by transport minister Nasir Shah, chief secretary Rizwan Memon, transport secretary Taha Farooqui, Railways GM Javed Anwar, the Railways Karachi and Sukkur DSs, and the Railways joint director.

Transport minister Nasir Shah told the chief minister that a feasibility study of the KCR was under way for which Rs45 million had been approved. The chief minister said the feasibility report must be completed as soon as possible so that it could be submitted for its inclusion among CPEC projects.

Replying to a question, the minister said there were 2,600 small installations and 4,500 houses on the route of the KCR and some people were constructing new homes.

The chief minister said that it was totally unacceptable and directed the chief secretary to ensure the removal of encroachments and the installation of a fence along the route.

Transport secretary Taha Farooqui said of the 48 kilometres of the KCR route, eight kilometres were encroached upon. "The Sindh government and the Pakistan Railways have already conducted a survey and have identified the encroachments," he added. The chief minister directed him to personally look after the operation and keep sending him daily reports from next week.

The Railways GM told the chief minister that for the handing over of the administration of the Karachi Urban Transport Authority and the possession of the KCR track, the Railways minister had formed two committees which would meet next week to make final decisions.

The chief minister said the prime minister had assured sovereign guarantee for KCR and that was necessary for its formal inclusion among CPEC projects.

The chief minister was told that Railways land was encroached upon in Sukkur and Larkana. The chief minister directed the chief secretary to involve deputy commissioners for having the land vacated.

It was also pointed out that some people in Sukkur and Karachi had fraudulently prepared ownership papers of Railways land. The chief minister directed the chief secretary to form a committee to inquire into the matter.

(The News 20, 25/01/2017)

Barbed wire fence along KCR route ordered

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday ordered removal of encroachments along the route of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) and installation of barbed wire fence.

He took the decision while presiding over a meeting on the KCR and related issues at CM House.

The meeting was attended by Transport Minister Nasir Shah, Chief Secretary Rizwan Memon, Transport Secretary Taha Farooqui, GM of Railways Javed Anwar and other officials.

Minister Nasir Shah said the chief minister had already approved Rs45 million to conduct the feasibility of the KCR and that work was in progress.

The chief minister said the work of feasibility must be completed at the earliest so that the scheme could be submitted for CPEC-related projects.

Replying to a question, the minister said there were 2,600 small installations and 4,500 houses built along the KCR route while construction of new illegal establishments was still going on.

The chief minister said it was totally unacceptable and asked the chief secretary to get the encroachments removed on war-footing basis and start the installation of fence along the route.

The secretary transport said eight kilometres out of 48km-long KCR were encroached upon.

The chief minister asked him to get personally involved in the operation and keep submitting reports to him on a daily basis from next week.

The meeting participants were told that Railways' land was under encroachment in Sukkur and Larkana as well.

The Railways' representative sought support of the Sindh government for the removal.

The chief minister asked the chief secretary to order deputy commissioners concerned and get the Railways' land vacated.

The meeting participants were told certain people in Sukkur and Karachi had fraudulently got ownership documents of the land owned by the Railways.

The CM asked the chief secretary to constitute a committee to inquire into the fraud and cancel the ownership, if it was found to be illegal.

Rs2.9bn for industrial areas

The chief minister on Tuesday approved a grant of Rs2.9 billion for the development and rehabilitation of infrastructure of industrial areas, mainly in Karachi.

The chief minister directed the industries minister to convene the Infrastructure Development Board, identify schemes, approve them and begin work under the joint supervision of the industrial area concerned and the provincial ministry.

"I would be releasing more funds if quality work is done before the end of current financial year," he said at a meeting with a 10-member delegation of the Karachi Industrial Forum (KIF) led by Zain Bashir at CM House.

The chief minister said his government would provide them maximum funds if they come up with a detailed development plan.

"On your advice I had revived Industrial Development Board under the chairmanship of minister of industries to execute government-funded schemes," he said, adding the delay was on the part of KIF which had not sent the development plan.

