

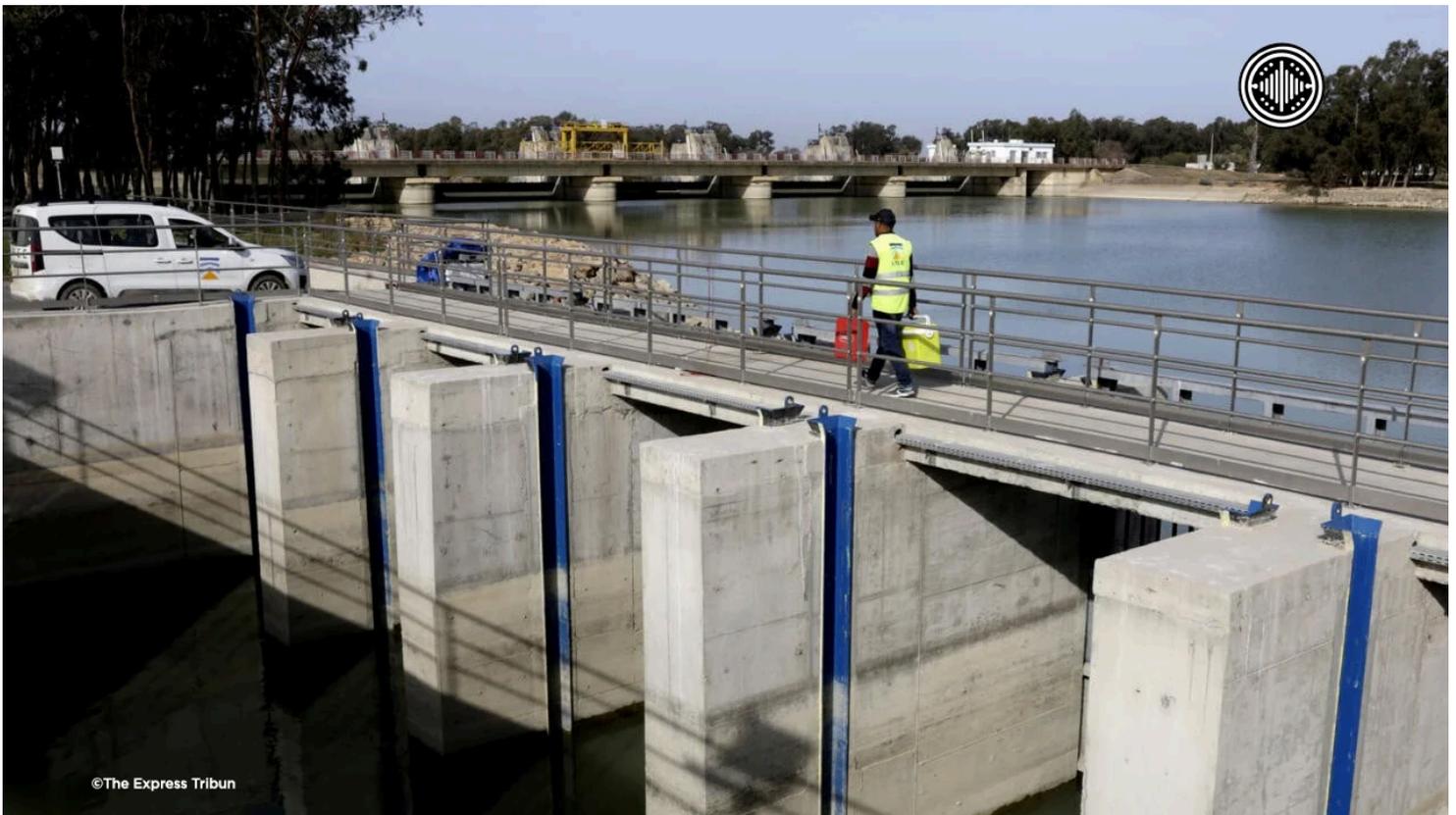
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Punjab Accelerates Expansion of Water Agencies and Commercial Facade Regulations in Lahore

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The Punjab Housing Department is pushing ahead with a rapid expansion of Water and Sanitation Agencies (WASA) across the province and introducing new regulations aimed at regulating commercial building facades in Lahore. These efforts are designed to enhance infrastructure management and protect the architectural heritage of the city while supporting sustainable urban growth.

Housing Secretary Noorul Amin Mengal announced that the establishment of WASA offices in 10 districts is nearly complete. Additionally, the department has launched a fresh phase to create agencies in Murree, Gujrat, and Sheikhpura. Dedicated teams for each district have been assigned, and official notifications have been issued to initiate their work. The teams in Gujrat and Sheikhpura are tasked with reviewing and revising existing PC-1 documents, which are initial project proposals crucial for government approval and funding. Meanwhile, Murree's team will prepare a new PC-1 from scratch, as there was no previous documentation available for that district. Each team is expected to complete its work within a strict 10-day deadline.

Mengal explained that the revisions will include comprehensive feasibility studies, design evaluations, quantity analyses, and cost estimates. "Our goal is to deliver high-quality projects while optimising costs," he said. Rationalising these estimates, where necessary, will facilitate smoother project implementation. Once these new WASA offices are operational, Punjab will have a total of 18 such agencies, significantly boosting the province's ability to manage water supply, wastewater treatment, and sanitation services.

In parallel, the Housing Department has initiated drafting new facade regulations for commercial buildings in Lahore to address the city's growing urban challenges. These rules will focus on controlling the design of building fronts, signboards, and the use of spaces between buildings and roads for parking or landscaping. Secretary Mengal has instructed the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) to accelerate the drafting process.

"The uncontrolled construction of building facades and excessive signage is harming Lahore's historic charm," Mengal noted. He emphasized the importance of climate-resilient, visually harmonious urban design that reflects the city's rich heritage, aiming to curb urban congestion and protect Lahore's unique identity.

This dual approach of expanding essential water infrastructure and imposing sensible urban design regulations reflects a necessary step towards more sustainable and efficient governance of Punjab's rapidly growing urban centers.