

The Journey from Kolachi to City District Government of Karachi

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Abstract: Karachi being metropolitan city and port was the obvious choice for becoming the Capital in 1947. However, General Ayub Khan, during his presidency, realized the political volatility and economic hustle bustle of Karachi founded a new City; Islamabad which is peaceful and easily accessible from all parts of the country. Demographic studies about the city also show us that it has accommodated and still accommodates people of all ethnicities, faiths, religions and cultures of Pakistan. This has led to the multiplication of population in Karachi, raising its population count from 3.0 million people in 1947 to over 23.5 million and still counting. Thus increased population, urbanization and diversity leads to administrative complexities to which the National Reconstruction Bureau under Devolution of Power Plan 2000 tried to provide solutions. Research highlighted the fact that Karachi is paying cost of its increased diversified functions in terms of densification and overburdened and dilapidated infrastructure.

The following study is an attempt to highlight the historical journey from Kolachi to City District Government of Karachi. On the basis of reviewed literature, this paper is organized into three sections. First part focuses on the brief but comprehensive introduction of the Administrative overview from 1839 to 1947. The second part discussed the changing role of Karachi Municipality to City District Government of 2000. A summary of problems and future challenges to Karachi would be discussed in the last section of the study.

It is expected that the results of this work would not only facilitate the scholars, experts of social sciences and historians but it would be also a massive contribution for the students in this field. Moreover, the insights may also help to plan more effective strategies to increase social services in non-urban areas. Ultimately it will open new avenues for further research to provide relevant information to the civil society and hence will remain a subject of common interest and beneficial to general public.

Key words: Kolachi, Devolution of Power Plan, National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB), City District Government of Karachi

I. Introduction

Popularly known today as "City of lights", Karachi was previously known to the world by many other names; one such name was Kolachi. The Greeks knew it as Krokola while the Arabs called it Debal, after Muhammad Bin Qasim entered Sind¹ via this place in 712 A.D.

During 1720s Karachi became the port for Talpur Dynasty marking the start of its Golden Era; similarly during the Kalhora Dynasty regime, a very famous woman from a Sindi-Baluchi clan named Mai Kolachi settled here and started her fishery and family here as well. The fishery grew into a fishing village and became known as Kolachi Jo Goth in Sindi meaning the village of Kolachi. This village established trading ties across the Arabian Sea with Muscat and towards the Persian Gulf; actively trading its produce with them.

During the middle ages of development in Pakistan each town was defined into wards. Each ward had a mosque that acted as the community center for the ward. With each mosque a Maktab was attached. There was an Amir-e-Mohalla acting as the spokesperson of the people in every mosque. It was during this time that Karachi attracted largest migration due to partition of subcontinent thus boasting it. What started as a small fisherman village has now become one of the most densely populated city of Pakistan with millions of people earning their livelihoods and striving to make their dreams come true.

Administrative Overview from 1839 to 1947

On 3rd February 1839, Karachi was captured by British East India Company with a vision to develop it as a major port of the region. Karachi was named capital city of Sindh in 1840 and in 1843, whole of Sind was captured by the British Army commanded by Sir Charles Napier.

¹ Changed from Sind to Sindh under The Sindh Amendment Laws 2002

In 1846 Karachi was hit by the worst natural calamity of Cholera, which made way for the formation of its first administrative unit. Sir Charles Napier initiated establishment of the Board of Conservancy consisting of high level Civil and Military officers.

Sind came under commissioner regime and was annexed to Bombay in 1847; Robert Keith Pringle became first commissioner of Sind. It is said that then there were only 9,000 citizens in Karachi. The Conservancy Board transformed itself into Municipal Commission in 1852 and later in 1853 Karachi Municipal Commission was upgraded as Karachi Municipal Committee and still later as Karachi Municipal Corporation.

Towards the end of Napier's rule, Karachi along with whole of Sind was made part of the Bombay Presidency. This angered native Sindis; shaping their feelings of antipathy toward the government. In 1880 Karachi's major population consisted of native Sindis and Baluchis with Sindhi being their first language.

In Karachi Sir Bartle Frere was appointed as a second commissioner. He was a natural administrator and a perfect successor to Sir Charles Napier. Sir Frere was much interested in establishing a Municipal system for Karachi to bring improvements in its sanitation system. Thus on April 13th, 1852 through "Imperial Act XXVI", Karachi Municipal Commission was established.

