

**Smooth operation of industry, businesses, Govt urged to play facilitating, advisory role**

LAHORE: As the government has announced the reopening of more businesses including the textile allied industry, the apparel sector has urged the government to play facilitating and advisory role for the smooth operation of industry and other businesses instead of acting the role of policing.

Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association, Vice Chairman Shafiq Butt in a statement issued here on Wednesday said that the export industry, which has been exempted from lockdown, has already been operating under Covid-19 pandemic strict precautionary measures and the administration should act as a supervisory body if it considers any kind of negligence in this regard. He said that the authorities should adopt friendly attitude to help the industry implementing SOPs in a better way instead of raiding, threatening and harassing the businessmen. "PHMA wants local administration's supportive role to the run the wheel of industry in a smooth way, instead of creating hurdles, demanding unnecessary paperwork from the industry and long procedure for the resumption of production."

He suggested the government should direct district administration for the proactive and friendly approach and dialogue with the industry, not creating atmosphere of fear and panic.

The PHMA Vice Chairman said that operation of textile allied industry is vital because without support from the allied businesses, the textile export industry will not be able to fulfill export orders. Moreover, the decision of the government would save hundreds of thousands of workers from layoff. He stated that the industries, which have already received permission from the government, were facing hurdles in manufacturing export orders due to closure of allied industries amid lockdown. He said that the whole supply chain was disrupted and it was difficult to complete export orders. Now permission to allow allied industries to operate as well during lockdown will also support the export industry, as they can receive relevant materials and supplies required to fulfill export orders. It is good that the government realizes the importance of the value-added textile industry in terms of employment generation and its contribution to the country's exports.

Shafiq Butt said the government has allowed reopening of the textile value chain subject to a strict observance of the SOPs, which the textile industry was already following. He said it is encouraging that the Covid-19 situation is much better in Pakistan as compared to the US and Europe due to timely steps taken by the government.

The PHMA Vice Chairman said this is the time to look for the survival options and the government's decision of reopening a large number of manufacturing units would be helpful in this regard.

He said the textile industry contributes to 60 per cent of the country's exports and it has already proven that precautionary measures have been fully observed during the permission granted by the government to process the semi-finished orders.

Pointing out the issue of exporters' refunds, he said exporters are highly perturbed amid severe liquidity crises as their liquidity in shape of Sales Tax Refunds, Customs Rebates and payments of DLT are stuck up with the government. The critical situation demands immediate relief by the government with instant relief measures like payment of sales tax refund claims, waiver of mark-up in export refinancing and deferment in payment of gas and power bills.