

NEWSCLIPPINGS

JULY TO DECEMBER 2020

KMC LOCAL BODY



Urban Resource Centre

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East, Korangi and West DMCs approve budgets

The East, West and Korangi district municipal corporations (DMCs) presented the budgets for the fiscal year 2020-21 on Wednesday.

Korangi

Korangi DMC chairperson Syed Nayyar Raza and Korangi DMC vice-chairperson Syed Ahmer Ali presented the budget, with an outlay of Rs4.39 billion and targeting a surplus of Rs915,847, during a council meeting.

In the budget, Rs8 million has been set aside for dealing with the coronavirus pandemic while a grant of Rs1 million has been reserved for the Karachi Press Club and treatment of journalists each.

Despite presenting a budget with a potential surplus, Raza lamented that Korangi had been left "paralysed" over the past four years, explaining that during the stated period, the district did not receive its due share of the octroi and zila tax by the Sindh government.

"There has been a shortfall of Rs1.89 billion that has not just had an impact on development initiatives but also other matters, including the payment of employees' salaries," he said. "Moreover, while sectors like education, health and advertisement were taken away from the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and devolved to DMCs, no funds were provided for the payment of salaries of the sectors' employees."

He further questioned, "How can an institution carry out development work when over 50 per cent of the funds provided to it are spent on salaries?"

Later, a resolution condemning overbilling and long hours of unannounced load-shedding by K-Electric was also passed during the meeting.

East district

The annual budget for East district, having an outlay of Rs2.83 billion, was passed during a separate meeting presided over by East DMC chairperson Moid Anwar.

Of the funds allocated to East district DMC, Rs841 million has been reserved for development work and Rs1.99 billion has been set aside for non-development expenditure.

At the meeting, opposition leader Zulfiqar Qaimkhani requested to increase the allocation of development funds for each union council (UC) to Rs20 million, so that each council member was able to adequately address and resolve the issues in his or her respective UC. However, the chairperson agreed to increase the sums to Rs15 million for each UC.

West district

Meanwhile, West DMC chairperson Izharuddin Ahmed Khan and municipal commissioner Ashfaq Mallah unveiled a tax-free budget of Rs5.34 billion, with an expected surplus and Rs10 million reserved for dealing with the coronavirus crisis, for the district.

Presenting the budget, Khan said that of the stated amount, Rs2.26 billion - a little more than 40 per cent of the budget - was reserved for development projects, and remaining Rs3.2 billion was set aside for non-development expenditure. He further said that the funds for the budget were to comprise Rs3.84 billion collected on account of octroi and zila tax, Rs300 million on account of property tax, Rs270 million generated through the DMC's resources, Rs450 million received by the Sindh government on account of grants and Rs560 million to be collected on account of overdue octroi and zila tax.

He explained that a surplus was expected in the coming fiscal year despite a 10 per cent increase in employees' salaries, since development expenditure was reduced.

Providing further details, he said that Rs70 million was set aside for the parks and horticulture department, each UC was to receive Rs46 million for development work, Rs100 million for the purchase of vehicles, Rs20 million for the purchase and construction of furniture and electrical repairs and installations at schools, Rs450 million for the payment of dues and Rs30 million for disaster management, among other expenditure.

Besides, he said, Rs2.5 million was set aside for the provision of medical facilities to employees, Rs103 for the payment of their group insurance, Rs10.5 million for financial support in case an employee died during service and Rs120 million for employees' health insurance policy.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 02/07/2020)

City Council approves contract for uplift works with World Bank

The City Council of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation on Thursday approved a contract between the World Bank and CLICK, under which uplift works would be carried out in the city.

Deputy Mayor Arshad Hussain chaired the City Council session at the KMC building, where a total of 14 resolutions were adopted. Ten of the resolutions were passed unanimously while four were adopted with a majority of votes.

According to one of the resolutions, local councils, including KMC, DMCs and District Council, will provide details of work to the implementation unit established for the CLICK Project.

Taking part in the debate, City Council parliamentary leader Aslam Shah Afridi, Karamullah Waqasi, Junaid Mukati, Amanullah Afridi, Hanif Soorti, Rahat Hussain Siddiqui, Mohammad Asif Siddiqui, Syed Khalil Imam, Habib Hassan, and others endorsed the resolution and contract with the World Bank for uplift works in Karachi.

They termed the contract a good omen for the city which, they said, had been neglected for many years.

The council members stressed the need for setting priorities for uplifting infrastructure of municipal services, hoping that the CLICK Project would help in uplift works at UC level and Karachi would once again become a prosperous city.

The council also passed supplementary resolutions with a majority of votes for the establishment of Covid-19 Infectious Disease and Research Centre at the Abbasi Shaheed Hospital; collection of charges from registered telecom and cable operators and establishment of a section for that purpose; auction of plot No 2B at old Sabzi Mandi in Gulshan-i-Iqbal.

The council also passed a resolution for establishing a pension desk to help pensioners.

In another resolution, the council also okayed regularisation of 178 contract employees and release of salaries of 722 employees working on contract from January 2019.

In the session, a unanimous resolution was also adopted asking the authorities to write Khatim-un-Nabiyin with the name of Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in all curriculum books.

Flyovers named

Through another resolution, the council named KDA Chowrangi flyover after renowned poet Raees Amrohvi; Five Star Chowrangi flyover after renowned actor Moin Akhtar; and Sakhi Hassan flyover after renowned qawwal Amjad Sabri.

In yet another unanimous resolution, the council asked the federal government to direct the K-Electric to mend its ways and stop loadshedding and overbilling.

The council also approved contracts made by Mayor Wasim Akhtar or his nominees with a majority of votes.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 18/07/2020)

Karachi Mayor irked by non-lifting of offal in Central, West districts

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Monday visited different areas in the city to review work to lift offal of sacrificial animals on Eidul Azha.

He said that the offal-removal process was better in districts Korangi and East but the situation was not that satisfactory in districts Central and West.

The mayor said different organisations had also helped in lifting of offal from streets in districts Central and West, while elected representatives of local government were also in the field along with the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB). District Municipal Corporations Korangi and East chairmen Nayyer Raza and Moeed Anwer were also present with the mayor during his visit.

Speaking to the media at Shah Faisal Colony, Mayor Akhtar said that offal-lifting process was far better in district Korangi but the operation suffered a delay owing to shortage of machinery including dumpers and loaders.

Says SSWMB was made responsible for offal lifting but it did not comply with LG minister's directives

He said that Pakistan Army and National Disaster Management Authority had been summoned for cleanliness of drains in Karachi, adding that the local government would have done this job had it been empowered.

"The NDMA would clean three big drains of Karachi for which the work began today (Monday)," he added.

'Incompetence of provincial govt'

The mayor said that earlier the people had to face difficulties during rains. Now they were facing miseries on Eidul Azha due to incompetence of the provincial government.

He said that it was decided in a meeting chaired by Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah that SSWMB would lift offal of sacrificial animals.

He added that Karachiites were facing hardships due to poor health sector, lack of public transport system and other issues, urging that all stakeholders come on the same page for redress of these problems.

"The issue of garbage in the city would not be resolved until a proper system is devised for its disposal at landfill sites," he added.

The mayor also visited districts Central and West on the second day of Eid to review lifting of sacrificial animals' offal.

DMC Central and West chairmen Rehan Hashmi and Izhar Ahmed and others also accompanied him.

Criticises SSWMB

The mayor said that the SSWMB didn't comply with directives of the LG minister, adding that the board should have been closed if it does not follow the minister's directives.

"Garbage was not lifted ahead of Eidul Azha. The SSWMB didn't give district Central required machinery. Institutions don't do their work and eventually governments are blamed," said the mayor.

He said that the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board was not seen on ground during Eid days and the bureaucrats were celebrating Eid at home.

Mr Akhtar said that the situation was worst at district West as he was informed by the DMC chairman that the animals' offal were still lying on the streets of Orangi Town but the SSWMB was not cooperating with the district administration and didn't provide it machinery.

The mayor said that if offal were not lifted ahead of next monsoon spell as forecasted by the Meteorological department, the situation may become worse and the people would suffer.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 13, 04/08/2020)

Moot demands immediate LG polls, empowered city govt for Karachi

Calling for relocation of the people facing displacement as a result of an anti-encroachment drive to alternative places, a civil society group on Saturday demanded that the government hold local government elections immediately, introduce an empowered city government and carry out a correct census to show Karachi's true population.

The current situation following heavy rains in the city prompted a meeting organised by the Shehri Awami Mahaz (SAM) at the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) House in which social and political activists, workers and human rights bodies were all present for a brainstorming session to come up with a joint strategy on how to cope with the poor infrastructure and other issues brought up by the rains.

Nasir Mansoor of the National Trade Union Federation (NTUF) counted the issues such as urban flooding, power breakdowns, low gas pressure, etc, on his fingertips.

"Karachi is the seventh largest city in the world. It earns 25 per cent of the GDP for the country and 75pc of the GDP for Sindh.

Unfortunately, the census was done wrongly for Karachi and thus there was less money set aside in the budget for the city," he said. Pointing out more of the city's woes, he said that there were some 64 drains in Karachi and all were blocked and encroached upon. Despite the city being without power, the K-Electric had raised the price of electricity too, he added.

'Karachi can earn enough to pay for its own uplift and it shouldn't be looking towards centre for aid packages'

"This city has never got a proper city government. Sectors such as education, health, roads, transport, water supply and drainage, policing and infrastructure development should be the responsibility of the city government as envisaged in the Constitution of Pakistan," he said. "Pakistan's provinces together form the federation here. But the provinces are not given importance. Handing over Karachi to the federal government is not going to do anything for this city," he said.

"Some 60pc of Karachi doesn't even come under the city government. There are cantonments here also, which are also not that great in the area of providing services either. Then when the people there protest for basic amenities and services, for which they also give taxes, there are FIRs filed against them," he said.

'Karachi can pay for its own development'

He said that Karachi can earn enough to pay for its own development. It should not be looking towards aid packages from the federal government. It just needs a proper city government and goodwill that many political parties who win elections here fail to give to it.

"We need a proper city government with representatives of all people and stakeholders who really care. This Karachi is a living entity. Treat it as such," he said, adding that the cantonments here need to be dissolved, KE needs to be given to the city government, and the issue of encroachments needs to be solved by providing people proper alternative dwellings.

He also raised the issue of dumping harmful chemical waste in drains.

Maria Ismail, a journalist from Lyari, said that the people they vote for turn their backs on them as soon as they win seats.

Architect Arshad Baloch said that they visited several factories in Malir due to which the indigenous people of Malir were getting skin infections.

"I have written to environmental protection agencies to activate them into stopping this hazard. They managed to have some effect as well. But now I am getting threats," he said.

Jan Baloch said that he was originally from Lyari but lived in Defence now.

"I told the people of DHA, all very nice and well-educated people, to learn to stand up for themselves. But they feel awkward doing so. They are too polite. Politeness is not going to help in this scenario," he said. "We need to make people aware of their rights and to stand up for their rights," he added.

Checks and balances needed on PM's package

Karamat Ali of the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) said that it was most important that everyone took part wholeheartedly in improving their city.

He also said that it was sad how so many people were not even counted in the census.

"We are all Pakistani but all have different backgrounds and circumstances. We need representation of all in the city government because we all live here together," he said.

"It is also true," he said. "That during election time we don't take any interest in who is running and the manifestos and past work of parties and leaders. Many of us don't even vote and sit at home on election day and this is the result of that," he said.

"Don't forget that the Rs1,100 billion relief package announced by the prime minister for rebuilding your city is coming from your pocket. It is your money. Even if it is a loan from the World Bank or anywhere it is still coming from you. You will be paying this debt," he said. "So there should be checks and balances. Do say when you see something wrong being done with your money," he added.

Abdul Mutalib Shah, a resident of Malir, wondered how a common man can bring about a change with strong political parties controlling things here.

A.B. Rathore from Lyari said that all city governments were against the Sindhis getting jobs here. "Demography is also an issue of Karachi," he said. "Karachi is broken into areas for different ethnicities and all lack the spirit of ownership for the entire city," he added.

Gul Rehman, a trade unionist, said that there are several NGOs and unions here which needed to join hands to raise a united voice and form a united front to change Karachi and make it a liveable city.

Shams Tabrez said that when the citizens of Karachi ask for their rights they do it apologetically.

"Why can't the people assert themselves? Why do they have to beg for their rights? Begging will not give you anything. It will only make you a beggar," he said.

Finally, Nasir Mansoor read out some recommendations that he said they still need to sit down and look at such as relocating encroachers by giving alternative places to them to live or carry out their means of earning, providing a proper public transport system to the people of Karachi, carrying out a correct census in order to show Karachi's true population and calling local government elections immediately.

