

# NEWSCLIPPINGS

*JULY TO DECEMBER 2021*

## SEWERAGE & DRAINAGE



### Urban Resource Centre

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### **Police establish urban flooding rescue unit**

The security and emergency services division of Sindh police, under the supervision of DIGP Security Maqsood Ahmed has constituted an Urban Flooding Rescue Unit to overcome any emergency or flooding situation.

The decision has been taken keeping in view the prediction of Meteorological department about more rainfall than usual in Karachi in forthcoming monsoon season, said a news release on Wednesday.

Urban Flooding Rescue Unit was recently inaugurated by city police chief Imran Yaqoob Minhas.

The unit comprises Special Security Unit commandos equipped with the latest rescue gadgets and small boats which will stay alert round-the-clock to respond to any situation during heavy rainfall.

DIGP Maqsood Ahmed said commandos of Urban Flooding Rescue Unit have received lifeguard training given by professionals.

A practical demonstration of rescuing people stranded in water was also exhibited by the unit.

(By APP Dawn, 14, 08/07/2021)

### **Preparations for rain**

The rainy season is around the corner, but the Water and Sanitation Agency, Hyderabad has yet not been released Rs326 million by the Sindh government needed to meet rain emergency situations. A WASA official feared that in all probability the required funds would not be made available before the start of rains. This is highly surprising that the provincial government has not learnt any lessons from previous years' experience in the wake of heavy rains and how people paid the price of years of official neglect. The consequences of the last year's floods were dreadful. The sad memories of those floods are still fresh for the sufferers and all those who witnessed the large-scale devastations caused by the deluge. Amazingly, that tragedy has failed to move the Sindh government to act before another such catastrophe strikes, as the inordinate delay in releasing the needed funds to WASA Hyderabad shows. If the funds are not provided to the agency to tackle the situation arising out of another bout of heavy rains this year, it might result in a repetition of the 2020 calamity.

It does not take much intelligence to visualise the scenario if there is another devastating episode of the kind. The complacency on the part of the authorities is fuelling fears that the province might witness another heart-breaking tragedy. WASA officials have repeatedly been seeking the needed funds since June. So far all these requests and entreaties have not been responded to. WASA is facing severe financial constraints as a result of mounting dues outstanding against a large number of government departments. The agency claims that the Sindh Building Control Authority has okayed 24 commercial building projects in Hyderabad without obtaining the mandatory No-Objection Certificate from it. If the funds needed by WASA are released after the arrival of rains, they would not be of much use. If money is spent in haste, most of it goes to waste. It is no use closing the stable gate after the horse has bolted.

(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 09/07/2021)

### **Karachi rain misery**

As ever, we were caught unprepared. While the authorities were still in the middle of clearing the major choked drains and making other rain preparations, the gathering dark clouds over Karachi burst early Monday morning. Thankfully, this first rain of the monsoon season in the mega city was only moderate – between 1 and 5 mm rain fell within the city while it measured 17mm on the outskirts in Gulshan-e-Hadeed – serving the relevant authorities with a wake-up call, as it is just the beginning of the season.

However, compared to the small amount of rain, the accompanying misery was still bigger. While major city arteries were by and large clear, the rainwater did accumulate at several places in the city, primarily due to broken roads and choked sewerage lines. Old city areas were particularly affected. Much of the business centres remained closed. The cattle market, set up on the outskirts of the city for sale of sacrificial animals, was in a deep mess. It was all mud and filth that caused problems for the animals and their keepers, besides the small number of people who did visit the market despite the rain. There were also reports of interruption in the flow of traffic due to the rainwater.

Power breakdown though was as painful as ever. The electricity supply to much of the city got disturbed literally from the first drop of rain. It was in fact the early morning power failure that broke the news of the first rain of the season in Karachi to the slumbering citizens. More than a third of the power feeders, according to K-Electric, were affected. The supply was not restored to as many as 12 hour, in some cases. There were also reports of at least one person losing life due to a severed live wire in Al Falah Society. Much has been written on the subject of rain misery and the citizens of Karachi. So much as that the whole cahce of vocabulary has been exhausted in an attempt to drive the point home. The authorities must get their act together.

(By Editorial The Express Tribune, 14, 14/07/2021)

### **Urban flooding in Islamabad**

Islamabad received heavy monsoon rain on Tuesday night inundating several low-lying areas in the city. The Capital Development Authority had reportedly warned of a cloudburst but the meteorological department ignored the warning. The city received 130mm rain bringing about flash floods on early Wednesday morning in some private housing societies in two sectors. A woman and her seven-year-old son drowned after the floodwater accumulated in the basement of their house in one of the private housing societies. Many vehicles were swept away by the torrent of water accumulating on roads.

Authorities have blamed private housing societies, insisting that the flooding was caused due to violation of regulations governing construction. According to an official, the flooding in Sector E-11-2 was caused due to the construction of a road over a stormwater drain. The drain collapsed because of the illegally-built road and the overflowing rainwater entered houses. Action must be taken against the erring housing societies, as their violating the rules has cost two precious lives.

Authorities claim that except for low-lying areas and the two private housing societies, the rainwater was removed from nearly all areas within a few hours. Reports say that civic organisations had been busy cleaning drains and removing encroachments for the past six months. Why the work could not be completed before the monsoon season needs to be investigated. The authorities concerned did do a good job clearing the neighbourhoods of

water pretty swiftly and restoring the power supply, but the situation would not have come to this pass if the authorities had prepared for the rainy day beforehand.

Never before has the capital city come under water like this. Isn't it reminiscent of what had happened in Karachi last year?  
(By Editorial, The Express Tribune, 14, 30/07/2021)

### Urban flood risk

THE alarming visuals that have come out of the recent deadly flooding in Islamabad's Sector E-11 have sparked a public discourse on whether or not this was a 'natural disaster'. The authorities promptly blamed 'cloudburst' for the disaster, adding a little known terminology to the public discourse. Many among the internet-using public connected the flooding in Islamabad with the floods wreaking havoc in Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands, citing climate change as the common denominator.



I believe it is important to have a public discourse on climate change and its devastating impacts which increase disaster risk and can have induced effects such as heavy localised rainfall or 'cloudbursts'. But irrespective of the role of climate change in this extreme weather, we must be careful not to attribute the disaster solely to it. In fact, it is unfair to brush it off as another 'natural' disaster where the focus of the public is diverted to response and relief rather than poor governance and the human choices that caused the disaster.

