

NEWSCLIPPINGS

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KCR / RAILWAY



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‘Sindh govt to pay Rs6bn for existing KCR’

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said on Monday that the Sindh government was committed to providing Rs6 billion for development works to be carried out for full operation of the existing Karachi Circular Railway but vowed to launch a modern KCR for the people of the megalopolis.

This he said while presiding over a meeting of the KCR here at CM House. The meeting was attended by Transport Minister Awais Qadir Shah, LG Minister Syed Nasir Shah, Adviser on Law Murtaza Wahab, Advocate General Salman Talibuddin and others. Pakistan Railways chairman Habib-ur-Rehman Gilani attended the event through video link.

The meeting was told that the rehabilitation of the existing track from Drigh Colony/Drigh Road to Karachi City station on the loop section had been started and so far it had 50 per cent physical progress. The rehabilitation of a 14km track, from City station to Orangi station, had been completed with two trains operating daily since Feb 10.

The KCR's existing set-up is 44km long with a 30km loop and 14km main line.

The FWO has to start construction of three structures on the KCR route and an elevated 6.4km structure for Rs11.508bn against which the provincial government has to pay Rs6bn as its share.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 20/07/2021)

Sindh govt commits Rs6b for KCR funding

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that his government is committed to provide Rs6 billion to make the existing Karachi Circular Railway fully operational.

He also vowed to realise the dream of launching a modern KCR in the city for the people of the megalopolis.

This he said while presiding over a meeting of KCR here at the CM House. The meeting was attended by Sindh Transport Minister Transport Awais Qadir Shah, Local Government Minister Nasir Shah and others.

The meeting was told that the rehabilitation of the existing track from Drigh Colony/Drigh Road to Karachi City station, on the loop section, has been started.

So far it has seen 50 per cent physical progress. The rehabilitation of a 14 km track from City station to Orangi station has been completed with two trains operating per day from February 10, 2021.

The KCR existing set up has a total length of 44 kilometers with a 30-kilometer loop and 14 km main line length.

The FWO has to start construction of three structures on the KCR route and an elevated 6.4 kilometers structure at a cost of Rs11.508 billion against which the provincial government has to pay Rs6 billion as its share.

The chief minister said that he would fulfil his commitment when work would start.

He urged the railway authorities to get the PC-I of the project approved from the federal government. He also asked them to carry out fencing work on the KRC route.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 05, 20/07/2021)

Work on KCR project on track: official

The feasibility study of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project is on track as per the timelines assigned by the ministry of railways, and will be completed by the middle of August, Railways Chairman and Secretary Habibur Rehman Gilani said on Monday.

He was speaking at a meeting which reviewed the present status of the preparation and processing of KCR. The meeting was informed that feasibility of the railways freight corridor project has been completed.

Keeping in view the importance of the KCR flagship initiative of the government, which should be a modern urban rail-based mass transit project, the meeting presided over by Planning and Development Minister Asad Umer, decided that a separate project be prepared for the civil structure of KCR for completing the project on a fast track basis.

The PC-1 for civil structures must be brought for approval and subsequent funding through the Public Sector Development Programme at the earliest.

Simultaneous work on both the components of KCR will result in months of time saving and completion of the project, the meeting observed.

During the meeting, important issues related to freight corridor were discussed and reviewed. Welcoming the completion of feasibility study of the freight corridor, the meeting decided that in order to gauge the level of investors' interest, important decisions must be taken within a month by all the departments concerned.

Railways Minister Azam Khan Swati, secretaries of Planning and Railways, the Chief Executive Officer of the Public-Private Partnership Authority and senior officials of the two ministries attended the meeting.

(By Amin Ahmed Dawn, 05, 27/07/2021)

Swati expects ML-I loan approval in two weeks

Federal Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati says China is expected to approve US \$6.8 billion loan for the Main Line-I (ML-I) project within next two weeks under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

"Keeping in view the progress on this issue, I am sure the loan will be approved by the Exim Bank of China within next two weeks, enabling us to move ahead towards the execution of the project," Mr Swati said while talking to senior Journalists here on Saturday.

Asked about the reported disinterest by the Chinese government because of slow pace of work on the CPEC projects, the minister dispelled the impression and claimed that it was the PTI government that had brought down the total cost of the project from \$9.2 billion to 6.8 billion. "This matter has been pending since 2014. Negotiations have been underway for the last three years. I tell you clearly that they (the Chinese government) have agreed to fund and execute this project as there is no more hurdle," he maintained.

Mr Swati said the railways was facing Rs2.5 billion loss per annum alone due to electricity theft because of non-installation of meters. "You will be surprise to hear that we are facing a huge loss in terms of power theft worth Rs2.5 billion per annum due to non-availability of meters at several railway colonies, offices etc," he added.

'Rs2.5bn power theft in PR in absence of meters'

The minister said he reported this matter to the PM who directed him to stop this theft by all means. He also arranged Rs1 billion or so for the installation of 26,570 meters. After a hard work of pushing the departments concerned again and again, the PR has so far been able to get just 1,870 meters installed.

