

Business community to be facilitated: PM Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday directed to abolish unnecessary taxes and inspection and around 150 licences required for small shopkeepers and businessmen as he vowed to facilitate the business community.

While chairing a meeting on licensing regime in the provinces, he also directed all the provincial governments to eliminate 74 different licences of this nature.

Prime Minister Imran Khan directed to simplify the process for necessary licences and introduction of automated system by employing modern technology.

He stressed the need for the business community to contribute their bit to the country's prosperity by paying their taxes. He lamented that the previous governments had wasted public money on lavish lifestyles of their leaders and therefore, the people are not willing to pay taxes.

"When leaders live lavishly on public expense, who will pay taxes," he questioned, adding that he was trying to change the culture starting with himself. "We reduced the expenses of the Prime Minister House by 40 percent," he said. "I live in my own home, pay my own expenses. My salary is not enough to fulfill my own household expenses," he added.

He claimed that his expenses on foreign trips were 10 times less than what was spent by leaders before him. "I'm just saying that I am starting with myself," he said. "There should be a realisation about the need to respect public money," he added, while seeking the business community's support to bring the country out of the crisis. "Nations only rise when the whole nation is united. The government alone can't do it," he said. Underlining the need for increase in tax collection, the premier said that during the first year of his government, half of the amount collected in taxes went towards payment of interest on loans acquired by the previous governments.

"And yet, we allocated Rs190 billion for the Ehsaas programme," he said, adding, however, that there were many sectors that needed improvement such as education, health and provision of safe drinking water but that would only be possible if the government had the funds. He detailed efforts by his team to improve conditions for the business community, saying, "We are continuously trying to figure out how to remove obstacles in the way of the business community."

He said that they had decided to remove the need for licences for 102 businesses, making the process simpler for small business owners. The prime minister emphasised that the country will never progress if the people do not pay taxes, saying his government is making all efforts to restore the public trust in the rulers. He has said that the government is taking bold steps to ensure ease of doing business in the country.

“People don’t want to pay taxes because they don’t trust rulers,” he said while addressing the business community at the Prime Minister House here Monday evening.

He said the government is also working to develop industries in the country, as without promotion of this sector the dream of a developed Pakistan cannot be materialised. Owing to initiatives taken by the government, the prices of food items will decrease in coming days. He urged the business community to pay taxes and help his government to make the country prosper. “The country can never prosper without taxes and we are trying hard to introduce a tax culture in the country,” he added.

While expressing his concerns over the country’s taxpaying standing, the prime minister said, “Pakistan ranks one of the lowest in the taxpaying countries.”