The meeting was also attended by Zehra Khan of Home-Based Women Workers Federation, Khaliq Zardgan, Rehman Baloch, Aqib Hussain, M. Sharif, Comrade Azhar Jameel, Jannat Khan, Sajjad Zahir of Progressive Writers Association, Zubairur Rahman, Saira Feroz, Shabnam Azma and Saeeda Khatoon.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 06/08/2020)

Kamal demands restoration of Karachi as single district

Pak Sarzameen Party chairman Syed Mustafa Kamal on Thursday demanded that Karachi be restored as one district like it was in 2013 as it was the only solution to the problems of the metropolis.

"Handing over Karachi to the federal government or the army is not the solution of city's problems ... the biggest problem of Karachi is its division from one district to six districts on linguistic lines," he told a press conference here at the PSP's Pakistan House headquarters.

Mr Kamal, who served as the Karachi mayor until Feb 2010, said that until 2013 the city was divided into 18 towns which worked under one district. Now Karachi had been divided into six districts and the abolition of 18 towns had affected administration, he added.

Accompanied by PSP president Anis Kaimkhani and others, he said that the Pakistan Peoples Party had laid the foundation of the division of Sindh by dividing its capital on ethnic and linguistic lines. "[If] the division of Sindh is unacceptable, the division of Karachi is also unacceptable."

The PSP, he said, strongly demanded that Karachi be restored as one district. "The rulers are dividing Sindh and Karachi due to their prejudice and to hide their corruption," he said.

Says PPP divided the metropolis on 'ethnic and linguistic' lines

PM, army chief urged to play role

Commenting on the cleaning of storm-water drains in Karachi by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), he sarcastically said that it was itself a disaster that the provincial government had to hand over the desilting of drains to the NDMA.

He said that the situation was so bad that the prime minister had to take notice of the cleaning of storm-water drains following rains.

However, he made it clear that neither the centre nor the army could alone solve the issues of the city, but said that it was the right of the prime minister to take steps for the provinces and Karachi was a part of Pakistan, not in a separate country.

"The prime minister and the army chief have to play their role [in solving city's problems]. They should come to Karachi and in the presence of the media go straight to the Chief Minister House and not leave the city until the Sindh government resolves all the problems of Karachi," he said.

He said that the potential of Karachi could be gauged from the fact that this city alone could generate revenue of Rs8 trillion if its destruction was stopped.

He said that the purpose of 18th Amendment was to empower the provinces, not the chief ministers. The resources and powers the provinces got through the 18th Amendment must be devolved at the grass-roots level, he added.

"It should not be left at the discretion of a chief minister whether he transfers resources and powers to the districts or not. Districts should get funds through the provincial finance commission award like the provinces are getting through the National Finance Commission award," he said.

Call to place mayor, others' names on ECL

Holding the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan responsible for what he called the city's destruction, he said that despite having the office of Karachi mayor and four of the six district municipal corporations the MQM kept on claiming that it was not given powers.

He said when the MQM had its own governor and 12 ministers and advisers in Sindh in 2013, it had itself handed over the powers and resources of Karachi.

He said that the four-year term of the local government set-up was going to end in the current month and with the dissolution of LG system the names of mayor,

deputy mayors and district chairmen should be placed on the Exit Control List.

(By Azfar-ul-Ashfaq Dawn, 13, 07/08/2020)

SHC seeks reply from govt over LG elections

The Sindh High Court (SHC) sought on Friday a written reply from the Sindh government over a plea calling for local body elections to be held soon.

A two-member bench, comprising Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar and Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed, was hearing the plea.

"When did the tenure of the local government representatives begin and when did it end?" asked Justice Mazhar, seeking further clarification on whether their tenure began with an oath-taking ceremony or after the completion of elections. He further asked that who would organise the new elections and how.

Advocate Haseeb Jamali maintained that the service period of the local government representatives had not yet expired. The petitioner, however, stated that the local body representatives had completed their four-year tenure.

The court remarked that it should be informed clearly when the local body elections were being held in the province.

The bench adjourned the hearing till August 26 and issued notices to the provincial government to submit a written reply.

The Sindh chief secretary, chief election commissioner, election commission secretary, provincial election commissioner, local government secretary and treasury department secretary have been nominated as parties in the plea.

Shortage of life-saving drugs

Meanwhile, the same bench issued notices to the nominated parties over a plea against a drug analyst vacancy and the shortage of life-saving drugs across the country.

The petitioner had maintained in the plea that life-saving drugs, including anti-rabies vaccines, anti-venom, and medicines for malaria, typhoid and dialysis had been unavailable in the market due to the absence of a drug analyst in the federal government's National Control Laboratory for Biologicals (NCLB).

He claimed that medicines worth Rs25 million could not be imported to the country, while orders had not been released to pharmaceutical companies for the last two months due to the federal government's 'negligence.'

He added that no medicine could make it to the market without the drug analyst's approval.

He moved the court to issue directives for the immediate appointment of a drug analyst and release of medicines.

The court issued notices to the parties, seeking replies.

Continued confinement

Another bench, comprising Justice Nazar Akbar and Justice Abdul Mobeen Lakho, transferred to another bench a plea challenging the second notification for the confinement of an acquitted man.

The petitioner's counsel maintained that Abdul Hameed Bugti had been confined under Section 11EEE of the Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and the period of confinement had been extended for three more months, despite his acquittal in the PIDC bomb blast case.

He claimed that only the federal government could confine a person accused of involvement in suspicious activities under the ATA, adding that a notification was not enough to confine a person and rather, strong evidence against the individual had to be presented.

Justice Akbar remarked that the hearing would be conducted by a regular bench.

The court transferred the plea to another bench.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter 05, 08/08/2020)

'Massive irregularities' in outgoing LG bodies

The local bodies in Sindh are scheduled to complete their tenure by end of this month, leaving behind massive irregularities allegedly committed during their four-year term. To this end, different federal and provincial institutions are probing the illegal appointments of employees, financial embezzlements in procurements, and several other discrepancies.

According to sources, the provincial government has launched an investigation into the issue of illegal appointments in different local government departments. The investigation is being carried out under the supervision of the Sindh Local Government Board secretary, Zameer Abbasi.

Through an official letter issued on July 28, Abbasi sought relevant records from 178 union councils (UCs) of Karachi to probe the matter.

According to the official letter sent to the union councils, a copy of which is available with The Express Tribune, all the details related to the appointment of employees had been sought by the government. The secretaries of the union councils were asked to submit appointment orders of all employees, their medical fitness certificates, data related to the year of their appointments, and details about the authorities involved in the appointment of the staffers.

Shedding light on the matter, Abbasi said that his office has received the relevant records from most of the union councils in Karachi.

"We have successfully received the required information from the majority of the UCs. Only 37 of them have not submitted the records yet, which we hope will be done soon," he said. "Once we receive the necessary details, a final report will be compiled about fake appointments from all the union councils and presented before the government."

Sources also said that hundreds of illegal appointments were made during the tenures of the outgoing local bodies. However, the incidents are not new as the practice of illegal appointments in local councils was also rampant during the terms of the previous local bodies.

When questioned, Abbasi confirmed the prevalent malpractice and said that his office was conducting an impartial and transparent inquiry into the irregularities that took place during the past two tenures of union councils.

Previously, several union councils were also found to be involved in the illegal transfer and posting of officers in their respective areas. The Sindh Local Government Department had taken serious notice of the practice and had warned the councils of stern action.

It was observed that the chairpersons of respective local councils, including district municipal corporations, had issued orders related to the transfer of government officers, even though it was the prerogative of the local government department.

Meanwhile, an inquiry is also underway into financial embezzlements related to purchasing of fogger and spray machines by local councils. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is investigating the said matter.

Sources said that the NAB has sought information about the purchase of such machines from 178 union councils of Karachi during the financial year 2011-2012. Though the information had been sought in March 2002, complete information has still not been provided to the NAB authorities.

After a delay of five months, on August 4, the Sindh Local Government Department sent letters to district municipal corporations of Karachi in this regard when the NAB required the information in connection with an inquiry underway in Hyderabad. Per sources, the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation officers Qamaruddin Shaikh, Shahid Ali Khan, and others are part of the inquiry.

According to local government secretary Roshan Ali Shaikh, all inquiries about current local councils will be completed before the end of their tenures. However, he added that as per the law, all inquiries will continue even after the end of the term of the local councils.

(By Razzak Abro The Express Tribune, 05, 11/08/2020)

Mayor says CJP rightly expressed displeasure over city's situation

Mayor Wasim Akhtar on Monday said that Karachiites paid 65 per cent and 95pc taxes to the federal and Sindh governments respectively, asking where these amounts were spent.

"I am ready to tender my resignation, if someone assures that the issues would be resolved with my resignation. I am serving in extremely difficult circumstances," the mayor claimed while talking to media outside the Supreme Court's Karachi registry here.

He said that he was implicated in "fabricated" cases and was nominated in dozens of FIRs despite being the mayor of Karachi. "I have been raising voice for the last four years for empowerment of local bodies across the country," he added.

Mr Akhtar said that the chief justice of Pakistan rightly expressed his displeasure over the situation of Karachi which had deteriorated especially in the past 12 years.

Says tenure of local govt will end on 28th, but he doesn't see LG polls on the horizon

He said that no one could deliver with the powers that he currently possessed. "The tenure of incumbent local government is completing on August 28 and I am not seeing the next local government polls soon," he added.

"I request the chief justice of Pakistan to hear my petition filed for empowerment of local bodies under Article 140-A of the Constitution. The situation might have been different had the petition [been] taken up," the mayor said.

He said that 70pc of the city was controlled by the federal government while 20pc was under the provincial government's control, adding that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation had control over just 10pc of the city.

Blames provincial govt

He said that all powers of the KMC including building control, master plan, transport, solid waste management and other civic departments were controlled by Sindh government.

"Even the power of drains' cleanliness was snatched from the KMC and the provincial government had formed different authorities under its control," he added.

The mayor said that the voice of Karachiites was not being heard at any level and no one seemed bothered in resolving issues of the city.

The mayor was of the view that Karachi was being neglected deliberately.

"Karachi is the revenue engine of Pakistan and if its economy is destroyed how would federal and provincial governments run," he said.

Mr Akhtar said that non-locals were being "imposed" on Karachi and they could not solve issues of the city as they were unaware of the same.

"The people would keep suffering from issues of sewerage, transport, water scarcity and other problems until locals of the city [are] given power," he added.

He said that no department of the provincial government was performing, that's why the people were facing severe problems.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 11/08/2020)

Sindh cabinet approves creating Keamari district

Sparking a fresh political controversy days before the tenure of local bodies in the province is due to end, the Sindh cabinet on Thursday approved carving out a new district — Keamari — from Karachi's district West, and directed the Board of Revenue (BoR) to submit a detailed proposal for the creation of more districts in the province which had big populations or areas.

The decision emerged after a cabinet meeting presided over by Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah here at CM House. The meeting was attended by all provincial ministers, advisers, the chief secretary and officers.

The cabinet was told that at present district West had seven sub-divisions —Manghopir, SITE, Baldia, Orangi, Mominabad, Harbour and Mauripur — besides having seven circles, nine tapas and 23 dehs with a population of 3,914,757. It was observed that district West was the largest in the province in terms of population.

The cabinet approved the creation of Keamari district, out of district West, comprising four sub-divisions — SITE, Baldia, Harbour and Mauripur — with a population of 1,833,864.

Keamari district will have three circles, five tapas and 11 dehs. The decision was taken in the “larger public interest”, the meeting was told.

The chief minister said the districts of Karachi had peculiar names such as South, East, West, Central etc. They must have proper names such as Central be named Nazimabad etc. He also directed the BoR to suggest names to rename these districts.

Hints at creating more districts from those having big populations or areas

The chief minister, on recommendations of some cabinet members, directed the BoR to prepare a comprehensive proposal for the creation of more districts in the province. He added that the districts which had big populations and vast areas should be bifurcated into two districts for the convenience of local people.

“Khairpur is the largest district; it must be bifurcated in two districts. I have heard that it has a constitutional protection, therefore, it could not be divided,” the CM said and directed the law department to explore ways to create another district from Khairpur.

Administrators

The cabinet was told the term of local councils was completing on Aug 29, 2020, as the councils convened their first meeting on Aug 30, 2016 wherein the mayors, deputy mayors, chairmen and vice chairmen were sworn in.

The chief minister said Sindh was the only government which allowed local bodies to complete their tenure. “We had allowed the mayor to work from jail but did not deprive people of the city of their mandate,” he said and vowed to hold elections as soon as possible.

Mr Shah said that the SLGA-2013 would be amended to strengthen local bodies further. Therefore, with the approval of the cabinet, he formed a sub-committee comprising Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Shah, Adviser on Works Nisar Khuhro and Adviser on Law Murtaza Wahab to furnish their recommendations within a month. He directed the committee to consult all the parties and stakeholders while framing amendments and recommendations.

The cabinet directed the local government department to issue a notification of completion of four-year terms of all local councils on Aug 29.

The cabinet authorised appointment of administrators in the local councils for their smooth performance and to seek ex-post facto approval from the chief minister.