(Dawn 18, 25/01/2017)

Anti-Encroachment: KCR to trample 4,000 houses

More than 4,000 houses will be demolished on the route of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), decided officials in a meeting held under Sindh Transport Minister Nasir Hussain Shah and was attended by Karachi Commissioner Aijaz Ahmed Khan and the deputy commissioners of all the districts of the city. According to Shah, the strategy to demolish the houses has been prepared and every house on the track will be demolished. On the directives of Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Bilawal Bhutto, he assured that they will rid the people of Karachi from daily traffic jams. Apart from KCR, he said that the remaining transport projects will soon be completed in the city.

(The Express Tribune 13, 28/01/2017)

4,500 houses to be razed to make way for KCR

Four thousand and five hundred houses built on the land reserved for the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) are going to be razed as part of the Sindh government's pledge to revive the project.

The decision was reached during a recent meeting that was chaired by Sindh Transport Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah and attended by, among other officials, the Karachi commissioner and the deputy commissioners posted in various districts of the city.



The transport minister told the meeting that the KCR project was of the utmost importance for the people of the economic hub of the country.

He said it was necessary to first issue notices to people to evacuate the illegally occupied land reserved for the project, adding that later all the encroachments should be removed from the land.

The minister reiterated the provincial government's resolve to free the KCR land of all the encroachers to fulfil its commitment of completing the railway project.

He said that it was the unequivocal order of the chief minister to complete the KCR project at the earliest to benefit the people of the city and no delays would be tolerated in constructing the mass transit project.

He also said Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari had directed the Sindh administration to resolve all the vehicular traffic issues of the city as soon as possible. The provincial authorities have been working on a number of mass transit projects, including KCR and the Karachi Metrobus rapid transit network, to provide swift transport facilities to the people of Karachi, he added.

(The News 13, 29/01/2017)

KCR construction: PTI demands resettlement of displaced residents

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has demanded resettlement of the residents living alongside the track of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR).

The party's Karachi president, Firdous Shamim Naqvi, presented these demands during a press conference on Sunday at the circular railway crossing in North Nazimabad's Block B.

He was accompanied by the party's general secretary, Sardar Aziz, and local party representatives.

Naqvi was of the view that since the project is costing the government billions of rupees, there will be little harm in presenting a resettlement plan for the people who have lived alongside the tracks for many years.

Earlier, we witnessed how people affected by the Lyari Expressway had to suffer and were later provided alternative plots of land 30 to 40 kilometres away from where they lived half their lives, said Naqvi.

Though they were compensated, the procedure was poorly managed, he asserted.

The PTI's Karachi president added that they are not against development projects in the city and have actually been demanding mass transit projects for a long time but these projects should be planned and implemented in a transparent manner. According to him, a resettlement plan for the residents should be a priority.

He pointed out that some black sheep in the government themselves helped these people settle here illegally by taking bribes.

Suddenly evicting the residents now has nothing to do with justice, said Naqvi, adding that ever since the project came into limelight, people living here are worried about their future.

He proposed that each household should be compensated with a similar sized plot of land and a sum of money should also be given in accordance with the area to be constructed.

He added that the lives of the residents of the city should not be compromised and a resettlement plan should be focused on before initiating the project.

Commenting on the KCR, Naqvi added that the people of Karachi have been reading about this project for the past several years but the lack of will of the government has left the people dismayed. He demanded of the government not to manipulate the budget and keep the whole process transparent.

Naqvi added that Karachi has an insufficient transport system that nonetheless generates massive revenue but other smaller cities have mega metro projects.

The government has to show a will to complete this project in a short time otherwise we all know the laziness of the government, he remarked.

He added that it will take 10 more years for the project to be completed if one is to judge on the Sindh government's previous performance.
(The Express Tribune 14, 30/01/2017)

'KCR closer to being on CPEC projects' execution list'

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said his government is working hard to develop the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone and complete the feasibility study of the Karachi Circular Railway so that both projects could be included in the execution list of CPEC projects.

This he said while presiding over a meeting on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at the CM House on Thursday.

Zafar Mahmood, special envoy of Pakistan in Beijing, attended the meeting and discussed matters pertaining to the CPEC projects.



The other participants of the meeting included Transport Minister Syed Nasir Shah, ACS (Dev) M Waseem, Principal Secretary to CM Naveed Kamran Baloch, Transport Secretary Taha Farooqui and Energy Secretary Agha Wasif.