This confused messaging has caused a significant portion of the population to believe that disasters are a manifestation of the wrath of the heavens and that there is little that can be done to prevent them. Countless academicians and researchers have pointed out the term 'natural disaster' is misleading as it shifts responsibility from human choices to the forces of nature. Disaster risk is a product of 'hazard' and 'vulnerability'. In the case of the Islamabad flooding, the former would be an extreme hydrometeorological phenomenon. It is likely that this phenomenon was exacerbated by climate change.

However, hazard alone would not have turned into a disaster had it not intersected conditions of vulnerability and exposure, which encompass all physical, socioeconomic and environmental factors that increase our susceptibility to hazards. Vulnerability is perpetuated by decades of poor governance and choices which are a key driver of disaster risk. For the residents of E-11, some part of their vulnerability was created by risk-insensitive land-use planning and flood zonation, by constricting and creating bottlenecks in natural waterways, and by ill-designed drainage structures clogged by solid waste.

*Flood risk has been exacerbated by unchecked encroachments.*

Such conditions are not uncommon in urban areas across Pakistan, even in Islamabad. As the flood ravaged parts of the capital, the students of the Capital University of Science and Technology shared alarming videos and photographs on social media as their entire campus appeared surrounded by deep turbid waters. Before someone says 'natural disaster', it must be mentioned that the entire campus is constructed on the floodplains of the Soan River, only a few feet away from its main channel.

Flooding in Abbottabad earlier last month, where life was mostly disrupted, once again points to decades of poor planning and governance shortcomings in our urban areas. Flood risk was exacerbated over the years not only by unchecked encroachments on waterways but also by diminishing green permeable surfaces that were replaced with concrete structures and impermeable paved surfaces. Taking measures such as increasing green infrastructure, and implementing adequate land-use planning and regulation not only in the city but also in the upstream catchment areas of urban streams could significantly reduce the risk of urban flooding. Another challenge that remains unaddressed is assigning responsibility to enforce the existing regulations — especially as there are a plethora of municipality corporations, cantonment boards and highway authorities, among other federal, provincial and local authorities.

Considering the toll disasters take on life and development outcomes, preventing them and reducing disaster risk appear to be common sense. However, trapped somewhere between the immediacy of the disaster response and the allure of expensive development projects, 'disaster-risk reduction' fails to draw sustained attention or policy and political commitment. Many of our political figures prefer to be seen as saviours as they hand out rations during disaster-relief activities, an exercise that takes precedence over building storm drainage networks and green infrastructure, and passing legislation to mitigate the effects of climate change.

Integrating disaster-risk reduction into sectoral policy and the national agenda seems to be piecemeal and lacks concerted efforts. Similarly, authorities constitutionally mandated to work in all phases of disaster management appear to limit their role to reactive disaster response, relief and rehabilitation, neglecting proactive measures such as disaster-risk reduction. People should not have to become homeless, or lose their lives or livelihoods, because no one is paying attention.

(By Ahmed Ali Gul Dawn, 07, 01/08/2021)

### KMC had cancelled leases of land along 30 nullahs in 2015, court told

The Sindh High Court was informed on Thursday that the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) had in 2015 cancelled all the leases granted in respect of the land located on and along 30 big and small storm-water drains in the metropolis following a resolution of the City Council.

The deputy commissioner of Karachi's district Central stated this in his comments filed before a single-judge bench, headed by Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar.

The bench was hearing a petition seeking payment of compensation to those citizens whose houses had been demolished along the Gujjar Nullah during the recent drive for the removal of encroachments.

The petitioner, Mohammad Salman, and others had submitted in their petition that they had built their houses on the plots duly leased to them by the KMC and other authorities concerned.

They had asked the court to restrain the Sindh government, the KMC and other relevant authorities from demolishing their houses without paying them compensation.

*Petitioners seek compensation before demolition of their houses*

In the comments, the deputy commissioner submitted that the encroachments on the storm-water drains crisscrossing the city were hindering the smooth flow of rainwater that resulted in inundation of the nearby low-lying areas during rains.

He said then administrator of the KMC Shoaib Siddiqui after approving a resolution passed by the City Council in 2015 had ordered then metropolitan commissioner Sami Siddiqui to cancel all the leases granted on and along the storm-water drains and take stern action against those officials under the relevant rules who had granted the leases.

He added that the then KMC administrator had also ordered removal of structures built on illegally leased land.

The deputy commissioner also mentioned that the drains whose land was illegally leased out included Gujjar Nullah, Orangi Nullah, Shershah Nullah and Hub River Road Nullah, Baldia Kalri Nullah, Pitcher Nullah, City Nullah, Soldier Bazaar Nullah, Frere Nullah, Nehr-i-Khayyam, Manzoor Colony Nullah, Mehmoodabad Nullah, Zahri House Nullah, Korangi Industrial Area Nullah, Road 10000 Nullah, Mehran Highway Nullah, Chakor Nullah, Azeempura Nullah, Pehlwan Goth Nullah, Sangol Nullah, Haroonabad Nullah, Lalaabad Nullah, Mochko Nullah, Road 12000 Nullah, Golden Town Nullah, Road 7000 Nullah, Road 5200 Nullah, Road 4200 Nullah, Road 9000 Nullah and Mehran Cut Nullah.

The deputy commissioner contended that the petitioners had encroached upon the land of the Gujjar Nullah and they were illegally granted lease by the Sindh Katchi Abadis Authority.

He maintained that since the leases in favour of the petitioners were illegal, they were not entitled to claiming any sort of compensation.

After taking the comments on record, the bench adjourned the hearing for a date to be later fixed by its office.

(By Naeem Sahoutara Dawn, 13, 13/08/2021)

**Flooding risk**

THE tragedy of two people drowning in the urban flooding witnessed in Islamabad's high-value E-11 sector a fortnight ago was an indictment of the negligent, in fact criminal, attitude of the capital's authorities. Much of the damage caused by the flooding was the result of drains having been greatly narrowed by land developers as well as encroachers. In E-11, part of the problem with city by-laws not being enforced was an exemption given to this area by former ruler Ayub Khan. Even so, in 2007, the Capital Development Authority framed by-laws; but these were applicable to high-rise buildings only — and even they were not implemented. In 2012, the property development's revised-as-built layout plan — in which the width of one drain had been reduced from some 12m to about 5m — was approved by the CDA. This, even when the then deputy director of the authority raised in writing concerns about the drain's width, only to be ignored. Meanwhile, a few days ago the Sindh High Court was seized with a petition pleading that a number of constructions that are now due to be demolished because they restrict storm-water courses had, in fact, been built after the land was leased by the KMC and other city authorities. The leases were cancelled in 2015 and action against officials responsible for the granting of the leases was ordered, but the issue remains unresolved.

