

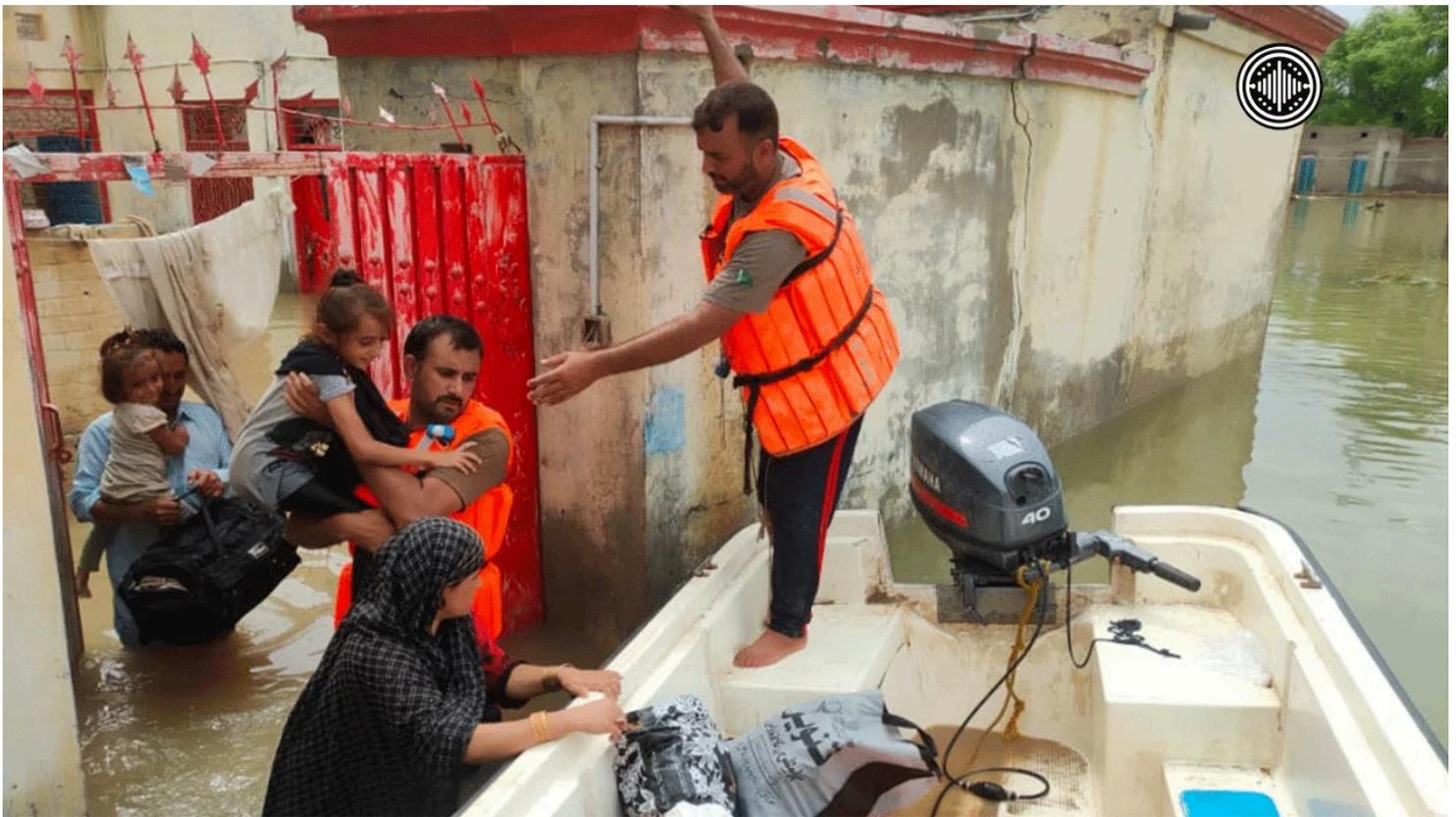
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## Punjab Government Urges Urgency on Flood Response, but Questions Remain Over Leadership and Long-Term Planning

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In a recent directive, Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif ordered immediate action on rainwater drainage across the province and emphasized the need to strengthen the flood warning system. While the move may appear responsive, the broader question lingers—whether it reflects meaningful governance or a political effort to shift attention from deeper infrastructural and administrative gaps.

During a high-profile visit to the **Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA)** headquarters, Sharif ordered that private housing developments be compelled to drain excess water swiftly. She called for announcements through mosque loudspeakers, particularly in rural villages, to warn residents against bathing in canals and streams. This directive followed reports of casualties due to electrocution, drowning, and structural collapses during the current monsoon.

Her instructions extended to deputy commissioners, mandating their presence in the field during the drainage process. She highlighted the importance of cleaning encroachments to ensure a smoother water flow. While these statements emphasize on-the-ground activity, critics argue they mirror reactive posturing rather than proactive leadership. For years, Punjab has faced similar monsoon emergencies, and residents still find themselves at the mercy of poor urban planning and aging infrastructure.

The CM was also briefed on the recent damages caused by flooding, particularly to crops like rice and key transport routes. The **Communications and Works Department** was tasked with submitting a full assessment of road infrastructure damage. Sharif praised the “timely desilting” of rivers and canals, crediting it with reducing the scale of destruction. However, many would question why these basic flood-control measures are still being described as exceptional instead of standard policy.

A PDMA report detailed the rescue of over 1,000 people during flash floods, including swift action in Jhelum and Chakwal districts, where individuals were evacuated in under half an hour with the help of the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** and military helicopters. According to the same report, 108 people have died so far in Punjab this monsoon season, most from collapsing roofs and walls. This tragic toll underscores just how fragile the province’s infrastructure remains.

Sharif insisted that no government institution was negligent and praised officials who remained in the field. Yet such remarks raise questions. If institutions are functioning so well, why does Punjab suffer such repeated losses every monsoon? More than 388 people were injured due to building collapses, with additional casualties from electrocution and lightning. Even one preventable death is too many, and platitudes from leadership fall short of meaningful accountability.

The CM also announced that the PDMA will distribute boats, life jackets, and other emergency supplies to vulnerable areas. She expressed sorrow over the deaths caused by

roof collapses, but once again, the focus appeared to be more on optics than systemic fixes. If the state were genuinely invested in long-term safety, building codes and infrastructure investment would have taken precedence years ago.