The chief minister said he had directed the chief secretary to convene a meeting of the Land Reserve Committee to reserve 1,000 acres for the Special Economic Zone at Dhabeji. "Once the land is reserved, a meeting of development committee would be convened to plan development of the zone," he said and added that he had adopted a fast-track policy to develop the economic zone and by March the project would be sent to the CPEC projects executing committee.

Talking about the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), the chief minister said he had held a number of meetings on the project and Rs45 million had been provided to the transport department to conduct feasibility. The work on feasibility was in the final stage, he said.

The government was going to launch an anti-encroachment drive to remove encroachments from along the railway track, he said.

"We are going to install fences along the track of the circular railway so that work on this project could be started without any delay."

The chief minister was informed that there were some NOC issues with the Shanghai Electric company in formally finalising the deal with K-Electric.

Shah assured the visiting envoy that he would support them as far as his government was concerned. "I would support them outrightly because they have to work with us and I am expecting huge investment by them in power generation to cater to the needs of the industrial sector of my city," he said.

He said his government was going to develop one-window facilities for investment in Sindh. "We are also planning to organise an investment conference to highlight opportunities in the province," he said.

Chairing a meeting in Karachi last month, the chief minister ordered the authorities to remove all encroachments to clear the KCR route.

He directed Karachi Commissioner Aijaz Khan to hold a meeting with all deputy commissioners and work out a plan to remove the encroachments and submit report. He directed ACS (Dev) Mohammad Waseem to coordinate with the federal government for issuing a sovereign guarantee.
(The News 13, 03/02/2017)

Govt trying to get KCR, economic zone 'formally' included in CPEC: Murad

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said on Thursday that his government was working hard to develop the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone and get the feasibility study of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) completed so that both projects could be 'formally' moved for their inclusion in the list of schemes related to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

He said this while presiding over a meeting on CPEC at CM House in which Zafar Mahmood, special envoy of Pakistan in Beijing, was also present and discussed matters pertaining to CPEC projects. The other participants of the meeting included transport minister Nasir Shah, ACS (dev) Mohammad Waseem, principal secretary to the CM Naveed Kamran Baloch, transport secretary Taha Farooqui and secretary for energy Agha Wasif.

Mr Shah said he had directed the chief secretary to convene a meeting of the Land Reserve Committee to allocate 1,000 acres of land for the special economic zone at Dhabeji.

"Once the land is allocated a meeting of the development committee would be convened to plan development of the zone," he said and added that by March the project would be sent to the CPEC projects executing committee.

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On KCR, the chief minister said he had held a number of meetings on the project and Rs45 million had been provided to the transport ministry to conduct its feasibility. The work on feasibility was at its final stage. Meanwhile, the meeting was told that the government was going to launch an anti-encroachment drive to remove encroachments along the railway track.

"We are going to install fences along the track of the circular railway so that work on this project could begin without delay," he said.

The chief minister was informed that there were certain issues pertaining to NOCs with the Shanghai Electric Company in finalising the deal with K-Electric. He assured the visiting envoy that he would support them as far as his government was concerned. "I am expecting a huge investment by them in power generation to cater to the needs of the industrial sector of my city," he said.

The chief minister said his government was going to develop one-window facilities for investment in Sindh. "We are also planning to organise an investment conference to highlight opportunities in the province," he said.

Development of zoo

CM Shah held another meeting for development of the Karachi zoo which decided to redesign the garden and develop it on the pattern of the Singapore Zoo which was almost the same size.

The chief minister was briefed by design director Zain Mustafa and MPA Samar Ali Khan, an architect; they proposed dismantling the cages and developing larger enclosures.

Mr Shah said an enclosure must have natural habitat with animal-centric environment.

The architect told the chief minister the innovative enclosure design was based on research from the designs of 10 international zoos such as in San Diego, Singapore, Bronx, Berlin etc.

The meeting was told the material to be selected for enclosures would be designed for low maintenance, sustainability, and to be animal-friendly. The ground soil would also be changed as per physical needs of animals. Apart from it, there would be a system within the enclosures which would feature animal furniture, hiding dens, raised levels, climbing structures, and perching surfaces.

The chief minister asked the city mayor to come up with plans to redesign the Safari Park, which could be taken up in the next financial year.
(Dawn 18, 03/02/2017)

KCR concerns

The writer is an architect.

THE Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) is arguably the most important project in the pipeline since it connects the four areas where over 45 per cent of Karachi's jobs are located with important low- and middle-income settlements. However, its right of way along 72pc of its length is encroached upon by many 'legally' built formal-sector constructions such as housing colonies, factories and warehousing and about 28pc is 'encroached' upon by katchi abadis. Without removal of much of these encroachments, the KCR cannot be built.

The government has not announced the measures it will take regarding the formal-sector encroachments but it has produced a plan for the removal and rehabilitation of the katchi abadis. They are to be shifted to Juma Goth, about 25 kilometres away from the city centre, where each household will be given an 80-square-yard plot and Rs50,000, a sum not even enough to transport one's belongings to the Juma Goth site.

Surveys of the settlements carried out by the Urban Design Research Cell of the NED University show the majority of children in these settlements walk to school; most of the men work within the settlement or in neighbouring industrial areas; and many women work in the neighbouring middle-income settlements as domestic help.

In addition, there are small- to medium-size businesses and workshops in the settlements which provide jobs, not only to residents but also to outsiders who service their transport, financial and skill-related requirements. Shifting them to a faraway location where they will have to build their homes (all over again) for which they have no finances; bear additional costs and time to travel to work and back, and to school; face the difficulty involved in participating in family festivities or visiting places of entertainment and recreation with their children, and accessing healthcare; will make them far poorer than before. The majority will come back to their old neighbourhoods as insecure renters. This is what has happened to many affectees of the Lyari Expressway rehabilitation project on which the government's KCR affectees' relocation is modelled.

The Urban Resource Centre has been in dialogue with the KCR-Affectees Action Committee. One of the possibilities that has been explored with them and which they cautiously seem to support is that the affectees, irrespective of whether they have a lease or not, should be divided into four broad categories — one, those with pucca houses and full utility connections; two, those living in makeshift shacks; three, those in between the above two categories; and four, those who are owners of businesses.

It is suggested that households should be paid between Rs2.5 million and Rs300,000, depending on the category they belong to, after which they should move out and find their own accommodation. Other considerations such as the period of time that the affected household has been residing in the settlement can also be taken into consideration. A committee consisting of representatives of civil society, the

affectees and government departments could develop the criteria for compensation and supervise its implementation.

The cost of the KCR project in 2012 was worked out at just below Rs150 billion of which the affectees' rehabilitation cost was worked out to about Rs2.5bn or 1.6pc of the total cost. If what is being proposed is accepted, the cost would increase to Rs7.5bn or 2pc of the total cost of the project. It has to be understood that the government plan will also require years to implement (while the communities remain in limbo) and its cost will go up by at least 100pc during the course of implementation. In the case of the Lyari Expressway, the rehabilitation costs increased by 3.5 times — from Rs2bn in 2003 to Rs7bn in 2012. The process is still incomplete and the resettlement colonies have been abandoned by the government with incomplete or non-functioning physical and social infrastructure.

If the proposal given here is accepted by the government and the communities, then most of the affectees will be able to make arrangements of their own choice in which many of the households will opt for finding accommodation in formal settlements.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is what happened in the case of the Kati Pahari road project where the market price was paid to the affectees and there was no protest or disagreement from their side regarding the decision.

Adding to the misery, class segregation and poverty, and actually spending well over Rs2.5bn to make that happen makes no sense. It will only add to the existing conflict and sense of alienation in an already divided city. Putting political and bureaucratic considerations aside, the Sindh government should consider, in conceptual terms, the proposal discussed in this article.

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(By Arif Hasan Dawn 09, 05/02/2017)

Ultimatum: Illegal occupants on KCR route to be removed by September: CM

The encroachments along the route of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) will be bulldozed to launch the project in September and those who were settled there before 2013 will be given compensation.

This was decided on Wednesday by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah while presiding over a meeting on KCR to discuss its progress. The meeting was attended by transport minister Syed Nasir Shah, additional chief secretary for development Muhammad Waseem, Karachi AIG Mushtaq Mahar, transport secretary Tuaha Farooqi, Karachi commissioner Ejaz Ali Khan, Karachi Urban Transport Corporation project director Talib Fatah Shaikh, Karachi railways DS and all DCs and other officers.

