

Next phase of drive against encroachments to start in mid-April

The Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) will start the next phase of the anti-encroachment drive in the city in the middle of April in order to clear the city of all kinds of illegal structures, The News has learnt from KMC Anti-Encroachment Senior Director Bashir Siddiqi.

According to Siddiqi, the next anti-encroachment operations will start from Old City areas of Karachi, in which the areas of Lea Market and Akbar Market will be focused. The KMC plans to remove all the encroachments on roads, drains, footpaths and parks during the drive.

When asked about the issue of debris of illegal constructions, which were razed in the earlier anti-encroachment operations, still lying all over the city and whether the new phase of the drive would aggravate the issue, the KMC officer said the corporation had not been able to remove all the debris because of financial constraints.

“We are facing a serious financial crisis,” Siddiqi claimed, adding that the Supreme Court (SC) had ordered the Sindh government to pay Rs200 million to the KMC but till date the provincial government had paid only Rs50 million of the dues. According to him, it was because of financial reasons, the KMC had to delay the next phase of the drive.

The anti-encroachment drive in the city was started by the KMC on November 11 last year at the Empress Market in Saddar. The corporation utilised heavy machinery in the drive and sought help from law enforcement agencies, including the range police, traffic police and Rangers.

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar cannot perform his job without money, Siddiqi remarked. The KMC officer explained that the new phase of the drive, like the earlier phase, would be carried out on the orders of the SC. He added that the KMC had submitted a detailed report to the apex court on the operations against encroachments.

According to Siddiqi, the mayor had to take a lot of flak for just obeying the SC. Akhtar was wrongly accused of targeting a particular community, he said, adding that the mayor also kept his promise of providing alternative shops to shopkeepers displaced due to the anti-encroachment drive.

Let me make it clear that encroachments on nullahs, footpaths and parks will not be spared at any cost, Siddiqi asserted.

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