City authorities urgently need to take responsibility for their considerable culpability in haphazard construction that leads to disaster. The question really is one of who guards those who are themselves responsible for upholding the law. The Met department has issued a warning for potential urban flooding in the north over these few days; this water will eventually — and after possible destruction — make its way south. The current ad hoc attitude of the authorities is appalling — demonstrably deadly. What will it take for sense to prevail, especially in a country with growing urbanisation and facing the realities of climate change?

(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 15/08/2021)

**Has battling poor sanitation made Lyari resilient to Covid?**

"We live with cockroaches and bed bugs... so many other insects. You will see mice running everywhere.

Do you think the coronavirus is deadlier than what we have been facing for years?" asked Dawood Alam, who lives on Shah Abdul Latif Road, Lyari.

For years, Lyari's residents have lived with poor sanitation, waste and sewerage mismanagement and contaminated water.

Baffling health professionals, it appears that living in such conditions made their bodies resilient to the deadly virus that has left the world shaken.

Despite little heed paid by local residents to coronavirus restrictions imposed by the government - with many believing that the virus does not exist, not for them at least - a negligible number of cases have been reported in the area.

Those who are diagnosed with the infection, regain health swiftly, said Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto (SMBB) Medical College Lyari Principal Dr Anjum Rehman.

"The number of patients from this area is very low," she told The Express Tribune. Out of the 130 patients admitted in the Covid19 ward at her facility, only 10 hailed from Lyari.

Most of the patients had been referred to the health facility from other districts of the metropolis. "The people of Lyari have very strong immunity," she observed, adding that very few persons from the area have been tested for the contagion.

The few elderly patients who were brought to the hospital in critical condition also managed to overcome the infection and soon regained health.

"Last week we admitted a man past 75 years of age. His oxygen saturation was dangerously low at 50 per cent. And now his condition is stable and he is being discharged."

Seconding Dr Rehman's observations, *Sindh* Infectious Disease Hospital and Research Centre's (SIDHRC) Dr Abdul Wahid Rajput said that coronavirus cases among the residents of Lyari were rare.

At SIDHRC, located near Nipa Chowrangi, he said very few Covid-19 patients belonged to areas with poor living conditions.

People living in areas like Lyari have already been deprived of clean drinking water, good food and hygienic living conditions, said Dr Rajput.

Taking the hypothesis a step further, he said that he had hardly seen labourers or masons - professions common among Lyari's residents - diagnosed with the virus.

"Their immunity is stronger because of physical activities." Although it is possible that many local residents were asymptomatic or didn't get tested for the virus when they did feel symptoms or that the area was simply overlooked when it came to random testing, health officials observed that a negligible number of Covid fatalities were reported in Lyari.

"There is no virus in Lyari. It does not exist here," said Dilmurad who lives near SMMB Medical College Lyari. "It is patients from other areas who come here [to be treated for the virus]."

Like several other local residents, Dilmurad told The Express Tribune that he had not known of a single person from his neighbourhood to die of the coronavirus.

The resilience built by people living in neglected localities might have prevented them from the more vicious attacks of a pandemic that has claimed at least 4.63 million deaths worldwide.

But it also testifies to the callous negligence of the government that forced citizens to acclimate themselves to disease-riddled living conditions. (By Sameer Mandhro The Express Tribune, 04, 16/08/2021)

### **Urban flooding warning issued for several Sindh cities**

The Met department on Tuesday warned of urban flooding in Karachi, Thatta, Badin and Hyderabad due to heavy rainfall expected in Sindh over the next three days.

"Prevailing very humid and hot weather conditions are likely to subside. The monsoon currents currently giving rains in upper/central parts of the country are now likely to give more rain/thunderstorms in southern parts of the country," stated a Met department advisory.

Explaining the weather system influencing the country, a Met department official said a monsoon low existed over east-central India with its trough extending north westward that was causing monsoon currents to penetrate into eastern Sindh.

"Under its influence, rain-thunderstorms with occasional gusty winds and isolated moderate/heavy falls are likely to occur in most parts of Sindh," he said.

These districts include Tharparkar, Umerkot, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad, Hyderabad, Badin, Thatta, Karachi, Jamshoro, Dadu, Larkana, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Shikarpur and Ghotki.

The minimum temperature recorded in Karachi on Tuesday was 28 degrees Celsius with 75 per cent relative humidity. The maximum temperature was 36.8 degrees Celsius with 56pc humidity. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 01/09/2021)

### **Reconstitution of KWSB board, reforms discussed**

An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Sindh Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah regarding reforms in Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) and reconstitution of its board, says a press release.

The meeting was attended by Secretary Local Government Syed Najam Ahmad Shah, MD KWSB Asadullah Khan, NED University Vice Chancellor Sarosh Lodhi and other officials along with the board members.

Briefing the LG minister, Najam Shah said KWSB needs to be made a more powerful, independent, profitable and progressive body, so that the citizens of Karachi would have easy access to clean drinking water and a defect-free sewerage system on permanent basis, which is also the topmost priority of the Sindh LG department.

Najam Shah told the LG minister that during the restructuring process of KWSB's board, special attention has been given to provide equal representation to all the experts and professionals concerned belonging to water improvement sector.

He said that the board members will be consisting of water experts, legal experts, IT professionals, education experts and field professionals.

Nasir Shah said that the mayor of the city should also be given representation in the new board of KWSB. The LG secretary informed the minister that all the decisions of the proposed board would have to be endorsed by the Sindh government. (By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 14, 10/09/2021)

### **Toddler dies after falling into uncovered manhole in Garden**

A two-year-old boy fell in an uncovered manhole and died in the Garden West area on Monday, police and relatives said.

The incident triggered a protest by relatives and area residents, who were also joined by an opposition lawmaker belonging to the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf.

Garden SHO Imdad Khawaja said that the boy, Hamza, was playing in the street outside his home and fell in the open manhole near Fatima Jinnah College. The body was found after a considerable delay when his family launched a search for him.

The police said that one of the dumper trucks that brought material for an under-construction high-rise building in the area had damaged the manhole lid and the child fell in the manhole.

*City police chief orders probe into the custodial death of a man*

Assistant Commissioner Sherina Junejo along with police officers visited the residence of the victim's family and assured them of her full cooperation to find and bring the culprits to justice.

She said that anyone, whether the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, local administration or the builder, found responsible for the incident would be taken to task.

After the tragedy, the manhole was repaired and covered properly.

