

Convention Details Covering the public Session, as Released by the Associated Press.

WASHINGTON, Dec 4 (APP)- Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, Catetaker, MQM North America, Saturday evening said Muttahida has set new traditions of service in politics.

And, that was the difference between MQM and other political parties of Pakistan, he said while addressing the concluding session of the daylong Semi-Annual Convention of the party in Washington DC metropolitan area, in which representatives of all the 17 Units attended.

"MQM acted swiftly to render relief work in the devastated areas of NWFP and Kashmir in the wake of October 8, and our task did not end with clicking of photographs," he stated, adding: "we were obligated to be in these areas as per call of our conscience and commitment."

"We are not in these areas for any personal gain or to seek votes, subsequently," he said.

The devastating earthquake, he said was a challenge to the Pakistani nation, and the living nations were determined to rise to face such national challenges, "and, we have tried to accomplish what we consider was our share of responsibility."

Dr. Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui said "we don't want to conduct our politics on the basis of NWFP or Kashmir, we are there purely on humanitarian basis, which we consider as our duty."

"Thousands of our workers volunteered to go to the affected areas, leaving Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and Sukkur," he said, adding that after the relief, there is going to be the second important phase of rehabilitation. "Our volunteers intend to remain in the affected areas for a year."

"It reflects our commitment- as the MQM now wants to focus on rehabilitation work, and will contribute handsomely towards this phase, as well," he added.

Presenting welcome remarks, Ajaz Siddiqi, Central Organizer, thanked the party workers for making devoted efforts to make the fundraisers, and collection of relief supplies a success.

He said as per instruction of the MQM Rabita Committee, all organizational activities of the party have been suspended after October 8 and all efforts have been diverted towards the earthquake relief work. "Millions of dollars worth of relief items have been sent to Pakistan via chartered airplanes and ships from USA, China and via road from India."

"It's now time to move to the long-term rehabilitation phase."

He thanked the party cadres for holding a successful semi-annual

convention a success.

Introductory remarks were earlier presented by Salim Shaikh, at a proceeding which started with recitation from the Holy Quran.

A 12-minute slide show was shown, which depicted the fundraisers, collection and purchase of relief supplies, their despatch by chartered and cargo flights, and distribution in the earthquake hit areas. It also showed the vast devastation and miseries of the sufferers, and rendering of voluntary work by Muttahida leaders and workers.

"Khidmate Khalq Committee (KKC) of the MQM was geared up to render emergency relief work within the few hours, in the wake of October 8 earthquake, on the specific directions of Quaid-e-Tahreek Altaf Hussain," Relief Coordinator Ibad U. Rehman said, giving an overview of the operation.

He commended the various units of MQM USA and detailed the raising of funds, collection and purchase of relief supplies. He said two chartered flights containing huge consignments of life-saving drugs, tents, wheel chairs, gloves, woollen wear and socks were sent to the base station in Islamabad for onward despatch and distribution among the affectees.

He referred to telethon in St. Louis, and Houston, in which large funds were collected.

After monitoring work of the KKC, the UNHCR and NATO entered into a partnership with MQM, for relief distribution "and, the operation is continuing as of today."

Mr. Ibad said Quaid-e-Tahreek gave \$10,000 in relief fund, which was matched by UNHCR by 90,000 dollars, making it \$-100,000.

In Houston, he said the MQM USA made a presentation before the City Council, and three containers of relief supplies, worth millions of dollars, were collected, and sent to Pakistan.

He said MQM also rendered relief work in Katrina and Rita, which was commended by the mainstream population.

He said City Nazim of Karachi Mustafa Kamal and Senator Nasreen Jalil presented a cheque for Rs. 2.10 crore to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz for the quake victims.

The Senators and MNAs of the MQM, including Federal Minister Babar Khan Ghouri and Dr. Farooq Sattar visited the devastated areas, participating in relief operations.

The Relief Coordinator announced that MQM has played its role and worked with Congressman Al Green for seeking temporary protected status (TPS) and to temporarily suspend deportation proceedings of Pakistanis from the United States. "So far, some 45 Congressmen have signed the petition- and we are hopeful that favorable action on it would be speeded up."

He said cost of a container from USA for Pakistan comes to \$3500, and therefore, such supplies as were costly should be sent, and, therefore, MQM had been discouraging collection of used clothes.

MQM USA's technical team led by Arif Siddiqui, he stated had designed quake-and cold-proof prefabricated shelters, which had been approved by Federal Relief Commissioner, Major General Farooq Ahmed. He said 75 such shelters had been constructed, while another 150 were now under process, and would be ready soon.

He said tents of the specification of four-season life shelter had been ordered from Ganzhao city, China, at relatively cheaper cost of \$100 per tent, and a large shipload of it is to arrive in Karachi on December 24.

He said a vigil was staged at the Capitol Hill, Washington in support of the earthquake affectees.

Mr. Ibad also referred to a joint fundraiser "over and above politics" was held in Washington recently, in which over \$150,000 were raised, at which Fakhre Alam was the chief guest.

He referred to two chartered flights i.e. Gemini and Kalita airlines, and sending of a consignment by PIA cargo, for which the national airliner did not charge anything.

"The earthquake devastation was grave, and the task of rendering relief was equally enormous," he said, adding the phase of rehabilitation requires full focus and tackling through devoted work on longterm basis, which requires continued support.

In the award ceremony, Special Achievement Award went to Saleem Lalani of Chicago; Recognition Award was given to Shariq Sajjad; Lifetime Achievement Award for Fida Khan; Best Worker Award for Khawaja Waqar; Best Unit of the Year award went to Houston Unit and was received by M. Zaheer bhai; and Best Professional Service Award was given to Ibad U. Rehman.

On the occasion, meritorious media coverage services of the Community TV, particularly those Mr. Waleed, were cited.

A party announcement said that Aamir Liaquat Hussain, MNA, and minister of state, will be chief guest at a fundraiser to be held in Virginia on January 1, 2006.