

PQA industry owners summoned over dumping of effluent into sea

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A Supreme Court-appointed judicial commission issued the Port Qasim Authority (PQA) chairman and the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) director general with notices on Wednesday after taking notice of the discharge of untreated industrial waste into the sea within the industrial zone of the PQA.

Headed by Justice (retd) Amir Hani Muslim, the commission investigating the non-provision of potable water, proper sanitation facilities and healthy environment to Sindh's people visited the PQA after receiving complaints from different quarters.

The PQA chairman briefed the judicial body on the three industrial zones within the limits of the authority. He said the plots were allotted to the industries by the PQA on the condition that the industries would install pre-treatment plants before making the industries functional.

The chairman said that most of the industries that discharge untreated effluent directly into the sea do not have pre-treatment plants within their premises. He showed the commission different pipes through which untreated waste is dumped into the sea.

He said Orient Textiles, Denim Textile and Agha Steel had been penalised, but neither did they pay the penalty nor did they stop dumping untreated industrial effluent into the sea. He also said that almost all the industries within the industrial zone of the PQA, in spite of being issued with notices by the PQA as well as Sepa, do not care about draining industrial waste directly into the sea.

The commission issued notices to all the industry owners who do not have pre-treatment plants installed to appear before the judicial body and explain their position on the discharge of untreated industrial effluent into the sea. Notices were also issued to the PQA chairman and the Sepa DG. The commission ordered that the notices be served through the Malir senior superintendent of police for June 20.

Storm water drains

Regarding the cleaning of storm water drains, the commission said the SC had directed Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar to ensure that the work was completed within a month.

Akhtar said that 38 larger drains fall under the domain of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC), while more than 550 feeder drains that culminate into the bigger drains come under the jurisdiction of various district municipal corporations (DMCs). He told the judicial body that the provincial government had provided funds to the KMC, and that the process of cleaning storm water drains had been started. The

commission said that the entire exercise would not bear any fruit until the DMCs clear their drains as well, observing that every DMC was reportedly facing an acute shortage of funds.

The judicial body said that the DMCs, in consultation with the relevant deputy commissioners, had identified the trouble spots and drawn up their demands, which were sent to the local government secretary so funds could be allocated for cleaning storm water drains.

The commission directed the LG secretary to put in place a joint monitoring mechanism by the DMCs and the DCs for transparent and judicious use of these resources, and to submit a weekly performance report to the judicial body's registrar.