The incident sparked anger among the area people who lodged a protest against those responsible.

#### **PTI MPA wants FIR against CM, administrator**

PTI lawmaker Khurram Sher Zaman also reached the area and met with the grieving family.

He told the media that an uncovered manhole took the life of a child. "It's a matter of shame for rulers in Sindh as people are dying after falling in nullah (drains), open manhole or being bitten and killed by dogs," he said.

He said that the Sindh chief minister and other functionaries of the provincial government should be ashamed of the incident.

Mr Sher Zaman said the provincial government did not bother to protect the life and property of the people. He suggested that the FIR of the incident should be registered against the chief minister, Karachi administrator and local government minister.

He urged the chief justice to take notice of the incident.

The child's grandfather told the media that some people were holding the builder of the nearby under-construction multistorey building responsible, but it was the responsibility of the local administration to cover the manhole.

He said that they were considering lodging an FIR against the administration.

The area SHO said no case had so far been registered.

#### **Suspect dies in police custody**

A held suspect, who suffered a bullet wound following a recent encounter with police, died in the custody of the Pakistan Bazaar police station, officials said.

The suspect, Usman Aziz, 25, was arrested a few days ago in an 'injured' condition in the Hyderi Market police remit. Today, he was brought to a hospital where he died, said a police spokesperson.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that the body bore torture marks and they took it from the Pakistan Bazaar police and shifted it to the hospital for completing medico-legal formalities.

Taking notice of the death of the suspect in police custody, the city police chief sought a detailed report about it.

A police officer, who wished not to be named, said that the suspect was arrested by the Hyderi Market police some days ago. He was brought to the Pakistan Bazaar police station by the police's investigation branch for the purpose of interrogation.

Meanwhile, SSP-West Abid Qaimkhani said in order to ensure a fair probe, the investigation was transferred from Hyderi Market police to the Pakistan Bazaar police. He said the investigators got his physical remand and brought him to the police station, where he informed them he was not well. He was taken to a hospital where he died, the SSP said.

#### **Mother, son found murdered**

A woman and her young son were found murdered in Saeedabad on Tuesday, according to police and rescue services.

Saeedabad SHO Shakir Husain added that the bodies were recovered from the underground water tank of their rented house in Sajan Goth. They were bludgeoned to death, he added.

The deceased were identified as Changal Mai, 50, and her son, Himmat Ali, 25.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that the bodies bore torture marks.

It appeared that they were killed and later their bodies were thrown in the tank.

The bodies were shifted to the Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital to fulfil medico-legal formalities.

(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, 13, 22/09/2021)



## Flooding hits many Karachi areas after light to moderate showers

As Karachi received light to moderate rain on Thursday, most parts of the metropolis, particularly Central district, witnessed a flood-like situation.



The authorities warned that the situation was unlikely to improve because of the huge, concrete and kilometres-long infrastructure of the Green Line bus service which had led to almost collapse of the Central district's drainage and sewerage system.

Though most parts of the city faced the similar situation as many roads were submerged under rainwater after first spell of the day, quick response from the city administration, pumping arrangements by the Karachi Water and Sewerage Board and manual cleaning by sanitary workers of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation led to normalcy to a large extent.

However, Central district's Shershah Suri Road witnessed a flood-like situation, which led to suspension of vehicular traffic on several intersections of the key road. Many motorists were seen parking their vehicles on the side of the road after failing to drive them on the flooded artery. The situation remained out of control even several hours after the downpour and, as suggested by the official, was unlikely to improve soon.

*Green Line infrastructure blamed for havoc in Central district; power supply interrupted; wet spell in Sindh to continue till tomorrow*

"It's all due to Green Line structure which has been built by the [federal government's] SIDCL [Sindh Infrastructure Development Company Ltd]," said Karachi administrator and Sindh government spokesman Barrister Murtaza Wahab. "I have remained at Nagan Chowrangi intersection for more than six hours but my team and heavy machinery failed to clear the road," he said. "The Green Line project has been built in the middle of the road with no drainage system in place. The company finally found a solution and installed two small pipes for that purpose. Last year we had witnessed a similar situation after rains and this year it's same again. We have – formally and informally – requested the SIDCL to fix this problem but they don't pay heed. The situation here [at Nagan Chowrangi and Shershah Suri Road] would not improve if they [SIDCL] don't fix it."

On the other hand, the Met experts see fast changing weather behaviour in the port city where they said it was unusual to record such count of rain in September. Though they said the monsoon season had not yet come to an end this year but was close to it, they suspected such frequency and intensity of rain in Karachi in September could be due to the impact of much-talked about climate change.

"The monsoon season is very much in and it usually continues till the end of September," said Sardar Sarfaraz at Karachi's Met office. "But definitely the September rain this year is higher than average as we don't have such count of rain in this month in our city. This year weather's behaviour is a little different and unusual, I would say."

Asked about the impact of climate change which could have led to such extreme weather and rain in September in Karachi, he said it would be hard to establish a trend on the basis on a single event.

"It may take time to reach any conclusion about this particular issue but scientifically it has been proven that climate change has increased the frequency of extreme events. So you never know. We are already seeing and documenting the data that how extreme weather events are taking place," he said.

### KE's 200 feeders affected

Amid complaints of power failure from several areas after rains, the K-Electric claimed that that it had ensured that power supply to the city and its adjoining areas remained stable even during the downpour.

"K-Electric teams remained vigilant and continued to monitor the situation as the weather intensified. The majority of the utility's distribution network consisting of 1,900 feeders remained stable and continued to provide a safe and reliable supply of electricity," the KE said in a statement. "Supply to areas with high incidence of theft and kunda (illegal connections) usage was preemptively shut down in the interest of public safety; the supply was restored after receiving clearance from KE's ground teams."

It said that Karachi received moderate to heavy rainfall in short bursts in the afternoon and as a result power supply to some areas was affected. At its peak, approximately 200 feeders were affected, many of which were temporarily powered off out of caution owing to the prevalence of safety hazards in these areas, such as kundas and encroachments of public infrastructure by TV and internet cables, it added.

"However, restoration efforts in these areas also began immediately after the rain subsided and clearance was received from ground teams. With more rain predicted by the Met office, the people are advised to continue observing precautionary measures and maintain a safe distance from electricity infrastructure at all times," said the KE statement.

### Rains to continue till tomorrow

The wet spell is likely to continue in Karachi and other districts of Sindh till Saturday (tomorrow) as monsoon currents of moderate intensity persist in the eastern parts of the province, according to the Met department.

