

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JULY TO DECEMBER 2019*

## KMC LOCAL BODY



## Urban Resource Centre

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

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

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

### KMC comes to a standstill

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

### Tit for tat

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

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

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

### They started it: KE

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

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

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

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

### Who will pay the dues?

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

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

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

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

## LG minister grants one week to clean up Karachi

Sindh Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani has directed local government authorities to take immediate measures for cleaning garbage and unblocking drains in all districts of Karachi, before the onset of monsoon.



He also ordered municipal commissioners to submit a report to him within seven days after the completion of the assigned tasks and instructed the managing director of Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) to cooperate with the management of all district municipal corporations (DMC) in undertaking cleanliness measures. Additionally, he directed the managing director of SSWMB to seek a report on the progress of work from municipal commissioners daily.

Ghani issued these directives while addressing a meeting at his office on Wednesday.

Expressing dissatisfaction with the state of cleanliness in the city, he reprimanded district officials for their inefficiency. He said that multiple complaints by citizens in this regard indicate that district officials were not fulfilling their responsibilities.

Granting a week's extension to municipal commissioners for the removal of garbage piles and cleaning the city, Ghani asked them to begin cleanliness work on an immediate basis, after consulting the SSWMB, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and deputy commissioners. He said that in case the officials face any difficulty in carrying out cleanliness measures, they should approach the provincial government.

Ghani warned the officials that he would pay surprise visits to different areas of Karachi after one week and would take strict action against municipal commissioners and managing director of SSWMB in case he observed any mismanagement or negligence on their part.

During the meeting, municipal commissioners informed the local government minister that garbage from different areas, falling under the jurisdiction of the cantonment board, was dumped in localities within their jurisdictions. Officials from SSWMB too complained that there weren't enough trucks to collect garbage from the city.

Addressing these issues, the provincial minister said that deputy commissioners should register an FIR against the cantonment board if they receive any complaint regarding the dumping of garbage, from other parts of the city, in areas under their control and shift the garbage truck, used to transfer garbage, to a police station.

Speaking with reference to complaints against KWSB, Ghani said he had already communicated the problems to the managing director of KWSB and is in constant contact with KWSB officials to get the issues resolved as soon as possible.

Sindh Local Government Secretary Syed Khalid Haider Shah, managing director of SSWMB AD Sanjrani, municipal commissioners of all DMCs and officials from SSWMB and KWSB attended the meeting.  
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 04, 04/07/2019)

## SC orders to restore power supply to KMC head office

Supreme Court (SC) has ordered K-Electric to restore power supply to Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's (KMC) head office as well as to the city's parks, and maintain the continuity of power supply to the stated places till July 24.

It was hearing the case pertaining to the conflict between K-Electric and KMC over outstanding electricity bills. A three-member bench, comprising Justice Maqbool Baqir, Justice Faisal Arab and Justice Sajjad Ali Shah, heard the case at SC's Karachi registry.

The apex court also directed the power utility to separately install the electricity meters at the residences of KMC employees, located inside the parks, from those of the parks and asked KE and KMC to together devise a solution for the payment of unpaid dues.

### The dispute

The rift between both the parties had begun over the non-payment of dues, amounting to Rs580 million, to K-Electric by KMC, following which the former had suspended power supply to KMC's head office, last month. This was despite SC's orders that KMC starts paying electricity bills from April 2019 onwards and K-Electric refrains from disconnecting KMC's electricity.

While K-Electric maintained that it was right in its decision to suspend power supply to KMC's head office, due to the non-payment of dues, Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar was of the opinion that KMC is only liable to start paying the bills from April 2019 onwards, as per SC's orders, and rest of the dues are to be cleared by the Sindh government. However, KMC still hasn't started paying its electricity bills.

### Lack of funds

During the hearing, Justice Shah asked why KMC hasn't paid last month's electricity bill. He also remarked that civic life would be disturbed if electricity connections of KMC's head office and parks are cut off. In response, counsel for KMC, Samir Ghazanfar, maintained that KMC is facing a loss of Rs70 million and has requested the Sindh government for a grant.

Ghazanfar had complained of the lack of funds in previous hearings too, with Akhtar claiming that most of the revenue generated through taxes was now being collected by the provincial government, during one of the hearings. The mayor had also blamed the Sindh government of deducting funds from the annual budget, which aggravated to KMC's financial crunch.

Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Saif informed the court that power supply has been suspended to not just KMC's head office but also to 12 major parks.

#### **Free electricity**

Justice Shah also inquired about the use of electricity in the parks. Ghazanfar maintained that employees' residences within the parks' premises were receiving electricity from KMC's connection. On this, Justice Shah remarked, were KMC employees being supplied free electricity. He asked, in this case, why they weren't paying their bills.

Ghazanfar said that KMC hasn't paid electricity bills for the months of April and May, and therefore, power supply to KMC's properties has been suspended.

Finance secretary informed the apex court that chief secretary has directed to devise a solution for the payment of outstanding bills, after consulting with the representatives of KMC and K-Electric. A meeting has also been called regarding the Rs70-million loss faced by KMC, he said.

#### **Sindh government's stance**

Sindh Advocate-General Salman Talibuddin argued that Karachi Mayor has said that Sindh government has taken control of KMC's recovery sources. He said that the mayor should clearly identify resources that the provincial government has taken control of. Things cannot work if city government solely relies on Sindh government to provide it with funds and doesn't do anything itself, he said.

In previous hearings too, Talibuddin had argued that provincial government cannot continue to pay exorbitant funds to the city government, stating that it was already providing KMC with funds as per their agreement.  
(By Nasir Butt The Express Tribune, 04, 11/07/2019)

### **Need stressed for public-private partnership to resolve civic issues**

Civil society activists on Saturday expressed serious concerns over the persistent failure of the government in providing Karachi with an efficient sewerage and drainage system that led to horrible post-rain sanitary conditions in the city.

They suggested that these chronic issues should be sorted out under a public-private partnership to bring efficiency, much-needed funds and transparency in affairs.

Organised by the newly formed Karachi Citizens' Forum, the meeting was held at the PMA House and attended by retired Justice Haziq-ul-Khairi, chief executive officer of the Sindh Healthcare Commission Dr Minhaj Qidwai, Nazim Haji, Advocate Anwar Kashif and others.

Speaking in detail about the post-rain troubles people have been facing in the city, seasoned architect and urban planner Dr Noman Ahmed highlighted the factors which had made the city vulnerable to flooding. He said that several big and small drains were in poor condition as either they had been encroached upon or blocked.

*Speakers warn that people will lose hope in political process if blame game continues*

Decades of negligence towards the city's topography, he pointed out, created the mess the city was in right now.

He, however, felt that a viable solution existed if drains were unclogged and rehabilitated and some more drains were developed.

#### **Rainwater harvesting**

To a question regarding rainwater harvesting, he said that rainwater could be conserved through different cost-efficient techniques and the concept was urgently needed to be implemented in a city like Karachi facing chronic water shortages.

He said it would support and encourage the agriculture sector, which is currently in dire straits.

During the discussion, speakers regretted that the issues pertaining to public health and sanitation had been greatly politicised and were being used by political parties to further their respective agendas.

They had a consensus over the premise that the state of sanitation and hygiene in Karachi had deteriorated to alarming levels, endangering public health, and that this required a permanent solution.

One of the suggestions agreed upon in the meeting was that the government should opt for a public-private partnership to tackle these issues as it would bring much-needed funds, transparency and ownership.

Nargis Rehman of the Pakistan Women's Foundation for Peace was of the opinion that committees should be formed in each and every neighbourhood so that people could participate in the process and get the municipality do its job.

Dr Qaiser Sajjad of the Pakistan Medical Association emphasised the need for creating public awareness and said the people were the real stakeholders in these issues and should be taken on board.

"They should be guided on their role and educated about how they should safely dispose of the waste generated daily at homes," he said, adding that the forum would meet and invite politicians from the Pakistan Peoples Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf and representatives of cantonment boards to their programme.