"We have yet to install remaining 24,700 meters. It is a huge task in face of massive resistance from a mafia which is very powerful," the minister said. "And now the PM has directed the authorities concerned to complete the meter installation work within a week,"

Mr Swati said the lesson he had learnt in his seven months in present office is that the only way forward to revive the railways is to outsource its train operations (both freight and passenger), dry port and other segments due to deep-rooted corruption and mismanagement in the department.

"There are thousands of workers in various PR departments and almost half of them stay away from their duties by giving 50 per cent of their salary to their seniors. We have decided to use technology to ensure their attendance," he explained.

"We have to spend around 30 to 40 million for launching a system that will check presence/attendance of all employees, including those in the field. This system is also in place in the army and some other institutions," he said.

Mr Swati said a professional would soon join as the CEO of the Pakistan Railways Freight Transport Company (PRFTC) who would take the freight business from Rs18.5 billion to 30 billion within a year.

Talking about other issues, including the scrap, the minister said he had directed the authorities concerned to auction the entire rail scrap on goods rates by Aug 31.

(By Khalid Hasnain Dawn, 02, 01/08/2021)

Groundbreaking of KCR next month, says Asad Umar

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Wednesday said the groundbreaking of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) would take place by next month.

Chairing a meeting to review the status of KCR and Railways Freight Corridor projects here, Asad Umar directed Pakistan Railways to fulfil all formalities at the earliest and ensure that all necessary arrangements for the groundbreaking of KCR infrastructure were made by September 2021.

During the meeting, the minister was briefed on KCR and informed that the KCR envisaged the construction of a 43km-long world-class affordable mass transit system using environment-friendly electric trains.

The secretary of railways informed that the KCR project was on track as per timeline given by the ministry. He said simultaneous work on Pakistan Peoples Party's components of KCR would result in months of time saving and completion of the project.

The railways shall expedite the consultation with the Public Private Partnership Authority (P3A), he said.

They discussed Freight Corridor project from Keamari/KPT to Pipri Marshalling Yard which envisages construction/dualisation/upgrade of 50km dedicated freight corridor from Karachi Port to Pipri and included development of an inland container depot/marshalling yard at Pipri.

It was briefed that the project was expected to facilitate 40 per cent of the cargo meant to be transported upcountry. Further, the plan has been submitted to PPP Authority for its approval.

Mr Umar directed that the corridor must be designed to optimise the level-of-service outcome, and financial costs.

The destination time has to be reduced as well, he added.

Federal Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati, secretary of planning, secretary of railways, chief executive officer PPP Authority, and senior officials of both ministries participated in the meeting.

(By APP Dawn, 14, 26/08/2021)

KCR and taxpayers

THIS refers to the letters "Taxpayers' money" (July 24), which called for shutting down of the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) in order to save public funds. The suggestion was based on the writer's observation that not many were using the facility.

I recently travelled by the evening KCR train from Karachi City to Malir Halt and found more people than the capacity of the train. The passenger profile mostly appeared to be that of educated staff, both men and women, returning homes from their corporate offices downtown. The commute was so comfortable that I was able to write this letter during the same journey.

It is highly likely that the said writer may have witnessed the train shunting/moving during off-route time or on a weekend or somewhere near the train's starting and finishing points. On the busiest route between Karachi City and Landhi, the up and down train is a success and great boon for passengers.

From the above account, it is clear that factual position and potential of KCR can be gauged properly and optimistically only by actually using the service. The Supreme Court should keep a watch on KCR affairs so that the utility may not be painted as non-viable.

Raihan A.K. Lodhi
Karachi

(From the Newspaper Dawn, 07, 26/08/2021)

PM to perform groundbreaking of long-awaited KCR project today

All is set for the much-awaited launch of the enormous Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) as Prime Minister Imran Khan is scheduled to perform the groundbreaking of the project, which is expected to be completed in less than two years and would ferry nearly half-a-million passengers daily, at the cantonment railway station on Monday (today).

Sindh Governor Imran Ismail made this announcement on Sunday and promised that the fresh visit of the prime minister would bring several other "good news" for Karachiites.

"The prime minister will be here tomorrow [Monday] to perform the groundbreaking for the Karachi Circular Railway project," he said while talking to media persons after attending a ceremony of the Global Ismaili Civic Day here.

Dry run of Green Line buses in 10 days

"The KCR is not alone...many good news are coming for Karachi. Green Line bus services infrastructure has been completed, its buses have reached the city and we have also started the trial run of the buses. We expect to go into a dry run of the service in the next 10 days," he said.

Commissioned in 1964, the KCR was originally designed to help the employees of Pakistan Railways travel between their workplaces (at and around the City and Cantonment railway stations) and their residences in Karachi's eastern neighbourhoods.

Governor Ismail says Green Line bus service to be inaugurated next month

The service later turned into a full circle of 44 kilometres in 1970 and connected Karachi's four main work areas — the port, the Sindh Industrial Trading Estate (SITE), the city's central commercial areas such as Saddar, and the Landhi Industrial Area.