The maximum and minimum temperature recorded in Karachi on Thursday was 36.2 degrees Celsius and 28 degrees Celsius.

The Met department recorded maximum rainfall in Surjani town (70mm) followed by North Karachi (49.2mm), PAF Base Faisal (47mm), Nazimabad (20.2mm), Airport old area (19.2mm), Saadi Town (16.1mm), University Road (13mm), Jinnah Terminal and Orangi Town (10.6mm each), Quaidabad (8.5mm), DHA Phase II (7mm), , Gulshan-i-Hadeed and PAF Base Masroor (5mm each), Gulshan-i-Maymar (3.6mm) and Keamari (2.7mm).

According to the Met department's website, rain-wind/thunderstorm with isolated heavy falls accompanied by occasional gusty winds are likely to occur in Tharparkar, Badin, Umerkot, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur and Khairpur districts during the next two days.

Similar weather conditions are expected to prevail in Karachi, Hyderabad, Thatta, Nawabshah, Jacobabad, Shikarpur, Dadu and Jamshoro districts till Saturday.

(By Imran Ayub & Faiza Ilyas Dawn, 13, 24/09/2021)

## Rain chokes city's arteries

After several days of sweltering under torrid weather conditions, Karachiites were offered a brief respite from the heat as rain lashed the port city on Thursday. The relief was short lived, however, as the moderate to heavy rain spell wreaked havoc on the crumbling infrastructure of Karachi.

Commuters were stranded for hours on end as rain water accumulated on major arteries and low-lying areas. Two spells of heavy showers between noon and 5pm left a major public hospital inundated besides submerging parts of Central District. In other areas, dilapidated roads deteriorated further and cars were swept away by accumulated rain water. Power outages were also reported in different parts of the city.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has forecast more rainfall and thunderstorms today (Friday) and tomorrow (Saturday). The weather is likely to remain hot and humid today with chances of rainfall in the evening.

### Inundated roads

Pictures and videos shared on social media showed several areas of the city, especially in Central District, flooded with rain water. Vehicles could be seen submerged up to their wheels, others were swept away by the flow of the water and some reportedly overturned. Fortunately no loss of life was reported in the city but the hours-long rain spell devastated the city's infrastructure.

Buffer Zone, Shadman and Nagan Chowrangi areas were inundated with rain water. The road leading to Nagan Chowrangi from Sakhi Hassan Chowrangi around Buffer Zone and Nagan was closed. Citizens could be seen wading through the water as vehicles were stranded. The nullah in Shadman Town overflowed submerging nearby areas while the road leading to Sakhi Hassan Cemetery was blocked by accumulated rain water.

The Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) track from Surjani town to Nagan Chowrangi was completely submerged.

"Left nagan Chowrangi around 7 pm. Its clear now. If u look at the videos, the side from nagan to sakhi hasan was clear but from sakhi hasan to nagan there was water because of green line structure which was stopping the flow of water [sic]," tweeted Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab on Thursday night.

Wahab claimed that North Karachi, North Nazimabad and New Karachi areas flooded because of faults with the Green Line BRT infrastructure which affected drainage of water.

Meanwhile, citizens reaching Abbasi Shaheed Hospital faced extreme difficulties as rain water accumulated in and around the hospital run by the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC).

Rain water also accumulated on the roads leading toward Teen Hatti from Liaquatabad, Jahangir Road to Gurumandir, Karsaz to Sharae Faisal, FTC to Metroville, PIB Colony to Central Jail and from Tibet Center to Regal Chowk besides inundating Tibet Square, Patel Para, Lasbela Chowk and Denso Hall areas. Logjams were reported in several areas across the city.

### Power outages

Over 300 electricity feeders were affected as rain lashed the city. In some areas PMT poles were also damaged and electric wires were broken. The worst-hit was again the Central District, with most areas reporting power failures.

Among other areas, power supply was disrupted in New Karachi Nazimabad, Sakhi Hassan, Federal B Area, Liaquatabad, Saadi Town, PECHS, Saddar, Malir, Keamari, Ahsanabad, Landhi and Malir.

In a statement issued on the day, a K-Electric spokesperson stated that power supply was ensured to over 1,700 feeders of the power utility's network. "Some areas were temporarily powered off out of an abundance of caution owing to the prevalence of safety hazards in these areas such as kundas and encroachments of public infrastructure by TV and internet cables."

### Monsoon rain

According to the PMD, the highest amount of rainfall was recorded in Surjani Town at 70 millimetres and the lowest in Keamari at four millimetres.

The PMD had earlier issued an alert predicting rain and thunderstorms in Sindh from September 22 till September 25, saying monsoon currents from a low-pressure system in the Bay of Bengal were expected to penetrate the province.

(By Aftab Khan, Amir Khan, Naeem Khanzada The Express Tribune, 04, 24/09/2021)

## Urban flooding – is Karachi prepared?

After last year's destructive rain spell in Karachi, Prime Minister Imran Khan had stated, "We will be announcing a plan for a permanent solution to the problems caused by urban floods."

Similar promises have been made to Karachiites for years, but, alas, no change ever takes place. For more than a decade, the monsoon season has submerged different areas across the city. When it rains, roads get jammed, cars are destroyed, the K-Electric fails to do its job, and people lose lives.

Karachi has been facing such destruction for years, but last year something novel happened - elite areas in the metropolis were also flooded. Filthy street water entered residents' houses in Defence Housing Authority, ground floor portions were flooded, furniture and electronics were destroyed and numerous people were trapped in their houses for days due to accumulated rainwater on roads.

When the elite finally experienced what the rest of Karachi had been going through, social media platforms were flooded with criticism. However, when the monsoon nightmare took place, the ruling governments once again became engrossed in the debate of 'who is to be blamed'. In fact, the residents of the city have been searching for this very answer - who is responsible for Karachi's rain disaster?

In statements launched on the media, the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) blamed the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which leads the provincial government, the ruling party in the Centre, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), condemned everyone, and the PPP blamed the Centre. Mid-June, Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry accused the Sindh government of incompetence, whereas Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah called out PTI for its "bias against Sindh." He also revealed that the PSDP schemes had been reduced ever since PTI came into power. From 27 schemes in 2017-18 and an allocation of Rs27.38 billion, the numbers decreased to 13 schemes and Rs8.5b.



While no single political party can be held accountable, the blame falls on the city's structure that has worsened over time. This includes the inept planning and development of buildings and bridges and land grabbing of nullahs.