"We want all of them on one page for Karachi's welfare. Right now, political parties are engaged in a blame game. If this continues, living conditions in the city would further worsen and people will lose hope in the political process," he said.

The forum, he said, would act as a pressure group on civic issues, broaden its members and take up matters with the relevant stakeholders.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 18/08/2019)

### **'Cash-strapped KMC unable to give 15pc pay rise'**

City Mayor Wasim Akhtar said on Wednesday that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation was unable to give its employees 15 per cent increase in their salaries due to financial constraints.

During a meeting with a delegation of KMC Sajjan Union (CBA), he said that the city's municipal administration already faced a monthly shortfall of Rs120 million and Rs40 million would be added to the shortfall if the KMC employees were given 15 per cent increase in their salaries.

"We cannot pay this increased amount till the Sindh government gives us this extra amount," he said.

However, he added that firefighters would be paid fire risk allowance in the last week of September despite the financial crisis of the KMC.

"Fire brigade is the most important department in the world and we want to provide firefighters facilities but we cannot do this due to shortage of resources," the mayor added.

He said that the provincial government had stripped off the KMC of its powers and resources by creating six district municipal committees and three different authorities.

The mayor said that the medical equipment worth Rs100 million was recently provided to the KMC-run hospitals to provide better treatment facility to patients.

Sajjan union delegation president Syed Zulfiqar Ali Shah informed the mayor about the problems of fire brigade and municipal services department.

(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 16, 05/09/2019)

### **KMC cancels 'urban forest' agreement, again**

For the second time in a year, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) has cancelled its agreement with an entrepreneur, who had started an initiative to convert a decrepit amenity plot located in Clifton into an urban forest.



Shahzad Qureshi, an entrepreneur and the brains behind the urban forest project, was informed through an official letter, issued by the KMC's Parks and Horticulture Department, that the KMC would look after the space itself now. The letter follows a similar one issued in September last year, when the KMC had cancelled the deal for the first time, saying the agreement was not being implemented in letter and spirit. Backlash against the KMC's decision had later forced them to revoke the cancellation orders.

#### **The deal**

At the time the deal was signed, the KMC and Qureshi had agreed that the three-acre plot of land, which was then a garbage dumping site, would be converted into an urban forest by planting 50,000 indigenous trees in five years. The agreement was signed in March 2018 though Qureshi had applied for it in May 2017.

Adopting the Miyawaki method, Qureshi said he has planted 15,000 trees of 55 native species, developed an artificial lake as well as an organic vegetable garden. "We have converted a garbage site into a beautiful urban forest in just 16 months," he claimed. He said that the vegetables produced in the forest were being provided to the community living nearby. Qureshi said, "We distribute the vegetables free of cost."

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Qureshi said that no one from the KMC's Parks and Horticulture department had met them before cancelling the five-year agreement. "The KMC has hung a notice on the main gate that it will look after the park's matters from now on," said Qureshi. "It is the second time they have placed such a notice since March 2018," he added.





#### A Herculean effort

According to Qureshi, around 5,000 persons, including school children, have visited the park and planted saplings. "Thousands of people want to see this project mature," he said. "We should know the reason of suspension of the agreement," he complained, adding that most of the parks, including the one in front of the urban forest, were dumping grounds. "You can see stray dogs roaming around in the KMC's parks," he justified.

Under the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013, the KMC is responsible for the upkeep of Karachi's parks and playgrounds. Over the last few years, however, almost all the parks in the city have either been encroached upon or are in miserable condition. The KMC, for its part, claims it doesn't have the funds for their upkeep.

#### The vision

Under the original agreement, Qureshi was supposed to develop the space as an urban forest and was responsible for its maintenance thereafter for a period of five years. The entrepreneur planned to develop a dense forest by following the Miyawaki method of growing plants, which enables a dense forest to grow in small areas 10 times faster than usual. This method was conceptualised by a Japanese botanist, Akira Miyawaki, who was also awarded the Blue Planet Prize in 2006.

The pilot project was carried out in a 400 square-metre area inside the same Clifton park in December 2015 by an Indian expert, Shubendu Sharma, whose company creates natural and native forests, along with Qureshi. There, up to 1,500 native plants had given the landscape the appearance of a small but dense forest with heights of a few trees reaching above 30 feet.

Qureshi believes the park he had established will not sustain for a longer period of time, if the KMC does not revoke the suspension orders. "I am trying my best to reach the senior KMC officials but I don't think they take this initiative seriously," he lamented.

Despite repeated attempts, the KMC's Parks and Horticulture Director-General Afaq Mirza, could not be reached for comment. Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar was also approached for comment, but he too did not respond. (By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 04, 05/09/2019)

### Sindh govt-KMC row hampers fumigation drive in Karachi

As Karachi continues to suffer the miseries left by recent rains, the Sindh government and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) seem unwilling to bail citizens out of this impasse on one pretext or other.



With swarms of mosquitos and flies growing all over the city in the aftermath the monsoon rains, the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation's (KMC) fumigation drive has been unable in containing the spread of the disease-carrying insects.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, KMC officials said their fumigation efforts were severely hampered by a lack of both funds and insecticide chemicals.

Meanwhile, accumulated rainwater, garbage heaps, sewage spills and uncollected offal from Eidul Azha sacrifices have turned many parts of the city into breeding grounds from mosquitos and flies.

According to officials, an insecticide spraying campaign carried out last month did temporarily contain the growth of the flying insects. But lack of consistency in the fumigation drive and another rainy spell undid the authorities' efforts.

#### Flies overwhelm Karachi in monsoon 'hell'

A major reason that KMC could not carry out the spraying campaign consistently was a dispute between the KMC authorities and the Sindh government that led to an inadequate supply of insecticide used. While KMC authorities carry out the actual spraying, the provincial health department is responsible for providing the insecticide.

KMC officials estimate they need to spray at least 4,800 litres of insecticide over the remainder of the year given Karachi's current situation. During last month's fumigation drive, however, KMC could only spray 550 litres, they added.

"The Sindh health department had not provided us Deltamethrin, the insecticide we use, for roughly two years," said KMC Fumigation Director Kashif Mirza. "Only due to media pressure, they provided us 300 litres just a day before Eidul Azha. We received another 100 litres from an NGO and were able to procure 150 litres more from other sources, but that was it," he told *The Express Tribune*.

According to Mirza, the limited campaign was carried out in stages across the city till the end of August but was ultimately futile. "We need to spray at least 1,200 litres every month given Karachi's current situation. The spraying drive should be carried out for at least seven days a month," he said. "But because we were unable to do so, mosquitos and flies have started to breed again and the recent rains have provided them even better conditions to do so."

Mirza said KMC has sent repeated reminders to the Sindh health department for the provision of insecticide, but to no avail.

Meanwhile, experts warn that the growing spread of mosquitos, in particular, has placed Karachi residents at grave risk to viral diseases such as malaria, dengue, and chikungunya. Already more than 1,400 people have been affected by dengue this year so far. Six of them have died of the disease in Sindh. Most recently, over 200 Chinese nationals working on the nuclear plant near Hawke's Bay contracted the virus.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali / Mustafa Hussain The Express Tribune, 04, 08/09/2019)

### Mayor welcomes committee formed by PM for Karachi

Welcoming the constitution of a high-level committee by Prime Minister Imran Khan for Karachi, Mayor Wasim Akhtar has stressed the need of "emergent measures" to address issues being faced by the residents of the city.

He said that the formation of the high-level committee was a better option for long-term planning, but the city needed urgent measures for solution of its civic and municipal problems.

While talking to media representatives on Wednesday during his visit to the mausoleum of Quaid-i-Azam on his death anniversary on Wednesday, he said that everyone knew about the problems being faced by the citizens of Karachi, which badly needed resources to resolve them.

*Says present LG system has totally failed; it gives no authority to elected representatives*

Deputy Mayor Syed Arshad Hasan and other officials were also present.

The mayor said: "If the federal government is waiting for the next local government elections then I can say on the basis of my experience that the resources provided today would take a year's time to be utilised. Therefore I request the prime minister to come to Karachi and himself announce it so the citizens have satisfaction that their problems [are] being addressed."