The KCR remained the means of transportation of choice for the people of Karachi till 1984 when the number of its trains was reduced. Reasons for the move included lack of maintenance and repair, a yawning gap between expenditure rising due to higher fuel and operational costs and revenue decreasing due to subsidised tickets, and the government's inability to spend money on improvement of tracks and stations. The KCR finally shut down in 1999, forcing thousands of its daily users to travel by buses.

Projects to largely end transport crisis

With the groundbreaking ceremony of the KCR today and expected launch of the Green Line bus service, the federal government sees the transport crisis in Karachi is finding its solution to a large extent.

"The Green Line service would be inaugurated next month and soon after the K-IV [water supply] project would be inaugurated," said Governor Ismail. "After completion, the K-IV project would cater to the needs of the city and solve the issue of water shortage."

Earlier, the Sindh governor planted a sapling as part of a tree plantation campaign during the Global Ismaili Civic Day ceremony.

While addressing the ceremony, he lauded the plantation drive saying it was a good initiative and other segments of the society should also follow it.

"A number of saplings are being planted at the same time all over the country as part of the drive," he said. "I am happy that Ismaili community has followed the vision of the prime minister's billion tree project. It's always easy to plant a sapling but it's obviously difficult to maintain it."

He said that these initiatives should be encouraged. He also urged other communities to come forward and plant saplings for clean and green Pakistan.

(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 27/09/2021)

'KCR pending approval from all forums'

Reacting to Prime Minister Imran Khan's visit to [Karachi](#) to [inaugurate](#) the Karachi Circular Railway on Monday, Sindh Transport Minister Awais Qadir Shah claimed that neither has the project been approved by any forum nor has a consultant been hired as yet.

In a statement issued on the day, the transport minister maintained that the [KCR](#) survey may take up to two years. The current infrastructure is not for the KCR and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government in the Centre is simply defrauding the people of Karachi, claimed the minister. "These structures will not work when the new KCR is created."

He claimed that Rs20 billion would be wasted in KCR's name. When the mega project has not been approved by any relevant forum, including the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC), then what is the foundation stone for, asked the minister. "They are going to pin the horse's tail but where is the horse?"

In a separate statement, Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Hafiz Naeemur Rehman made similar comments and termed the inauguration of KCR a 'distasteful joke' on the people of Karachi. He implored the premier to instead reveal the progress on packages announced by the Centre for the metropolis.

Rehman said that the PM inaugurated on Monday a project which was inaugurated one and a half years ago.

Karachiites want to know what became of the Rs1,100 billion package announced by the premier earlier, said Rehman, adding that citizens had the right to know about the progress made on projects announced under the Karachi Transformation Plan.

The premier believes the cleaning of a few drains is enough to deem the Karachi Transformation Plan successful and complete, which is far from the ground realities, added Rehman.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 28/09/2021)

Putting Karachi back on rails

What Prime Minister Imran said in Karachi this Monday while speaking at the groundbreaking ceremony of the Karachi Circular Railway resonates equally with the people of the entire country because people from all parts of the country live and work in this megacity. He said cities act as engine of growth all over the world, emphasising that Karachi has the same importance for Pakistan as London has for the UK and New York for the US. It leaves no room to doubt the significance of Karachi as the economic hub of Pakistan. The PM called for better coordination between the Centre and Sindh government for timely completion of mega development projects as this would benefit the city, province and the country evenly. He acknowledged that neither could the Centre nor the provincial government work for the development of the city alone; they need to cooperate with each other. It is necessary to revive the city and put it back on the road to progress.

For the past several years, civic infrastructure has been crumbling in this sprawling city. It has become a badly disorganised city. It is without public transport; most roads are reduced to rubble; the water supply system is in a shambles. Even the poorest have to purchase potable water. Residents have been hearing for the past several years that the K-4 bulk water supply scheme will be completed soon. Now a federal minister has said the project will be completed by 2023. However, those in the know of things say there are many obstacles in the way of the scheme; it would take more than a decade to complete it. The drainage system in the entire city has nearly collapsed. Every year in the rainy season, the city roads turn into canals.

The PM has rightly underscored the importance of a rapid mass transit system aligned with an integrated transport system for Karachi. The railway minister says the KCR project will be completed in two years. Since 2001, several attempts have been made to partially restore the KCR. A rapid mass transit system is essential for big cities.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 29/09/2021)

'Link KCR to airport'

It has been recommended that the long-awaited revived edition of the Karachi Circular Railways be linked to the Jinnah International Airport so that both locals and foreigners could avail the facility.

The suggestion was made by Senate Standing Committee on Railways Chairperson Muhammad Qasim.

"The committee will also recommend that KCR be linked to the airport so that passengers from within and outside the country can also avail this facility," Qasim said. He was speaking to a meeting of the committee at the City Station on Tuesday.