The first managing committee of Municipal Corporation of Karachi, consisted of three members namely Captain Preedy, as revenue collector, Mr. John Macleod, as collector of customs and Mr. Naomal, a famous merchant of Sind. Their main duty was to inspect the town daily and ensure cleanliness. This Karachi Municipality introduced the system of taxation on Housing which set an example for other cities and also marked as the beginning of District Taxation in Local Government and their Finances in sub-continent.

Later, in 1873 Bombay District Municipal Act was regularized and later extended to Sind and all urban areas of Karachi in 1878. The foundation of Karachi Municipal Corporation building was laid in 1927 which was completed in 1932. In 1933 Karachi Municipal Act was disseminated and Municipality of Karachi was upgraded to Municipal Corporation of Karachi and positions of President and Vice President were replaced with Mayor and Deputy Mayor respectively. The Corporation represented different communities residing in Karachi consisted of 57 councilors. Mr. Jamshed Nasserwanji was elected the first Mayor of the city in 1933; formerly being an elected president for nearly 20 years.

In 1936 Sind was separated from Bombay Presidency and was awarded the status of a Province. This started an era of governors with the appointment of Sir Lenslit Graham as first governor of Sind. Mr. R.E. Gibson was the last commissioner of Sind following which in 1937 Sind Assembly was constituted. Sir Dow became governor in 1941; since Second World War was in progress at this time he did not pay much attention to civil issues and kept himself busy with military affairs which neglected development of this region. However Dow Medical College; the first medical college in the Province was founded by him.

During this first period of commissioners, Karachi developed much and left many other Indian cities behind. A fair number of educational institutes were established in Karachi and Imports and Exports were handled on a large scale. Along with various foreign companies many Hindu, Muslim and Parsi traders also established their offices in Karachi. The National Bank of India, the Simla Bank, the Agra Bank, the Mercantile Bank of India and the Chartered Bank were also established in Karachi providing good employment opportunities to local population. Sind Railways Project was initiated thus providing employment to a large number of engineers, surveyors, workers, peons and porters. With the extension of Railway tracks, auxiliary staff too was recruited; since at that time silver coins were used for transactions, the Railway project reached a point where one hundred thousand silver coins were needed to disburse salaries of its employees only. This period can be referred to as The Golden Era of economic activity in Karachi, as many rich Muslims, Hindus and Parsis emerged as prominent residents of this city. Thus in 1937 British Parliament passed a new Act allowing East India Company to lay Railway tracks in Punjab along with Sind to connect Multan, Lahore and Amritsar with economic activities of Karachi, establishing it as the hub of commercialism in sub-continent. During this period, many big bungalows, parks, golf course, race course, hospitals, markets, libraries, halls and huge commercial complexes were built in this region.

The second period of commissioners in Karachi stretched over about 25 years, starting from 1890 till 1915. Sir James, Robert Giles, Younghusband and William Henry Locus served as commissioners in this period. The serious epidemic of Plague broke out in the city, during this period. Over these 25 years all the washer-men of the city were moved to Baghdadi Mohalla from their old Dhobi Ghat, and Kumhars were allocated homes in Kumhar Wara. The Municipality built many new roads and localities. Dhayaram Jethumal established D. J. College in 1885, first in two rooms and later to its present location. D. J. College was the first College in Sind. This period saw an increase in the educated population of Karachi City and a British Company started printing a newspaper by the name of "Daily Gazette", to support the policies of its government.

During the First World War in 1914, William Henry Locus (1913-1916) was commissioner of Karachi. He declared Karachi as base of Military Movements, as it was the nearest seaport from Europe and Middle East. This move of William Henry Locus made supply of arms and ammunition closer to the fighting British Army. Alongside, specialized hospitals for injured army personnel and other infrastructural developments such as

construction of McKinnon McKenzie Building, Customs House, British Steam Navigation Office Complex, Military and Naval Barracks and Rest houses for Military elite were established in this era.

During the third period of commissioners many newspapers in different languages started publishing. Ameer Amanullah started the first Urdu daily newspaper of Karachi, named "Azadi". Sir Francis Mudie was the last Governor of Sind before independence in 1947. Following independence Sheikh Ghulam Hussain took oath as the first governor of post colonial Sind.