If you trace the history of Karachi, the city was dominated by MQM-P - then MQM - as early as the 1980s. The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) too, has been run under the leadership of the aforementioned political party since 1988. The first KMC council head was Dr Farooq Sattar, followed by Muhammad Tariq Hassan in 2001 and Nasreen Jalil in 2006. The last MQM-P member that controlled KMC was Waseem Akhtar, whose tenure as the last elected mayor lasted from 2016 to 2020.

PTI on the other hand, has also been unable to modernise the drainage system of the city since they won the election in 2018. This may be due to the lack of understanding of Karachi's complicated typography besides political rivalry with Sindh's existing parties such as MQM-P and the PPP.

The PPP on the other hand, does not control all the jurisdictions of the city, and can only work in certain regions. They too, are entangled in a rivalry with other ruling parties, which refuse to cooperate. Karachi Administrator Murtaza Wahab, has complained several times regarding the federal government's lack of funding. The Sindh Government has also officially stated that Rs39b were provided to KMC in 2019, but MQM-P has provided no record of where the money went. Last year's rain made it obvious the money was not spent on the city, to say the least.

However, this isn't where the complications end. Several political parties also sabotaged the nullahs and drains on purpose by stuffing garbage in them. The reason? When Karachi floods, the leading political party of the region will be blamed. In this tug of war, all related individuals must realise that if the city is to be reconstructed, everyone must join hands and work together. They also need to understand that at a time where social media reigns the world, it has become impossible to ignore the people's woes. Working together will not only be beneficial for the city, but will also prove useful in building a positive image of the party leaders.

#### **What can we expect this year?**

It is a fact that no country in the world is prepared to deal with climate change. But since the damage monsoon did to the city last year, Karachiites have witnessed a considerable improvement as a new drainage system was installed by the Sindh government. This includes storm water drains that can combat Karachi's urban rain flooding.

Throughout the year, roads were dug up and rebuilt. Also, since KMC completed its tenure, PPP was left with less opposition and more jurisdictions to cover. Numerous residents have seen roads and drainage systems being improved to avoid future flooding. This is because earlier in January 2021, the CM constituted a committee that was given the task to tackle Karachi's water problems. Rs170 million was also given to the KMC to clean the drains.

While water was spotted in several roads of DHA during the rains that occurred earlier in July last year and on September 3, 2021, there has been no instance of urban flooding in the city except in DHA and Clifton. And since Cantonment Board Clifton (CBC) is a federal body and is responsible for maintaining the infrastructure of DHA, we know just who to blame for not learning their lessons from the past.

(By Fatima Shaheen Niazi The Express Tribune, 05, 28/09/2021)

### **Karachi's civil society demands job security, safety kits for sanitation workers**

A huge number of conscientious citizens, wearing neon orange safety vests, turned up at the Abdul Sattar Edhi Avenue in Defence to march for the rights of janitors on Sunday morning.

The 'Justice for Janitors' group headed by human rights activist Naeem Sadiq demanded justice, equality and dignity for janitors all over the country. They wanted janitors in all organisations of the state to be paid the minimum wage applicable in their province regardless of the nature of their employment.

They demanded that all janitors be regularised after three months of work and be registered with Employees Old-age Benefits Institution (EOBI) and Social Security.

They said that no janitor must ever be made to enter a gutter without a safety kit including a hazmat suit, safety harnesses, ropes, breathing devices and gas testing.

*Rights activist Sadiq says janitors have been exploited, underpaid and treated like slaves*

They wanted all government advertisement for sanitary workers' jobs asking for only non-Muslims to be banned. And they wanted the manual entry of janitors for cleaning of gutters to be replaced by machines.

"The expense of the mechanical equipment for manual cleaning may be recovered by selling the large television sets that are now found in most government offices and only contribute in wasting the time and attention of the bureaucrats," Mr Sadiq told *Dawn*.

"The pillars of the state and society have let the janitors down ever since the creation of Pakistan. They have been exploited, underpaid and treated like slaves. Not a single janitor here gets the minimum wage as set by the government. They have been living in extreme poverty while being deprived of their dignity and humanity as they are made to work in the most appalling, repulsive and demeaning conditions. And people pass them by in their big luxurious cars without noticing their misery. They just accept what is going on. But we demand an extreme end to this cruelty," he added.

#### **Minimum wage not being paid to janitors**

Artist, writer and activist Rumana Husain said that the minimum wage as set by the Sindh government is Rs25,000 but the janitors are still getting far less than that. "They are getting around Rs15,000," she said.

Shabnum Abdullah, a member of the Justice for Janitors group, said they are also human beings but they have been ostracised. "Why this discrimination? These people clean our dirt. They keep us clean and we bury them in filth and turn our backs on them," she said.

MPA Rabia Azfar Nizami said that she has been writing to all government and non-governmental organisations for the rights of janitors. "I have reached out to authorities, local municipalities, cantonments, hospitals, etc., to at least pay the legal minimum wages to janitors. The chief minister had

announced Rs25,000 as minimum wage in the province but it has not happened for janitors. Even the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board, which is a government organisation, has not yet done the needful," she said.

"What to talk of government organisations, municipalities and cantonment boards, when even the industry here is not giving them their due right. There are 40,000 industries in Sindh and not a single one of them is paying the minimum wage. They also hire children. The younger a janitor, the lesser he or she is paid," she pointed out.

Zahid Farooq of the Urban Resource Centre said that because of the ill-treatment of janitors, they are reducing in numbers as the population grows.

Educationist Baela Raza Jamil said what is happening to janitors here is something to be realised by the educated people of this society to bring an end to the injustice.

Pastor Ghazala Shafiq from the Church of Pakistan said even the church is not paying due attention to the janitors who are mostly Christians. "I have been bringing up their issues in the church but so far there has been no result," she said.

Another issue that the Pastor brought up was that janitorial positions are also handed out by people who are taking their salaries.

"Someone gets a janitorial job for say, Rs20,000 and he does not do the job. Instead he calls in someone else to fill in for him on a smaller amount as he himself pockets the rest of the money and works somewhere else. This kind of handling also requires research," she pointed out.

(By Shazia Hasan Dawn, 13, 29/11/2021)

### **MNA's father among 15 die in Karachi drain gas blast**

At least 15 people were killed and 16 others injured when a building housing a private bank in the Shershah area collapsed on Saturday due to a huge gas explosion in a nullah on which it was constructed, according to officials and witnesses.

The death toll is feared to climb up, as doctors described the condition of six of the injured as serious. Among the deceased was father of the ruling party's lawmaker Alamgir Khan, Dilawar Khan, while most of others who died were bank employees or clients.