Shah was told that more encroachments have appeared along the route of KCR. Expressing his displeasure, the chief minister said that the district administration, police and railways authorities were in slumber when unauthorised people had started illegal constructions on government land.

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"Why are you not taking the ownership of government property and why do your people remain hand in glove with the encroachers," questioned Murad. "I will start accountability of the officers at the helm of affairs for encroachments on government land and damage to government property."

Commissioner Khan, quoting a survey conducted by Pakistan Railways, said that 4,950 illegal constructions in the form of houses and shops have appeared along the KCR route.

In District South, there are 420 houses, including four katcha and 417 pakka, 2,517 different establishments including 448 katcha houses, 1,700 pakka houses and 369 katcha shops in District East, 720 establishments such as 262 katcha, 420 pakka houses, 47 katcha shops and four pakka shops in

District Central and 1,002 illegal establishments, including 20 katcha houses, 773 pakka houses, 30 katcha shops and 179 pakka shops in District West.

The railways have not surveyed some portions in District South where around 300 illegal structures have also appeared, said Khan.

A survey conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) in 2013 showed that there were about 4,600 houses and shops along the route of KCR, said CM Murad.

It may be taken as a policy decision that the occupants of houses or shops constructed before and up to 2013 as mapped by Jica will be compensated and the encroachments that appeared after 2013 will be bulldozed after serving notices to the encroachers, he said.

"I am not in favour of allowing someone to encroach upon government land and then give them compensation to vacate it," said Murad, adding that old cases are being treated on humanitarian grounds.

Disclosing details on the anti-encroachment operation, the transport minister said that he has worked out that 48 excavators of different functions, 24 dumpers, eight loaders, eight gas cutters, 24 hand drills and 400 labourers were required for the operation.

The chief minister directed Nasir to start work on serving notices to people living there illegally and then bulldoze their houses. Once the houses and shops are bulldozed, start fixing fences to protect the KCR route, ordered Murad.

"I am going to perform the groundbreaking ceremony of KCR in September or October in which senior officials of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will be invited," said the chief minister.

The total length of KCR is 43.24 km of which 14.95 km will be on ground and 28.18 km will be elevated. The expected KCR ridership is 550,000 while there will be 24 stations of which 10 are to be on ground and 14 elevated.

(The Express Tribune 14, 16/02/2017)

All houses and shops built on KCR route to be razed

Owners and residents of constructions erected up to 2013 to be compensated
Sindh's chief minister has said the entire route of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) will be made encroachment-free and the affected owners and residents of constructions erected up to 2013 will be compensated.

Murad Ali Shah took the policy decision at the CM House on Wednesday during a meeting to discuss the progress of and difficulties in the project for reviving the regional public transit system.



CM Shah clarified that all the encroachments that had appeared along the KCR route would be razed and the families who settled there before 2013 would be compensated before the project's inauguration later this year.

The chief executive was informed that around 43.1 kilometres of the route was encroached on and the occupied length of the transit system was 21 kilometres. An annoyed Shah said the police, district administration and railways authorities were asleep when people started illegal constructions on the government land.

"Why are your people hand in glove with the occupiers? This is unacceptable! I'll start holding officers at the helm accountable for encroachment on government land and damage to government property."

Quoting a Pakistan Railways survey, Karachi Commissioner Ejaz Ahmed Khan said that around 5,000 illegal constructions in the form of houses and shops had appeared along the KCR route.

“In District South there are 421 houses: four kutcha [rickety] and 417 pucca [solid]. In District East there are 2,517 establishments: 448 kutcha and 1,700 pucca houses, and 369 kutcha shops.”

In District Central, he said, there were 733 constructions: 262 kutcha and 420 pucca houses, and 47 kutcha and four pucca shops.

“In District West there are 1,002 establishments: 20 kutcha and 773 pucca houses, and 30 kutcha and 179 pucca shops.”

He added that the railways authorities were yet to conduct a survey in some parts of District South where around 300 illegal structures were believed to have appeared.

