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Islamabad Authorities Escalate Crackdown on Illegal Land Grabs, Prioritize Public Safety

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In response to growing public safety concerns and blatant violations of the law, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has ramped up its efforts to eliminate illegal encroachments across Islamabad. At a high-level meeting chaired by CDA Chairman and Islamabad Chief Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhawa, authorities reviewed ongoing actions, particularly against unauthorized structures on government land and waterways.

The crackdown, carried out under the directives of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, focuses on reclaiming government land and clearing dangerous, unauthorized construction

over stormwater drains, known locally as nullahs. These illegal structures, especially those erected without hydraulic safety studies or CDA approval, pose significant risks during the monsoon season, which this year has seen the heaviest rainfall since 2001.

Multiple agencies, including the CDA's Building and Housing Directorate, Enforcement Directorate, the Islamabad Administration, Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA), and the Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), are coordinating to carry out the anti-encroachment operations. According to CDA officials, many residential and commercial buildings erected over nullahs have been sealed or demolished in recent weeks to prevent flood-related disasters.

Chairman Randhawa stressed that all buildings constructed without proper authorization over drains are not only unlawful but structurally dangerous. "These encroachments threaten both property and lives," he warned, directing teams to seal all such structures immediately and pursue legal action against those responsible.

The CDA has advised citizens to voluntarily remove any illegal encroachments on public lands or waterways. Those who fail to comply will face both demolition and legal penalties. The authority emphasized that responsibility for such violations will lie squarely with the encroachers.

To prevent the reoccupation of reclaimed areas, the CDA is implementing a permanent monitoring system. This includes the use of drone surveillance and Google Earth to track land activity. In a bid to modernize and streamline its operations, CDA is also digitizing key processes such as the Layout Plan and No Objection Certificate (NOC) issuance.

Additionally, citizens can now pay for map approvals and other services through a newly launched cashless system. The One Window Facilitation Center is being computerized, and land records are also undergoing digitization to improve transparency and efficiency.

While the CDA's efforts mark a positive step toward restoring the rule of law in Islamabad's urban planning, officials acknowledged that weak enforcement in the past contributed to the persistence of illegal structures. The CDA's current push may help establish more consistent enforcement, provided the current momentum is sustained.