

# Govt should subsidize air freight service to facilitate exports - Mohammad Yousaf

*Exclusive Interview of Chairman Air Cargo Agents' Association of Pakistan and CEO Pak Cargo*

**C** The government should subsidize air freight service to facilitate exports from Pakistan. This was suggested by Chairman of Air Cargo Agents' Association of Pakistan, Mohammad Yousaf, who is also Chairman of the Pakistan Cargo Services, in a recent interview with Energy Update about his air freight business in Pakistan.

**Energy Update: Would you share your profile and the services of your company?**

**Mohammad Yousaf:** I have been in this business since 1982. I formed my own cargo company in 1984. I have been running my company along with two shareholders. Right now, my company is facing virtually no competition in Pakistan. We have nine offices related to our air cargo business employing around 400 to 450 people. I'm number one as far as the IATA's ranking is concerned. I am very happy with this business. I have worked a lot for my industry as I'm now recognized for my services for this business.

**EU: What were the services done by your company during the coronavirus emergency.**

**Mr. Yousaf:** During the situation of Covid-19 when air travel virtually came to a halt, our company successfully operated 17 cargo flights for Europe. By doing so, we amply served the Pakistani economy and the people of Pakistan. We operated these flights when people had no other mean to send abroad their products as we provided them with an option to do so. We did so as we do our work as a solution provider. Whatever we have been doing, we are doing for the national economy. We don't do work to earn money as we do work to serve the people by facilitating them.

**EU: Tell our readers about post-coronavirus situation of your business.**

**Mr. Yousaf:** The situation of our business has improved after the Covid-19. Several airlines are now coming to Pakistan as I do appreciate availability of their service in the country. These airlines have been providing us with opportunities. The rates of air freight service have been much higher as the airlines don't have any other option owing to the less number of air passengers. The Pakistan government should subsidize the air freight service to facilitate exports from the country. Resultantly,

■ By M. Naeem Qureshi



the Pakistani exporters facing competition in the international market, will be able to get more orders. The government didn't provide any support to our business during the coronavirus emergency. The government didn't provide any help in this regard despite demands to this effect made by the federation and chambers of commerce and industry. The government says that it doesn't have any money to extend to us any such assistance. The exporters in Pakistan have been doing their work in sheer compulsion as their profit margins have shrunk.

Lately, we have seen much improvement in our business related to three to four products especially the sportswear from Sialkot and textile products being manufactured in Faisalabad. I think that our country do possess massive potential

for such production but the main issue is that we lack mutual trust.

### EU: Tell us about the project of Sialkot International Airport?

**Mr. Yousaf:** We launched the airport in Sialkot some 10 to 12 years back. We started this project after realizing that up to 60 per cent population of the most populous province of Pakistan i.e. Punjab lives in the region around Sialkot. Before the situation of Covid-19, we had up to 80 flights operating from Sialkot every week. Now these flights have been reduced to 25 to 30 due to the impact of coronavirus. The cargo in sizable quantity is being sent from the airport. The Sialkot Airport has supported much

the economy and people of Pakistan. The government should overwhelmingly support and appreciate such local investment by the businessmen of Pakistan.

### EU: What are the salient features of the project of Air Sial?

**Mr. Yousaf:** Sheikh Riazuddin being a visionary leader of the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry came up with this idea. His vision is also behind the projects of dry port, airport, and road network in Sialkot. The most important feature of Air Sial is that it is a community-owned airline. This airline has come into existence on the basis of investment by up to 300 businessmen.

This airline enjoys support of an entire community. This airline has emerged as the second national flag carrier in Pakistan. All the businessmen behind this airline have been duly conveyed the vision that Air Sial is not there basically to earn profit. The airline will be run in a manner that it gets the capability to contain within the country the revenue earlier earned by other airlines in Pakistan and sent outside the country. We don't want to earn money. Our aim is to strengthen the national and conserve the precious foreign exchange. We have been doing this work for the sake of our economy and for the good name of our city. ■

## Zubair Motiwala vows to carry forward Siraj Teli's mission

Chairman Businessmen Group (BMG) Zubair Motiwala has vowed to carry forward and accomplish the mission of Late Siraj Teli who always desired to make Karachi a livable city where all the citizens are employed, law & order remains stable, infrastructure is improved, cleanliness along with proper sewerage system and other civic facilities are available to the masses and prosperity prevails all over the city.

"We in close alliance with everyone will be making all out efforts to restore the lost status of this city which was once known as the city of lights", he added while speaking at a Condolence Reference organized to pay homage to Late Siraj Kassam Teli who dedicated his entire life for the rights of business community and the Karachiites. Vice Chairmen BMG Tahir Khaliq, Haroon Farooki, Anjum Nisar, General Secretary BMG AQ Khalil, President KCCI Shariq Vohra, Nusair Siraj Teli (Son of Late Siraj Teli), Patron-in-Chief United Businessmen Group S. M. Muneer, Former SVP KCCI Jawed Bilwani, Former President KCCI Shamim Ahmed Firpo, President Korangi Association of Trade & Industry Saleem uz Zaman, Arif Habib, Tariq Yousuf, Haji Anis, Hanif Motlani, Durre Shahwar Nisar, Mehmood Hamid, Abdul Samad Khan and Javaid Sheikh also paid glowing tribute to Siraj Teli who will always be remembered for his matchless services and lifelong struggle for the rights of Karachi city and its business community.

Zubair Motiwala said, We only demand that Karachi must receive its share in proportion to what this city has been contributing to the national exchequer so that these funds could be utilized in developing the dilapidated infrastructure which is almost in existent", he said, adding that the road infrastructure in Site area, which is the oldest and biggest industrial area, has worsened to such an extent that almost all the roads in this particular area are neither motorable nor jeepable. Commenting on sad demise of Siraj Teli, Zubair Motiwala said it was the most tragic and saddening incident not only for Karachi city but for entire Pakistan.

"Siraj Teli was a person who was neither born in years nor in centuries. I was associated with him since last 28 years and throughout this period, he added. Referring to Siraj Teli's dedicated efforts in dealing with Bolton Market inferno incident in 2009, he said that due to Siraj Teli's determination and day-night efforts, more than 1900 affectees of Bolton Market and other markets whose shops were burned to ashes received full compensation as per their aspirations. It was the biggest achievement as a total of 29 buildings were reconstructed while compensations ranging from Rs15,000 to Rs150 million were handed over to the affectees. Expressing satisfaction over complete unity amongst BMGIANS, Chairman BMG said, "You will not find a single example all over Pakistan where any political party or any other group has remained intact and fully united for a period of 23 years except BMG whose Chairman and all Vice Chairmen remained the same since it came to existence and no divide or break up was seen at any point in time throughout all these years."

He reiterated that Siraj Teli was a person who cannot be forgotten as he struggled really hard throughout his life for the welfare of poor masses and the business community and fearlessly raised voice so that the authorities could be compelled to not only deal with economic issues but also many other social issues being suffered by the public. In the end, President KCCI M. Shariq Vohra, in his remarks, said, "Siraj Teli will stay alive in our hearts and will always be remembered for his exceptional and dedicated services to the entire business & industrial community and Karachiites under the policy of Public Service. He was a dynamic leader whose illustrious career spanning over 28 years has indeed left an indelible impression on the entire business & industrial community. ■