CM Shah said the survey conducted by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (Jica) in 2013 showed that there were about 4,600 houses and shops on the KCR route.

“This may be taken as a policy decision that the houses and shops constructed before and up to 2013, as mapped by Jica, would be compensated on humanitarian grounds, and the encroachments in and after 2013 would be razed after serving them notices.”

He made it clear that he was against allowing anyone to encroach on government land and compensate them to vacate it. “We are considering old cases purely on humanitarian grounds.” The chief executive was informed that in the South, East, Central and West districts 3,173 houses and shops were constructed on up to 75 square yards of land, 688 over 75 and up to 125 square yards and 36 over and 125 square yards.

Transport Minister Nasir Shah said he had worked out that 48 excavators, 24 dumper trucks, eight loaders, eight gas cutters, 24 hand drills and 400 labourers would be required for the anti-encroachment operation.

Shah directed the minister to start serving notices to illegal owners and residents and then raze their houses, adding that fences should be erected after the operation to protect the KCR route.

“In September or October I'll perform KCR's groundbreaking ceremony, in which senior officials of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will be invited. That will be the beginning of a modern Karachi.”

He said the district and railway police, Anti-Encroachment Force, civic utility agencies and government agencies, such as Karachi Port Trust, National Highway Authority and Lyari Development Authority, would participate in the operation assigned to the transport minister.

The KCR meeting was also attended by Additional Chief Secretary (Development) Muhammad Waseem, Karachi police chief AIG Mushtaq Maher, Transport Secretary Taha Farooqui and Karachi Urban Transport Corporation Project Director Shaikh Talib Fatah.
(The News 13, 16/02/2017)

KCR anti-encroachment drive in Jauhar hits a snag

Hussain Hazara Goth residents prevent officials from doing their job

The Hussain Hazara Goth locality in Gulistan-e-Jauhar turned into a battlefield on Tuesday when residents staged a protest against an anti-encroachment operation being conducted in the area.

The locals fought with the anti-encroachment team, baton-charged them, held them hostage and set tyres on fire to prevent the officials from carrying out their responsibilities.

The operation in the locality to free the land reserved for the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project from illegal occupiers was put to an end before it could even begin.

The residents were of the view that they had been living in the area for a long time after “completing all the legal formalities”.

They said the Sindh government would not be allowed to “exploit” them. The anti-encroachment team postponed the operation on the court’s stay order.

Police and other officials of the city have repeatedly been unable to control mob of protesters. On February 19, three people were injured as police clashed with residents of Orangi Town who were protesting against the increasing number of robberies in the locality.

The locals had gathered at the Islam Chowk where they raised slogans against the police force for “protecting the culprits involved in street crimes”. Using burning tyres, the protesters had closed down a main road in the area.

As the protest gained intensity and a police mobile was attacked, the police teams deployed at the site resorted to aerial firing and tear gas shelling to disperse the demonstrators. In November last year, as police and Shia protesters demanding the release of their arrested leaders clashed for over 10 hours at Malir 15, residents of nearby localities were virtually cut off from the rest of the city.

The protesters had blocked the road, causing a massive traffic jam on Sharea Faisal and National Highway. They also blocked the railway track, bringing train movement to a halt.

After the demonstrators pelted stones at the police, the latter used teargas, fired gunshots in the air and baton-charged the former to disperse them. A couple of policemen were injured in the clash and around 15 protesters were arrested and 36 motorcycles confiscated.
(The News 20, 08/03/2017)

PTI MPA moves PA for KCR compensation

As the Sindh government has expressed resolve to commence work on the long-delayed the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project in the current year, an opposition lawmaker in the provincial assembly submitted a resolution on Friday urging the government to give compensation to people who would have to be relocated due to the project.

The resolution was submitted to the Sindh Assembly by an opposition legislator of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Khurram Sher Zaman, representing one of the constituencies in Karachi.

The resolution stated: “This house resolves that affectees of Karachi Circular railway project should receive compensation by the Government of Sindh before their homes are demolished.

These affectees have been residing in the area for over forty years and most of them are not financially well-off to be able to purchase a new home without government compensation. The House urges the Government of Sindh to compensate these people as soon as possible.”
(The News 14, 18/03/2017)