

Environment  
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Shooting of protesting citizen in Sheikhpura

# Paper mills still polluting canal

■ EPD officials estimate pollution has caused about Rs 500m damage

By Shahnawaz Khan

**LAHORE:** The Flying Paper Mills in Sheikhpura, whose officials are accused in the murder of a citizen protesting at their pollution, is still dumping effluent into the Khanpur Canal, sources in the district Environment Protection Department (EPD) and Irrigation Department told Daily Times.

Three officials of the Flying Paper Mills and three policemen were named in the FIR relating to the shooting on August 4 of Tabasum Javed Kalyar, a local landowner, during a demonstration on GT Road near Baway Di Kutiya village in Sheikhpura.

Mr Kalyar had given evidence in a case against the mill's administration submitted by the department, police sources

told Daily Times. He had also filed a petition in the Lahore High Court against the administration of Flying Paper Mills and some Sheikhpura policemen and had received death threats from them as a result, according to Mr Kalyar's family.

EPD officials said Flying Paper Mills was still dumping untreated effluent in Khanpur Canal. They said the EPD Sheikhpura office had sent a case to a tribunal with a site inspection report, water sample report and a report of poisonous smoke emitted by the mill for further action. They said according to the water analysis report, the water in the canal was not fit for human or animal consumption, had killed aquatic life and damaged crops.

Officials of the Sheikhpura Irrigation Department said the effluent from Flying

Paper Mills had damaged 251,760 acres in more than 500 villages in the 152 miles between Khanpur and Kot Saeed Wala, which includes two Irrigation Department sub-division, Sheikhpura and Mangtanwala. This cost an estimated Rs 503.5 million in lost wheat and rice.

Local farmers said waste from the factory had damaged their lands. "Normally we get around 45 to 50 mounds (1,800-2,000 kg) rice or wheat per acre, but the wastewater and poisonous smoke from the mills has damaged the crops and now we only expect 25 to 30 mounds (1,000-1,200 kg) per acre," they said. The officials said they would soon take action against Flying Paper Mills and another 20 mills in the area that were polluting.

Irrigation Department and EPD officials sealed Flying Paper Mills for pollut-

ing the canal a couple of years ago, but it reopened 18 months later when the administration promised to set up a waste treatment plant. However, they did not build a plant and continued dumping waste into the canal.

On August 4, Baway Da Kutiya village was invaded by 200 policemen who herded villagers into their homes while labourers began extending a pipe from the mills to the village's main drain.

The villagers, fearing that the mills planned to dump waste directly into their main drain, came out of their homes and began protesting. Mr Kalyar joined the protest on the Lahore-Sheikhpura road. Police tear-gassed the protesters, who threw stones in response.

Police began firing in the air. While the protestors took cover, one of the police-

men targeted Mr Kalyar and shot him in the belly, according to his family. The villagers tried to rush him to hospital, but the police delayed them for 40 minutes. Mr Kalyar died on the way.

The villagers continued protesting until the next morning, when police registered a case under Sections 302/148 and 149/109 of the Pakistan Penal Code against Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Shahid Razaque Qureshi, Station House Officer Shakeel Khokhar, Sub-Inspector (SI) Ghulam Mehdi Bhatti, Kamran the owner of Flying Paper Mill, Captain (r) Wazir Khan and security guard Mehboob Ahmad. The complainant was Mazhar Jamil, the brother of the deceased. Mehboob Ahmad has been arrested.