



Bridging the Gap

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In other words, love them or hate them, the MQM is a force to re

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The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) can best be described as the voice and representative of the citizens of Karachi, a city of 17 million inhabitants of diverse ethnic backgrounds located in the southern part of Sindh province.

Being the commercial hub of the city, the spoke that keeps the wheels of trade and commerce turning, Karachi is truly a cosmopolitan city representing people from different ethnic communities.

The Mohajirs (Urdu speaking community) are the majority in Karachi, on the basis of which the MQM was formed.

The MQM is the brainchild of Altaf Hussain, the founding father of the movement better known as Quaid-e-Tehrik who first formed the All Pakistan Mohajir Student Organisation (APMSO) in 1978 which was the forerunner to the Mohajir Qaumi Movement later established in 1984.

The MQM is the fourth largest party in Pakistan and the dominant party in Karachi.

On July 26, 1997, realizing that Karachi needed a united front to represent all its citizens the term Mohajir was replaced by Muttahida meaning united.

The Mohajirs settled in Karachi after partition from India and engaged in business and joined the bureaucracy.

However, feeling alienated by other communities, the Punjabis, Sindhis and Pushtuns, the mohajirs felt a need to have a representative body to speak up for their rights and position not only in Karachi but also in Pakistan.

It was in the late eighties when the MQM emerged into prominence as evident from its rally on August 8, 1986 held at Nishtar Park, which drew large crowds from the entire length and breadth of Karachi.

Subsequently they won local bodies election in 1987 and won considerable seats in the 1988 elections.

Political alliances are mandatory to sustain any movement and the MQM forged such alliances with both the PPP in 1988 and the PML in 1992 but political differences eventually broke up all alliances and in the nineties the MQM was subjected to subjugation and brutal repression by what is infamously known as the Karachi Operation.

The MQM did not take it lying down and retaliated with force forcing party members to go underground.

It was at this point in time, in 1992, that feeling persecuted and victimised and at the behest of party workers Altaf Hussain left for London from where he has been running party affairs ever since.

It is noteworthy to mention that in October 2005, Syed Mustafa Kamal, a prominent member, of the MQM, became the Mayor of Karachi and under his dynamic and committed leadership, Karachi transformed rapidly with mega projects of sewerage, infrastructure and improvement in civic services giving the citizens of Karachi newly built roads, overhead bridges, underpasses and beautiful parks..

He introduced the Apna Karachi campaign motivating citizens to participate in community related projects and build Karachi at every level.

The MQM does a lot of charitable work in the city also and has one of the largest charity organisations, the Khidmat Khalq Foundation which runs a large fleet of ambulances and helps widows and destitute people.

The KKF was actively involved in relief operations in the recent flood relief effort providing massive aid to the flood affected.

The MQM also runs a highly successful charity, the Sun Charity in the USA and in what can best be termed as a monumental achievement the Sun Charity and the UNHCR recently signed an Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) whereby the UNHCR will use Sun Charity to provide relief goods to the flood victims in Pakistan.

The Party has its international secretariat in London, with an overseas presence in the United States also.

The Party has also massive support in Hyderabad and Sukkur and is already making inroads in the Punjab. Unfortunately since the nineties the image of the party has been badly tarnished by allegations of massive extortion, gun-running, criminal activities and target killings.

It has been accused in intimidating the media to prevent them from reporting the truth about the party's activities and beating up reporters and people against them. What the party really needs is a massive facelift with regard to public relations and image marketing

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.It should reorganise itself to launch a media campaign and project its image positively.

It should highlight its charity work both in Pakistan, the UK and the USA especially that in the USA where its charity work has been highly appreciated. The services of Pakistan related media should be used both in the USA and Canada where Pakistani newspapers can project all the good the party has done for Karachi and the rest of the country.

The MQM needs to restructure itself for without any doubt, every party has to project its image positively for too much negative publicity is not good in politics at all. In conclusion, it would be right to say that no major political party can survive especially in Karachi without the support of the MQM.

In other words, love them or hate them, the MQM is a force to reckon with in Pakistan politics.

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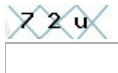
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