He said that he had been seeking cooperation of the provincial and federal governments for the past six months for the solution of the city's problems, but no one was paying attention or showing any seriousness towards the issue.

Mr Akhtar said that he approached the prime minister and briefed him on the city's problems in three meetings after he lost hope in getting support from the provincial government.

However, he lamented, no steps were taken so far despite his appeals for immediate implementation of the PM's announcement regarding the city's problems.

The mayor said that the country was getting revenue from this city, therefore, some share of this should be utilised here too. "The people are waiting for decision in this connection," he said.

In reply to a question, he said that the present local government system had totally failed as no such system could succeed if it gave no authority to elected representatives of the local governments.

"I have been demanding amendments in local government law for the past three years, but to no avail," he said, adding that he had also sought federal government's interference for betterment of the city as there was a provision of such interference by the federal government in the Constitution.

He said that the local governments' leadership in the whole country should have powers so basic problems could be solved easily.

"Had we got such powers or resources, we would have solved these problems instead of asking the government to help us," the mayor added.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 16, 12/09/2019)

### Plants in Urban Forest uprooted by KMC after cancelling its adoption

Stacks of vegetable plants mercilessly uprooted lay on one side of the Urban Forest. "Here look at the corpses. It's the funeral of our vegetable patch," said Shahzad Qureshi, who had adopted the land reserved for a park but which was used for dumping garbage on plot ST-13 in Block 5, Clifton, for five years in May, 2017 after an agreement with the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).



But the adoption was cancelled through a notice issued on Aug 26 and on Wednesday KMC workers started pulling out all the vegetables planted towards the front of the park as

Mr Qureshi begged them to stop.

The notice of cancellation of adoption pasted on a park pillar at the entrance reads that the Urban Forest failed to develop according to expectations after one-and-a-half years. Therefore, the adoption was being cancelled. A banner on the gate also says the same thing with another banner which states 'Work in progress — KMC'.

*'I had a proper landscape design for this place but it is going to become a khichri of an urban forest now'*

The said 'work in progress' can be seen in clearing up the vegetable patches and planting two rows of moringa trees in its place.

"But this is an urban forest where the trees are supposed to grow like they do in a forest, without being trimmed or pruned. Now we have our trees at the back and this unnatural facade," Mr Qureshi told Dawn.

"I had a proper landscape design for this place but it is going to become a khichri of an urban forest now. If Mayor of Karachi Wasim Akhtar wants to take over this park, I will not come in his way. If he wants to rename the Urban Forest after himself, we can certainly call it 'Wasim Bagh' as long as they don't harm the trees and plants here and let me develop this place according to our design," he added.

"Still, I have had a first meeting with Wasim sahib today and I am told that I can carry on doing my work, but the KMC will also develop this park with me," he said.

"Whenever the KMC people come here they just look at the park front. They don't want to come and see the place where we have planted thousands of native trees and fruit trees and where the urban forest is a home for birds and insects, frogs and butterflies that help the ecosystem. We also have grassy patches in my landscape with a lake, but they don't see all that," he said.

After learning of the uprooting of the Urban Forest on Wednesday, several members of civil society rushed there to protest. Horticulturist Tofiq Pasha, also known as the Maali, or gardener, questioned why the experts who know their work are sidelined for amateurs. "How do the people who get salaries out of our taxes, and who are supposed to serve us, become rulers and kings?"

Social activist, classical dancer and founder of Tehrik-i-Niswan Sheema Kermani also wondered why citizens who mean well are discouraged this way. "It is sad when citizens who step forth to take responsibilities to save cities, are obstructed like this," she said.

"We need such urban forests all over for helping the environment and climate. Pretty manicured gardens and grassy lands only give cosmetic beauty, not environmental change."

Saleem Lallani, a concerned citizen, said that the trees and plants that had been planted at the Urban Forest should not be uprooted as if they are nothing. "Each tree and plant here has been donated by caring citizens. They are their property," he said.

Shumaila Matri, another concerned citizen, also said that she saw the chief minister flying over the city in a helicopter during Ashura. "The footage we saw was of a dry and brown city below. With such green patches this city is truly a place of bricks and stone like the hearts of the government people," she said.

Lawyer and teacher Abira Ashfaq said that she had been witnessing too much subversion of law in land issues, which was not right.

The Urban Forest was also taken back from Mr Qureshi in September 2018 but the adoption was restored the same year after about a month. Right across the street there is another amenity plot for another park, which the KMC doesn't seem so interested in developing as the Urban Forest. When Dawn called KMC director general for parks Afaq Mirza, he was not available for comment despite several calls made to him with many messages sent his way.

Mayor Akhtar also kept rejecting all calls made to him from Dawn.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 15, 12/09/2019)

### **Mayor to back Centre's steps for better Karachi**

City Mayor Wasim Akhtar said on Thursday that he would support any constitutional step of the federal government for solving problems of the city and bringing improvement in its civic and municipal infrastructure.

"The city's condition", said the mayor, was as if the metropolis was in an "intensive care unit; therefore, it should be helped," adding that Karachi was the only city in Pakistan which had been divided into many municipal authorities.

Mr Akhtar said he had also filed a constitutional petition in the Supreme Court for obtaining a decision which would strengthen all local bodies in the country.

#### *NGO to help make city zoo a world-class facility*

He expressed these views while speaking at the signing ceremony of a memorandum of understanding with a social organisation called Join Hands in Karachi Zoo. Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman and others were also present on the occasion.

The document was signed by the mayor of Karachi and the director of Join Hands, Zubair Habib, under which the NGO would help make the Karachi Zoo a "world-class" zoo through its technical cooperation which also includes the training of the zoo staff.

The mayor also planted a sapling in the zoo.

Speaking to the participants at the ceremony, he said parks and heritage had much importance all over the world "but we are doing opposite and the result is that many of the city's parks are now in a devastated condition and need urgent funding".



The mayor said that improvement was seen in some parks, including Bagh Ibne Qasim, Hill Park and Safari Park, due to efforts of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and more new parks, including the Kidney Hill Park, and a park in the China Ground along Kashmir Road, would be established shortly.

Metropolitan Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman said that the Karachi Zoo and other parks in the city had been centres of attraction for visitors in the past and now all efforts were being made to restore their beauty.  
(By The Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 13/09/2019)

### **Allergic to local bodies**

Whatever the differences between Pakistan's major political parties may be, there is one affliction that unites them all. All three of them seem almost allergic to the idea of functional local governments. Such is the half-heartedness with which they have approached the notion. Each of them has their own unique excuses when questioned on why their government was never able to devolve powers to local bodies in a meaningful way. Each of those excuses is as flimsy as the next.

And it does boggle one's mind. Local governments are understood to be the most vital manifestation of democracy given their grass-roots nature. It is most ironic then that for all ideological rhetoric by Pakistan's political parties about the sanctity of democracy, the last time the country had a functional local bodies system, it was ruled by a military dictator. So what is the reason for Pakistan's democratic governments' lethargy towards making local bodies effective? While their true reservations may only be known to party stalwarts alone, one can surmise a few things.

Across the world, local bodies and councils serve, among other things, as incubators for both new leaders and new governance ideas. Local government elections allow citizens to leverage any support and influence they have on a neighbourhood or community level into a pathway to a greater political stage. The first step of any political career in any functional democracy is to secure a seat at one's local council. And a successful stint at the local level can often launch an individual into political superstardom.

One theory that emerges then is that Pakistani parties' negligent attitude to local bodies is very much intentional and motivated by a drive to jealously guard their positions of power. In the study of politics, there is an idea that states that a course of action that makes most sense economically or administratively may not make sense politically for the main actors' point of view. Perhaps this is the case with Pakistan's political parties. As much as it would make citizens' day-to-day life easy, to allow new faces to emerge would perhaps be tantamount to eroding their own power and influence.  
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 16, 22/09/2019)

### **Sindh's local bodies await Provincial Finance Commission Award**

The distribution of the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) Award is a legal requirement, according to the Sindh Local Government Act. However, Sindh's municipal councils have not received the award for the past 12 years as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led provincial government has failed to distribute resources among the districts. Rural and urban areas in the province have been facing a myriad of problems in the absence of the new award.

