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### **Karachi traders support strike call**

KARACHI: City's traders on Thursday endorsed a decision of the country's business community to observe one-hour strike every day from 15th October as they felt perturbed over the delaying tactics and indifference of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and ministry of commerce to their plights.

Karachi Tajir Action Committee's focal person Muhammad Rizwan told The News that the authorities are using delaying tactics and they have not met "any single one of our demands".

"Our demands have been the same and we have been repeating them since the announcement of the federal budget," Rizwan said. The committee is a union of traders' associations in the city.

Traders from across the country joined forces to pressure the government to abolish certain tax conditions from higher taxes on mobile phones to value-added taxes. They announced one-hour strike every day.

All Pakistan Anjuman-e-Tajran (APAT) already announced to observe complete shutter down strike on October 28 and 29, 2019. On Wednesday, APAT held a meeting with government officials led by Minister for Economic Affairs Hammad Azhar in Islamabad, but the talks remained inconclusive. Ajmal Baloch, president of APAT said it was decided after internal discussions that the protest would continue until the demands are met.

Rizwan said the FBR introduced a fixed tax for shops on the basis of covered area of shop instead of profitability. The customs authorities are harassing importers, he alleged. "Even after the clearance of import consignments and payment of duty and taxes, traders are being served notices demanding (from them) payment of more money," he added.

Karachi Electronic Dealers Association (KEDA) President Rizwan Irfan criticised over high taxes on mobile phones. "A large number of mobile phones are not operational as they need to be regularised by the FBR and [Pakistan] Telecommunication Authority," Irfan said. "We have offered to pay taxes on these mobile phones but the government is not willing to take the tax on such mobile phones."

Traders further demanded of the government to do away with the value-added tax, restore income tax exemption for sale of up to Rs1.2 million, and reduce turnover tax to 0.3 percent from 0.6 percent.

KEDA president said the Karachi Tajir Action Committee demanded of the government to restore income tax exemption for annual salary income of up to Rs1.2 million, and abolish the condition of taking a copy of computerised national identity card from customer whose buying bill exceeds Rs50,000.