By-election

The chief minister told the cabinet that two provincial assembly seats, Malir and Umerkot, had been lying vacant after the deaths of Murtaza Baloch and Ali Mardan Shah. He added that the Election Commission of Pakistan could not conduct elections due to the Covid-19 situation. Now, they have sought the assent of the provincial government to hold the election, he said.

The cabinet discussed and decided to request the ECP to hold free and fair elections in both the constituencies under Covid-19 SOPs.

It was observed that when the SOPs would be implemented, the election process would definitely take time, therefore, the election commission would be requested to increase the polling time.

Import of wheat

The chief minister told the cabinet that the wheat consumption in Sindh had been recorded at 5.6MMT against which 3.8MMT had been produced during the current crop year that showed a shortfall of 2MMT. Earlier, this shortfall was covered through wheat from Punjab. “But, sorry to say, the wheat of Punjab has disappeared mysteriously, therefore, we will have to import wheat,” he said. The cabinet discussed the matter and decided to import 1.5MMT through TCP for which the secretary of finance and secretary of food would work out a mechanism.

The cabinet discussing release of wheat, authorised the food minister to start releasing wheat from the first week of September but if he felt fit he could release wheat to flour mills/chakkis before September.

DHQ Badin, Aman HCS

The health department told the cabinet that the DHQ Badin was being operated on the PPP mode. A grant of Rs1.272 billion has to be released, otherwise the performance of the hospitals would be affected.

The cabinet appreciated functioning of the DHQ Badin. Its OPD was getting an increased number of patients from nearby districts. The cabinet approved a grant of Rs1.272bn and directed the hospital administration to conduct its audit from an independent auditor.

Health Secretary Kazim Jatoi told the cabinet that Rs300 million was required as grant-in-aid for the Aman Healthcare Services. The cabinet appreciated the provincial government for running the Aman ambulance service in the city. The cabinet approved the proposal of a Rs300m grant. At this the chief minister directed the health secretary to ask the Aman Healthcare Service authorities to induct 50 ambulances in their fleet.

(By PPI Dawn, 13, 21/08/2020)

Sindh gives nod to new district in Karachi

In a sudden move to divide the province's districts on an administrative basis, the Sindh cabinet started off with Karachi on Thursday, deciding to carve out Keamari district as a new administrative unit from West district - the largest district in Sindh in terms of population. This will be the city's seventh district.

A cabinet meeting, chaired by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, directed the provincial Board of Revenue (BoR) to submit a detailed proposal for the creation of more districts in the province out of those with greater populations or larger area. Refuting opposition allegations about 'ethnic division,' the cabinet claimed the decision was made "in the larger public interest."

During the meeting, the cabinet was told that West district presently had seven sub-divisions - Manghopir, SITE, Baldia, Orangi, Mominabad, Harbour and Mauripur - along with seven circles, nine tapas and three dehs, housing a population of 3.91 million people.

The newly created Keamari district will comprise four sub-divisions, namely SITE, Baldia, Harbour and Mauripur, with a population of 1.83 people. It will have three circles, five tapas and 11 dehs.

Touching on the idea of renaming Karachi's districts too, the CM noted, "They have peculiar names, such as South, East, West, Central and so on. They must have proper names, such as calling Central district Nazimabad district or South district as Karachi district." He directed the BoR to suggest names for the city's districts as well, suggesting they be named after well-known localities.

The cabinet also discussed the population of other administrative units at length, debating the creation of more districts in the province, while some of them suggested bifurcating Khairpur Mirs in the next phase.

On the recommendation of some of its members, it further directed the BoR to prepare a comprehensive proposal for the potential creation of more districts in Sindh.

"Districts with higher population and vast area should be split into two for the people's convenience," said the CM.

Pointing out that Khairpur Mirs was the next largest district after West district, he too endorsed the idea of bifurcating it. "But I have heard it has constitutional protection and therefore cannot be divided," he noted, directing the provincial law department to explore ways and means to do so.

Appointing administrators

Another controversial decision made by the cabinet involved the appointment of local government administrators.

The cabinet authorised Sindh Local Government Minister Nasir Hussain Shah to appoint administrators in the local councils upon being informed that the tenure of all local bodies in the province would end on August 29.

The matter of bringing about changes in the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013, also came under the discussion, with the cabinet deciding to amend the law. In this respect, a committee comprising the local government minister and the CM's advisers on works and law was formed and directed to submit their recommendations within a month.

Briefing the media later, Nasir said the Sindh government would consult all parties and stakeholders before finalising the amendment draft.

"It was the Pakistan Peoples Party government that allowed Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar to work from jail and did not deprive the city's people of their mandate," he pointed out, adding that they would soon conduct local government elections.

The cabinet meeting also took up the question of by-polls in Malir and Umerkot, where seats have fallen vacant after the deaths of Ghulam Murtaza Baloch and Ali Mardan Shah. The decision was made to request the Election Commission of Pakistan to hold free and fair elections in both constituencies under Covid-19 standard operating procedures.

Wheat imports

The cabinet further discussed wheat imports in Sindh, with the chief minister stating that the province required 5.6 million metric tonnes (MMT) of wheat while 3.8MMT was produced this crop year.

The cabinet requested the Trading Corporation of Pakistan to import 1.5MMT wheat for the province, and directed the provincial food and finance secretaries to coordinate on the matter. A sub-committee comprising provincial ministers Hari Ram Kishori Lal, Ismail Rahoo and Nasir Hussain Shah was also formed to provide recommendations for wheat release policies.

PRCs and domiciles

Also on the agenda was the matter of permanent residence certificates (PRC) and domiciles being issued illegally to non-residents, pertaining to which the CM had earlier set up an inquiry committee.

On the CM's directives, the home department proposed a five-member Sindh PRC appellate committee to hear appeals against PRC domiciles. The cabinet approved the committee.

FATF legislation

On the recommendation of the federal government, the cabinet approved the amendment and introduction of new laws to control money laundering and terror financing, as required under the Financial Action Task Force.

(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 04, 21/08/2020)

New district in Karachi

ON the face of it, the PPP-led Sindh government's move on Thursday to carve a seventh district out of Karachi seems like a harmless administrative decision. But scratch the surface and listen to the opposition's clamour and one realises that something deeper, more sinister is afoot. The provincial cabinet has sought to create Keamari district, as well as more potential new districts in Sindh, "for the convenience of local people", as the chief minister put it. If this really leads to better governance and service delivery, then there should be nothing to worry about. However, if these moves — specifically administrative changes in Karachi — are designed to 'improve' the chances of the PPP grabbing a few more seats in the metropolis, especially when local government elections are due, then such political ploys can only be condemned as gerrymandering. At this point, all evidence points to the fact that the PPP has performed an administrative sleight of hand by creating Keamari district.

Practically all major political players with stakes in Karachi — the MQM, PTI, Jamaat-i-Islami and PSP — have slammed the provincial government's decision. Some parties say the move will add to the ethnic divide in the metropolis, while others assert that the PPP is trying to engineer a victory in LG polls. Indeed, the decision came suddenly, with no debate either in the Sindh Assembly or the KMC's City Council. This adds credence to accusations that Sindh's ruling party is trying to 'create' a power base for itself in Karachi through administrative jugglery. Interestingly, the PPP claims that more districts will make it easier to govern Sindh.

However, under Pervez Musharraf's LG system, Karachi was administratively divided into 18 towns and though that system had its flaws, it arguably worked much better than the set-up the PPP introduced under the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013. For Karachi, the latter law has been a total disaster, with the provincial government hogging almost all civic powers and creating a practically toothless KMC. The PPP considers itself the champion of devolution, accusing — often with good reason — the centre of grabbing powers that belong to the provinces. But when it comes to empowering the districts and local bodies in Sindh, the PPP wants to micromanage the entire province, particularly Karachi.

Instead of making cosmetic changes by carving out new districts, let the PPP introduce a new LG law in the Sindh Assembly with the consensus of all parties. In particular, water, sewerage, solid waste and other key civic functions of Karachi, Hyderabad, Larkana and Sukkur should be the responsibility of elected mayors of these cities. If the PPP genuinely wants to win the hearts and votes of the people of Karachi, let it serve the city by giving it an elected, empowered municipality, instead of trying to control the metropolis through dicey measures.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 22/08/2020)

Mayor demands referendum on Keamari district

Karachi mayor Wasim Akhtar called on Sunday for a referendum to gauge the public response to the formation of Keamari district, claiming that neither the West district chairperson nor the district's residents were taken on board before the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)-led Sindh government went ahead with "bifurcating West district."

Indicating the deepening rift between the PPP on the one hand and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) - coalition partners in the federal government - on the other, his remarks came after he laid the foundation stone of a Rs200 billion development initiative in Orangi Town.

"The PPP has carved the new Keamari district out of Karachi's West district for political and monetary gains," he alleged, repeating the accusation that has been at the centre of MQM-P's criticism of the Sindh government's move to create a seventh district in the country's economic hub.

Continuing his tirade, the mayor added, "If the PPP considers Sindh its dharti maa [motherland], to us, all of Pakistan is our dharti maa and we will not allow anyone to dismember it."

Saying so, he compared PPP's move of making Keamari a new district to its policies in 1971, when the party was in power at the Centre and Bangladesh attained independence after the separation of East Pakistan.

"Everybody knows what the PPP did in 1971, but we won't let history repeat," he remarked, stressing that in a democratic setup, all stakeholders were taken onboard before a decision was finalised.

In the same instance, the mayor also justified the demand for carving out new administrative units out of Sindh, stating that "the Constitution allowed it."

The mayor also reiterated, for the umpteenth time, that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation was unable to carry out any development work in the port city due to a lack of authority and funds.

Claiming that even Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had acknowledged that the KMC had not been duly empowered, he said, "The situation in Karachi would have been different had the power been rightfully devolved to the KMC."

He added that the metropolis would only be able to prosper when the local government was empowered.

Akhtar also complained about the provincial government maintaining hold over departments that generated revenue, demanding that all civic departments be given under the mayor's control.

Meanwhile, he said, the federal government had furnished Rs1 billion for development work in Karachi, elaborating that the funds had been allocated for launching four schemes, including the construction of a road from Sharae Orangi to Sharae Qaddafi. However, he added, sewerage lines would be laid before the construction of the road.

Saying that he would also take steps for the removal of encroachments, the mayor committed to completing the said schemes within four months, even after the end of his tenure.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 24/08/2020)

Funds for LGs

IN a generous move, Punjab's ruling set-up has 'in principle' decided to do a huge favour to local governments, which have been lying suspended in the province, and allow them to utilise funds that had been already allocated and transferred to them. During a visit to Faisalabad the other day, Chief Minister Usman Buzdar broke the news about 'unfreezing' LGs' development funds. As these LGs are hardly among those who can choose what they want, the move must be welcomed. The delivery of funds may help them finance some of their stalled, small schemes aimed at providing basic amenities such as sanitation and potable water to citizens. In some lucky cases, with a little bit of extra optimism, it can be presumed that a few roads may be repaired and crumbling infrastructure patched up here and there. This would be no small transformation when we consider that the same provincial government had forbidden the same LGs from using their development funds last year. These elected local institutions, dominated as they were by the opposition PML-N, were dissolved midway through their tenure last year to pave the way for the replacement of the Punjab Local Government Act, 2013, with a new law. One reason to 'freeze' the LGs' development funds was to prevent the possible misuse of public money by unelected administrators during this transition period.

The ruling PTI had promised to organise new polls within one year of the premature termination of the elected LGs' tenure. But it is yet to deliver on its commitment in spite of the passage of the new Punjab Local Government Act, 2019, last November. The Covid-19 crisis is cited as the reason for delay but a permanent deterrent in the way of LG polls is the aversion of the upper elected tiers to share power with the grassroots representatives. Devolution of powers to the lowest units is critical to a strong democratic dispensation. This unfreezing of funds for LGs now in an effort to revitalise the economy can turn into a lesson in governance only if the rulers pay heed to the basic principles of popular rule. The change of heart has come as the Buzdar government tries to stimulate stalled economic activities through public-sector development investment. The truth is that ultimately rulers must reach out to the grassroots to reach the people. The re-entry and temporary restoration of LG functionaries at this critical moment best illustrates this point.

(By Editorial Dawn, 06, 29/08/2020)

Local bodies across province dissolved after completion of term

The four-year term of the elected local governments in Sindh came to an end on Monday as the provincial authorities dissolved all municipal bodies through a notification.

The Sindh government's local government department also asked the LG representatives across the province to return the assets which they were handed at the time of their oath four years ago.

With the fresh notification, an official said that the provincial government was bound to appoint administrators for the municipal bodies for an interim period before the fresh elections were held.

"Consequent upon expiry of four (04) years term of Local Councils on 30th August 2020, pursuant to section 20 (1) of Sindh Local Government Act 2013, all offices of elected Mayors, Deputy Mayors, Chairmen, Vice Chairmen, members, representative and such office bearers of Metropolitan Corporation, Municipal Corporations, District Councils, Municipal Committees, Town Committees, Union Committees, and Union Councils, in Sindh shall cease to exist w.e.f 31st August 2020," read the Sindh LG department's notification.

