

City 'without' fire fighting equipment

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By Our Reporter

LAHORE, Jan 23: The city government and six towns have 13 and the Lahore Civil Defence Organization has only one fire fighting vehicle and absolutely no arrangements to rescue the people trapped in the multi-storeyed buildings in the event of fire.

Neither the city government nor the Civil Defence Organization owns a turntable ladder for reaching the people trapped in the upper storeys of the high rise buildings comprising six or more storeys. They do not even have gas masks or fire suits for the firemen. Several people lost their lives in a fire at Pace departmental store in Gulberg last year because the fire brigade did not have a turntable ladder for their rescue.

Owners of most of the multi-storeyed buildings and shopping plazas have not bothered to make arrangements for fighting fires despite mandatory legal provisions because the civil defence officials empowered to conduct inspections and prosecute

the defaulters seldom bother to discharge their duties in this regard.

Fire fighting equipment is required to be kept at all the factories, petrol pumps, hotels, cinemas, shopping plazas, departmental stores and the government office. Fighting the fires is the responsibility of the city government and towns but their fire officer is not empowered to inspect the fire fighting arrangements made by the government and private sector organizations. A civil defence officer is empowered to conduct inspections and institute legal proceedings against those who have not made the required fire fighting arrangements but this is not done.

The provincial metropolis has 13 fire brigades at the Jinnah Hall, Paniwala Talab, Queens Road, Shahdara, Timber Market, Baghbanpura, Lahore Cantonment, Bund Road, Badami Bagh, Shah Muhammad Ghaus, Shadbagh, Dharampura and

Ferozepur Road with only one fire lorry each. All the fire lorries are old.

The fire officer of the city government has been recommending raising the number of fire brigades to at least 16 with at least two fire fighting vehicles each since the days of the defunct Metropolitan Corporation of Lahore but the city fathers never bothered to accede to the request. His request for acquiring a turntable ladder vehicle also met the same fate.

The fire brigades could refill their lorries from hundreds of fire hydrants and lorry filling posts in the city in the past. All the fire hydrants and lorry filling posts have disappeared with the passage of time and fire lorries can now be filled only at the fire stations or from the canal at present. The empty lorries can thus be refilled only after returning to the nearest fire station or canal if the fire cannot be controlled with a single waterload.