Clause 112 of the Sindh Local Government Act states that it is compulsory for the provincial government to issue the PFC award every four years and distribute financial share to all districts and local government agencies from provincial revenue as per the formula. However, the provincial government has failed to finalise the procedure for distribution of provincial revenue in the past 12 years.

The new award has not been issued to the metropolitan corporation, district councils, district municipal corporations, municipal committees and town committees in the past 12 years. There are around 1,500 union councils and union committees in Sindh's rural and urban areas and they too have not been issued the award.

The PFC award was last issued in 2007. The procedure for the distribution of the Sindh government's financial resources was decided but even in its third term, the provincial government did not issue the award during any fiscal year. Around 55 per cent of the province's revenue was supposed to be distributed under the last PFC while the remaining 45 per cent was to be kept by the Sindh government.

In 2017, PPP selected members for the Provincial Finance Commission. The commission also held a few sessions but neither did it manage to prepare a formula for the distribution of resources nor was the PFC award issued to any of the above-mentioned bodies.

Under the PFC Award 2007, financial resources were distributed among cities on the basis of population, service infrastructure, development needs, area and performance. The formula was constituted as 40 per cent, 35 per cent, 10 per cent, 5 per cent and 10 per cent respectively.

"The Sindh government does not want the fair distribution of financial resources. It was to keep all the resources with the authority," said Muttahida Quami Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) Rabita Committee Member and former MPA Faisal Sabzwari while speaking to The Express Tribune. "We have demanded the government of Sindh to issue the PFC award several times but no action has been taken in this regard," he added.

Opposition Leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi said that the Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah has not contacted anyone regarding the formation of the commission. "The constitution guarantees security of citizens not security of the government. Something must be done if people are not getting their fundamental rights," he said while speaking to The Express Tribune. Naqvi added that Karachi has the largest population and contributes to 90 per cent of the tax collection. "Karachi could receive up to 40 per cent funds from provincial tax revenue through the PFC award."  
(By Vakeel Rao The Express Tribune, 05, 23/09/2019)

### **SHC seeks details of contract between DMCs, Chinese firm**

A two-member bench of the Sindh High Court (SHC) sought details of the agreement signed between the district municipal corporations (DMCs) and the Chinese company, which has been awarded the contract to lift garbage from Karachi, on Tuesday.

While hearing the plea filed against the awarding of the contract to the company, the bench, comprising Justice Syed Azhar Hassan Rizvi and Justice Kausar Sultana, also ordered the petitioner, Bashir Abbasi, to submit details pertaining to the registration of his non-governmental organisation (NGO).

Expressing annoyance over not being provided basic information, the court remarked that the petitioner's counsel had only presented the plea filed against the DMCs. Addressing the petitioner's counsel, Justice Rizvi asked, "Don't you have any problem with the Sindh government, which is responsible for allocating budget and releasing funds?" He also asked whether the petitioner's counsel knew how much money is given to DMCs. Reprimanding the defence lawyer, he said that all the details should be submitted to the court.

Presenting Abbasi's case, the defence lawyer said that the Chinese company was charging billions of rupees but was not doing its job.

The court remarked that "pick and choose" strategy wouldn't work. If you want to file a plea then nominate everyone found to be involved in the case as a party, it said. It also asked about Abbasi's profession and the amount of tax he pays. Abbasi informed the court that he runs an NGO and is a filer.

Apart from the details of Abbasi's NGO, the court also sought particulars of the agreement signed between the DMCs and the Chinese company.

### **Illegal land allotment**

Meanwhile, another bench of SHC, headed by Justice Ahmed Ali Shaikh and comprising Justice Omer Sial, expressed annoyance over the absence of co-accused Iftikhar Qaimkhani's counsel, during the hearing of a bail plea pertaining to the illegal allotment of 198 plots by Syed Mustafa Kamal and others. The court ordered that Qaimkhani's counsel appear before the court at the next hearing under any circumstances.

The assistant lawyer informed the court that the counsel for Qaimkhani was sick and requested an extension, so that the arguments could be presented at a later date. Expressing annoyance, Justice Shaikh remarked, "Do you think we don't understand these tactics?" He warned that the court won't entertain any excuses at the next hearing. The bail would be cancelled if Qaimkhani, or his counsel, didn't appear at the next hearing, he said.

The court adjourned the hearing till Oct 1, while approving the extension of pre-arrest interim bails of the former city nazim, Mustafa Kamal, and other accused, including Fazalur Rehman, Mumtaz Haider and Nazeer Zardari.

The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had filed a reference against Kamal and others, alleging that they had illegally allotted 5,500 square yards of land located along Karachi's coast. The land was initially leased to hawkers and shopkeepers in 1980, but was later acquired by DJ builders in 2005, also on lease. According to NAB, Kamal illegally permitted the construction company to build a high-rise building on the land.

### **Verdict annulled**

In another case, pertaining to the murder of a police constable, Maqsood, in 2010, the court accepted the plea filed against the sentence awarded to the accused, Mateeullah.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice KK Agha and Justice Khadim Hussain Tunio, accepted Mateeullah's plea and annulled the verdict announced by a trial court, which had meted out life imprisonment to the accused along with imposing a fine on him.

The defence lawyer argued before the court that legal requirements pertaining to the identification of the accused, during the identity parade, were not met.

According to the police, Mateeullah had opened fire while police officials were patrolling in Mehmoodabad. As a result, constable Maqsood was killed and another official, Muhammad Aslam, was injured. Police said that Mateeullah was arrested after he was identified by Aslam and a case was registered against him at the Mehmoodabad police station.

### **Fake domiciles**

Another bench of SHC issued a notice to Khawaja Izharul Hassan over a plea filed regarding the nomination of a private organisation as a party in a case pertaining to fake domiciles. A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Agha Faisal, heard the plea filed by Hassan.

The plea mentioned that thousands of government jobs have been awarded on the basis of fake domiciles in the past and another 40,000 jobs would be given to those having fake domiciles in the near future. According to the plea, fake domiciles and Permanent Residence Certificates are being issued across Sindh. Furthermore, domiciles for Karachi are issued without considering the address mentioned on CNICs, which is depriving the metropolis' residents of job opportunities, it stated.

Jobs announced by the Sindh government, which should have been awarded to the citizens of Karachi, were being given to others on the basis of domiciles since 2008, it said. The plea sought the formation of a committee, on the orders of SHC, to ensure proper investigation of documents before the issuance of domiciles.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till October 24.  
(By Our Correspondent The Express Tribune, 05, 25/09/2019)

### **DMCs express helplessness in capturing stray dogs in city**

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday summoned the municipal commissioners of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) and the district municipal corporations after the counsel for DMCs said that they were helpless regarding detention and control of stray dogs.

The SHC also issued a show-cause notice to the additional secretary of the local government department over his absence and directed the health secretary to be in attendance on the next hearing.

A two-judge bench, headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar, was hearing a petition about stray dogs and shortage of anti-rabies vaccines at all government-run hospitals in the province.

On Wednesday, additional health secretary Imran Bhatti filed a reply to a show-cause notice issued to him in the previous hearing.

Mr Bhatti in a statement placed before the bench also submitted that 17,837 anti-rabies vaccines and 11,855 snake antivenom were available in different hospitals of the province including the provincial metropolis, adding that this update was received a day before from the hospitals.

*The SHC summons municipal commissioners of KMC and all six DMCs*

The bench directed him to provide the copy of the statement to the petitioner to go through the same and file the reply.

The bench said that the issue was the detention and control of street/stray dogs and counsel for DMCs wanted further time to file a reply, but they had not given any clear answer to the bench as to why the DMCs had failed to perform their duties.

They said that they were helpless because of a financial crunch. They further stated that the old vehicles for detaining dogs were in possession of the KMC and not delivered to the respective DMCs for performing their duties.

