

## weather chiller in Karachi

By Our Staff Reporter

KARACHI: The city saw its second spell of winter showers on Thursday afternoon under the influence of a westerly wave that brought about light to moderate rainfall in several areas.

After the rains, strong winds blew through the city and made the weather chillier.

According to the Met Department advisory, Surjani Town recorded the highest rainfall at 26.3mm, followed by North Karachi (20mm) and Gulshan-i-Maymar (17.6mm). Bahria Town Phase V received 14.2mm, while Saadi Town recorded 10mm. Rainfall in Nazimabad (Paposh Nagar) measured 6.5mm and 4mm in Korangi.

Gulshan-i-Hadeed and PAF Masroor Base each recorded 3mm, followed by PAF Faisal Base with 2mm.

Lighter rainfall was observed on University Road (Met Complex) at 1.2mm, DHA Phase II at 1mm and Jinnah Terminal at 0.2mm. Trace rain was recorded in the old airport area and Keamari.



THE use of heavy machinery for debris removal has sparked fears of desecration of the remains of Gul Plaza fire victims.—Shakil Adil / White Star

# Gul Plaza fire death toll rises to 67 as search continues for sixth day

- Officials say 15 victims identified so far; remains of as many deemed 'unidentifiable'
- Families protest slow pace of search operation • Flower shop owner's negligence blamed for devastating fire • Only 200 of 1,200 shops had fire extinguishers, meeting told

By Imtiaz Ali

KARACHI: The death toll in the Gul Plaza fire tragedy rose to 67 on Thursday as remains of six more victims were found in the rubble during a search operation that continued for the sixth day.

South DIG Syed Asad Raza told *Dawn* that 15 of the 67 bodies had been identified.

Police surgeon Dr Summaiya Syed on Thursday issued a list of 67 victims whose bodies had been brought to the Civil Hospital Karachi since January 17.

She told *Dawn* that six bodies were identified with the help of their facial features, eight through DNA testing and one with the help of his computerised national identity card.

She said that the DNA matching of 37 victims was in process. She said that it would be difficult to identify 15 bodies because DNA extraction was not possible.

A team of the Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA) also visited the plaza. The

SBCA team believed that they would demolish the building after completion of the search operation.

**Thermal imaging cameras used in search operation**

Rescue 1122 spokesperson Hassaan Ul Haseeb Khan told *Dawn* that urban search and rescue teams were conducting the search operation with the help of thermal imaging cameras (TICs).

"Urban search and rescue teams are working at the incident site and using specialised tools and cutters," he said.

He said the TIC can detect heat up to 1,500 degrees Celsius. However, the heat inside the building was higher, affecting the remains of the victims.

The spokesperson said they had never experienced such a fire incident in the metropolis in recent times. Despite continued cooling work over the last three days, extreme heat still persisted inside the debris.

However, he said they continued to remove debris.

The spokesperson said the structure of the building was dilapidated, so extreme caution was being exercised during the search operation.

He added that there was no way to move inside the building. The rescue workers created confined spaces by cutting the wall, but the action triggered "vibration". Therefore, the work, which should have been completed within 10-20 minutes, took one to two hours to finish, he said.

**'Fire caused by flower shop owner's negligence'**

Sources familiar with the preliminary findings of a committee tasked with investigating the devastating fire told *Dawn* that the blaze started from a shop selling artificial flowers on the ground floor due to the alleged

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