The meeting was attended by senators Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junejo, Rana Mahmood Al Hassan, Saifullah Sarwar Khan Niazi, Dost Muhammad Khan and senior officials of Railways including CEO Nisar Ahmad Memon, DG Property and Land Amjad Iqbal, CEN Open Line Irfan-ul-Haq, DS Karachi Hanif Gul, DS Sukkur Shoaib Adil, PD KCR Amir Muhammad Dawood Puta and others.

Railway officials briefed the senate committee on the steps taken for the removal of encroachments on KCR and railway lands in Sindh. It also highlighted the regularisation of 10 sub-engineers in Balochistan province.

Senator Muhammad Qasim, in his address, said Karachi is the most important city of Pakistan and there are many traffic problems here.

He added that the KCR would reduce the difficulties faced by the people in terms of transport facilities.

During the briefing, the committee was informed that the KCR project had an estimated cost of Rs.207 billion. According to preliminary estimates, it would benefit 475,000 passengers on a daily basis and after a decade, this number will reach 1.1 million.

He said that electric trains would be run on the KCR route and one train would have a capacity of 814 passengers. It was further mentioned during the briefing that KCR would be linked with six BRTs to be set up in the city.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, The Express Tribune, 04, 13/10/2021)

Plan to connect KCR with city's five BRT lines

In addition to efforts to restore the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) to its original route, the federal government has also decided to add some value and come up with an idea to connect the circular railway line with five under-construction Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines in the metropolis to ease the pressure of traffic on roads.

The plan was shared by Pakistan Railways officials while briefing members of the Senate Standing Committee on Railways, who visited the City station for a briefing on the progress of different projects of the PR.

The committee, led by its chairman Senator Muhammad Qasim, held a detailed meeting with senior PR officials, who briefed the legislators about the progress on the KCR, removal of encroachments on railway land in Karachi and progress to fill the vacant posts in the department.

“There is a plan to connect the KCR with the under-construction BRT lines’ routes in the city, which would further enhance its effectiveness and utility,” said a statement issued after the meeting.

Some 475,000 passengers to commute daily after the revival of circular railway project

“This idea would help release pressure of traffic on roads and bring benefits in multiple ways. Once the service is restored it would cater to some 475,000 passengers daily on its route and after 10 years with increased capacity, it would be serving 1.1 million people each day across Karachi,” the standing committee was told.

‘Karachi breeze’

Known as “Karachi Breeze” — the name officially given by the Sindh Mass Transit Authority for Karachi’s Bus and Mass Rapid Transit system, some 112.9-kilometres-long roads under BRT projects are in place for Karachi through five dedicated lines.

However, so far only one line, Green Line, is set to start service by the next month.

As the wait for Karachiites for the Green Line service is about to over, which is about to be completed after facing several hiccups over the five years since its groundbreaking in 2016 and incurring almost double the original cost, there’s no visible plan for the four other lines — Orange, Red, Blue and Yellow — as their fate is not known yet.

However, the federal government sounds ambitious for Karachi’s transport system and the claims made by PR officials during the standing committee’s briefing suggest that Islamabad is planning not only to revive the KCR, but also introducing some innovations.

“The total cost of the [KCR] project is Rs207 billion,” said the statement quoting the PR officials briefing the senators. “The KCR will provide the quality travel facilities to people of Karachi. The Senate committee members during the meeting suggest that they will recommend linking KCR to airport so that domestic and foreign travellers could also avail this facility.”

Apart from its chairman, the meeting was attended by Senator Muhammad Asad Ali Khan Junejo, Senator Rana Mahmood Al Hassan, Senator Saifullah Sarwar Khan Niazi, Senator Dost Mohammad Khan and senior officials of PR, including CEO Nisar Ahmed Memon, director general-property & land Amjad Iqbal, Irfanul Haq, divisional superintendent-Karachi Hanif Gul, DS-Sukkur Shoaib Adil, Amir Muhammad Dawood Puta and others.

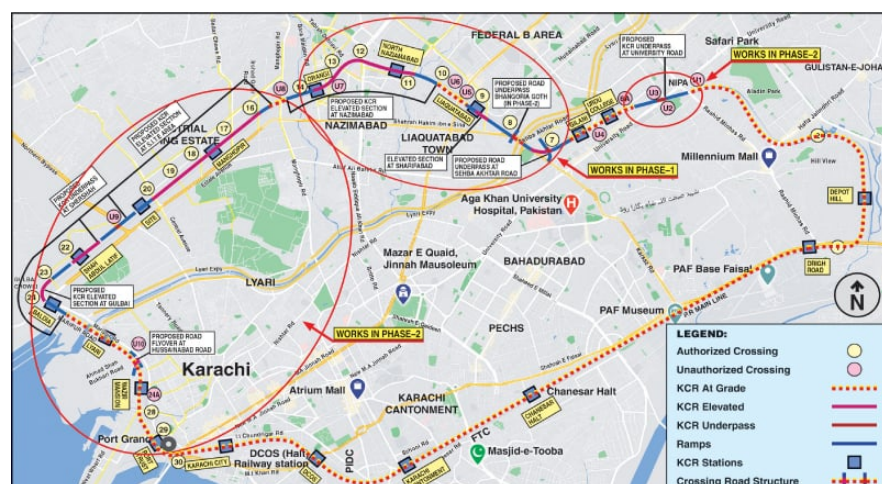
Encroachments

The PR officials briefed the standing committee on the issue of encroachments on railway land in Sindh, steps taken to retrieve the land, KCR and regularisation of 10 sub-engineers in Balochistan.