In a tweet, Prime Minister Imran Khan stated: "My heartfelt prayers & condolences go to all the families of victims of the twin blasts at Sher Shah Paracha Chowk, Karachi. I am especially saddened to hear of the loss of our MNA Alamgir Khan's father who also perished in the blast. May Allah give him strength to bear this loss."

Officials have ruled out the possibility of any sabotage or terrorist act declaring that the explosion took place due to accumulation of gases in the sewerage line. However, Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah directed the Karachi commissioner to conduct a thorough inquiry in consultation with police.

The bank building, a nearby petrol pump and some vehicles were damaged in the explosion caused by accumulation of gases in the drain underneath, officials at the Site police station said. Subsequently, they said, contingents of police, bomb disposal unit and rescue workers rushed to the spot and started retrieving the bodies from under the debris.

Dr Sabin Memon, head of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Trauma Centre at Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi, said: "Fifteen people have died in the incident." He said 16 injured were also brought for treatment. Eight of them were discharged after being provided first aid and an equal number of people were admitted for treatment. "Two of them have suffered life-threatening injuries and condition of four others is also relatively serious," he said.

The head of the trauma centre described fallen debris as the cause of death. He said no smell of chemical or explosive substance from the bodies was noticed. All the deceased and the injured were men, he added.

#### **Deceased, survivors identified**

Dr Qarar Ahmed Abbasi, Additional police surgeon at Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital, said that 13 people had been brought dead at the hospital and two died during treatment. He said the deceased were identified as Mirabat Khan, Dildar Khan, Zeeshan, Mohammed Yunis, Inamullah Shah, Shafiullah Khan, Zahid Husain, Junaid Zehri, Naseerullah Khan, Sooba Khan, Dilawar Khan, Rashid Khan, Islam Khawaja, Mohammed Shafiq and Altaf Idrees. Some of the injured were Ghulam Mustafa, Mohammed Arshad, Ghulam Akbar, Jameel Ahmed, Abdul Ghaffar, Hammad, Riaz Mehmood, Kashmir Khan and Abdul Wahab.

In a statement, Karachi police spokesperson said the explosion took place due to accumulation of gases, ruling out possibility of any sabotage or terror act. The bomb disposal squad officials, who examined the blast site minutely, also confirmed to the authorities that it was a gas explosion.

According to a BDS report reviewed by Dawn, the blast occurred inside the sewerage line at the private bank and petrol pump near Shershah's Paracha Chowk. The bank offices and nearby showroom offices were badly damaged 'due to sewerage line gas blast', causing loss of human lives, according to the report.

DIG (South) Sharjeel Kharal said police investigators had collected CCTV footage from the damaged building of the private bank and nearby place. Samples of the debris from the bank and the drain was also obtained and sent for a forensic analysis, he said, a proper investigation was under way.

An Edhi Foundation spokesperson whose ambulances shifted the bodies to the hospital said that almost all the victims were either employees of the bank or customers.

Area police officer Zafar Ali Shah recalled that a similar sewerage line explosion had claimed one life and damaged a restaurant in the same area some months ago. He recalled that a notice had been served to the bank to vacate the place, as it was situated on the drain.

Minister for Information and Labour Saeed Ghani told the media that the bank building was constructed 'illegally' on the drain and rented out by the industrial association, SITE.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 01, 19/12/2021)

### Work to revamp Mahmoodabad Nullah finalised

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Saturday said that foreign investors had shown keen interest to become part of the Karachi Circular Railway project and the government was considering all possible options before picking up the best to complete it in two years.

Addressing a ceremony to mark the restoration and revamping of Mahmoodabad Nullah, he said that the completion of the major drain under the Prime Minister's Rs1.1 trillion Karachi Transformation Plan was a reflection of the federal government's commitment for development of the metropolis.

"When the Karachi Transformation Plan was announced in September 2020, we marked three nullahs for restoration to modernise the city's drainage system and keep it safe from urban flooding during rains," he said.

"This Mahmoodabad nullah is one of them and the work is also under progress on two others drains — Orangi Nullah and Gujjar Nullah. So Karachiites should know that all the projects under the KTP including freight corridor, water supply through K-IV and KCR would be completed within the stipulated time," he said.

He said that the port city's betterment did not fall within the ambit of the federal government, yet Prime Minister Imran Khan gave special attention to Karachi.

Minister for Maritime Affairs Ali Zaidi was also present.  
(By Newspaper's Staff Reporter, Dawn, 13, 19/12/2021)

### Karachi explosion

IN Karachi, the sad truth is that decades of haphazard growth and flouting of civic codes have created death traps across this vast, unwieldy city. Saturday's blast in the Shershah area has once again illustrated this painful reality. At the time of writing, 17 people had been confirmed dead in the tragedy.

While investigation is underway to determine the exact cause of the explosion under the building built atop a sewerage drain, the bomb disposal squad has said leakage of sewer gases may have been responsible for the blast. The tragic fact is that in Karachi, it doesn't need an act of terrorism to cause mass casualties; decades of civic neglect and official apathy have created a disfigured city where hazards are always lurking around the corner. The deadly results of this negligence manifest themselves often enough.

Buildings erected on drains, encroachments blocking the natural flow of rainwater and structures built without regard to safety features or fire hazards result in frequent tragedies in the metropolis, with the authorities promising to get tough after every incident, but in reality doing little to change the situation on the ground.

The fact is that 'fixing' Karachi is a gargantuan task, as the city has been left to its own devices by successive federal and provincial governments. Structures built on drains or posing other safety hazards are in their hundreds, if not thousands.

A few months ago, a portion of the KMC's Jubilee Market caved in, while there have been a number of deadly building collapses in the recent past. So the million-dollar question is: where does one begin to address decades of civic neglect in the metropolis? Perhaps there needs to be a thorough survey involving independent experts along with officials conducted to spot major hazards in the city, such as dangerous buildings or structures built on drains and other infrastructural hazards.

Thereafter, a rational plan needs to be followed whereby structures which pose a threat to human lives are brought down. In the long run, an elected, honest and professional civic administration is needed in the megacity that brooks no corruption, and puts the emphasis on safety and enforcement of civic codes. And while the Sindh government has passed an ordinance to regularise buildings, such legal instruments should in no way be allowed to green-light dangerous construction so that tragedies such as the Shershah episode are not repeated.  
(By Editorial, Dawn, 06, 20/12/2021)

### Investigators unclear about cause of Shershah drain blast

Investigators probing the Shershah drain blast have decided to send several pieces of evidence collected from the scene to two labs for a forensic examination to determine the exact cause of the explosion, it emerged on Monday.

