

HASSAN ABBAS

## **Second phase of FTA with China to be operational from Dec 1: Razak**

LAHORE: Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce, Investment, Industries and Textile, Abdul Razak Dawood on Tuesday said that the second phase of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with China is going to be operational from Dec 01, 2019 helping Pakistan come at par with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Chinese market, providing a huge opportunity of tariff relaxation to the manufacturers especially the garment sector to enhance their export volume with the potential to grow by 20 times.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony, of the 35th World Fashion Convention organized by Pakistan Readymade Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) in collaboration with International Apparel Federation (IAF). He said that export of Apparel increased by 17 % in terms of quantity.

Dawood said that recently International Monetary Fund (IMF) said that government is moving in right direction as it reduced the fiscal deficit and also the volatility in the exchange rate in last few months. He stressed his hope that we will further bring down the fiscal deficit by June 2020. Recently Pakistan has jumped up 28 places on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index and secured a place among top 10 countries with the most improved business climate.

The commerce & textile advisor further said, after the World Fashion Convention in Pakistan the economy of the country would be more integrated to the global economy and this linkage would bring foreign investment to the country. Dawood said the convention will prove to be a game changer in the country's business environment, which would enhance the overall image of the country at world level and will be helpful in promoting investment to the country. "Government's major economic agenda is to increase country's exports, which would strengthen the economy by overcoming trade and current account deficit," the advisor said.

Referring to the question regarding low exports of yarn and fabrics, he said that this is good for Pakistan, as it would provide the opportunity to our textile sector for more focus on value-addition. He said the government is taking different measures for export enhancement including reclaiming traditional markets besides getting access to the new markets. He also said that many Chinese textile companies have started their businesses in Lahore and Faisalabad.

President IAF HAN Bekke said that IAF is a global platform uniting apparel buyers with manufacturers and this crucial relationship is at the heart of the conference, as 'we focus on growing together'. He said that Convention has gathered apparel industry leaders from across the world and provides a unique opportunity for Pakistani apparel industry to learn new techniques.

IAF regional president and PRGMEA Chief Coordinator Ijaz Khokhar said that one of the world's largest Apparel Fashion Convention was aimed at opening new avenues for the domestic garment industry to collaborate with the international buyers and leading global brands. He said that the event attended by world class speakers, offering global network opportunities during the conference. He said that World Fashion Convention is held every year in one of the member countries. Ijaz Khokhar said that Russia and Bangladesh had also applied for the 35th Convention. However, Pakistan has won the convention bid with full struggle and proper presentation. "In the world class convention, there is a detailed presentation on Pakistan and apparel industry for creating awareness about the potential of Pakistan as production hub of textile items especially garments," he added.

PRGMEA North Zone Chairman Sohail Afzal Sheikh said that the mega convention provides an opportunity to its participants to discuss issues being faced by the global industry and also to network at a global level. Sheikh said that the Convention is being held at a time when the world population is set to cross the next billion. Provision of clothing to the burgeoning population in sustainable manner is going to be a huge challenge.

Highlighting the salient features of world fashion convention, he said that mega fashion show helps in presenting softer image of Pakistan abroad, and delegates from 45 countries have attended this mega event.