

Sindh govt supports businessmen's protest against gas shortages

KARACHI: The Sindh government on Monday announced to support the protest of the business community vis-à-vis gas shortages that has virtually crippled the economy.

Energy Minister Imtiaz Shaikh said he contacted the leaders of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on phone and assured them that the Sindh government supported their protest.

Mr Shaikh said the federal government was playing politics on the gas issue that had damaged the country's economy and foreign reserves.

Officials said the minister called business leaders Siraj Kassam Teli, Javed Balwani and Zubair Motiwala and told them the act of the federal government, in which it did not respect the Constitution, was utterly illegal.

The minister informed the business leaders that the Sindh chief minister (CM) had written many letters to the prime minister (PM), asking him to resolve the gas crisis by providing Sindh's due share in gas it produced. He said the PM had admitted Sindh's stance and assured that the crisis would be resolved.

Minister Shaikh said the CM had also raised that issue at the Council of Common Interests, but Islamabad had ignored his assertions. He said the industrial and domestic sectors and transporters were worst effected due to gas crisis.

Officials said the energy minister had also contacted the secretary petroleum and managing director of the Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and asked them to resolve the issue of persistent gas shortages.

SSGCL revokes decision

The Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) has agreed to the request of industrialists to revoke the decision to enforce 50 per cent curtailment of gas to the captive power units.

This was decided by the SSGCL in a meeting with members of Karachi Industrial Forum (KIF). Before the meeting, the KIF members also held a protest at the SSGCL's head office over gas shortage to the industries.

According to a SSGCL's press release, the company agreed to the KIF's request since the new 12" dia x46 km pipeline project from Rehman Gas Field has been commissioned.

Sources said the SSGCL had cut gas connections of various factories besides serving notices for consuming extra gas against the allocation.

The industrialists argued with the SSGC to withdraw notifications issued to the industrial units that were consuming more gas than their allocations. The SSGC management explained to the industrialists that such Gas Sales Agreement (GSA) violations would create shortage of gas for other consumers, especially the domestic sector.

On the request of KIF members, the SSGC agreed to review the industries' gas allocation violations on a case by case basis and warned that this would increase shortage in domestic supplies.

Leading industrialists including Siraj Teli, Zubair Motiwala and Javed Balwani participated in the talks with the SSGCL management.

The KIF includes the Landhi Association of Trade and Industry (LATI), Bin Qasim Association of Trade and Industry (BQATI), North Karachi Association of Trade and Industry (NKATI), Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Federal B Area Association of Trade and Industry (FBATI) and SITE Association of Trade and Industry (SAI).