At this juncture, the lawyer for the KMC informed the bench that old vehicles were not in running condition and therefore, no useful purpose could be served from such vehicles. The counsel also complained that the KMC was facing shortage of funds.

The bench found additional LG secretary absent and issued a show-cause notice to him asking him to appear in person on the next date with an explanation. It also asked the health secretary to be in attendance on Oct 22.

It also asked the municipal commissioner of the KMC as well as the municipal commissioners of all the six DMCs of the city to appear in person on the next date of hearing.

In the last hearing, the KMC submitted that the function of detention and control of street/stray dogs had been assigned to the DMCs.

Petitioner Advocate Tariq Mansoor submitted that Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho had given a statement before the provincial assembly that more than 92,000 dog-bite cases had been reported from across Sindh till June 30 this year and that there was a shortage of anti-rabies vaccine due to the ongoing tension with India and the closure of a Chinese company's operation.

He maintained that dog-bite incidents had been on the rise due to the failure of the provincial and local administrations to tackle the situation as stray dogs had not been dealt with, and on the other hand anti-rabies vaccines were not available at the government-run hospitals.

The petitioner sought a direction for the provincial and local governments to take necessary steps for vaccination, detention and control of the population of stray dogs as per the World Health Organisation's guidelines.

### **Interim bail to Khursheed Shah's family extended**

Another division bench of SHC on Wednesday extended interim pre-arrest bail of two wives and as many sons of detained Pakistan Peoples Party parliamentarian Syed Khursheed Shah in an inquiry pertaining to assets beyond known sources of income.

Earlier, the SHC had granted interim bail to Syed Zeerakh Shah and Syed Farrukh Ahmed Shah, sons of the PPP leader, and his wives Talat Bibi and Gulnaz Bibi, Transport Minister Syed Awais Qadir Shah and some other relatives.

On Wednesday, prosecutor for the National Accountability Bureau submitted that NAB Sukkur was investigating the case and Mr Shah was in custody on physical remand.

The bench headed by Chief Justice Ahmed Ali M. Shaikh extended the interim bail till Nov 15 and directed the petitioners to cooperate with the investigators. The bench also temporarily exempted the appearance of Mr Shah's wives.  
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 15, 17/10/2019)

### **SHC directs to stop salaries of 'missing' KMC KWSB employees**

The Sindh High Court (SHC) on Thursday directed the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC), Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), and excise and taxation and local government departments to ensure that the salaries of missing persons should not be released.

While hearing dozens of petitions about the recovery of missing persons, the two-judge SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Karim Khan Agha directed the Karachi mayor, KWSB managing director and secretaries of the local government and excise and taxation to file a compliance report till Oct 31.

In the last hearing, the bench had sought a report from Karachi Port Trust (KPT) and an official the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances about the salary of one of its employees, who reportedly went missing in 2016, after it was informed that the commission had ordered to release the salaries of the missing persons.

On Thursday, an official of the commission through a statement informed the bench that directives had been issued for the release of salaries of around 30 missing persons, who were employees of different provincial and local government departments. However, now the salaries were stopped, it added.  
(By Newspaper Staff's Reporter Dawn, 16, 19/10/2019)

### **Rumpus in City Council as opposition denied debate on civic issues**

A session of the City Council descended into chaos on Tuesday as the opposition and treasury members shouted insults at each other when the chair did not allow the former to discuss the municipal and civic problems of the city.

Shortly after the regular session got under way at 3.55pm with a delay of one hour and 25 minutes with Deputy Mayor Arshad Hasan in the chair, the parliamentary party leaders of the Pakistan Peoples Party and Jamaat-i-Islami, Karamullah Waqasi and Junaid Mukati, respectively, and other opposition members sought permission to discuss the city's problems.

The opposition members walked towards the podium in protest when the deputy mayor told them that the city's issues might be discussed in the house after completion of the business on the council's agenda. However, they were confronted by charged treasury members, who assembled in front of the podium effectively obstructing the opposition members.

*The house passes 25 resolutions amid opposition's protest; council demands restoration of Sarfaraz Ahmed's captaincy*

While the City Council echoed with slogans against the municipal administration and Mayor Wasim Akhtar, the house swiftly approved 25 resolutions with majority votes in as many minutes in the ensuing chaotic scenes.

One of the opposition members belonging to the PPP brandished her shoe, many others stood on their benches chanting slogans against the city government and tearing up the copies of the agenda that littered the floor of the council hall.

Later, talking to media representatives in the corridors of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation head office, the opposition leaders said that Mayor Akhtar did not have the courage to face the opposition and that was why he had been absent in the last three sittings of the council.

Mr Waqasi and Mr Mukati alleged that the mayor was running the affairs of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan with the funds of the KMC. They further alleged that the mayor was also handing salaries of more than 200 KMC employees each to several party office-bearers.

The JI parliamentary party leader said that people were dying due to dengue and dog-bite cases were being reported daily in the city, while roads and streets were in poor condition with no proper public transport system.

He said that the KMC with a hefty budget of Rs27 billion miserably failed to control the incidence of dog bite.

The 19-point agenda and many private resolutions were put up for approval during the proceedings, which include the approval of amendment in the by-laws for graveyards; demand of a 15 per cent increase in the Octroi Zila Tax (OZT) share of the KMC to meet the shortfall in disbursement of staff salary as employees were not paid the 15pc increase in their salary and pension.

The council also gave approval of a resolution about start of construction work at the Orangi Cottage Industry.

It also demanded that cricketer Sarfaraz Ahmed be appointed as captain of the Pakistan cricket team in all three formats till the next World Cup.

Other resolutions which got approval in the meeting include the rights of recovery of parking fee on 12 KMC charged parking sites; establishment of technical posts in Landhi Sports Complex; cleanliness arrangement in the Trauma Centre of the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital; adoption of a family park in Clifton Block-5 by the Houston-Karachi Sister Cities Association and naming it as 'Tahira Family Park'; contract of sale of animals at old beef slaughterhouse of Cattle Colony and vehicle parking fee carrying the fodder for financial year 2019-20; recovery of animal slaughtering fee at the New Karachi slaughterhouse and rights of running various food stalls and electric rides, zoo entry fee, cafeteria and photography stall in the Karachi Zoo, Landhi-Korangi Zoo and Safari Park.

Earlier, the council offered fateha for late M.M. Usmani, a former KMC administrator, naat khawan Yousuf Memon and mother of chairman estate committee Nasir Khan Taimuri.

The members also prayed for full recovery of ailing former prime minister Nawaz Sharif.  
(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 15, 30/10/2019)

### **CM releases Rs88m to three DMCs and district council for cleanliness**

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah on Tuesday released Rs88 million to three district municipal corporations and the District Council Karachi to get their machinery repaired and start cleanliness work while in three other districts of the metropolis where the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board was assigned the job, the SSWMB would further be "activated" to make the CM's cleanliness drive sustainable.

The three districts where SSWMB is carrying out cleanliness work are South, East and Malir while Korangi, West and Central districts and District Council are carrying out cleanliness drive on their own.

A total of Rs17m is provided to Korangi, Rs22m to West, Rs37m to Central district and Rs12m to Karachi District Council to repair garbage vehicles and other related machinery so that they could clean their areas.

The chief minister, who was chairing a meeting to review the results of the month-long cleanliness drive that concluded on Oct 21, directed the SSWMB to take strict action against contractor firms if they failed to deliver because the firms were being paid by the provincial government and it was expected of them to carry out cleanliness work up to the satisfaction of citizens.

He also recalled that just after concluding of garbage-lifting drive, the contractor firms of the SSWMB went on strike. "This is a deliberate attempt to turn the city ... filthy. This is not acceptable at any cost," he said and directed SSWMB MD Asif Ikram to take strict action against the contractors.

The CM directed the DMCs to devolve sweeping work and front-end collection up to katchra kundi to union council level so that monitoring and supervision can be done at the doorstep.

"Union councils are small units and their chairmen and other staff can ensure proper sweeping and cleaning of their areas easily," he said and added that "I am assigning supervision work to the chairmen of DMCs".

