

Siraj Teli urges political parties to shun differences for sake of Karachi

Chairman Businessmen Group and former president Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Siraj Kassam Teli has asked all political parties, including PTI, PPP, PML-N, MQM, to set aside their differences for the sake of Karachi which is the industrial, business and financial hub of the country which contribute more than 70 percent revenue to the national exchequer but remains deprived of basic infrastructure facilities.

"The political parties must work collectively for this city," he urged, speaking as chief guest at inaugural ceremony of the 16th My Karachi - Oasis of Harmony Exhibition at Karachi Expo Centre on Friday.

BMG chairman Teli further said that every political party should be allowed to do the work in the interest of Karachi and PPP should embrace all of them. He said if it is done, it would certainly go in favour of Karachi and Karachiites would surely be benefited.

Sindh Minister for Local Government Saeed Ghani, BMG vice chairmen Zubair Motiwala and Anjum Nisar, general secretary AQ Khalil, KCCI president Junaid Ismail Makda, senior vice president Khurram Shahzad, vice president Asif Sheikh Javaid, chairman Special Committee for 'My Karachi' Muhammad Idrees, Consul Generals of friendly countries, including USA, Germany, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Russia, Philippines, Thailand, Qatar and Kenya, KCCI's ex-presidents, exhibitors and other important dignitaries were also present on the occasion.

On behalf of Aqeel Karim Dhedhi who was also attending the ceremony and on his personal behalf, Siraj Teli offered to mediate between political parties at the federal and provincial governments for resolving their differences and for the sake of betterment in Karachi.

"Many people say Karachi is mini-Pakistan but I don't agree with them and I always reiterate that Karachi is Pakistan as without Karachi there is no Pakistan," he said, adding that although law and order situation improved but the infrastructure, particularly roads all over the city were in a pathetic state which require special attention.

He reiterated Karachi had been contributing 70 percent to the national exchequer and they don't mind contributing even 90 percent but they need basic infrastructure particularly roads, gas, electricity and water, etc. Therefore, all political parties should be on one page as far as the infrastructure improvement in Karachi is concerned", he suggested, underscoring the need to release enhanced funds for the development of Karachi.

Paying tribute to all the exhibitors, particularly the Consulates for constantly supporting KCCI's My Karachi Exhibition since its inception in 2004, Siraj Teli said they all had proved themselves of being true Karachiites by constantly supporting and participating in this exhibition.

Highlighting the theme, he said the name "My Karachi" signifies that everyone who lives in this city takes ownership while the theme "Oasis of Harmony" depicts the city of multi-cultural, multi-ethnic,

multi-language and multi-sectarian people from all walks of life who are living together peacefully with complete harmony.

Veteran business leader pointed out that it was initiated when terror attacks were on the rise in different parts of Karachi, a huge city of more than 3500 square kilometres. He said the western media was misreporting by portraying the entire city as unsafe; therefore, KCCI decided to counter all such misconceptions by highlighting the positive image of Karachi through this exhibition.

"Karachi is a safe city where all businessmen, industrialists and even foreigners move freely everyday without any problem: thanks to Karachi Operation initiated in 2013 which was agreed upon by all three tiers of the government, including the federal, provincial and local governments," he cited. Teli noted Karachi's previous status of being the City of Lights had been restored and it had become much safer as compared to what it had been in the past. He said Rangers, Police and other law enforcing agencies had played a commendable role and they all deserve to be appreciated.

Speaking on the occasion, Sindh Minister for Local Government Saeed Ghani appreciated Karachi Chamber for regularly staging My Karachi Exhibition as the city desperately needs such positive and healthy activities which would encourage foreigners to visit Karachi.

Advocating Siraj Teli's viewpoint, Saeed Ghani said Karachi is Pakistan which unfortunately has not received political freedom despite the fact that the entire politics of the country is controlled from Karachi. "Improvements in Karachi will only happen when its inhabitants are given the freedom to choose representatives which unfortunately has not happened since last three decades, resulting in intensifying the hardships for this city," he said.

The LG minister said people of Karachi must get their rights and freedom to cast their vote as per their will otherwise the situation would never improve. He said the province was not getting its due share from the national exchequer which creates a lot of cash problems for Sindh government. "All these are genuine issues that require attention and we are ready to sit with anyone, including PTI to get them resolved in the larger interest of the country and the city," he asserted.

The minister said it was really unfortunate that instead of correcting themselves, some people were busy in giving suggestions on how to correct others which is one of the major reasons for so many problems being suffered by the country.

He said Sindh government wants to take remedial measures but it needs support of the business and industrial community. He said Karachi would only improve when all the departments would focus on their own work only.

BMG vice chairman and KCCI's ex-president Zubair Motiwala requested members of the diplomatic corps to tell the world that Karachi is a peaceful city where a lot of bustling economic activities take place every day. "You must send a communiqué to your respective countries that everything in Karachi is fine and it is a very peaceful place which, if done, will certainly send a positive signal to the rest of the world," he said, adding that negative travel advisories being issued about Karachi need to be reviewed and replaced with positive directives.

In his welcome address, KCCI president Junaid Ismail Makda said 'My Karachi' provides exhibitors and visitors with excellent opportunities to explore trade possibilities and realise true potential of Karachi and its natural beauty, traditions and cultural heritage.

He said overall economic impact of Karachi Operation was very positive and should remain so at all times. However, the high incidence of crimes particularly the street crimes should also be dealt with on urgent basis and it must be ensured that even foreigners feel free to roam around in the city without any fear.

He called for depoliticising of police. He said intense training, strict vigilance, provision of necessary gadgets, arms, ammunition, bullet proof jackets and vehicles and complete transformation of police stations as per international practices have to be done to improve local policing and to ensure durable peace in Karachi.

He said all these measures would enable policemen to swiftly respond in case of any untoward incident and minimise the public grievances. He said the business community expects to see Karachi regaining its past glory soon during current tenure of PTI government at the Centre. He said Karachi is ideally placed to reap the benefit for being blessed with a wide coastline of recreational marine activities.

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