

Punjab industry seeks'egalitarian gas distribution

Thousands of industrialists, trade leaders and industrial workers Saturday ended their dharna outside Governor's House after talks with Governor Punjab. Presidents of all the 17 chambers, President Anjuman-i-Tajiran Pakistan, President Qoumi Tajir Ittehad Pakistan and Chairmen of all the sector-specific Associations, LCCI Senior Vice President Kashif Younis Meher, Vice President saeeda Nazar, former LCCI Presidents were prominent among participants of LCCI-backed Dharna. The protesters were carrying banners inscribed with slogans "We reject discrimination with Punjab in supply of gas," "We reject fast increasing unemployment," Save our jobs, save our children, and were chanting full throat slogans against the government. They also burnt tyres in the deafening voice of sloganeering.

LCCI President Irfan Qaiser Sheikh, President of Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Muzammil Sultan, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry Javaid Akhtar Bhatti, President Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce & Industry Malik Zaheer, President Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mian Anees Ahmed Sheikh, President Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry Naeem Anwar Qureshi, President Jhelum Chamber of Commerce & Industry Kausar Naheed Anwar, President Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce & Industry Muzamil-ul-Rasheed Abbasi, President D.G Khan Chamber of Commerce & Industry Khawaja Muhammad Anees, President Sargodha Chamber of Commerce & Industry Mazhar Ahmad Malik, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry Yasaar Sakhi Butt, President Jhang Chamber of Commerce & Industry Sheikh Mughees Ahmad, President Sheikhpura Chamber of Commerce & Industry Amjad Nazir Butt, President Gujrat Chamber of Commerce & Industry Muhammad Mirza Mushtaq, President Okara Chamber of Commerce & Industry Chaudhry Shafqat Rasool, President Sahiwal Chamber of Commerce & Industry Waseem Akhtar, President Rahim Yar Khan Chamber of Commerce & Industry Muzaffar Saleem Chaudhry.

Chairman Lahore Township Industrial Area Association Iftikhar Bashir Chaudhry, Khawaja Arif Qasim of Ghee Industry, Fida Hussain and Haroon Shaifique Chaudhry of Food Processing Industry, Adnan Butt and Shahid Baig Mirza of Ferozepur Road Industrial Area, syed Mehmood Gaznvi of Katarbund Road Association, Mehmmud Akhtar of Kanha Kacha Industrial area, Textile Printing and Processing Association, Khalid Pervaiz and Mohammad Ashraf Bhatti of Anjuman-e-Tajiran Pakistan, Baber Mehmood and Shabbir Labah of Hall Road, Raja hamid Riaz and Raees A Sheikh of Mall Road, Waqar Ahmed Mian and Sohail Azhar of Badami Bagh, Haji Mohammad Munir, Haji Mohammad Rafique and Mubashir Sheikh of Shah alam Market, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh from Liberty Market, Chuadhry Mehbbob Ali Sirki and Athar Ali Kazmi from Ferozepur Road, Ghulam Sarwar Malik and Haji Nasrullah Qadari from McLeod Road and Chairman Ferozepur Road Welfare Association Tariq Javed remained present in the dharna all the day long. Earlier, the LCCI President Irfan Qaiser Sheikh in his address said that the protests and dharans would continue till normalization of gas supply and urged the government to immediately stop giving new connections, apply same formula across the country for gas loadshedding and waive off the markup to the trade and industry during the period when the gas is not being supplied to the trade and industry. The LCCI President said that the government need to reset its priority regarding the supply of gas as the decision to stop gas to the industry has rendered thousands of daily wagers jobless

while it has also caused closure of a large number of industrial units that were used to remain in production in three shifts in 24 hours.

Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said that it was very unfortunate that the economy of the country is the last priority of the present regime and only due to its non-seriousness towards the real issues is giving birth to a number of social problems and if the situation remains the same for quite some time it could also create law and order situation in the province. Irfan Qaiser Sheikh said that the trade and industry would be able to pay back the markup to the banks that generally charge on Sundays as well when the productions in the industrial units are a complete halt for indefinite period now. How can the industry pay markup on 365 days basis when the gas was only given for 200 days last year. The LCCI President said that the President and the Prime Minister should intervene into the issue as the situation was fast heading towards point of no return and their credibility to handle economic issues was at stake. The President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Muzammil Sultan, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry Javaid Akhtar Bhatti, President Gujranwala Chamber of Commerce & Industry Malik Zaheer said that same protests would be staged in all the cities of Punjab as the government seemed least interested in well being of the economy. It is the responsibility of the government to ensure provision of utilities to the masses either they belong to trade or industry but the situation is totally otherwise and a long period of four years of its tenure has passed in making tall claims and doing nothing.

The LCCI former Presidents including Mian Anjum Nisar, Iftikhar Ali Malik, Bashir A. Baksh, Mian Muhammad Ashraf, Sheikh Muhammad Asif, Muhammad Ali Mian, LCCI former Senior Vice Presidents Abdul Basit, Sohail Lashari, Vice presidents Shafqat Saeed Piracha, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, Sohail Azhar and Vice Chairman of Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association Shahzeb Akram said that business community wants to play its role for the progress and prosperity of the country but government was trying to keep them busy in other issues. They said it is the government policies that have forced them to stage sit-in. They said that if the government remains unmoved even after the sit-in, the call for a protest in Islamabad would be given because due to gas closure, the entire industry is in deep troubles and thousands of workers are going to lose their jobs. They said that the police cases against the business leaders cannot come in their way and they would continue their struggle till the acceptance of their genuine demands in the larger interest of trade, industry, economy and the country.

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