On Dec 18, a blast believed to have caused by accumulation of gases in a sewerage line that destroyed a building housing a private bank and other office killing 17 people.

As investigators were not sure about a preliminary report submitted by the bomb disposal squad that exiting of gases from the drain running underneath the building caused the blast, they decided to widen the scope of investigation.

DIG-South Sharjeel Kharal on Monday chaired a meeting to review the progress so far made in the case.

*Samples being sent to KU and Lahore labs for forensics; authorities demolishing structures built on nullah*

Talking to Dawn, the DIG said they decided to seek cooperation and help of other institutions as well for investigation purpose to ascertain the possible causes of the explosion and its deadline.

He said they also held a meeting with the Punjab's Forensic Science Agency's experts and sought guidelines from them about collection of evidence and its proper packaging for sending to them.

He said that 'main evidence' would be sent to Lahore while some other pieces would be sent to a forensic lab of Karachi University to determine the cause of the explosion.

**Doubts over SSGC version**

Besides, it was also under investigation whether a gas line of the Sui Southern Gas Company passed through the area or not, the DIG said.

Initially, the SSGC had claimed that their gas line did not pass through the area, but one of the top investigators said that this might not be true as it had been noticed institutions concerned tended to absolve themselves from any responsibility in case of such tragedies.

The DIG said they would approach environmental experts to assess the possibility of the existence of gas in the atmosphere to determine as to why the blast was so deadly.

He said the investigators would expose any institution or the bank concerned if found negligent during the course of their probe.

Also on Monday, a team of investigators led by Keamari SSP (Investigation) Abdullah Memon visited the scene and told reporters that the police had not concluded yet that the leakage of gases in the sewerage line triggered the explosion.

He said it would also be determined as to how the building was constructed on a 14-foot-wide nullah (drain). He said the investigators had asked the district administration not to demolish the remaining portion of the building as they were still collecting evidence.

**Removal of encroachments from drain begins**

The district administration has also started removing encroachments from the drain after the tragedy.

Deputy Commissioner-Keamari Mukhtiar Abro told the media that Shershah drain would be cleared from encroachments up to the Lyari river.

He said encroachments on the other side of the drain were being removed and when police investigators allowed them, they would also destroy the remaining part of the ill-fated building.

SITE Managing Director Munawar Ali Mahesar told the media that the statement of the SSGC about the absence of a gas line was 'misleading'.

He claimed that the allotment of the building that housed the private bank branch was cancelled earlier this month.

The DIG-South said total 13 employees were posted in the bank but on Saturday only half of the staffs were working. He said total 17 persons, including five employees of the bank, died in the explosion.

(By Imtiaz Ali Dawn, 13, 21/12/2021)

**MPAs concerned over non-functional effluent treatment plants**

Members of the provincial parliamentary task force on sustainable development goals (SDGs) on Wednesday expressed serious concern over the non-functioning of effluent treatment plants in the entire province.

Speaking at a meeting of the task force at the Sindh Assembly building, they also emphasised the need for measures to control the leakage of methane gas from LNG terminals around Karachi coast.

Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) Director General Naeem Ahmed Mughal informed the meeting that an estimated 470 million gallons per day (mgd) industrial and municipal waste from Karachi was directly disposed of into the sea without any treatment. Of the 470mgd waste, 80 per cent was sewage and 20pc was industrial waste.

*Sepa chief informs task force on SDGs that city's 470mgd industrial, municipal waste directly released into sea*

Mr Mughal told the meeting that the government planned to install seven combined effluent treatment plants (CETP) in the city's industrial zones, but none of them was working.

"The Karachi Water and Sewerage Board (KWSB) is the implementation agency for CETP and Sepa has a regulatory role," he said. He expressed concerns over the situation in other major cities of Sindh where, he said, industrial and municipal waste was directly discharged into the Indus river or its canals.

He pointed out that all municipal and industrial sewage from Hyderabad was directly disposed of into Phuleli Canal without any treatment.

"The industrial effluent from the industries of Kotri is discharged into KB Feeder, which supplies drinking water to Karachi via Keenjhar Lake," he said.

He said that Sepa closed down a cement factory in the Nooriabad industrial area for two months and only allowed it to operate when the management installed an air treatment plant.

He maintained that Sepa was trying to implement the Sindh Environmental Quality Standards (SEQS) and had closed down many industries, which were non-compliant to the standards.

"During the last three years, 209 treatment plants have been installed in the industries in Karachi, and 50 more water treatment plants are being installed," he added.

The Sepa chief was also asked by the chairman of the task force to give a detailed briefing to other members of the assembly.

**Pakistan most vulnerable to climate change**

In another presentation, environmental expert Nasir Panhwar said that Pakistan was fifth most vulnerable country to climate change, water scarcity and extreme events in particular.

According to Mr Panhwar, damages and losses resulting from natural disasters in Pakistan over the past decade had exceeded \$10 billion.

“Sindh is facing environmental challenges due to climate change,” he said, adding that the sea level along Karachi coast had risen approximately 10 centimetres in the last century and was expected to further rise by 60cm by the end of the century.

He said that low-lying coastal areas in Indus Delta were facing sea intrusion, which destroyed millions of acres of the land.

He said a climate change policy had been drafted, but was waiting for the approval.

Director of The Knowledge Forum Zeenia Shaukat said that about 80pc of the country’s energy came from fossil fuel-based means, and very little attention has been paid to generate energy from renewables.

She pointed out that persistent events such as heatwaves, regular flash floods, reduction in water resources and dwindling agriculture resources emphasised the need for stronger institutional action on climate change.

Another environmental expert, Jameel Junejo, said that due to the shortage of natural gas in the country, the government was developing Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals to supply gas via pipes to different parts of the country.

“Two LNG terminals have been developed and five are under construction. LNG is considered an environmentally safe fuel, but when it is handled and converted from liquid shape to gas for supply through pipes, methane gas is leaked which is dangerous for the environment. Methane gas leakage is more dangerous for the environment and human health than the emission coming out from other fossil fuel plants,” he said.

“In the energy mix, Pakistan is producing only three per cent of energy from renewables, whereas at least 30pc of energy should be produced from renewable,” he said.

The meeting was attended by task force chairman Pir Mujeeb ul Haque, MPAs Saeed Afridi, Farhat Seemi, Kalsoom Chandio, Shahzad Qureshi, Arsalan Taj Ghumman, Ghazala Siyal and Heer Soho.

(By PPI Dawn, 13, 23/12/2021)