During the briefing, it was further informed that 152.8 acres of railway land in Karachi and Sukkur divisions was retrieved during the past three years.

The standing committee directed the officials to take steps to ensure prevention of encroachments on railways land in future.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 13/10/2021)

Dream of Karachi Circular Railway revival inching towards reality



complete this project in three years.

Initiated in 1964, the old KCR route started from Drigh Road and ended in downtown Karachi. After suffering losses for years, it ceased operations in 1999.

The service was initiated in 1964 and suspended in 1999

The scheme to restart the 44-km Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) by constructing three underpasses, a flyover and an elevated 6.4-km structure along with the laying of new rail tracks on most part of the route for running electric trains at a revised cost of over Rs207 billion still looks like a pipedream.

However, this highly ambitious plan, for which substantial ground work has already been done albeit on paper, may go a long way in transforming Karachi’s public transport problem.

There are many sceptics, including those in the Sindh government, who believe the federal government is still not sincere in reviving the KCR, which has remained off track for well over 20 years. However, those like the prime minister, who had inaugurated the project earlier this month, railways minister and some senior officials of Pakistan Railways are pretty confident that they will be able to

Infrastructure development

The Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) has to start construction of structures on the KCR route and an elevated 6.4-km structure for Rs11.508bn in two phases, against which the provincial government has to pay Rs6bn as its share.

However, no contract has so far been signed or work order issued to the FWO.

The main idea is to remove almost all the authorised and unauthorised level crossing at 22 different places. (See map).

KCR Project Director Ameer Daudpota told *Dawn* that the project was primarily envisaged for the construction of structures for elimination of 22 level crossings from the KCR loop.

According to the PC-1 of the project, an underpass for road traffic would be constructed at Sehba Akhtar Road, Gulshan-i-Iqbal and the existing culvert at 13D area would be widened. An underpass will be built at Sharifabad, Federal B. Area and another at Mujahid Colony, Allama Rasheed Turabi Road. Besides, a flyover along Ahmed Shah Bukhari Road across KCR providing access to the congested neighbourhood along Mauripur Road and its link road.

The proposed structures would also provide conflict free movement of Green Line bus rapid transit system and road traffic along Nawab Siddiq Ali Khan Road, along Tabish Dehlvi Road near Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Chotta Maidan and Bara Maidan, Nazimabad.

The PC-1 of the project said that no major shifting or protection was needed for the utilities and services due to the construction of proposed structured along the KCR right of way.

'550,000 ridership'

Mr Daudpota said that the proposed structures were part of the infrastructure for the development, operation and maintenance of KCR as modern urban railway under the public private partnership (PPP) mode. "The proposed structures will be compatible with other components such as electric traction, signalling, telecom, etc, to avoid any clash with the design of other components, which may be executed by BOT [built operate and transfer] partner," he added.

The project director said that eight trains, each comprising a locomotive and four coaches, would run with each train facilitating 814 passengers at a time.

"The entire 44km route will be covered in 55 minutes," he said and added the ridership would be 550,000 passengers per day.

He said that rehabilitation of the existing track from Drigh Colony/Drigh Road to Karachi City station on loop section had been started and so far it had 50 per cent physical progress.

"The rehabilitation of a 14km track from City station to Orangi station has already been completed with two trains operating per day from February 10, 2021," he added.

The project director said that existing set up of KCR had 44km length with 30km loop and 14km main line length.

He said that there would 24 railway stations — 10 on-ground and 14 elevated.

All the encroachments on and along the KCR route have been removed by the railway authorities with the assistance of the provincial authorities, police and Rangers.

"Most of the KCR track was encroached upon for the past 20 years", Mr Daudpota said adding that no authority ever bothered to clear encroachments from the site until the Supreme Court ordered.

The 44km KCR track passes through different parts of the city where people have built shops, houses and other structures over the past many years.

The displaced people will be rehabilitated by the provincial government.

Real challenges

Informed sources, however, told *Dawn* that the real challenge for the government was raising the infrastructure on the existing KCR as major help would be required from the federal and provincial utilities and services, which had their respective infrastructures both over and underground along the track.

They said that the railways authorities had already approached the utilities such as Sui Southern Gas Company, Pakistan Telecommunication Limited, K-Electric and Karachi Water and Sewerage Board to share the details of their respective infrastructure, but their response was still awaited.

The KCR project director said that topographic survey drawings showing the project limits had been sent to the respective utilities and services concerned to mark their respective assets requiring protection or relocation.

The sources said that the process of awarding contract to the FWO might take up to three months as the bidding documents were still being prepared. The FWO has to complete the infrastructure in two years.

