

Gas supply to Sindh units: Constitutional right under Article 158 should be protected:

APTMA

Zahid Mazhar, Chairman, All Pakistan Textile Mills Association, Sindh-Balochistan Region has urged the government not to deprive Sindh industries of their constitutional right in the supply of natural gas under Article 158 of the Constitution.

Sindh is producing about 67 percent of system gas and consuming only 39 percent produced in the country, even then the industries of Sindh are denied of their constitutional right guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan, he added. In a statement on gas supply, he said that the gas being produced in Sindh should at first be supplied to the province and after fulfilling the requirement of Sindh, surplus gas should be passed on to other provinces in line with Article 158 of the Constitution.

He further said that the textile industry is not only facing the problem of weekly closure of gas every Sunday but also the problem of low gas pressure. This is resulting in heavy production losses and de-industrialization.

Mazhar said that the low gas pressure is disturbing the production-lines, delaying exports and causing harm to industry's costly plants and equipment. The low gas pressure is equivalent to having no gas at all and it is a 360 degrees turn from the assurance given by Prime Minister Imran Khan of uninterrupted supply of energy both gas and electricity, especially to export-oriented industries such as textiles which is earning more than 60 percent of the much-needed foreign exchange through exports. It is also against the government policy of industrialization and export-led growth, he added.

He said gas supply suspension to Sindh-based industries that make up 52 percent of the country's total exports, is resulting in loss of foreign exchange and revenue. Production of export-oriented industries has shrunk since the export sector has been compelled to work only six days a week instead of functioning round-the-clock, he added.

"In other countries governments give priority to their export-oriented industries in supply of gas and energy, whereas domestic and commercial sectors are provided with LPG or LNG. On the contrary, our precious natural gas is being supplied to domestic and commercial sectors at the cost of industries. This has resulted in de-industrialization and decrease in manufacturing sector's share in the GDP from about 22 percent to 19 percent in the last financial year," he maintained.

Mazhar urged the Federal and provincial governments to look into the issue on an urgent basis and instruct SSGCL to ensure uninterrupted gas supply to the industries of Sindh and Balochistan in general and export-oriented sector in particular, otherwise industries would be compelled to close their operations which will create not only irreparable losses to the economy but also create law & order situation due to unemployment.

RECORDER REPORT