The following tables give an overview of the work of commissioners posted in Sind:

Table — 01 First Period of Commissioners in Sind:

| Year | Commissioner | Achievement/ Landmarks |
|------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1847- 1851 | Robert Keith Pringle | Construction of Karachi Port and roads of good quality for the better flow of traffic. |
| 1851- 1856 | Sir. H. Bartle Frere | First government Newspaper started its publication. Karachi Municipal Corporation started working. Construction of Karachi Railway Station began. Frere Hall was built in his memory. |
| 1857- 1858 | General John Jacob | This was the most turbulent period. Due to insurrections and the mutiny no major work could be done. |
| 1859- 1862 | Jonathan Inveriority Duncan | Powers of commissioners were upgraded. Inveriority road in Saddar is named after him. |
| 1862- 1867 | Samuel Mansfield | Many welfare works carried out during his tenure. Mansfield Import Yard was build and named after him. Mansfield street in sadder is named after him too. |
| 1867- 1877 | Major Sir William Lockyer Merewether | Karachi developed significantly during these 10 years. Police Department was finally organized. Merewether Tower of Karachi was built and named after him. |
| 1877- 1878 | Francis Dawes Melville | Worked as temporary acting commissioner |
| 1878- 1879 | Sir James B. Pile | Served as acting commissioner of Sind |
| 1879- 1887 | Henry Napier Bruce Erskine | Many development and welfare works under his leadership. Bruce road has been named after him |
| 1888- 1889 | Charles Bradley Pritchard | A training College was established during his days. Reforms were also introduced in the Department of Excise and Taxation. Pritchard road is named after him |
| 1889- 1890 | Arthur Charles Trevor | Many development work took place during his tenure |

Table — 02 Third Period of Commissioners in Sind:

| | |
|------------|------------------------|
| 1916- 1920 | Henry Stanley Lawrence |
| 1920- 1925 | John Louis Rieu |
| 1925- 1926 | P.R. Cadel |
| 1926- 1929 | Walter Frank Hudson |
| 1929- 1931 | G. A. Thomas |
| 1936 | R. E. Gibson |

II. Karachi Municipality:

The first government in Karachi City was a Conservancy Board established to control the spread of Cholera in 1846; in 1852 this board became a Municipal Commission and later in 1853 it was upgrade to a Municipal Committee. In 1933 after the passing of Karachi Municipal Act the Municipal Committee became Municipal Corporation of Karachi consisting of a Mayor, Deputy Mayor and 57 Councilors.

In 1947 the then Mayor of Karachi Hakim Ehsan received Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah at Karachi's Airport; at that time approximately 2,103 km (812 sq. miles) of Karachi were established as Federal Capital territory of Pakistan. Later in 1958 capital of Pakistan was shifted to Rawalpindi and in 1960 Islamabad was finally established as Capital of Pakistan. During the 1960s Karachi had both a Municipal Corporation and a Karachi Divisional Council; major functions and responsibilities of these two authorities included development of plans for colleges, schools, parks and municipal gardens. In addition to these Karachi Divisional Council had a special and separate committee responsible for planning development of roads, educational institutions and residential societies. In 1961, Karachi became a part of West Pakistan; however Municipal Corporation remained intact. In 1976 Karachi Municipal Corporation was upgraded to Karachi Metropolitan Corporation and later in 1987 Zonal Municipal Committees were formed to assist Metropolitan Corporation; however these committees were dissolved in 1994. In 1996 the metropolitan area was divided into 5 districts and District Municipal Corporations (D.M.C.) were established.

III. Karachi under District Municipal Corporations:

With the expansion of Karachi its administration also became difficult; there were major labor struggles during the 70s, influx of Afghan refugees due to a proxy war with former Soviet Union in the 80s and ethnic violence in the city during the 90s; all contributed to Administrative difficulties of Karachi.

Owing to these difficulties, on August 14th, 2001, the then President General Pervaiz Musharraf, passed a Devolution of Power Plan which gave way to the establishment of City District Government Karachi. Under this new administrative structure Karachi was divided into 18 towns and 178 Union Councils with elected heads. This study proceeds with the discussion of the administrative changes made to the structure of Karachi.

