

**Country does not have even 1,000 garment units, Senate body told**

Secretary Textile Division Syed Iftikhar Babar on Wednesday said that whatever increase has been registered in exports is because of Textile Division not the Commerce Division. The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce and Textile was also informed that there are 4500 garments factories in Bangladesh but in Pakistan such factories are less than 1000. In Pakistan, he said, garments sector has been ignored. Pure cotton seed and fertilizer are not available in Pakistan. Other countries formulated laws after introduction of BT cotton. In Pakistan, the Plant Breeders Act has been enacted but registry is not established.

Secretary Textile Division stated that cotton is not a food item but the department of cotton has been given to Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Standing Committee directed that cotton department should be given to Textile Division.

The committee was informed that the demand for cotton is declining globally but in Pakistan cotton production is on the higher side. In Pakistan synthetic cotton production is 19 per cent whereas globally its production is 62 per cent.

Pakistan is at 5th place in cotton production in the world but has failed to benefit from it by as much as much smaller countries. The Committee directed the Ministry to conduct a study of Bangladeshi and Vietnamese textile production and export policies and submit to the committee.

Senator Nauman Wazir said that sugar output has slashed cotton production. Most of the sugar mills are owned by the influential who also demand subsidy. However, KP government has refused to give any subsidy to sugar sector.

Chairman Standing Committee directed the Textile Division to share the draft of five-year Textile Policy with the standing Committee so that the latter can give its input. He also suggested that textile policies of other countries should also be taken into account while preparing a textile policy for the country.

The Standing Committee also sought performance report of Trade Officers in Pakistani Missions abroad aimed at reviewing it. Commerce Ministry has recently recalled four Trade Officers due to their dismal performance however one could not be recalled as he won the case in court against the Ministry. Senator Dr Ghous Niazi suggested that low performing Trade Officers should be recalled. Senator Dilawar Khan maintained that exports will not increase until Trade Officers are taken from the private sector.

The committee also held a detailed discussion on the performance of IPO. Members of the Committee stressed upon the need to protect Pakistani products like salt and rice when they are exported abroad as reports have been heard about Pakistani rice and salt being sold as other countries' products. The need to ease the process of registration of patent, trademark/copyright was also discussed while at the same time an effective mechanism to deal with people involved in using or copying fake names was discussed.

Chairman Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO) Mujeeb Ahmed Khan, requested the Standing Committee to write to Commerce Division and Cabinet Division to expedite approval of Geographical Indication (GI) laws as the country is without this law since 11 years.

In reply to a question, he said that Banaspati rice trade is not illegal but its sale by another country by repacking our material is illegal. The committee decided to discuss the GI law for five minutes in the agenda of each meeting.

Chairman IPO further stated that India had formulated GI laws in 2002 which enabled it to register Banaspati but Pakistan could not do this due to lack of this law. The committee was informed that patents backlog has been reduced from seven months to 25 days. The duration of patent registration is 30 months which is similar to other countries. The duration of Trade Mark is six months.

Senator Nauman Wazir said that Pakistan's situation with respect to patent and trade mark is poor. Senator Dilawar Khan said that due to his knowledge there is no case of someone being penalized for a violation of a patent.

Chairman IPO informed the committee that 500 cases of copyrights and trademarks have been pointed out of which 189 cases are related to copyright.

"Pakistan cannot defend its products at the international level because we don't have relevant laws," he maintained. Senator Nauman Wazir said that Pakistan's Khewra salt is being exported to India in trucks.

MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN