**The mysterious leakage**

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In 2018, a foul smell had engulfed the coastal areas of Karachi. It gradually spread across the city until everyone became annoyed from it. Later, it was revealed it emanated from the rotting of the phytoplankton plant that washed ashore at the end of the monsoon season. In February 2020, however, a rather mysterious smell – a foul stench – enveloped Karachi’s area of Manghopir.

While 14 people lost their lives by inhaling the [mysterious](https://dailytimes.com.pk/548747/mysterious-dashed-hopes-of-oil-and-gas-discovery-in-pakistan/) poisonous gas, over 200 people were affected by it and received first-aid at the hospital. For days since the gas leakage was reported and had been affecting the residents, the local authorities have remained silent over the incident. The concerned officials were unable to identify the cause of this leakage while the media was terming it ‘mysterious.’ Even the port authorities had not commented on its origin nor given a statement on the cause of this leakage. The most affected neighborhoods in the locality are Bhutta village, Jackson Market, Tara Chand road and GR Railway Colony.

This, however, only added confusion and chaos. As is the case during mysterious happenings, people begin promoting false news and fabricated notions. While some rumored that the government conducted a secret test, some said the army was involved. Some even went on to say that a ship had docked at Karachi’s port that had arrived from China. It had traces of Coronavirus and the authorities were spraying the ship every night that was causing this foul deadly smell. A piece of news also surfaced that this was because of an underwater nuclear test. While a number of stories were part of the gossip, a case of rotten soya beans causing this smell also emerged. Whether these are facts or spins created by the ‘hidden’ forces, one cannot establish the cause yet.

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During such situations when an incident affects the masses, the government officials must adhere to protocol and policies. In this case, they must have responded first to dilute any crisis that may spring out of proportion. The authorities must have sent a team to investigate the source of this gas leakage within a few hours of it being reported by the residents or the media. Some gases are combustible in nature and may lead to disaster. Second, when the number of victims and those being affected by this gas was climbing, the local authorities must have established first-aid clinics and emergency response units across then vicinity. Third, the government must have distributed masks and other necessary first aid kid instruments among the residents of the affected area.

Unfortunately, the price of dusk masks rose exponentially from Rs. 90 to Rs. 300. The residents of Kemari are blue-collar workers and cannot afford to buy masks being sold at such a high price. However, this is the irony of our society. God forbid, if Coronavirus were to spread in a metropolis like Karachi, the prices of medicines, rents of hospital beds and antidotes were to soar by hundreds of times to satisfy the ego of its sellers.

The case of the mysterious gas being spread across Kemari must be dealt with all seriousness by the government. It has not only taken human lives, but it will also continue to be a menace if the source is not located. Lack of awareness, therefore, comes into play in the spreading of a crisis – especially in Pakistan where official designations are given to those who are either illiterate, have a fake degree or are associated with an influential office holder. One must wonder why the government and the officials at the port remained silent for so many days following the gas leakage that raised havoc and pandemonium among the residents.

At this point, we can only make speculations of what could be the cause. There must be a valid, viable explanation behind this leakage; however, the authorities just might be concocting facts and news. The social media was abuzz following the news of this gas leakage. One Facebook user symbolized Karachi with Gotham City and went on to say that the Joker might emerge to ask for a ransom to end this ordeal who had created it to raise mayhem.

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