He also asked the deputy commissioners to declare model areas in terms of cleanliness and hygiene in their respective areas and keep them expanding. "I am still receiving serious complaints that shopkeepers and restaurants are throwing their trash and filth on roads," he said and directed the deputy commissioners to warn market associations once again before taking actions against the delinquents.

The meeting participants also decided to inform all builders not to put their debris on roads and bound them to lift their construction material at their expense, otherwise fine would be imposed on them.

Mr Shah directed DCs and chairmen of DMCs to develop at least two garbage transfer station (GTS) in their respective districts. "These GTS must be properly developed with all required facilities along with weighing system," he said.  
(By Newspaper Staff's Reporter Dawn, 16, 30/10/2019)

### **Decentralisation of municipal administration**

THOSE were tricky times. A movement of sorts for decentralisation of Karachi's municipal administration was gaining momentum, but not without facing stiff resistance. Demands such as a separate municipality for Nazimabad had already been documented. On Nov 8, 1969, Mahmudul Haq Usmani, secretary general of the National Awami Party, strongly supported the move for the decentralisation of municipal administration in the city.

In a statement, he said while the government was considering the decentralisation of administration up to tehsil level in West Pakistan, there was no reason why the same principle could not be applied to Karachi. The decentralised administration, he pointed out, could be a step in the right direction in the realisation of local self-government under which the people of the underdeveloped areas, who had been 'neglected so far by the Karachi Municipal Corporation' (KMC), would be able to manage their affairs. Mr Usmani also appealed to the governor of West Pakistan to accept this unanimous demand of the people of Karachi.

But the day before, a special meeting of the chairman and divisional councillors, held by the Jinnahabad Union Committee, Lyari Quarters, unanimously rejected a report on the multiple municipal committees in Karachi. The meeting was presided over by G. M. Nooruddin, KMC councillor, who was also a member of the governing body of the Karachi Development Authority (KDA). The councillors felt that the implementation of the document (which was known as the Ziauddin Report) would create more problems for



the city of Karachi having far-reaching consequences. Mr Nooruddin expressed surprise over the suggestion arguing that this experiment should have been done in Lahore and Dacca also which were the capital cities of the two provinces.

On Nov 9, Latif Ibrahim Jamal, president of the RCD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, urged the governor of West Pakistan to let elected representatives of the people decide what type of administration they would like to have for Karachi. He was of the view that the issue had become "so controversial and sensitive it could only be decided by the people of Karachi". He recalled that sometimes back he had opposed the decentralisation of the city's municipal administration for he felt it was not in the interest of underdeveloped areas. Since then a big controversy had flared up in which "arguments and counter-arguments and even personal attacks have been resorted to."

Sounds like a familiar scenario even in 2019!

Amid the hullabaloo, something significant took place reasonably quietly. On Nov 9, McLeod Road was renamed Ismail Ibrahim Chundrigar Road. Mr Chundrigar was the prime minister of Pakistan in 1956. McLeod Road was one of the many thoroughfares and streets that had been recommended by the KMC for renaming.

And then there was Karachi, the tourist-friendly town. On Nov 5, Princess Lamia Abdellah, wife of Moroccan Prince Moulay Abdullah, who arrived in Karachi on Nov 4 on a week-long visit to Pakistan, spent a busy day in the city. She began her round of engagements with a visit to the College of Home Economics, and then proceeded to the All Pakistan Women's Association Gule Raana Nusrat Industrial Home after which she saw the Adult Blind Centre. In the afternoon Princess Lamia went shopping and visited a number of stores on Elphinstone Street. During her visit to the college, the students enthusiastically crowded around the princess and she had to sign autographs for them.

(By Peerzada Salman Dawn, 14, 04/11/2019)

### **Akhtar criticises Centre, provincial govt for neglecting Karachi**

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar has said that despite generating revenue of up to Rs350 billion for the country, Karachi is mired down by a hoard of problems and the condition of the city has worsened.

He expressed these views while addressing a reception held in his honour at Electronics Dealers Association's (KEDA) head office in Saddar on Tuesday.

"Karachi is facing a difficult time," he said, adding that "however, neither the provincial government nor the federal government is paying any attention to its problems."

Akhtar said that the traders of Karachi want him to stage a sit-in for the resolution of the city's problems and claimed that 300 representatives belonging to different markets are ready to join the protest. Moreover, he mentioned that the Sindh government is not even paying salaries to its employees despite having control over all of the province's revenue departments. He added that if the employees of the Sindh government get an appraisal, staff also Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and district municipal corporations should also be given a raise.

Speaking with regards to the issue garbage, he said that the federal and the provincial governments have held month-long cleanliness drives but these provided only temporary respite to the citizens from the menace. The mayor reflected that lifting garbage is routine work and short-term campaigns are not the solution to the problem. He said that in order to solve the problems of Karachi, all civic bodies should be brought under the control of one authority.

According to Akhtar, Sindh Local Government Act, 2013 devastated the whole city. "Local governments were paralysed and destroyed before the local government elections were held," he said.

(By [Our Correspondent](#) The Express Tribune, 13/11/2019)

### **This week 50 years ago: KDA's demand in KMC tax share and voters' list**

THE demand for more municipalities in the city was being met with fierce opposition.

On Nov 18, 1969 four members of the Karachi Divisional Council urged the governor of West Pakistan, Air Marshal M. Nur Khan, and the Karachi administration to "frustrate the evil designs of old politicians in creating more municipalities" for Karachi which, according to them, would seriously affect the progress of undeveloped areas such as Lyari.

The councillors in a joint statement stressed that the creation of more municipalities would bring an end to development work going on with the active support of the union committee chairman of Lyari. The signatories to the statement — Abdul Majeed Mandhi, Hajji Ghulam Mohammad, Bashir Ahmad Khan and Abdul Majeed Brohi — believed suspension of projects at Lyari was the main objective of the politicians who were also responsible for the appointment of the Ziauddin Committee (that had recommended more municipalities).

Speaking of development work, a couple of days earlier, the provincial government enhanced powers of chairman of the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) in respect of expenditures to avoid delays in execution of projects carried out for the public.

Previously, the KMC chief executive was allowed to sanction development schemes costing Rs50,000 which was later cut down to Rs20,000. As per the latest orders, the chairman was allowed to sanction schemes involving an expenditure of Rs100,000. For the amount beyond that he had to seek permission of the city commissioner.

And what was the commissioner doing all this while? On Nov 17, Masud Nabi Nur (commissioner) paid surprise visits to different parts of the city to inspect the enumeration of voters for the forthcoming general election. He was accompanied by the deputy regional election commissioner, Zafarul Hasan, and the director of basic democracies, Abdul Hai. During door-to-door inspection at Pir Illahi Bux Colony, he expressed satisfaction at how things were shaping up. At Liaquatabad and a new settlement of about 2,000 families far from New Karachi, he was informed that the voters' forms had yet to be collected by the enumerators.

This may have been a small concern, but there were more significant issues related to the polls to be dealt with by the authorities. It was reported on Nov 18 that a meeting of Sindhi students held at Dow Medical College's canteen threatened with a hunger strike and boycott of the general election "if the government did not accept their demand for providing voters' lists in the Sindhi language within one week."

Things were not just heating up in the political arena; on the administrative front, too, they kept the newsmen on alert. On Nov 19, the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) asked the KMC to pay it up to four per cent of all the taxes collected by the corporation in the city. It did that on the plea that the KDA had carried out many civic schemes in various residential areas out of its own funds. Now when the KMC was collecting various taxes the KDA was justified in seeking the four per cent of the collection.

Ironically, the weather in Karachi that week, it seemed, was trying to bring the temperature down on the ground. On Nov 21, the percentage of humidity in the air dipped slightly and the wind became a bit colder. For the first time in the month, people were seen in their woolen garments and walking in the sun for them did not prove to be unpleasant. The temperature at night was 56 degrees Fahrenheit – three degrees less than on Nov 20.

