

Opponent group wants to occupy chamber: HCCI president

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HYDERABAD: The Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) president Ikram Rajput has said that millions of rupees of the chamber's funds have been embezzled over the eight years of Seth Goharullah's presidency but still he and his group want to perpetuate their hold on the traders' body by hook or by crook.

Mr Rajput said at a press conference at local press club here on Thursday that Rs20 million had been given to the HCCI by former Sindh governor Dr Ishtatul Ebad Khan "exclusively for the construction of chamber's secretariat" but the huge amount had been misappropriated in 2013.

He said that he wrote to secretary general about the irregularities in the chamber's account and asked him to submit details but he evaded his request and dragged his feet over it.

"When we launched probe into the irregularities, it irked Seth Goharullah to the point that on Saturday around 10 to 12 persons trespassed into the chamber when I was in Karachi. The lock of my office was broken open and my fake resignation was produced before the chamber's secretary," he said.

Mr Rajput said that when he came to know about the episode, he rushed back to Hyderabad and confirmed to the secretary over phone that he had not resigned.

When he and his colleagues reached HCCI and confronted Seth Goharullah, he kept them engaged in talks for two to three days seeking honourable exit for Mohammad Shahid, whom he had installed as president in his place, he said.

He said that Goharullah promised to hand him over the office of the president at 2pm on Tuesday but left the chamber and then switched off his phone.

Mr Rajput accused the chamber's outgoing management of stealing record of accounts for which a complaint had been lodged with Cantonment police.

He said the chamber's president was elected for a year and nobody had any authority to remove him except that he tendered resignation.

He appealed to police and civil administration to intervene and open the chamber's secretariat so that they could resolve day to day problems of traders. A delegation of HCCI office-bearers had met Hyderabad commissioner, DIG and deputy commissioner and briefed them about the factual situation, he said.

The delegation told the officers that since the chamber's keys had been given to Goharullah's group it could lead to a clash when they opened the chamber on Saturday. The DC had convened a meeting on the issue on Saturday, he said.

He said that Goharullah's group was employing all tactics to occupy the chamber. The new body of the chamber was elected on June 3 and before that Seth Goharullah was at the helm of affairs in HCCI.

Mr Rajput was accompanied by HCCI vice president Iqbal Ahmed Baig, Adeel Siddiqui and Pehlaj Rai at the press conference.

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