Sindh govt yet to appoint administrators to run the LG set-up until new polls

It directed all outgoing local government representatives to settle "individual liability, return asset(s), including government vehicle(s), and state belonging, if any, to officer-in-charge of respective council, at once, as failure would constitute offence".

'A bumpy ride'

It was a bumpy ride between the PPP, which has been running the provincial government for the past 12 years, and the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan, which until yesterday controlled local governments of Karachi, Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas.

The four-year term of the elected LG system in Sindh was seen largely ineffective with off and on debates and arguments between LG representatives and PPP leaders representing the provincial administration.

The completion of the four-year term coincided with the record-breaking monsoon rains, which played havoc on Karachi and other major cities' infrastructures causing pressure on the federal, provincial and local governments amid calls for massive reforms in the civic infrastructure, particularly drainage and municipal system.

For many it would be interesting to see the process of next LG election and response from the people of major urban centres of the province amid a strong rivalry among the key parties having electoral mandate from Sindh cities and a history of municipal governance.

"Only this month [August 2020], PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari publicly asserted that the Sindh government would lead the administrative affairs of Karachi regardless of the mandate of any party in the local bodies' election," said a senior political leader, wishing not to be named.

"So I don't think that there would be any major change of policies towards powers and control of local bodies in Sindh. Under the existing circumstances and the policy stand of the PPP, the political tension would further grow among the parties as we have witnessed in the past."

The MQM, whose leader Wasim Akhtar was Karachi's mayor for four years, frequently lodged complaints of having no powers and funds to run the affairs of the megacity. However, the ex-mayor often came under fire for his performance.

The PPP government on the other hand has been enjoying full administrative control over Karachi for the past 12 years. The provincial government is responsible for even many civic and municipal functions such as garbage collection, building control, master plan, water and sanitation, etc.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 01/09/2020)

Sigh of relief: Institutions celebrate 'Salvation Day' as LG reps leave office

The Sindh government dissolved the province's local government bodies on Monday upon the completion of their four-year constitutional term. As a result, Wasim Akhtar, who was dubbed 'the weakest mayor' in Karachi's local government history, has also gone home. Although the mayor had very few powers and resources at his disposal, his performance within the institutions available to him had been very disappointing.

According to sources, officers, employees, and citizens are happy because of Wasim Akhtar's departure, with many institutions celebrating a 'Salvation Day' with the end of his tenure.

Even though the Pakistan Peoples Party-led provincial government had paralysed the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), the mayor had over a dozen institutions running under him which he could fix during his tenure. Instead, he appointed his favourite officers whose incompetency failed to bring any improvements.

The institutions that functioned under Wasim Akhtar included the Parks and Horticulture Department, the Veterinary Department, Katchi Abadi and Land Department, the Engineering Department, Sports and Culture Department, Municipal Services, and the City Institute of Image Management, among several others.

Sources said that throughout Wasim Akhtar's four-year tenure, irregularities were on a rise in most of the institutions. What is more, Municipal Commissioner Dr Syed Saif-ur-Rehman fully supported the Karachi Mayor and his team and did not play the role of a dutiful officer at any stage.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, the All Pakistan Local Government Workers Federation Chairman Syed Zulfiqar Shah said that a 'Salvation Day' and 'Thanks Day' was celebrated by employees upon the departure of the local bodies' representatives.

"The local bodies' representatives failed to deliver anything to the citizens and employees," he said. "Since the Sindh government did not give them enough powers, unions stood by the representatives at every stage. But instead of improving the institutions that were available to these local bodies' representatives, they did nothing."

Commenting on Wasim Akhtar's performance, Syed Zulfiqar Shah said during his tenure, citizens were deprived of basic facilities and pensioners could not get their legitimate rights either.

"There is no doubt that the Sindh government snatched most of the powers from Wasim Akhtar that former urban nazims enjoyed, but he was in charge of the Land Department, the Katchi Abadi Department, the Veterinary Department, the Local Tax Department, Charged Parking and the Food Quality Department, which could have been improved through planning and billions of rupees of revenue could have been increased," he said.

According to Shah, a marine tax could have been imposed under the law, but unfortunately, the elected local bodies' representatives did not make any improvement in these departments. In this context, the mayor of Karachi and his team showed a lack of vision and a lukewarm attitude towards their responsibilities.

An official of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that during Wasim Akhtar's tenure, the basic rules of transfer and posting were severely ignored and non-technical and inexperienced officers were appointed to technical posts in various institutions that functioned under his control. These include Karachi Zoo, Safari Park, Veterinary Department, the City Institute of Image Management, Food Laboratory, Parks and Horticulture, Finance Department, and the State Department.

Expressing his frustration with the situation in Karachi, Muhammad Naveed, a resident of the city, said that if Mayor Wasim Akhtar had acted sincerely despite limited resources, the citizens of Karachi would have stood with him and he would not have been criticised in this manner.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced the schedule for the fresh delimitation of constituencies for the local government elections. According to a notification issued on Monday by the ECP, the delimitation committees would prepare the preliminary lists from September 9 to 22.

(By Syed Ashraf Ali The Express Tribune, 04, 02/09/2020)

Karachi: centralism and local government

Emotive discussions have been observed over the issues of Karachi, between the representatives of Sindh government and the Centre amidst blames and counter-blames – the recent one being the appointment of an administrator for an interim period of 120 days until the election for the mayor's office.



Reportedly, the federal government wants an officer of their choice to be appointed against the post – a suggestion hardly acceptable to any political government in a province. The federal government is pressuring the provincial government to give a powerful local government to Karachi, not considering the present system as sufficient to manage a metropolitan city like Karachi. In this connection the Supreme Court is also seized with a constitutional petition filed by the PTI, seeking directions for the devolution of powers to local government institutions to fulfil the requirements of Article 140(A) of the Constitution as well as Articles 3, 4, 9, 14, 16, 17, 19, 19(A) and 25 by challenging the Sindh Local Government Act (SLGA).

The basic premise relied upon is that Karachi is a city with a population of 16 million (as per the 2017 census), attracting people from all over the country for seeking employment or for other reasons. "The municipal services are non-existent, there are broken roads, severe water crisis, appalling sewerage systems, heaps of garbage are everywhere while leading to ill health, diarrhoea and various life-threatening diseases, health department and government hospitals are in a pathetic state, medical facilities are not available, education is not being provided, schools are non-existent and the living conditions are pathetic, unhygienic and inhumane," says the PTI petition.

The main reason for the deplorable situation in Karachi as cited by the party is that local bodies' institutions had not been allowed to function in accordance with the principle of Article 140(A) of the Constitution. The deviation from that article has placed the lives of millions of people of Karachi and other areas of Sindh under threat. Such a threat can be eliminated by ensuring a local bodies' system in line with the spirit of Article 140(A). This will also solve these problems, enabling not only the people of Karachi but also the whole of Sindh, to enjoy the fundamental rights guaranteed under Articles 4, 9, 15, 18, 23, 24 and 25(A) of the Constitution. The writ prayed for the issuance of directions for the Sindh government to provide funds to the local bodies of Karachi in order carry out its obligations for local governance for making the city liveable, with an additional prayer to release all the dues to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) including the release of its share of Octroi Zila Tax (OZT).

There is no doubt that the woes of Karachi are of a greater magnitude compared to the rest of the country, requiring dispassionate analysis without point scoring and making it an ethnic issue. The problems enumerated in the writ petition are more or less the same in all parts of the country. Be it Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar or Quetta, all are caught in the same vicious circle. These cities are no paradise on earth. Even the capital city of Islamabad does not have the civic amenities as mentioned in the writ. The city not only faces shortage of water but also does not have a proper drainage system as per international standards. The moment one steps out of urban area like E-11 and steps into the adjacent area of Golra, one finds a different Pakistan, afflicted with all problems, not at all considered fit for a liveable place.

It is therefore imperative that while taking up the matter of Karachi, a comparative analysis of local government systems of all major cities in Pakistan be done. The causes of on non-functioning of local governments must also be found and reasons for missing civic amenities should be explored; and so should the reasons for bestowing more powers to civil servants in the local government system in Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and not holding elections.

While working on the above-mentioned element, the fact that the Constitution demarcates the powers of the federation, the provinces and local government should not be ignored. The provisions relating to local governments are clear in the Constitution and over-stretching its meaning to suit centralism will do more harm than good in political terms. The constitutional provisions are not only for Sindh or for Karachi but for the whole country. As a matter of fact, the local government systems have not been functioning in Punjab and K-P for the last two years. Even under the Local Government Act, the main authority lies with

commissioners, DCs and secretary local government. The same is true about Islamabad, the capital. But, these glaring omissions have not been made the topic of discussions. The question then one should ask is: why has Karachi been singled out? It is for this reason that the moves of the PTI regarding the Sindh government on this account will always be taken with a pinch of salt.

The Sindh government should also revisit its policies and laws to cater to the needs of a metropolitan city and release all the dues to the KMC including the release of its share of OZT. It is hoped that the federal government and the apex court will exercise all the caution to avoid a perception that only the Sindh government has been singled out or any decision is based on ethnicity or centralism of the federal government. Let the provincial governments enjoy its constitutional powers free from all encumbrances and local governments function within the parameters of the law.

(By Dr Syed Akhter Ali Shah The Express Tribune, 15, 02/09/2020)

Karachi: the sinking metropolis

Torrential rains over the past few weeks swept away the city of Karachi, brought it to a standstill and resulted in economic losses worth billions of rupees. The broken sewerage network, clogged stormwater drains and unplanned construction left little space for rainwater to drain, which ultimately found its way through people's homes, offices and enterprises, sweeping away their fortunes.



But was it just the rains? Looking deeper, it becomes clear that the issue is much graver. The rains only washed away the façade of a functioning city and exposed its ugly vulnerabilities.

Karachi is one of the 10 worst cities in the world on the Global Liveability Index. The metropolis has a population of 16 million, though many claim that this is grossly understated. With the exception of a few posh localities, the city is densely populated with dreadful air quality, poor road infrastructure, low-quality public transport system and

severe water shortage. As per the World Bank, urban green-space is now merely 4% of the city's built-up area; 60% or less population has access to public sewerage; and 45 citizens compete for every bus seat compared to 12 in Mumbai.

Last week, the Prime Minister announced a grand Karachi Transformation Plan worth Rs1.1 trillion, to improve water supply, drainage and public infrastructure. The plan would be supervised by a committee headed by the Chief Minister Sindh.

But before this plan can be executed, there are two critical issues that need to be addressed: political economy and governance. Political economy will ultimately decide who picks the tab for the promised development, while governance would dictate who gets to spend this money and how.

On the political front, PPP's rule in Sindh has left little room or resources for the local governments to function effectively. Karachi being the bastion of MQM has been getting peanuts, despite the fact that it contributes 12-15% to the national GDP. Over the next 10 years, the city is expected to contribute \$330-450 billion to the country's economy. As per World Bank estimates, the city needs around \$9-10 billion over the same period to finance its infrastructure and service delivery needs. This means that even if we plough back 2-3% of what the city contributes to the economy, it can be rescued. But misaligned incentives have so far prevented this.

Moreover, Sindh has an annual development outlay of merely Rs170 billion, while the federal public sector development programme is Rs650 billion. Even if both the federal and provincial governments, along with development partners, pick the tab for Karachi's transformation, they are likely to take years and will have to compromise on other constituencies craving for resources.

Then comes the governance. Across the world, there are many models followed to govern large cities, ranging from mayor-council structure to city commissions and professional city managers. But nowhere in the world is there as fragmented a structure as witnessed in Karachi. Although on paper the city is managed by Karachi Metropolitan Corporation headed by the mayor, there are scores of other agencies and entities diluting KMC's authority. These range from district municipal corporations with limited control of KMC, cantonment boards, Karachi District Council, Karachi Development Authority, Malir and Lyari development authorities, Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, Sindh Building Control Authority and more. Everyone is keen to assert their jurisdiction when it's time to collect the rents, but no one is there to assume responsibility when it's time for accountability. This fragmented structure has been the primary reason that no development plan has ever been successful in Karachi.

Without having the political will and incentives for the decision-makers, as well as a single unified governance structure, transformation of Karachi will remain a distant dream.

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

Changes in Sindh LG law demanded to make KMC city's chief civic authority

Speakers at a seminar on Monday demanded that the Sindh Local Government Act 2013 be amended and the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation be made empowered so that it functioned as the chief civic authority of the city.

They also demanded that the KMC be made part of the Provincial Coordination Implementation Committee (PCIC) so that the city was able to benefit from the Rs1.1 trillion package announced by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The demands were made at the seminar, 'Why is Karachi, Pakistan's megapolis an abandoned city', organised by the Karachi Citizens' Forum (KCF).

Aggrieved citizens shared the ordeal that they went through since the Aug 27 rainfall — with hunger, job losses and damaged homes amid the Covid-19 pandemic dominating the narrative.