(By Peerzada Salman Dawn, 14, 18/11/2019)

### Rollback of LGs

WHEN the year 2019 began, there were elected local governments functioning in every single federating unit of the country. Today, there are none in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. No less than 74 per cent of Pakistani citizens stand deprived of their right to local democracy. This creeping coup against democracy at the local government level is perhaps the greatest untold story of 2019. So how did we come to this?



On Jan 27, 2019, the four-year tenure of local governments in Balochistan ended. On May 3, all local governments in Punjab were dissolved through a legislation passed by the Punjab Assembly. And on Aug 28, the three-year tenure of local governments in KP also expired. To date, the PTI-dominated regime has not announced new election dates in any of these provinces, preferring instead to rule the districts through handpicked bureaucrats. Balochistan has now remained without local democracy for 10 months, Punjab for six and KP for two. Save for a judicial intervention, the situation is unlikely to change any time soon.

While it is unfortunate, the rollback of local democracy is not something new. According to my review of Punjab's legal history, this is perhaps the 10th time since 1972 that something like this has happened in this province. The record of other provinces is not much better. There is, however, a ray of hope in the present scenario.

*A power once devolved cannot be reclaimed, not even for a day.*

More than ever before, this time around, the rollback of elected local governments is being vigorously contested. Deposed local governments have come knocking at the door of the courts, emboldened in their quest by Article 140-A of the Constitution. The first such challenge was brought before the Lahore High Court (LHC) by the deposed chairman of the district council of Narowal, Ahmad Iqbal. Although the case is proceeding very slowly, by now, 37 other petitioners have joined in and similar petitions are also surfacing in the high courts of KP and Balochistan.

So what exactly is this Article 140-A, upon which the hopes of local democracy are now pinned? It states: "Each Province shall, by law, establish a local government system and devolve political, administrative and financial responsibility and authority to the elected representatives of the local governments." In the present context of the rollback of local governments, three aspects of Article 140-A are worth noting.

First, note that Article 140-A uses the term 'devolve', not 'delegate'. Devolution represents an irreversible transfer of rights; that's how the term is defined in dictionaries and is also used elsewhere in the text of the Constitution. A power once devolved cannot be reclaimed, not even for a day. Therefore, postponing fresh local government elections for months and years, while governing districts through bureaucrats, is no longer a legally tenable option.

Second, note that Article 140-A uses the term 'local governments', not 'local bodies', which was used in earlier legislation. The term 'government' was previously used in the Constitution only for the federal government and provincial governments. This suggests a legislative intent to elevate the status of local governments.

Third, Article 140-A uses the phrase 'shall establish'. Devolution is now a constitutional, enforceable obligation, not a matter of provinces' convenience.

The redemptive potential of Article 140-A was first flagged by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah in a LHC case reported as *Tiwana v. LDA*. A three-member bench held that, following the insertion of Article 140-A, the principle of local democracy has been entrenched in our Constitution. Now, the people of Pakistan can only be ruled by elected representatives, even at the district level. They cannot be subjected to bureaucratic raj, not even for one day.

It is true that the LHC's judgement was overturned on appeal. But, contrary to popular perception, the Supreme Court's judgement in the case did not give a *carte blanche* to provinces in their dealings with local governments. The SC clarified that, after the insertion of Article 140-A, a province does not "retain the same wide legislative and executive authority that it did before its insertion". It left the door wide open for judicial review of legislative action and executive inaction on the touchstone of Article 140-A. And, above all, it assured that the promise of local democracy enshrined in Article 140-A would never be allowed to become a "hollow constitutional promise".

It is a sobering thought that, as 2019 draws to an end, the promise of local democracy has in fact become a hollow constitutional promise for at least three-quarters of the Pakistani population. And no one seems to have even noticed.  
(By Umer Gilani Dawn, 09, 20/11/2019)

### Alternative places to be given to KMC tenants, says mayor

City Mayor Wasim Akhtar said on Thursday that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation would arrange alternative business place for all tenants of the municipal administration, including the shopkeepers of Lighthouse Lunda Bazaar (flea market), whose shops had been removed in the anti-encroachment action.

He said a team comprising KMC officers and members of Lighthouse Traders Association would conduct a joint survey of different areas to provide them with alternative place for doing business.

The mayor expressed these views while speaking to a delegation of the Lighthouse Traders Association led by its president Hakeem Shah which met Mr Akhtar in his office.

Mr Akhtar said that the KMC wanted to help these traders resume their businesses at some proper place so they could be saved from financial problems.

He said that encroachments were removed from city drains, parks and pavements to facilitate citizens' movement as well as traders' community who had difficulties in carrying on their businesses in presence of encroachments.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 15, 22/11/2019)

### The Quintessential Karachiite: A dark world, a brighter future

Imagine having to go through life without seeing its vibrant colours. Imagine not being able to see not just your own features but also those of your loved ones. Imagine never observing the subtle changes in expression that give away a person's feelings when making conversation. Never looking up to the sky to appreciate its changing colours. Never being able to see beautiful landscapes or count the stars at night. Imagine never being able to see at all.



If you can read this, you cannot even begin to imagine.

For Saima Shahid, 25, this is the hard life she has dealt with. Instead of treating it as a disability, though, she has decided to take matters into her own hands and make the best of her skills to improve the quality of life, both for herself and her three siblings, two of whom are also visually impaired.

For the past three years, Saima has been writing books in the braille reading and writing system used by visually impaired people. It uses raised dots to represent the letters of the print alphabet. "It started out as a hobby," says Saima, with a smile. "I would record cooking shows on TV channels and then write down the recipes in braille," she reminisces.

Seeing her commitment, one of her teachers encouraged her to start writing a book. Saima accepted the challenge and, in 2017, compiled a book comprising 23 recipes within a span of two months. The book has now been reproduced several times and is being promoted by the Blind Resource Foundation Pakistan (BRFP).

"My father reads the books to me and I type it with the help of a braille translation software by Duxbury Systems," she explained. "My second book, which was launched in 2018, comprises 150 recipes and is spread over two editions. It is available in the market," she added.

Saima believes that literature should be made commonly available in braille. "There should be novels, books and even newspapers written in braille to facilitate the visually impaired people," she said, adding that the cause needed the support and assistance of the government.

"We don't have many libraries except for audio libraries," lamented Saima, referring to the limited options for research material available to visually-impaired persons. "The audio libraries have material related only to the curriculum. There is nothing on topics such as current affairs and other social issues," she added.

**What is braille?**

According to Saima, braille comprises six dots and 63 shapes. All languages can be written in these characters. There are signs at the beginning of every text that show which language is it. "We start from the right when we write braille and from the left when we read it," she explained.

Saima doesn't charge anything for typing in braille, but the paper used for it is very expensive. Each page costs between Rs30 and Rs40. "The BRFP has a printing press from where the books I type are printed," she said, adding that the organisation has also started a quarterly magazine this year. "I type short stories or articles on current affairs for the magazine."

**Future plans**

A second-year student of intermediate at the Sir Syed Government Girls College, Saima hopes to work on braille and publish books related to the curriculum so that more visually impaired persons can benefit from her talent. For now, she is supported by her peers and faculty and is preparing to graduate this year.

"I feel there is hope," said Samia, with reference to her impairment. "I genuinely believe the Almighty has made me special for a reason," she said, mouth widening into a smile. She has taken on her disability and plans to work towards improving the conditions of others like her. She is currently working on a book containing guidance on everyday chores for the visually impaired. The book comprises 26 chapters and will be completed by January.

**A father's struggle**

Saima's father, Shahid Jamil, is a salesman and has been in this profession for the last 25 years. "Having three visually impaired children has been a great challenge for me," he said. "There was no one to guide us on how to best educate and bring up my children," he explained.

For Shahid, the children's education was in itself an arduous process as they went to the regular schools in the beginning. "We heard about an institution for differently-abled students at Numaish Chowrangi, but the children had grown up by the time," he said. "Someone told us to opt for private tuitions but this option too came with its own issues."