Railway Minister Azam Khan Swati said that modern KCR project would be completed in three years with a cost of Rs207bn with automatic electric air-conditioned coaches.

He also said that global tenders would be invited for procurement of electric trains.

Sindh govt sceptical

Though the provincial government has assured the railways authorities that it would be supporting them in improving the operation of the existing KCR, Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh termed the "claims" of federal government regarding modern KCR as pile of lies.

“They have nothing, no funds and approvals for the electric trains,” he said and asked how the electric trains would be provided electricity when there was already power shortage in the province.

He said that the seriousness and interest of the federal government in the KCR could be judged from the fact that the railway authorities had not yet started carrying out fencing work on the KRC route, which was cleared of encroachments.

Financial model

The sources said that the financial model of the project on a BOT basis would be approved by Public Private Partnership Authority under the Planning Commission at meeting on Oct 30 with Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar in chair.

They said that private firms from China and Russia had already shown their interest to execute the modern KCR and the selection of the private partner would be made by the PPPA.

The sources said that the modern KCR was not financially feasible, but it was socially, economically and environmentally viable. They said that the project would involve heavy subsidies to the private partner by the government.

(By Tahir Siddiqui Dawn, 13, 17/10/2021)

KCR delays

AS political and bureaucratic stakeholders drag their feet over reviving the Karachi Circular Railway, residents of the city must make do with limited options for public transport that is operated by individuals, private entities or mafias. Though the ambitious revival of the KCR had been in the works for a long while, the prime minister’s invitation to the Sindh government to bury the hatchet and work together on this project had raised hopes. However, the slow pace of work continues to be cause for concern. On the one hand, the federal government appears intent on bringing the dormant project to life by mid-2023, as indicated by reports of the meetings chaired by Federal Planning Minister Asad Umar, but the Sindh government appears to be delaying matters on account of bureaucratic hurdles. Apparently, the Frontier Works Organisation has to begin construction on the KCR route in two phases for which the Sindh government must pay the agency Rs6bn as its share. Regrettably, no contract or work order seems to have materialised so far in this regard.

Reports point out that the biggest obstacle include the existing infrastructure of the provincial and federal utility companies. These companies have reportedly failed to respond to the inquiries of the railways department about the details of their assets along the KCR route. Maybe the planning authorities can step in to liaise with the utility companies. Additionally, there has been scepticism over the feasibility of the project itself — within the provincial government’s ranks. However, whatever the reason for this delay, the Sindh government should not give in to doubts now. Political consensus on this project — or any other project for that matter — has been elusive. Now that it has been achieved, both the centre and the Sindh government should do their utmost to make the KCR dream a reality. Only then will we see a visible improvement in the lives of those millions of commuters who reside in this sprawling city.

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 19/10/2021)

Over 5,000 acres of Railway land in Sindh still under illegal occupation

More than 5,000 acres of Pakistan Railways (PR) land is under encroachment in Sindh and currently in the use of different individuals, groups and even business organisations for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for the past many years.

This was transpired during a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways held here at the office of the divisional superintendent at the City Station.

Tuesday’s session was the first of the committee’s three-day engagements in the metropolis.

The committee led by its chairman Muhammad Mueen Wattoo raised several issues and put several questions before the railways authorities about quality of service, punctuality and challenges being faced by the PR.

Encroached land is being used for agriculture, commercial and religious purposes

While briefing the committee, DS-Karachi Hanif Gul informed the members about the current status of PR’s encroached land and that despite an aggressive anti-encroachment operation being carried out in coordination with law enforcement agencies a huge part of its property remained in illegal use.

“The committee members were informed that the PR possessed 45,663 acres of land in its Karachi and Sukkur divisions and 39,759 of acres is in operational use,” said a statement issued after the NA committee’s visit.

“About 1,810 acres of railway land was encroached for residential purposes, 291 acres for commercial purposes, 2,968 acres being used for agriculture while 112 acres of its land is occupied for mosques, imambargahs,” the body was told.

48 trains operating from Karachi division

The PR officers also briefed the meeting about their efforts regarding retrieving thousands of acres during operations against encroachment.

The standing committee members included MNAs Muhammad Bashir Khan, Nauman Islam Sheikh, Nusrat Wahid, Aftab Jehangir, Engr Sabir Hussain Kaim Khani.

PR Chief Executive Officer Nisar Memon, DS Gul, DCO-Karachi Nasir Nazeer and other senior officers attended the meeting.

During the meeting, the committee recommended improvements in railways functioning including increase in number of passenger trains, upgrade of railway stations, punctuality of trains and others.

Mr Gul informed the committee members that 48 trains were operating in Karachi division. Eight of them are offering intercity services, 36 are mail or express trains and four trains are being plied for the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR), he said.

"About punctuality, Karachi division has maintained 81.21 per cent punctuality of timings," the statement quoted the DS as telling the NA committee.