Welcoming the formation of the PCIC from its original three political parties to include the other stakeholders and the land-owning authorities of Karachi plus the army, the KCF urged for transparency and demanded to know who will undertake the accountability of monitoring the expenditures and execution of the programme and if the public-private partnership will include qualified urban planners and members of industry.

A civil society group calls upon authorities to conduct a new census in Karachi

Moderating the session, KCF convener Nargis Rehman stressed that 19 civic agencies needed to be included in the Karachi master plan and called for an audit of records.

She acknowledged the positive role of the army when it came to rescue and relief operations, noting that "it's the only institution that helps when disaster strikes".

Khalid Mehmood, a resident of Korangi, said the area was not cleaned since Eidul Azha. "The offal are lying there and then add to it rainwater. Currently, many places in the area have two to three feet of stagnant water," he said, adding that citizens suffered huge financial losses.

A social worker from Malir, Mastajeb Abbas, said hunger was overlooked in all relief efforts. He said the people in the area, like most parts of the city, were suffering due to Covid-19 pandemic and the rains just compounded their troubles.

"There were people trying to save TV sets which they had purchased for their daughters' dowry," he added.

Abdul Jalil Durrani, a local political worker from the Mauripur area, said they had to breach the Hawkesbay Road at some points to let the water drain.

"Too much water was accumulating and we had to do it. I was taking photographs of the area to mobilise some rescue operations. I saw a lady having labour pains while the entire area was surrounded by water. Mera zameer gawara nahi kiya tasweer lene ka, there was so much helplessness," he said as the room went silent.

Haris Askani from Lyari said he was able to mobilise help. He said the area had schools but no teachers, hospitals but no doctors. "Lyari has become synonymous with gang war and this is so wrong," he said while demanding that things must be improved in his area.

'SBCA, Sepa responsible for Naya Nazimabad disaster'

A resident of Naya Nazimabad said his house was submerged in rainwater since 15 days.

"The army came to drain the water, so did Edhi and others. Everyone tried but gave up. We have been living in our relatives' homes for two weeks now," he said, adding that 30 per cent of the area was still submerged in eight to 10 feet of water.

Some members asked him if he knew there was a lake on the site which was reclaimed to which he said no. However, the forum unanimously agreed that rather than blaming the residents of Naya Nazimabad, the builders, officials of the Sindh Building Control Authority and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency must be held accountable.

Earlier, former MPA Mehtab Rashdi shared the woes of DHA residents, including her personal experience with flooding in the recent rains.

Former Sindh governor retired Lt Gen Moinuddin Haider asked why there was no planning done when there were forecast of heavier than usual rains.

"Why weren't they planning for it? Why were they waiting for a disaster," he questioned.

On the occasion, former Sindh governor Kamal Azfar asked that how can a repeat of this disaster be prevented in future.

Former Citizens-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC) chief Nazim Haji gave a detailed breakdown of the issues and mafias that were destroying industrial areas in Karachi.

"Either we decide to suffer in silence or we speak up. We need to step out and demand our rights, not sit in the drawing rooms and talk," he said.

The seminar noted that people were marooned in their homes in stinking sewage without electricity and gas, medical aid and proper food for weeks.

Former Nespak chairman Asad Ali Khan, Pakistan Medical Association secretary general Dr Qaiser Sajjad and stockbroker Muzamil Khan also spoke at the event.

Fresh census for Karachi demanded

Demanding transparency and accountability, the KCF noted that if the Rs1.1tr package was meant to procure a meaningful result, all loose ends must be sorted out.

The forum called for a new Karachi census along with control on migrant entry.

“Control on land developer and land development, eliminations of ghost employees and foreign consultants, utilization of our eminent urban planners, architects who have been working and advising for decades on city’s fault lines, names and responsibilities of the PCIC should be clearly delineated along with the names of the monitoring agencies, project development report should be made public and oversights such as air and coastal pollution, rain harvesting and mangrove protection must be included in the development programme,” are the other demands of the KCF.

“When the 18th Amendment was passed we welcomed the autonomy and authority given to the provinces whose assemblies and government were elected. On that very same principle of democracy we demand that the Karachi megapolis should have a Karachi Metropolitan Corporation with an elected mayor, the metropolitan corporation be given empowerment autonomy, authority, to discharge all municipal functions of the city with all the necessary financial allocations, heading the KWSB and the KSWMB and the seven Karachi DMCs and all union councils. As it is an elected body of the locals elected by the locals it would be far more effective in ordering the municipal services delivery then bureaucrats who have temporary postings and cannot relate to the problems of the local,” the KCF said in its resolution.

(By Sumaira Jajja Dawn, 13, 09/09/2020)

New city administrator pledges to follow Sindh LG law

Newly appointed Karachi Administrator Iftikhar Ali Shallwani on Wednesday said that he would work in accordance with the responsibilities and mandate given to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) in the Sindh Local Government Act 2013.

“I have nothing to do with politics and will perform my duties as a professional civil servant,” he added.

Addressing his maiden press conference as city administrator at the KMC head office, he also expressed gratitude to all the stakeholders — particularly the federal and provincial governments — for the trust placed in him for the betterment of the city.

Maiden presser ends on a bitter note as Shallwani irked by media’s questions

The administrator said that he would fulfil the responsibility given to him and that the work to be done in coming days would be seen by the people.

He said if he was assigned any other responsibility, he would fulfil it to the best of his ability.

Media protest

However, the press conference was marred by a strong protest from the media when Mr Shallwani evaded questions and left the conference room saying he had held the press conference for giving a statement.

He became ostensibly irked when a senior reporter asked him how he could efficiently work as the city administrator when he “failed to control” prices of dairy products when he was the commissioner of Karachi.

Mr Shallwani initially opted to remain evasive, but the situation took an unpleasant turn when another reporter repeated the same question as he coldly claimed that the media had appreciated his achievements as commissioner, especially the organising of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) matches in Karachi and the “beautification” of the city.

“I did not let the prices of milk to go up as long as I remained commissioner”, he snapped and left the conference room as one of the senior reporters tore up his notes in agitation.

At the outset of the press conference, the KMC administrator said that after taking charge of the post, it was necessary to meet the media representatives so that there would be no lack of communication with the media.

“Every effort will be made to fulfil the expectations of those who have entrusted me with this responsibility and we all have to work together to improve the city,” he said, adding that it could not be done alone and he needed the advice, cooperation and suggestions for the betterment of the city.

(By Tahie Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 10/09/2020)

Local government woes :Four years on, LG commission still short of quorum

Mired in myriad controversies, Sindh’s local bodies have finished their four-year term. But along with the local councils themselves, the provincial local government commission, which was supposed to oversee their functions, spent the entire tenure with little to show for itself.

Under the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013, the commission had to keep an eye on local bodies by conducting special inspections, arranging audits and preparing annual reports. It was also tasked with resolving disputes and grievances, both within the local bodies and between them and provincial government.

“Since day one, however, the commission’s composition has been incomplete,” a local government official told The Express Tribune. Under the aforementioned act, the commission was to be headed by the local government minister and comprise the local government secretary, two technocrats and four MPAs, two of whom would be picked by the chief minister and two nominated by the Sindh Assembly opposition leader.

“The treasury and opposition never evolved consensus over who the four MPAs would be. So it continued to exist only on paper,” the official said.

Even with no functional commission to provide oversight, the Sindh finance department continued to disburse over Rs60 billion every year among all local bodies, official documents revealed. “The local councils also generated their own income in addition to this through local taxes, parking charges, etc. How this money was utilised for development, no one knows,” the official said.

A technocrat who served as a member of the commission admitted that the body was ‘toothless’ and had failed to achieve its targets. “We didn’t meet quorum, but even then we referred two inquiries to the chief minister. Nothing happened, though,” he said. “Without a proper secretariat, as envisaged in the relevant act, how could the commission have worked?”

The ex-commission member added that the body also had to impart training to local government representatives. “But we couldn’t materialise this endeavour either.”

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Sindh Assembly opposition leader Firdous Shamim Naqvi accused the Sindh government of violating its own law by delaying the nomination of MPAs to the commission. “We took this issue up persistently, but the CM and his cabinet turned a blind eye,” he said. “Meanwhile, billions of rupees were supposedly spent by local government representatives. There needs to be a proper audit.”

Defending the Sindh government’s performance, Local Government Minister Nasir Hussain Shah said, “The commission has been working as a watchdog to monitor the affairs of all local bodies.” He added that many inquiries have been conducted against a few corporations and town committees.

“It is unfortunate that the final two nominees for the commission could not be finalised, but we are again pursuing this matter and will complete its composition,” Shah insisted. “Once up and running, it will oversee all local government bodies now being run by administrators.”

(By Hafeez Tunio The Express Tribune, 05, 13/09/2020)

Covid & ‘shecession’

AS 35 million individuals plunge into extreme poverty as a result of the pandemic, there is no denying that such factors will lead to further feminisation of poverty. In almost all societies of the world, women show higher poverty rates than men. The causality of this can be attributed to the way economic resources are allocated as well as overall gender-discriminatory beliefs that emanate from patriarchy and misogyny. Such notions have led to the oppression and brutalisation of women, while sustaining huge economic disparities.



Over time, gender discrimination has been highlighted as a structural issue, where there are inbuilt biases which work against women at all levels — from gender roles within households to legislation to the distribution of wealth or the way in which the economy and workplaces are organised. The Covid-19 world has forced us to reassess the state of capitalism,

especially in terms of the intrinsic and extrinsic constraints that women face, which prevent their full participation in the economy while inhibiting the potential gains from their financial contributions.

Beyond doubt, Covid-19 has had an indelible effect on the economy; yet the impact needs to be viewed from a gendered lens in order to determine its true significance. This recession has been termed a ‘shecession’, and for good reason. Although during previous economic recessions or pandemics, men have fared worse, this time, the effects are severer for females. The 1919 Spanish flu for example hit young men between 20 and 39 years, ie 49 per cent of those that died in the Spanish flu fell in that bracket. Essentially, this meant that families lost their primary breadwinner.

At the height of the Spanish flu, many countries in Europe and North America were in the process of industrialisation and transforming into free-market economies. Post flu, market adjustments took place in the labour supply. Research shows that with male labour supply being negatively affected due to higher mortality, women and minors were forced to enter the labour force to make up the differential, as relatively low skills were required. Despite this move women were not paid wages equal to those of males even at the height of the pandemic.

The pandemic has exacerbated the lot of women.

Today, economic realities are somewhat different, with greater globalisation of world markets through a network of supply chains. According to the ILO, there are 3.3 billion workers worldwide of whom 2bn work in the informal sector and in developing countries. Due to lockdowns and reduced demand, over 50pc of such workers will lose their jobs.

Essentially, women workers are ghettoised in low-value, unskilled and insecure jobs, eg in South Asia alone, 85pc of women who work are employed in the 'grey' economy. This leaves them without the protection of labour laws including job security, paid sick leave and child care. Women rely on such jobs as they lack the education and requisite skills that are necessary for them to compete with men for employment in the formal sector.

Things haven't been better from a gender perspective in the formal sector. Among the 20.5m jobs lost this year in the US, 55pc of those who worked in them were females. Female employment is segregated in the services industry, including entertainment, tourism, hospitality sector and the like. Salons, flight attendants, cleaners, part-time agriculture workers; all of these remain vulnerable to the post-Covid-19 economic downturn. Economic data has revealed that Covid-19 has negatively affected these sectors, and thus more females are out of a job today.

A major effect of the 'shecession' is the inordinate amount of physical and psychological burden placed on women, which is rarely measured or acknowledged. Women faced by traditional gender roles have double the responsibility at present, with over 1.5 billion children out of school, they not only have to perform as employees while at home, but simultaneously provide child-care and act as homemakers.

They are also the first ones to attend to the sick and elderly. Combine this with the fact that during the current pandemic there has been a 20pc increase in domestic violence globally. All these factors imply that women are getting the short end of the stick.

It is not often that we have the opportunity to reset our priorities in order to build a society that honours the dignity and well-being of each and every human being. There is a clear relationship between patriarchal mindsets which suppress a woman's growth, and the extreme economic recession that has befallen females during this pandemic.

We need to bring about change by devising economic policies which benefit women, and enable them to be equal participants in the economy, for it is unlikely that market forces will find an optimal solution on their own. There can be no doubt that the gains from gender inclusion are much bigger than ever imagined before.

(By Roshaneh Zafar Dawn, 07, 24/09/2020)

'Solution to Karachi's problems lies in financially autonomous local govt'

While terming the recently announced prime minister's Rs1.1 trillion Karachi Transformation Package nothing but a lollipop, speakers at a programme on Friday said that a city, which sustains the whole country, deserves better.



They said its chronic issues could only be addressed by a financially autonomous local government representing its people.

The discussion on 'What should be the priority of the Karachi Transformation Package' was held at the Pakistan-American Cultural Centre on Friday.

