

MUSHTAQ GHUMMAN

### **Appointments to govt posts, Dawood says 'NAB factor' scares away 'good people'**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Advisor on Commerce, Textile, Industries and Production and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood Friday said that good people may not be joining the government because of the National Accountability Bureau's factor.

He was responding to a question during a press conference convened for a briefing on his recent visit to China wherein he attended mini-ministerial WTO Summit and held detailed meetings with Chinese Commerce Minister and his Deputy.

On October 29, 2019 when the issue of delay in the appointment of Chairman State Life Insurance Corporation (SLIC) was raised, the Advisor stated that Commerce Ministry was unable to find good quality professionals for the position of chairman SLIC due to aversion of private professionals from public sector jobs because of the NAB factor. When the Advisor was asked how many heads of organizations he has been unable to appoint due to fear of NAB, he replied "I had informed the Cabinet that I interviewed several people and I was not satisfied with them. I informed the Prime Minister that many good people are scared of joining the government because of NAB factor." He added that Ali Habib and Tariq Shafi have joined the government. In reply to a question about a deal between Sharif family and the government, Dawood said that he has just returned from China and knows nothing about any deal. Answering another question, Dawood said he is not aware of the latest development on withdrawal of interest in Abu Dhabi Expo 2020, adding that a meeting has been convened in TDAP Karachi on Saturday (Nov 9) where this matter will come under discussion.

The Advisor stated that the second phase of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China will become effective from December 1, 2019

He said FTA was signed with Beijing in April this year and the Chinese maintain that it usually takes a year to make such an agreement operational. However, due to special relationship with Pakistan, the Chinese side has agreed to make the FTA operational as quickly as possible. The Adviser said that negotiations are continuing with the Chinese side to export Pakistani agri products to their market. Dawood said that an international conference on textiles is being held in Lahore on Monday. About 35 Chinese companies will be attending the conference.

He said, top people of international brands such as Zara, Nike, and Adidas are also attending the exhibition in Lahore as security situation has improved in the country, adding that he would hold meetings with them in Lahore and ask them to open their offices in Pakistan. He would offer them whatever incentives they require and "we are ready to give tax benefits to investors to invest in Pakistan."

Dawood said during his meeting with Chinese Commerce Minister, he requested additional quota of 0.5 million tons of rice in comparison to last year's quota of 250,000 tons. "I have also requested Chinese Commerce Minister to give special quota of 300,000 tons of sugar for this year as the crushing is starting soon."

Dawood, however, made it clear that if domestic price rises due to export to China, exports will be banned. China has also been requested to import tobacco and cigarettes from Pakistan and it has agreed to import fruits and vegetable also, he stated. It has also agreed to give training to officials of Ministry of National Food Security and Research on quarantine issues.

He said during WTO's mini ministerial summit, a group of developing countries and some other countries demanded that rule based multilateral system should continue with China playing a good leadership role. He said, the next WTO moot will be held on June 8, 2020 in Kazakhstan. The Advisor expressed his anger at the stalls established by Pakistan in China International Import Expo in Shanghai from November 5-10, 2019. Dawood said that he has discussed the issue with the Chief Executive TDAP and told him next year would be different. He said Pakistan has requested China to allocate land for Pakistan's pavilion for next year and they have agreed and Pakistan has to deposit the required amount by next month. Dawood said that he was not aware when trade will be opened with India.