"The committee was apprised that the China Creek bridge with single line has been restored while tracks have also been completely renewed. Three trains including Shah Latif Express, Saman Sarkar Express and Marvi Express have been restored this year keeping in view the passenger facilitation and public delivery."

The DS-Karachi also informed the meeting that installation of high tension and low tension network by the Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (Hesco) and Sukkur Electric Power Company (SEPCO) had been completed in PR's residential colonies in Hyderabad, Tando Adam and Mirpurkhas.

For installation of the same networks in railways colonies in Karachi, he said, an agreement had been signed with the K-Electric.
(By Imran Ayub Dawn, 13, 03/11/2021)

NA body not satisfied with progress on KCR, ML-1 projects

More than a month after the ground-breaking of the Karachi Circular Railways by Prime Minister Imran Khan amid much media fanfare, the performance of the so far available and operational service came under serious criticism from lawmakers on Wednesday who observed that the Pakistan Railways should undergo massive overhauling to come on a par with the required standards which were currently on the decline.



The observation came from members of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Railways on the second leg of its three-day visit of travel and inspection of the KCR route.

"Unfortunately, the situation is not very good or promising," said NA standing committee chairman Muhammad Moeen Wattoo while taking to Dawn after the visit.

"We visited from Orangi Town to City Station [one of the KCR routes] on tracks and it was not a very good experience. Even I shared a joke with the Pakistan Railways officials that a man on foot can complete the distance faster than this train service. It was dead slow. How can you expect it to become a popular service with this speed and pace? It doesn't serve the purpose at all," he said.

\$6.8bn ML-1 project would be completed in eight and half years

Similarly, he said overhead bridges and underpasses were badly needed to scale up the KCR service otherwise it would fail to meet the desired results. He referred to several level-crossings in the main urban centre, which were needed to be upgraded and said that the legislators from the lower house of the parliament had made their observations part of the record.

Mr Wattoo also questioned the utility and effectiveness of the ML-1 project which was much publicised and cheered by the Pakistan Railways authorities, but in reality it had not yet taken off.

After the briefing from the Pakistan Railways, the NA body was convinced that the project carried several advantages for the country and could benefit the country's transport economy in a long term, but there were several formalities which had not been met yet.

"We are not satisfied with the progress [on ML-1]," he said. "We keep hearing about its benefits and advantages but no one tells that where the project actually is on the ground? There are several formalities, documentary procedures and contractual requirements which are still pending. We have not yet completed several jobs and formalities with China which we have to do before the tender. Then it would go into tender and other things. So we are far away. This performance is so unsatisfactory."

Meanwhile, a Pakistan Railways official said that the NA committee briefed that ML-1 project would not only improve the performance of the Pakistan Railways, but would also have a positive impact on the national economy.

"The officials briefed the standing committee on the ML-1 project and the scrap auction of Pakistan Railways Karachi Division during the last five years. The committee was informed that ML-1 project would be completed in three phases and in 8.5 years with a total estimated cost of US \$6.6806 billion," he said.

While briefing the NA committee on the revenue generated from the auction of coaches in Karachi Division during the last five years, the official said, it was shared with the legislators that the auction was stopped in 2016-17 due to low prices.

Later, he said, after its restoration the revenue from auction stood at Rs343 million in 2017-18, Rs71.43 million in 2018-19, Rs11.86 million in 2019-20 and Rs198.613 million in 2020-21.

PR CEO Nisar Ahmad Memon, chief engineer Irfan ul Haq, divisional superintendent of Karachi Hanif Gul, project director of KCR Amir Muhammad and other senior officials.

The NA committee members included Sheikh Rashid Shafiq, Aftab Jehangir, Nusrat Wahid, Engineer Sabir Hussain Qaim Khani, Muhammad Hamid Hameed and Muhammad Khan.
(By Imran Ayub 13, 04/11/2021)

Displaced people air grievances at EIA hearing on Karachi Circular Railway project

A public hearing held on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) report of the development of Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) on Wednesday miserably failed to allay concerns of project's affectees, who turned out in large numbers at the event where they repeatedly put their demand that the government take immediate measures for their resettlement and provide them with all basic utilities as per 2019 decision of the Supreme Court.

The event organised by Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) was held at Karachi Cantonment Railway Station.

A federal government project — Development, operation and maintenance of Karachi Circular Railway as a modern urban railway under public-private partnership mode — is estimated to cost Rs207 billion and is envisaged to be completed in three years.

During the question-answer session, several speakers, while affirming their support to the project, regretted that there was no mention of grievances of the KCR affectees in the presentation given on the EIA report at the event.

An agreement has been signed with KE for 'uninterrupted' supply of electricity for running trains

Venting out their frustration over the government delaying their rehabilitation, project affectees cited the May 9, 2019 decision of a three-member bench of the Supreme Court wherein the government was directed to resettle the 1,100 people whose houses were razed in Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Quaid-i-Azam Colony, Gharibabad, Punjabi Basti, Moosa Colony and Mujahid Colony, during the anti-encroachment drive carried out to clear the KCR route.

The court, they said, had asked the government to provide them with all basic utilities in their resettlement.

"Have mercy on us! Three years have passed but not a single government official has visited us. Where should the poor go? Some of us are living on the rubble of their destroyed houses while others are forced to find residence on rent," said an old man, who was deprived of his house in Quaid-i-Azam Colony.

It's tough to explain how hard it was to pay monthly rent and, at the same time, manage basic necessities of life amid rising inflation, he added.

A few participants narrated their ordeal when their houses were demolished during Ramadan in 2019, describing the government's drive to clear the route along the 43.24-km long KCR as sheer injustice.

"At that time, my wife was battling with cancer. I had to look for shelter for her and my three young daughters. And, it wasn't just me facing this uphill task. The government had bulldozed hundreds of houses without serving any warning notice," said another attendee, whose house was demolished seven months back, adding that the majority of the KCR affectees had been living in those localities for 50 to 60 years.

Questions over using controversial census data

About the project's technical and legal aspects, questions were raised over the utility of sharing the EIA report with the general public at a time when the project was already in progress.

The EIA report, it was said, didn't highlight how the project would impact people and environment and used controversial data of the 2017 census.

The information that electric trains would run on the railway track was met with wide scepticism. Concerns were also raised over the absence of Sepa's director general and representation on behalf of the federal government at the event, indicating participants' desire to get concrete assurances over their resettlement.

The project proponent, however, couldn't provide with the latest data on the number of people who have so far been affected by the project.

In reply, KCR Project Director Ameer Mohammad Daudpota spoke about how the project would facilitate commuters and said 25 trains would run at a time from 6am to 11pm, transporting an estimated 475,000 riders daily.

The project would utilise the existing length of the track.

About the affectees, he said: "We are aware of your problems that exist in our record. A grievance committee is part of the project and the process of redressal would be carried out as per law."

On concerns related to electric trains, he said an agreement had been signed with K-Electric for 'uninterrupted electricity supplies' under the project.

Sepa Deputy Director Imran Sabir explained that the first EIA of the KCR project was done and approved in 2008-09. Over the years, work on the project continued in bits and pieces. The department asked the railways to upgrade the EIA report following the Supreme Court's intervention in the matter.

Earlier, a representative of the EMC Pakistan Private Limited, consultants for environmental impact assessment, gave a presentation on the EIA report, according to which the project would solve Karachi's traffic issues and help reduce airborne contaminants.

According to the information shared during the programme, the KCR originates from Drigh Road station on the Pakistan Railways' mainline after crossing Sharea Faisal, it passes through populated areas of Gulistan-i-Johar, Gulshan-i-Iqbal, Liaquatabad, Nazimabad, SITE, Baldia, Lyari, Kharadar, Mithadar and finally touches the City Station.

(By Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 11/11/2021)

Railways 'illegally' used its 53 acres of land for housing project

Pakistan Railways has used 53 acres of its land to set up a housing society for its employees.

The land meant exclusively for railways purposes was turned into real estate against all rules and regulations, it was revealed during a hearing at the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Monday.

An SHC has sought reply from Pakistan Railways Corporation Housing Society and others on the response of Sindh government regarding 53 acres of railway land adjacent to Safari Park in Gulistan-e-Jauhar.

A two-judge bench headed by Justice Zafar Ahmed Rajput heard the petition. Sindh Additional Advocate General Barrister Sheharyar Mehar informed the court about the government's decision.

Mehar stated that 53 acres of land was given to the Railways for railway purposes but the department did not use the land for the designated purpose.

"The Supreme Court has declared that railway land can only be used for the railway system," the AAG said. "We are taking back the land in the light of the decision of the Supreme Court.

Four acres of land has been recovered. More is being recovered," the AAG contended.

The court adjourned the hearing of the case till December 21.

Sugarcane price

The SHC has extended the restraining order against fixing price of sugarcane at Rs250 per 40kgs.

The court while extending the stay order adjourned the hearing of the case until December 15. The court also restrained the government from taking action against sugar mills.

The petition was filed by 17 sugar mills including Mirpur Khas Sugar Mill and Habib Sugar Mill.

The petition argued that the Sindh government on November 4 issued a notification fixing the price of sugarcane at Rs250 per 40kgs. The cane commissioner hinted at taking action on the complaint of purchase at a price less than Rs250.

The price of sugarcane in Punjab has been fixed at Rs225 per 40kgs whereas in Sindh the price of sugarcane has been fixed at the highest rate.

Meanwhile, the Sindh High Court has directed the counsel of the farmers to provide copies of the petition and documents to the parties in the petitions pertaining to fixing of sugar prices and provision of subsidy by the provincial and federal governments.

A two-member bench headed by Chief Justice Sindh High Court Justice Ahmed Ali Sheikh heard the petitions seeking fixing of sugar prices and subsidy from the provincial as well as the federal government.

Advocate Mureed Ali Shah stated, "For the first time in history, the owners of sugar mills filed a civil suit and obtained restraining order. (By Nasir Butt The Express Tribune, 04, 09/12/2021)