Organised by Karachi Citizens' Forum (KCF), the event also saw speakers demanding a census reflecting the actual population of the metropolis so that the city could develop on a sound foundation.

Need stressed for transparency and accountability in spending of funds for PM's package

"The package is of no consequence. The city generates [revenue] 10 times more [than] this amount. Second, the announcement should have been backed by thorough planning, which isn't the case. In fact, the prime minister's announcement was soon followed by provincial government's criticism, reflecting poor communication and trust deficit between the two governments," said Syed Khawar Mehdi, associated with Commonwealth Karachi, a think tank.

Even a fair allocation to the city would have made little difference given the scale of corruption rotting the whole governance system, he regretted.

Revive Karachi as one district with 18 town

He also emphasized the need for devolving administrative powers to the grass-root level, restoring Karachi's status of one district with 18 towns and bringing all municipal services under one mayor.

"[Unfortunately] There is no political will. The prime minister should open his eyes and the chief minister develop [some] empathy. It's about Pakistan ... a city that sustains all of us," he said.

Concluding his comments, Mr Mehdi warned that external and internal enemies could take advantage of Karachi's simmering issues and exploit the situation. "Karachi's beauty and strength lies in its ethnic diversity but it's also threatening for some."

Recalling Karachi's devastation in the aftermath of monsoon rains last month, KCF convener Nargis Rahman said it exposed shortcomings of the civic infrastructure, demanding representation of city's stakeholders including seasoned urban planners, architects and representation from the labour groups in the committee established for the implementation of Karachi package. The package, she pointed out, won't uplift Karachi unless there was transparency and accountability.

She also talked about how the city could make sustainable progress and said, “We need people [to lead Karachi] from the people to take care of its people. Even a good administrator is not a solution to city’s long-standing problems.”

Plugging leakages may save 100mgd

Zahid Farooq of the Urban Resource Centre said the city contributed over 90 per cent and 65pc revenue to the provincial and the federal government, respectively. But, what it received in return was peanuts.

“Today, Karachiites are deprived of basic civic utilities including clean drinking water and a functional waste management and transport system. If the government just plugs leakages in the distribution system, it could save up to 100mgd of water daily that would help address water shortages in the city,” he said.

Criticising the Karachi package, architect Sameeta Ahmed said while half of its amount was meant for already functional projects, the federal government had not yet shared complete details of the package.

She also called for a technical assessment of the urban flooding the city experienced last month as encroachment of water channels was a major reason behind it.

Dr Qaiser Sajjad of the Pakistan Medical Association highlighted the adverse impact of degraded civic infrastructure especially after the monsoons on public health, calling upon the representatives of civil society to build pressure on the government to deliver.

Architect and founder Chhaoon Komal Pervez spoke about personal responsibility and said small efforts carried out with strong commitment could make a big difference.

“Since 2015 we have planted 10,000 trees in Karachi. A tree for plantation should be at least five years old so it has better survival chances,” she said, adding her team worked without government support.

Industrialist Mirza Ikhtiar Baig and film director Amna Khan also spoke.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 26/09/2020)

KMC property falls prey to ‘China cutting’

After the application of ‘China cutting’ to private and government lands, the practice is also becoming common at different buildings belonging to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

Coined by the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the term ‘China cutting’ refers to the slicing of plots from parks and land earmarked for public amenities, and turning them into residential and commercial properties to be sold off for a huge profit.

Local government departments working under the Sindh government have not even spared the Liaquatabad Supermarket, a building gifted to the citizens of Karachi by former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1976.

Owned by the KMC, the building had fallen into ruin because of the negligence of the relevant agencies. Many illegal shops have been set up in the upper part of the building under the nose of the authorities.

Some forty illegal shops have also been built in the vacant office of the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) situated in the building. The office was vacated because the building was declared unfit for use due to its dilapidated condition.

Two large warehouse-like compounds were also constructed on the rooftops of shops in the upper part of the Liaquatabad Supermarket last year, which were later demolished on the orders of municipal commissioner Syed Saifur Rehman.

Per sources, shopkeepers who bought the compounds are still looking for the ‘property selling mafia’ to get their money back. Earlier, a team of reporters from The Express Tribune had visited the abandoned KWSB office, where more than 30 workers could be seen constructing the walls of the shops along with a ‘supervisor’.

When questioned about the ongoing activity, the supervisor locked the office, left the workers inside, and fled the site.

Upon being approached, a KMC official, who requested anonymity, said the shops in the empty KWSB office would be allotted to the affected shopkeepers whose shops had been evicted from various areas of Karachi due to the removal of encroachments.

“The shops were sold to the Liaquatabad Supermarket and nearby shopkeepers for Rs1.5 million to Rs2 million,” the officer said. “Most of the construction work was carried out at night-time, while accommodation had also been provided to workers who sleep on the site.”

According to vendors, the supermarket’s power supply has also been cut off for many years, due to which legal tenants and owners are facing severe problems.

The stairs, toilets, corridors and open spaces of the Liaqatabad Supermarket have also been sold.

The supermarket was inaugurated by Bhutto. However, his nameplate has been uprooted from the building by property mafia and the new generation is unaware of the building’s history.

What is more, the office of the KMC estate inspector is situated on the same floor, a few yards away from the water board's vacated offices and the China-cutting shops.

When contacted, workers at the estate inspector's office said no officer was authorised to give a statement on the issue.

According to the shopkeepers, the building suffered dilapidation due to the accumulation of rainwater every year. They lamented that relevant authorities never paid heed to the situation which eventually weakened the foundations of the building.

"We appeal to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari to respect his grandfather's name and do something about the building," one of the shopkeepers said. "Just as the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) is employing efforts to protect Bhutto's political legacy, they should also do something to protect this supermarket, which is the late leader's public legacy. We demand that the PPP-led Sindh government halt the illegal construction going on in the building and restore its electricity."

(By Kashif Hussain The Express Tribune, 05, 27/09/2020)

'Sindh govt has approved Rs1b for Central district'

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has approved Rs1 billion for development endeavours in Central district, claimed Sindh Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Ali Shah on Sunday.

He was speaking to media persons after a meeting at the Central deputy commissioner's office.

The minister pledged to transform Central district into a model district, acknowledging that being Karachi's largest district, it faced the most issues.

He further stated that Pakistan Peoples Party chairperson Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had directed the Sindh CM to resolve issues in all areas of the city and his orders would be implemented soon.

Nasir assured that garbage would soon be removed from Central district's streets and roads, besides also being collected door to door, while issues of water supply and sewerage would also be addressed.

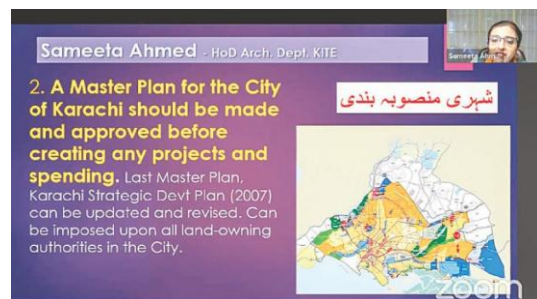
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 28/09/2020)

Call for making Karachiites partners in re-planning of metropolis

Experts have called for involving the people of Karachi in the re-planning and development of the city.

Speaking during a webinar about the re-planning of Karachi titled 'Governance and Planning Framework' on Monday, they shared their opinions on how the city could be improved and upgraded through the Prime Minister's Transformation Package.

Sameeta Ahmed, head of the Department of Architecture at the Karachi Institute of Technology and Entrepreneurship (KITE), who also happened to be the organiser of the webinar, started by discussing previous master plans for Karachi. She said officials concerned needed to visit those plans and assign different departments to take care of their different aspects. Bring experts into technical planning, listen to taxpayers about their vision for the city. Sustainable development and environment also needed to be considered, she added.



Amber Alibhai, general secretary of Shehri-Citizens for a Better Environment, said that everyone working for planning of Karachi was working in pockets and not together.

Experts share opinions on how city can be improved and upgraded during webinar

"Be it KMC (Karachi Metropolitan Corporation), DHA (Defence Housing Authority), Cantonments, etc, they all work separately. All university departments of architecture should also do some research to see which law helped which area or community of the city. Call legislators to educate them about your city, make them understand what laws are needed to help their city," she said.

'There is no plan anywhere'

"It needs to be examined how our corporates or businesses are contributing to urban commerce and ... housing for common people. We have no recreational spaces. Who will create these places? Who will maintain them? There is no plan anywhere. We are just doing firefighting in our city, not doing anything beforehand," she said.

Urban planner Farhan Anwar said that the government's plans did not provide the desired outcome.

"Our projects have no organic links to planning and therefore they fail while the city serves the motives of a select few. We need to evolve a political consensus. Otherwise, it will all be going from worse to worst. Our institutions are working on inappropriate mandate. So we need to rethink planning itself. We need strategic planning with sustainable neighbourhoods. We need to bring this city together with vision," he said.

"Cosmetic work won't do here. You need radical surgery," he added.

Environmental lawyer Zubair Abro said that the biggest problem was that the government's planning institutions were not even willing to consider the people of this city as the stakeholders of Karachi.

"There are tall buildings, even taller than 50-storeys high that don't even have approval to go that high, but there they are," he said when talking about the laws and bylaws of buildings and their construction from the point of view of environmental laws.

"No institution here cares about the law regarding buildings," he added.

"And see how the city has grown. DHA City is not Karachi. It is Nooriabad if you ask me. And how will you supply water to these new housing schemes said to be part of Karachi?" He asked when talking about bending laws to create more land to sell for housing to citizens of Karachi.

"And why is there never any environmental assessment or study done for government buildings and projects," he asked. "In actuality you need an environmental audit of the entire city."

Nargis Rehman of the Karachi Citizens' Forum said that there was no cooperation between civil institutions. "But instead they clash with each other. There is ill will. In fact, there is no will to do any good for this city," she said.

"This transformation package includes three loans. But we want economic revival. We need good governance. And these things need good planning but here we are taking loans for improving a city without a plan and without implementations of plans. We need a redressal system," she said.

Speaking from the business community, Mirza Ikhtiar Baig said that our projects have flaws. "Many of these projects are old and have been revived. But in reviving them we need to look at the changes that have taken place in all these years. They may need a modern design infrastructure like they do for K-IV and the Karachi Circular Railway now. So are the old or revived plans even suitable now?" He asked.

Yasir Hussain of the Green Pakistan Coalition said that public participation was very important in planning for the city.
(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 06/10/2020)

Sindh govt adopts two KMC parks

The Sindh government has adopted two parks, New Clifton Park and Family Park Clifton ST14, run by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation, said the provincial government's spokesperson, Barrister Murtaza Wahab on Saturday.

Addressing the inauguration ceremony of New Clifton Park, he announced that the Sindh government planned to adopt more parks in the city.

The spokesperson said the adopted parks would be rehabilitated, in line with the Sindh government's vision of making the province clean and green.

"These parks, after rehabilitation, will be included in the list of best parks of the city," he expressed hope.

Wahab said that following the adoption, both the parks would be jointly managed by the Sindh Environment, Climate Change and Coastal Development Department and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency.

He said the Pakistan Peoples Party firmly believed that planting more trees would help reduce the harmful effects of the ever-rising air pollution.

"The provincial government is busy protecting the environment from the menace of pollution on one hand, and endeavouring to rehabilitate the already degraded environment by promoting green practices on the other," he added. "Adopting parks is a part of these efforts."

Speaking on the matter of developing Bhandar and Dingi islands, he said according to all relevant sections of the Constitution, the Sindh government owned all natural resources in the province and they were to be managed and protected by the provincial government.

"However, if the federal governments wants to help provinces develop their islands, it can do so while staying within its constitutional limits," Wahab added.

Berating Sindh Governor Imran Ismail, Wahab said he needed to study the relevant sections of the Constitution before issuing any statement on the matter of the twin islands, so that his words could be taken seriously.

He further stated, "It has been a longstanding tradition of the PPP to keep planting the saplings of democracy in the desert of dictatorship."

At the end of the ceremony, the spokesperson planted a sapling at the park and inaugurated the facility.
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 18/10/2020)

Bureaucrat 'mayor'

Waseem Akhtar has recently completed his four-year term as Karachi Mayor. In the saddle now is Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, the Karachi Administrator. During a recent webinar, Shallwani listed the various projects needed by the people of Karachi and expressed his determination to do his best to accomplish the needful. While an elected mayor failed to even clear the stormwater drains of garbage, will a bureaucrat be able to help complete the various mega projects? However, the time between now and the next local bodies elections is far too little to pull off this feat of gargantuan proportions. The city's interests never appeared at the former mayor's heart. Well, his achievements — in fact, a lack thereof — prove that. Conversely, he may be true when expressing his inability to undertake bigger projects because of an "empty treasury" and his "clipped" wings.

