

No relief for Karachiites as 12-hour power outages continue in several areas

Despite K-Electric's (KE) assurances on June 26 to Sindh Governor Imran Ismail that unannounced load-shedding in the city would come to an end in 48 hours and an increase in the power supply from the national grid from the usual supply of 650 megawatts (MW) to 800MW, the load-shedding of more than 12 hours continues in the city unabated.

Several areas of the city braved eight to 12 hours of power outages on Saturday. In the wee hours of the day, most areas of the city were without power.

Residents of Pak Colony, in particular, spent a sleepless night on footpaths due to the warm temperature. "It's so hot. How can we sit inside homes?" asked one of the residents of the area. He added that no one wanted to see women sitting on footpaths. "Inside our homes, without fans, it's like sitting in an oven," he pointed explained.

Another resident said they were sleeping out on roads but could not bring women and children. It is pertinent to mention here that the gathering of people on the footpaths and roads is dangerous during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, many COVID-19 patients in self-isolation could not come out of their homes even during the power outages. In Karachi's North Karachi area, the load-shedding continued even after midnight. One of the residents, Sibte Hassan, complained that when he reached home from his work late in the night daily, he had to suffer power cuts. "There's no generator or UPS at my home and one cannot sleep without electricity in home," he lamented.

Earlier, the governor had also expressed his serious displeasure at the KE's failure to live up to its commitment made with him on June 26 that the unannounced power load-shedding in Karachi would end in the next 48 hours. He held a meeting at the Governor House on Friday on the lingering electricity crisis in the city. The meeting was also attended by lawmakers and leaders of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Muttahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan and Grand Democratic Alliance and KE CEO Moonis Abdullah Alvi, while Federal Energy Minister Umer Ayub Khan attended the session from Islamabad via video-link.

It was told in the meeting that the gas supply for the privatised power utility of the city had increased from 190 MMCFD to 250-280 MMCFD. The federal minister said that the KE should readily address the power woes of the residents of Karachi.

KE, on the other hand, has written a letter to the governor and asked for a meeting with him and other stakeholders. The power utility said they wanted to eliminate any confusion regarding their investment and further projects. It added that work on a 900MW power plant was under way and by 2021, it would start producing power.

PTI's protest

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) parliamentarians from Karachi will stage a protest outside the K-Electric's (KE) office against the prolonged unannounced load-shedding and overbilling tomorrow (Monday).

In a joint statement, PTI MNA Aftab Siddiqui who is also the party's central joint secretary, Fahim Khan, Sindh MPAs Jamal Siddiqui, Ali Aziz, Saeed Afridi, Raja Azhar, Bilal Ghaffar, Riaz Haider, Shahnawaz Jadoon, Rabistan Khan, Sidra Imran and others said the party would set up a protest camp outside the KE office from Monday onwards against the power crisis and 'overbilling' by the city's power utility.

"K-Electric has not fulfilled its promises. The people of Karachi have elected us and we cannot leave the citizens in trouble," they said.

The PTI legislators said KE had increased the tariff and put the people in more trouble and it had become a mafia for the people of Karachi.

"In case of non-stop load-shedding and overbilling by K-Electric, we will approach the Supreme Court and save the people from the torment of forced load-shedding", they said.