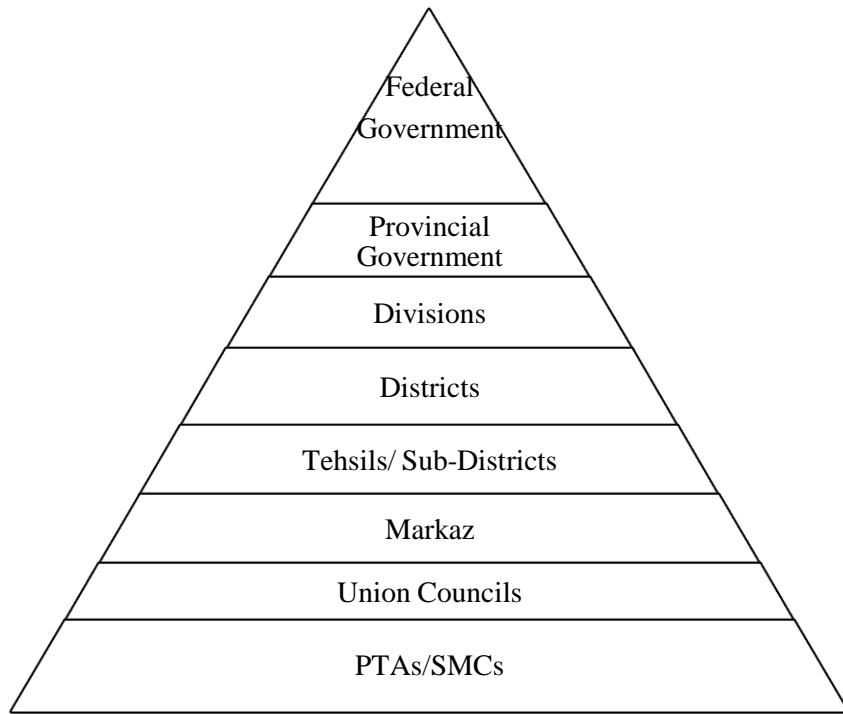
IV. Karachi under Devolution of Power Plan

For 54 years Pakistan including Karachi remained under colonial and colonially inherited administrative system; which was pyramidal in nature; broad at the bottom and narrowing towards top. It consisted of well-structured geographical tiers and good bureaucratic control.

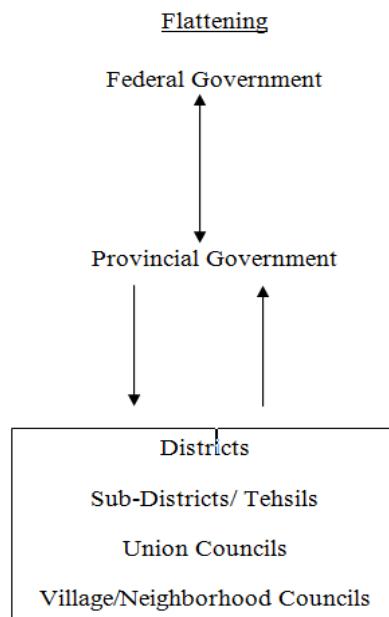
In the Figure below pre and post Devolution Plan, structures are depicted:

Figure — 01 Pre-Devolution Administration

Classical Pyramid



Post Devolution Administration



V. Problems faced by Karachi

Over the years people have come to Karachi from other low lying parts of the country to earn their livelihoods and fulfill their dreams. The current population of Karachi stands at 23.5 million and is continuing to grow with each passing day. The city contains 62 per cent of Sindh's urban population, 30 per cent of its total population and 22 per cent of all Pakistan's urban population (Government of Pakistan census reports, 1998). This dream land has a darker side to it and only people living in the city know what problems they face daily. However, some of the most prominent problems are listed below:

- First and foremost there is the problem of an ever growing population. A large number of people from all over Pakistan migrate to Karachi in search of economic opportunities. This problem only leads to the many other problems the city is currently facing. The population of this city continues to grow endlessly.
- Because of constant rise in population of this city, there is a lack of proper residential Schemes. Development is ongoing however it is unable to match the rapid population growth of the city.
- There is lack of proper transportation. Although the Green CNG Bus service started during the period of Mr. Naimatullah Khan was a fresh air breather; it became a symbol of neglect during the period of Mr. Mustafa Kamal. Similarly the highly trumpeted Mass Transit System never saw the light of day. To solve these problems citizens have resorted to private transport a system which is leading to traffic congestion. Also the building of wider roads and marked highways has not been able to cater the ever growing traffic. The traffic congestion seems to be growing with the growing population.
- Since Karachi is the economic hub of the country, pollution and its hazards are on the rise. Also heavy traffic and an increase in rickshaws and motorcycles are adding to the air and noise pollution in the city. The city is almost always surrounded by smog and has been experiencing less rainfall with each passing year. Sewerage, water and garbage dumped all over the city are also affecting sanitation, noise and air pollution. The residents of Karachi are living under serious health hazards.
- In past few years Karachi has also become the hub of street crimes. Every day the newspaper is full of news items such as target killing, mobile snatching robberies and theft. Every third person in the city now has a firsthand experience of a theft or robbery and is the eye witness of a target killing shoot out. This is instilling fear complex in the citizens and develops a sense of perpetual insecurity.
- The constant rise in population is also raising the consumption of power resources, in turn resulting in long hours of power outages and power theft. Similarly an increased use of water resources is resulting in water shortage. Some plans were devised to cater these problems but these were politicized and met the fate of Green CNG Bus project.
- Disparity between elite and working classes is on the increase. Karachi faces threat of a rising urban inequality.
- All sorts of Mafias also seem to be operating in this city. These unseen forces are also hindering the development of the city by controlling Mafia, transport Mafia and water tankers Mafia among others etc.

- Corruption is also on the rise in the city. Everyone is trying to take advantage of their position and power, be it an ordinary school admission or a high level Police Ranking transfer; each has an aspect of corruption to it. Merit is not the policy of those managing the affairs of Karachi as they are not elected and responsible to the people.

VI. Future Constraints and Challenges

Karachi is a nucleus for all forces and one can easily foresee internal and external threats to this piece of land. It is industrial base, generates 15% of national GDP, 25% federal revenues and 62% of income tax (Master Plan Group of Offices (MPGO), 2007). Federal government exercises its powerful role in the city in form of Karachi Port Trust (KPT), Port Qasim and Customs and Civil Aviation Authority. Moreover, the conflict of land management and ownership among federal and provincial government and many sovereign entities is quite visible in Karachi.

The governance pattern of Karachi is highly affected by its ethnic composition. The Sindhi speaking population feels dejected in their own province (Khan, 2002). This is evident from the fact that in 1941, 73% Karachi's population mother tongue was one of the provincial languages i.e. Sindhi, Balochi and Gujrati, 6.2% regarded Urdu or Hindi as their mother tongue and only 2.8% spoke Punjabi. By 1998, local language spoken population was reduced to only 14 per cent of residents, 48.52 per cent spoke Urdu, 14 per cent spoke Punjabi and 11.42 per cent spoke Pashto (Calculated from the government of Pakistan census reports, 1998). This transitional aspect of Karachi has never given any serious consideration by our policy makers and politicians at any level, therefore, resentments are accumulating in many hearts.

Moreover, the SLGO 2001 devolved power from province to city; from Sindhi speaking elites of Sindh to Urdu speaking dominants in Karachi. Moreover, this new structural arrangement was also rejected by the orthodox colonial bureaucratic power structure of Pakistan. Later in 2008, this ordinance was suspended and Karachi brought back under the control of province.

However Karachi is not all that dark as after all it is known as the city of lights. In the ten years of Devolution of Power Plan — 2000, Karachi experienced most of its development in the form of new roads, highways and efficient, effective and cost friendly transport. Also this plan through its structural changes aroused a sense of ownership and participation amongst citizens. Research suggests that in spite of all its problems, Karachi does have the potential to make speedy developments and compete with highly developed cities of the world. Recently Karachi is ready to go under electoral process under Local Government Act 2013 with the consensus of all major political parties.

It is a known fact that Karachi has a pluralist power structure. Its social and economic division into planned and unplanned areas has potential conflicts which demand peace building strategies. Competition over resources and public services and the interplay between political parties and interest groups alienates the city into considerable degree. Moreover, arms and drugs mafia along with sectarian and ethnic roots also curtailed the economic advancements. Therefore, new elected local bodies will have multiple challenges that need serious and urgent response.

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