The new administrator, on the other hand, sounds sanguine and hopes to bring about positive change. He talked about waste management, water supply, sewerage, transport and other issues of the city. Topping the list of his priorities is improving water supply to the citizens. Broaching the subject of daily travellers' woes, he acknowledged that the port city is facing a huge transportation problem. However, he added that this issue would be resolved soon since transportation systems like Red line, Green line, Orange line and Brown line are nearing completion in different areas of the city, and some of them could start functioning by early 2021. Shallwani sees the extremely old drainage and sewage system as a "great headache" for the city administration, but believes that a number of projects that have been initiated will bring about visible improvement. He also plans to turn Karachi into a "walkable city" akin to some European and South American cities.

Will Shallwani actually be able to do that? Let us sit with our fingers crossed.
(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 02/11/2020)

MQM challenges in court 'ethnic-based, illegal' creation of Keamari district

The Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan leaders on Thursday slammed the Sindh government for carving out the seventh district out of Karachi and approached the Sindh High Court against the creation of Keamari district.

They contended that it was not an administrative decision, but an attempt to divide the city on ethnic lines and strengthen the political position of the Pakistan Peoples Party.

The MQM leaders, Khawaja Izharul Hasan and Salman Mujahid, were talking to journalists on the premises of the SHC after filing an application along with a party supporter from Keamari to become an intervener in the petition already pending before the SHC challenging the notification issued in September to notify Keamari district.

They were of the view that it was a politically-motivated decision made without consulting the stakeholders and the people of the area, adding that the decision was made to achieve political goals by the ruling party in Sindh as the final result of the population census 2017 has not yet been announced while the delimitation of local government jurisdictions in the province has also not yet been carried out.

The MQM leaders further said that provincial government had so far submitted nothing in court to justify the move apart from a notification of the new district.

It was contended in the application that despite pendency of the petition in question, the provincial authorities had also notified the district municipal corporation of Keamari.

Opposition Leader Naqvi gets bail in NAB inquiry

It further argued that under the relevant laws, it was mandatory to hold a public hearing before creating a new district and contended that the move was unconstitutional and illegal and pleaded to set aside the notification of the new district.

Initially, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf MNA from Karachi Aamir Liaquat Hussain had petitioned the SHC against the Sindh government for carving out a new district out of Karachi and contended that it was done in violation of law and proper procedure had also not been followed.

The provincial government had created the new district of Keamari through a notification issued on Sept 4.

Additional secretary summoned in price hike case

A divisional bench of the SHC on Thursday directed the additional secretary of the services, general administration and coordination department (SGA&CD) to appear on Dec 8 in court, in a petition filed against the menace of profiteering, black marketing and hoarding of essential commodities in the province.

When the two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Ali Mazhar took up the petition for hearing, the secretary of agriculture, supply and price department of Sindh contended that he was holding the ex-officio charge of director general of bureau of supply and prices since the regular post of DG was not mentioned in the budget book issued by the SGA&CD.

The bench said that in order to seek clarification, the additional secretary was directed to turn up on the next hearing.

Responding to a question of the bench regarding compliance with regard to certain duties and responsibilities of their department, the secretary of agriculture and deputy director of bureau of supply and prices contended that various functions were already being performed by them and requested for some time to submit details in writing. Subsequently, the hearing was adjourned till Dec 8. The petitioner, advocate Tariq Mansoor, sought enforcement of laws pertaining to control of hoarding and black marketing of essential commodities in the province.

He contended that under the Hoarding and Black Market Act, 1948 the federal government should appoint special judges to hold trial of the offences under this act, but despite the fact that the law was in the field since 1948 such appointments were not made yet.

The petitioner further maintained that the provincial authorities had also failed to implement the Sindh Essential Commodities Price Control and Prevention of Profiteering and Hoarding Act, 2005 and Sindh Registration of Godowns Act, 2005 in letter and spirit while the commissioner was authorised to take cognizance under the Karachi Essential Articles (Price Control and Anti-Hoarding) Act 1953, but it was also not being put into practice.

Opposition Leader Naqvi gets bail

Another divisional bench of the SHC on Thursday granted interim pre-arrest bail to Leader of the Opposition in the Sindh Assembly Firdous Shamim Naqvi in an inquiry being conducted by the National Accountability Bureau.

The opposition leader through his lawyer moved the SHC and after the preliminary hearing, the two-judge bench headed by Justice Mohammad Iqbal Kalhoro granted interim bail against a surety bond of Rs1 million till Nov 27. The bench also issued notices to NAB for next hearing.

The lawyer for the petitioner contended that the anti-corruption watchdog was probing an allotment of land in the favour of Habib Group of Companies and the petitioner was one of the directors of the group in 2006.

He submitted that NAB had summoned Mr Naqvi again in this regard and sought pre-arrest bail.
(By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 13/11/2020)

KMC contractors stop road repair over non-payment of dues

While the provincial government seems to have focused on mega projects with international donor organisations' support, the repair and maintenance work of roads and streets in almost every part of the city has long been halted by the contractors of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) due to non-payment of their dues, piling miseries on people.

While confiding this to [Dawn](#), informed sources said that several contractors assigned the repair and maintenance of roads, flyovers and bypasses had abandoned work on the ongoing projects as they had not been paid any money for the works they had already done.

They said that the city and district administrators of Karachi had also failed to get the funds released from the provincial government, which, however, released funds for the uplift and development work in other districts of the province.

Former city mayor Wasim Akhtar termed the non-release of funds for the projects of Karachi sheer injustice and said that total liability of contractors from budget book was Rs11 billion from 2012 till date.

He said that the KMC was to receive Rs3.3bn in four quarters till May 2020, but the provincial government released only first-quarter amount, i.e. Rs625 million.

"How can contractors be paid their bills when KMC has not received money from the provincial government?" he said and added that this showed the non-seriousness of PPP-led Sindh government towards the civic and municipal issues of the city that generated funds for the whole country.

Sources in the municipal administration said that there was a shortage of over Rs2.5bn in the last fiscal year that affected over 400 uplift schemes.

They said that work on over 200 schemes relating to repair and maintenance of roads, streets, pavements, drainage and sewerage had come to a grinding halt due to non-payment of approved bills of the contractors who had now literally stopped all types of work.

The sources said that a large number of internal roads in almost every locality of the city were in a dilapidated condition after the last monsoon rains and they needed immediate repair and maintenance.

They said that the halted schemes included repair and maintenance of University Road from Jail flyover to Hasan Square, patch work at various main roads from Liaquatabad to North Karachi, Rashid Minhas Road from Imtiaz Super Market to Sharea Faisal, several roads in Federal B Area, Model Colony, Khokhrapar, Korangi, Malir, Nazimabad, North Nazimabad, Sir Shah Suleman Road from Essa Nagri onwards, Shahrah-i-Quaideen up to Sharea Faisal, Jahangir Road from Teen Hatti to Gru Mandir, different roads in Gulshan-i-Iqbal and Gulistan-i-Jauhar and several other roads in districts West and East.

The pending schemes also include drainage and sewerage works in many parts of the city. The dilapidated roads and leaking sewerage pipes and drains are also visible in many parts of the city.

Shortfall exceeds Rs303bn

KMC insiders told Dawn that the shortfall of the funds of the city's municipal administration under the District Annual Development Plan had exceeded Rs3.325bn till September.

The chairman of the Karachi Constructor Association (KCA), S.M. Naeem Kazmi, was of the view that the fragile civic infrastructure of the city was bound to collapse if repair and maintenance of the roads was not immediately restored.

He said that their body was considering moving the Sindh High Court for payment of contractors' dues.

Mr Kazmi said that the contractors had stopped work on municipal uplift schemes as they were not paid their approved bills.

He said that the contractors would not be in a position to continue work on municipal projects due to lack of funds as their bills were not paid to them.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 16/11/2020)

Former LG secretary, others declared 'not guilty'

The Sindh High Court declared on Wednesday former Sindh local government secretary Roshan Ali Sheikh, former Karachi Metropolitan Corporation administrator Lala Fazlur Rehman and former land department director Mohammad Waseem not guilty in a case pertaining to the illegal allotment of 265 acres of KMC land.

The land, allocated for a slaughterhouse in Landhi, was allotted illegally to a small cottage industry, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) prosecutor had told the court at an earlier hearing.

Issuing a detailed verdict on the bail pleas of Sheikh, Rehman and Waseem, the court stated that no further investigation needed to be carried out against the three and granted them bail.

In the verdict, the court expressed dissatisfaction over NAB's investigation of the case, stating that none of the three accused were involved in the illegal allotment of KMC land.

Sheikh hasn't provided assistance for any irregularity, nor has he misused his authority for financial gains, the verdict states. It further highlights that the NAB has admitted to not being able to find any evidence of Sheikh, Rehman and Waseem's involvement in the illegal land transfer.

The verdict mentions that the NAB had received a letter in February 2019, informing that Sheikh was being unnecessarily dragged into the case and the land transfer was made in 1960, prior to Sheikh's birth. The BoR hasn't ever declared the land "disputed", nor sought its repossession from the KMC, the verdict notes, adding that NAB, though, had sought the property's details from Sheikh. It had written a letter in 2012 to Sheikh, then Karachi commissioner, for the purpose and Sheikh had informed NAB that the land was owned by the KMC.

As per the verdict, the sections included in the case were not applicable and hence, the court found the NAB's investigation of the case unsatisfactory.

Azadi Card discounts

Meanwhile, another bench summoned the Sindh social welfare secretary in a plea pertaining to senior citizens not getting discounts on medical facilities as warranted under Azadi Cards.

The petitioner's counsel informed the court that while mechanisms for collecting the cards had been set up, the cards were yet to be issued. He added that many elderly persons were being treated for various ailments at private hospitals but without any discount.

In reply, the counsel for private hospitals said that they couldn't afford to give discounts amid medicine price hikes.

The Sindh assistant advocate-general submitted a progress report to the court, adding that the Sindh social welfare secretary, who headed the council on elderly persons, had contracted Covid-19.

The court summoned the secretary and sought a progress report from him on the matter.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 04, 26/11/2020)

Committee reviews progress of work on Karachi projects

The Karachi Coordination Committee, constituted to monitor development works of the city, on Friday reviewed progress of various uplift initiatives, including cleaning of nullahs, lifting of garbage, water supply and construction of some important roads.

The meeting was attended by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and his team including Local Government Minister Nasir Shah, Chief Secretary Mumtaz Shah, Planning and Development Board Chairman M. Waseem, KMC Administrator Iftikhar Shahalwani, the secretaries of LG and transport, the chiefs of Karachi Water and Sewerage Board and Sindh Solid Waste Management Board and NED University's Prof Dr Adnan, while the federal government was represented by Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar.

Corps Commander of Karachi Lt Gen Humayyoun Aziz, Inter-Services Intelligence Director General Lt Gen Faiz Hameed and GOC of Karachi Maj Gen Aqeel were also present.

Remodelling of nullahs, other projects discussed; Sindh govt plans remodelling of Malir Expressway, ICI Bridge

The chief minister told the meeting that he had assigned the task of survey and preparation of remodelling design of three nullahs — Mahmoodabad, Gujjar and Orangi nullahs — to the NED University which had submitted a design and remodelling plan of Mahmoodabad nullah. The designing and survey of the remaining two nullahs would be completed by Jan 15.

CM Shah said that remodelling of Mahmoodabad nullah would affect 319 structures constructed along the embankments of the drain.

He said that Mahmoodabad nullah was six-metre deep at Korangi but the depth kept reducing as it ran down and finally turned to one metre at Defence up to its end. "This causes a serious problem to discharge of smooth flow of water," Mr Shah said. "In the proposed remodelling design this defect has been pointed out to remove it."

Asad Umar said that work on Mahmoodabad nullah should be started at the earliest so that it could be completed as soon as possible.

He said that the federal government had authorised the National Disaster Management Authority to utilise Rs7 billion for cleaning of various nullahs and related assignments.

Water projects

The meeting was told that the federal government had taken up the task of completing the K-IV water project and, therefore, relevant documents were handed over to the Centre.

The federal government had assigned the task to the Water and Power Development Authority, Mr Umar said, vowing to complete the project on a priority basis.

The chief minister said that his government had launched a 30 MGD scheme to provide water to district South.

He said that the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) was reluctant to give passage for the scheme and asked federal minister Umar to direct the PQA to clear the way for the scheme so that it could be completed.

Mr Umar assured the chief minister that the issue would be resolved.

Solid waste management

The chief minister said that necessary amendments were being made to the laws related to the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) for devolving it to city level.

He said that Karachi would have a separate solid waste management board to carry out cleaning works.

The local government minister told the meeting that cleanliness works would include sweeping of roads, garbage collection from housing to garbage transfer station and then to landfill sites.

The meeting was told that contracts for cleanliness works in Central and Korangi districts were being auctioned. By the end of February, the qualified private firms would be awarded the contracts.

The chief minister told the meeting that he was meanwhile launching a special drive to make the city neat and clean.

Roads

CM Shah said that the Sindh government was going to launch the mega projects of Malir Expressway and ICI Bridge remodeling on a public-private partnership mode.