Arranging a writer for examinations was one such difficulty as there was no facility for giving the exams in braille. Somehow, though, all the children managed to pass their matriculation. According to Shahid, the government doesn't offer any funds or facilities to schools and institutions catering to differently-abled children. "Education for visually impaired students is very expensive," he lamented, adding that special slates for writing cost Rs3,000 and books printed in braille cost a minimum of Rs1,000 each. This is besides the tuition fee and traveling costs.

"But I somehow managed to get them a basic education," said Shahid. "Now I want them to get employment and become independent so that they can move further in the journey of their lives."

**Job search**

Saima's brother, 30-year-old Mujtaba, is also visually impaired but is able to travel in public transport. He has been searching for a job for the last three years and says he can type documents on Microsoft Word and operate the computer. He can even work as a telephone operator or a receptionist. "But everywhere I apply, I am simply told that the organisation doesn't have a disabled quota."

Maliha, 23, another sister of Saima, has passed her matriculation and has stopped studying further for the time being. She makes handicrafts and jewellery using beads. She wants to design new things and is searching for a job.

**Soul searching**

"All my children are independent and perfectly capable of looking after themselves," said Saima's mother. "Our society is cruel, though, and doesn't understand differently-abled persons," she lamented.

"They don't like them and don't want to help them even though there is no difference between them and the differently-abled. They can think, feel and do all other things in the same way," she continued.

For Saima's mother, it is the 'normal' people who need to be educated on how to behave with those who are differently abled. "Society's mind-set needs to change. Everything else will change with it."

*This story is part of a weekly series that seeks to bring to light the unsung heroes of Karachi – the hawkers, traders, doctors, teachers, engineers, lawyers and daily-wage labourers. It is they who make Karachi the city of lights.*

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 05, 09/12/2019)

**Striped of powers, local bodies left twiddling their thumbs**

With the year 2019 nearing its end and the decade coming to a close, Karachi is still generating 70% of the country's revenue. Yet the city of lights remains deprived of basic facilities itself.

Being the industrial hub and an airport city, Karachi generates billions of rupees in taxes which are used to run the economy of the country. Yet the city has been plagued with several problems, most of which have remained unresolved for the past 10 years because of the partial policies of the federal and provincial governments.

Over the decade, quite a few political and legal transformations have taken place in the city. The gap between the rural and urban areas, for instance, has widened with the extension of the quota system which has not only contributed to unemployment but has also created a sense of deprivation among young Karachiites.

The city is littered with heaps of garbage, has a scarcity of public transportation, broken roads, severe water crisis, appalling sewerage system and the weakest local-bodies system as compared to the rest of the country.

Different democratic governments that came to power neither employed structured and independent methods for the prosperity of the city nor made enough efforts to resolve the issues.

To top it all off, the city's actual population was misrepresented in the federal government's census of 2017, according to which the population of Karachi was cited as 16 million, with the urban population standing at 15 million and the rural population at one million. Per independent sources, however, the population of Karachi is over 25 million.

#### **Political crisis**

Under the Sindh Local Government Act 2013, the democratically-elected provincial government scrapped the authorities awarded to the local bodies institutions during the British era. It is a setback that Sindh has been under the rule of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is in power in the Centre while the Muhattida Qaumi Movement (MQM), is the biggest party in local bodies institutions.

Despite being rival parties, PTI and MQM together represent the opposition seat in the Sindh assembly. Owing to their lack of majority, both the parties fail to make legal amendments to empower municipal institutions.

There is a divide between the political and administrative institutions in Karachi, hence development works do not take place under one umbrella as envisioned by former president Pervez Musharraf during his tenure out of the uniform.

Earlier, there was a single chief Nazim responsible for heading all institutions. After bringing all the civil institutions on one page, the Nazim was able to resolve issues to a great extent. Contrary to that, the present administrative setup, instead of reducing the problems, has further aggravated them.

The PPP has been ruling Sindh for the past 11 years and despite its federal governance for five years – from 2008 to 2013 – Karachi has remained neglected. The approval of the new Local Government Act 2013 by the Sindh government legally weakened the local bodies corporations. The local bodies corporations were further disempowered with the local bodies elections, last held in 2016 on the directives of the Supreme Court.

#### **Misplaced priorities**

While the construction of mass transit, mega schemes for water and sewerage, flyovers and underpasses being built on the important thoroughfares of the city by the federal and Sindh government can change the façade of the city, they cannot resolve its deeper issues. And even these infrastructural schemes, worth billions, are constantly hit with delays and proceeding at a very slow pace, thus creating problems for the public.

Meanwhile, the federal government and the Sindh government are policy-making bodies and are, thus, not responsible for maintaining the cleanliness and construction works in the city. It is the duty of the local bodies institutions to lay down water or sewerage lines, construct roads, bridges and underpasses and to keep the city clean.

Surprisingly, however, the federal government did not even provide development funds to the local bodies, while undertaking a task which principally falls under the jurisdiction of the local bodies. All the development works are being performed under the supervision of the Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Limited, an entity run under the federal government. The ongoing projects under the federal government are moving at a very slow pace and could not be completed on time.

The federal government is facing several obstacles in the construction of the Green Line Bus project. On the other hand, the Sindh government imposed the flawed local bodies system while dissolving the civilian government system introduced by Pervez Musharraf which was considered by many to have been very productive.

According to political analysts and experts, if the local body institutions are strengthened and local body elections are held, new and young political leadership will emerge and it will put an end to the customary political families in a few years. But fear of losing power means that the two major political parties of Pakistan – the PPP and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz – have not allowed the local body system to thrive.

#### **A dumping ground in every street**

According to Local Government Act 2013, the Sindh government has taken all the important departments away from the Karachi Municipal Corporation (KMC) and restored the old commissioner system that severely weakened the authority of the mayor.

Across the globe, cleanliness is the priority of local bodies institutions. But the KMC, together with several local bodies, has been deprived of lifting and dumping the garbage and sweeping the city. Similarly, the mass transit master plan, the regional transport authority, education and health departments have also been taken away from the KMC. Neither has the KMC mayor's office been given the authority to head the Water and Irrigation Department nor does it have control over the Karachi Development Authority (KDA) or the building control authority. All these important institutions now function under the Sindh government.



The KMC does not even have any major source of funding as the federal and provincial governments are themselves directly working on mega projects. The local bodies institutions in Karachi have been utilising the limited funds provided by the Sindh government for cleaning rainwater drains, carrying out germicide spray and conducting several small-scale development works.

In usurping the basic function of the local bodies institutions, that is cleaning thoroughfares and lifting garbage from landfill sites and dumping it, the Sindh government has handed it over to Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) which is run under the provincial local bodies department. The performance of the SSWMB over the last three years has been appalling.

Earlier, each union council (UC) used to have only one dumping site. Today, every lane has turned into a dumping ground. Sanitary workers, who were previously answerable to the Nazim of the elected union council, are now required to report to the chief minister (CM) of Sindh as the incumbent chairs the SSWMB. The CM, though, cannot monitor the cleanliness of lanes and thoroughfares or deal with sanitary workers directly.

As a result, the system has entirely failed and the city has turned into a garbage heap. The KDA, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB), mass transit, master plan, and regional transport authority, among others – all these institutions were under the control of the elected Karachi Nazim but they are now working under the Sindh government, which has disrupted the quality of work.

The incompetence of the Sindh Mass Transit Authority can be understood from the fact that the 4-kilometre-long Orange Line Bus Rapid Transit project, running from the Orangi TMA office to the matric board office, has been under construction for the past three years.

In the presence of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), the city has turned into a concrete jungle.

The water and sewerage systems and roads too are dilapidated. The KWSB is working on five mega water and sewerage projects that have not been completed even after several years of construction. Owing to the criminal negligence of the Sindh government, not even a drop of water has increased in the city's supply in the past decade even when its population has exploded.

The list of tragedies in Karachi's local governance may never end. Despite feeding the entire country, Karachi has no solicitor to represent the public. The tug-of-war between provincial and federal authorities, together with ethnic differences, has brought unprecedented losses to the city over the last decade.  
(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 05, 26/12/2019)