He said that the two schemes would reshape the flow of traffic in the city, adding that he had also released special funds to construct dilapidated roads from Gulbai to Y-junction and the main and internal roads of the SITE area.

The meeting decided to speed up cleanliness work of the nullahs.

In order to help the Sindh government resolve civic issues of Karachi, the federal government has planned 100 projects under the Rs1.1 trillion Karachi Transformation Plan.

The plan aims to find a permanent solution to issues such as solid waste management, water shortage, cleaning of nullahs, sewerage and transport.

However, it was not clear what else was discussed about those projects in Friday's meeting attended by top federal and provincial officials.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter Dawn, 03, 05/12/2020)

City suffers with local govt in disarray

The metropolis is in chaos - or so it would seem to a person visiting Karachi for the first time. Here, the roads are broken, the local administration has been unable to control the prices of food items, there is no proper solid waste management and civic development seems to be in constant limbo.

The situation, however, isn't surprising for the city's residents, aware of the ad hoc manner in which it is being run by what appears to be local government officials in a game of musical chairs, following delays in LG polls.

The city's deputy commissioners (DCs) have been given the additional charge of district administrators - posts that were long vacant. As a result, it has become difficult for them to perform their duties well on both ends.

According to sources in the Sindh Local Government Department, officials having to serve two posts simultaneously is one of the reasons why progress on multiple civic matters is halted.

"No measures are being taken to repair broken roads and remove encroachments," an official told The Express Tribune on the condition of anonymity.

He cited the example of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) additional secretary being given the additional charge of the SBCA director-general. "He had already been given multiple additional charges and now, he was also made the SBCA director general, the same way DCs have been given the additional charge of district administrators," he complained.

Other sources in the department claimed the Sindh government was "not serious about improving the Karachi's condition," accusing the ruling Pakistan Peoples Party of appointing favoured individuals to different posts in the local administration.

"It's not that there are no capable individuals in the bureaucracy; it is just a matter of favouritism and Karachi's people are paying for it," remarked an official.

Delays and reshuffles

Sindh's LG system seemingly went for a toss when local bodies completed their four-year constitutional term in August this year. According to the official notification, the service period of the elected LG representatives ended on August 31, when all local government councils stood dissolved.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) announced a schedule for the fresh delimitation of constituencies for the LG elections, with delimitation committees set up to prepare the preliminary lists.

According to the law, the Sindh government has three months to hold these elections from the day the local bodies' representatives step down. It had appointed administrators in the place of city mayors until the new LG elections were held.

However, when the ECP's move to assign the delimitation of constituencies to the committees was challenged in the court, the polls ended up being delayed despite the completion of the three-month period. Petitioners have also argued in court that fresh LG elections cannot be held until the final census results are released.

In the meantime, there seems to be a continuous reshuffle underway in the LG department.

In September this year, the Sindh government issued an official notification to appoint administrators in LG bodies across the province. According to the notification, Iftikhar Ali Shallwani - who had been serving as the city commissioner - was appointed as the Karachi administrator.

Later, Sohail Rajput was appointed as Karachi commissioner, only to be soon removed from the post, with Shallwani being handed the additional charge of commissioner once again.

However, in a recent development on Saturday, the provincial capital's bureaucracy appointed a new city administrator and commissioner.

The existing Karachi commissioner and administrator, Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, was removed from the posts and directed to report to the Services, General Administration and Coordination Department (SGA&CD), in a notification issued by the department.

Meanwhile, Laeeq Ahmed - the excise, taxation and narcotics secretary - was posted as the city administrator, and Navid Ahmed Shaikh from the SGA&CD was posted as the city commissioner, both with immediate effect.

(By Naeem Khazada The Express Tribune, 04, 15/12/2020)

SHC seeks replies over creation of 7th district

The Sindh High Court issued notices to the parties in Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's plea against the carving out of a seventh district - Keamari - in the metropolis on Monday.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MNA Aamir Liaquat also filed a similar petition before the high court.

The petitioners maintained in their pleas that the establishment of Keamari district and a related district municipal corporation was 'illegal.'

They argued that a population census was not carried out in the area before changing its status to a district, adding that a public hearing to solicit public opinion on dissolving or creating a council is a requirement before establishing a district according to revenue rules.

The petitioners contended that the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government's decision to establish Keamari district was more political than administrative. Besides, the petitioners argued that the formation of a new district before the announcement of census results was illegal and would impact the results of local government elections as well as national and provincial assembly seats.

The MQM-P counsel prayed the court to call an immediate hearing of their plea while the PTI lawmaker's counsel sought an extension to submit a counter-reply.

The court accepted MQM-P's request and issued notices to the parties seeking their replies by December 23.

Crumbling graveyards

A two-member bench, led by Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and comprising Justice Yousuf Ali Sayeed, issued notices to the Sindh government, Karachi commissioner and others over a plea pertaining to the deteriorating condition of the city's graveyards in the aftermath of monsoon rains.

The petitioner maintained that rainwater was still accumulated in the city's graveyards. Malir, Gizri, Sakhi Hassan and Meva Shah graveyards are in the worst condition, he contended, adding that rainwater entered the graves but no one cared.

The bench directed the provincial government and the Karachi commissioner to take immediate action on the matter and inform the court about the measures taken to improve the state of the graveyards.

The court also issued notices to the parties seeking their replies on the matter.

Illegal construction

The same bench issued notices to the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) director-general and other parties over a plea pertaining to illegal construction in the city.

The petitioner contended that high-rise buildings were being constructed without approval. "Buildings are constructed and sold but no one gets to know about it," he argued. "Citizens lose millions of rupees and no questions are asked."

He maintained that approval was not sought from any civil institution before the construction of buildings in the metropolis.

The petitioner prayed the court to restrict illegal constructions in the city.

The court issued notices to the SBCA DG and other parties, seeking their replies by January 19. The relevant authorities should inform the court about the efforts being made to control illegal construction, remarked the bench.

Baldia fire compensation

Meanwhile, hearing a plea pertaining to non-payment of compensation to families of Baldia factory fire victims, the SHC issued a show cause notice to the Employees' Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI) secretary.

Pension payments to affected families have been suspended, contended the petitioner's counsel. He maintained that German textile company KiK Textilien had given over Rs6 million to the Sindh Employees Social Security Institution for compensation payments. But only Rs300,000 had been paid in compensation thus far due to the government's negligence, he contended.

The counsel maintained that the remaining Rs5.6 million was not paid despite the announcement by provincial minister Nasir Hussain Shah.

The petitioner prayed the court to direct the relevant authorities to pay compensation to the affected families in a single instalment, in accordance with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention.

Irked at the absence of the EOBI secretary, the court directed him to appear in court on December 21 and issued him a show-cause notice.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter The Express Tribune, 05, 15/12/2020)

SHC wants KMC to sell assets to settle Rs4.2bn dues of pensioners

The Sindh High Court on Wednesday directed the city administrator to identify 25 properties of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) to sell since a proposed special grant of the provincial government would not be sufficient to settle the dues of its pensioners.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Nadeem Akhtar also directed a committee headed by the Sindh chief secretary to file its report on Dec 22 about a one-time grant to KMC for settlement of the dues of KMC pensioners.

It observed that the post-retirement benefits of KMC's retired employees was Rs4.246 billion and could not be settled by the proposed monthly grant-in-aid or the provincial government may give a one-time special grant.

Therefore, the bench while observing that the only option left was to sell the assets of the KMC directed the administrator to identify at least 25 properties from the list placed before the bench.

The bench was informed that the committee, constituted on its order to explore the possibilities of resolving the issue, met twice and proposed that the special monthly grant-in-aid of Rs430 million being given to KMC should be enhanced to Rs600m.

The KMC also submitted the list of its immovable properties including bungalows and apartment in posh areas of the city, which were in the possession of its officers.

Sindh govt has approved Rs500m bailout package for KDA

The bench directed the local government secretary to verify the ownership of such bungalows and apartments and submit a report on the next hearing.

It was further pointed out that the KMC also owned 250 beach huts in Hawkesbay. However, the lawyer for the KMC submitted that all leases of huts had recently been cancelled.

Several retired employees of the KMC moved the SHC against non-payment of their post-retirement benefits.

Rs500m grant for retired KDA employees

The provincial authorities also informed the same bench that the Sindh government had approved an amount of Rs500m as a one-time grant/bailout package to settle the dues of retired employees of the Karachi Development Authority.

The finance and local government secretaries asked the bench to direct the KDA to follow seven recommendations that had been made after receiving the bailout package.

The officials of the provincial government as well as the KDA sought reasonable time to finalise the strategy for utilisation of the package as well as the amount to be realised by liquidating the investments of KDA by selling its properties.

The bench directed both the secretaries and KDA officials to file their reports by Dec 17.

The bench passed these directives on a set of petitions moved by retired employees of KDA seeking their post-retirement dues. (By Ishaq Tanoli Dawn, 13, 17/12/2020)

Opposition parties seek 'empowered' local govt in Sindh

Opposition parties in Sindh have contended that the existing local government system in the province has failed to cater to the needs of the public.

Speaking to The Express Tribune, Muttahida Qaumi Movement- Pakistan member of Sindh Assembly Muhammad Hussain Khan, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf lawmaker Khurram Sher Zaman, Jamaat-e-Islami's Sindh Ameer Muhammad Hussain Mohanti and others put forth a unanimous demand that the Pakistan Peoples Party-led Sindh government should immediately form a new and 'empowered' local government system in the province.

The opposition party leaders said that the Sindh government should hold talks with all the other provincial parties and stakeholders or summon an All-Parties Conference (APC) to mull over the matter.

The opposition parties demanded that the new system should include reforms for police, education, health, building control, water board, solid waste management, transport and other departments.

Under the system, district-level financial commissions should be set up and local governments should be given political, administrative and financial powers.

The opposition leaders believe that would be the correct method to resolve the problems of people at the grassroots level. The demands also urged the federal government to release the results of the census so that local body elections can be held by forming new constituencies.

Karachi mega projects should be completed as soon as possible, they opined.

Responding to the opposition's litany of demands, the Sindh government said that a committee of provincial ministers is working to reform Sindh's local government system or to create a new one.

"We can consult with all parties if needed. The PPP is trying to solve the problems of the province including Karachi," said Sindh government spokesperson Murtaza Wahab.

Wahab said that the PPP government in Sindh allowed the term of the local governments to come to an end in the province, so that the democratic and parliamentary system could be strengthened.

“Karachi and Sindh are not separate,” said the PPP spokesman regarding the oft-repeated notion that Karachi should be a separate administrative unit, adding that the talks of a new local government system only serve to invoke ‘prejudice’.

Karachi and Sindh cannot have separate local government systems, clarified Wahab.

“The laws that the Sindh Assembly makes are not only for Karachi but they are for the entire province,” he said. The lawmaker assured that the port city’s stakeholders, including the federation, are trying to resolve the issues of the city and work is being done for the completion of the mega projects.

“In Karachi and Hyderabad, there were local governments of MQMP. We allowed the term of these local governments to come to an end despite political opposition. The way they performed remains questionable.”

The Sindh government spokesman also took aim at the ruling PTI, questioning its criteria to improve the local government system in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Wahab said after the approval of the provincial cabinet, amendments to the local government system or a new system will be approved by the Sindh Assembly.

“Parliamentary parties may be consulted if necessary,” he mentioned.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Functional Sindh General Secretary, Sardar Abdul Rahim, accused the provincial government of paralysing local bodies.

“A local government is the first step in a democratic system. Karachi has no clean drinking water, no electricity and no gas, corruption is rampant in every provincial government agency,” he said, adding that an empowered local government system needs time to streamline things.

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader and former senator Nehal Hashmi, in his statement, objected to the concept of the local government in Sindh, saying in such a system all the important departments are with the provincial government.

“A local government system should be formed in which union council or committee, taluka or towns and district governments are financially and administratively strong. There should be an integrated body to check this system. In order to solve the problems of Karachi, it is necessary for the local governments to have the power to solve the problems of transport, drinking water, infrastructure, electricity and others.”

(By Aamir Khan 05, The Express Tribune, 19/12/2020)

Sindh govt ordered to give grant to KMC for pensioners’ dues

The Sindh High Court has directed the provincial government to provide a grant-in-aid to the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation to settle the dues of its pensioners.

The two-judge bench headed by Justice Nadeem Akhtar observed that the KMC had miserably failed to manage its accounts properly due to mismanagement and lack of planning.

The Sindh government, having supervisory control and jurisdiction over the KMC, is equally responsible for not taking timely action regarding wrong decisions taken by the KMC at wrong time, it added.

The bench directed the chief secretary, the finance secretary and the local government secretary to appear in person along with compliance report on Jan 20.

About the sale of KMC properties to settle the dues, the bench said that the KMC’s contention regarding retention cannot be ignored as once such properties were sold, the KMC will not be able to generate sufficient funds for acquiring such properties in future, it added.

(By Newspaper’s Staff Reporter Dawn, 14, 31/12/2020)