

Exclusive interview with LCCI Vice-President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary

Govt making all-out efforts to make country economically strong: LCCI

• Says bureaucracy needs to be told directly and bluntly either serve or leave • Govt has vision and wants to make country an economic power as it has introduced numerous trade and industry-friendly policies • PM wants to do something good for country and it is therefore, the govt has introduced a number of landmark policies • FBR treating business community like criminals and registering cases promoting harassment among the business community



BY M JAHANGIR HAYAT

The incumbent government is undoubtedly taking strong measures to make the country economically strong but it is the bureaucracy that does not want the government to be successful in its endeavour.

The government must have to replace the trouble makers in the bureaucracy with the elements that are willing to serve the national interests. The Tax Collector should refrain from harassing the members of business community instead it would have better take the chambers and associations on board before initiating any direct action that earns bad name for the country.

These views were expressed by the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI), Vice-President, Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary while exclusively talking to *Daily The Business* here the other day.

"The government has vision and wants to make the country an economic power as it has introduced numerous trade and industry friendly policies.

However, the bureaucracy has become one of the biggest hurdles in the way of economic growth and development.

The bureaucracy has failed to implement the government policies in letter and spirit. The government has to speak directly and bluntly to the members of bureaucracy making it clear to them; either serve or leave," Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary suggested.

When questioned as to why the bureaucracy is not ready to implement the government's well contrived policy, he replied that the bureaucracy does not want to implement the policies to serve its own limited interest, failing the government.

"The government has a vision. Prime Minister wants to do something good for the country and it is therefore, the government has introduced a number of landmark policies," he pointed out, but the bureaucracy is reluctant to implement.

"The FBR can collect huge revenue if the fix tax policy is implemented, but the policy is not being implemented.

Why is it not being implemented? Definitely, there are some nefarious designs," he explained.

Talking about the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) raids on the business premises, he said that the business community is the major source of revenue for the government but the Federal Board of Revenue is using coercive tactics against them.

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary said that it is high time to make joint efforts to keep the wheel of the economy moving but the FBR is treating the business community like criminals and registering cases promoting harassment among the business community.

He said that the Tax Collector should refrain from harassing the members of business community instead it would have better take the chambers and associations on board before initiating any direct action that earns bad name for the country. Such practices on the part of the FBR are not only fatal for the business community but also for the FBR as it would not be able to meet its revenue targets set for the year 20-21 due to anti-business measures like registration of cases against the business community.

"The PM should intervene into the matter and help stop the FBR from this practice that is pushing the taxpayers to the wall besides denting the reputation of the government.

The FBR was constituted to facilitate the businessmen but it is presently doing the other way round.

These acts of the Federal Board of Revenue are not only defaming the government but also hurting the business atmosphere.

It is unfortunate that the FBR is not releasing what it owes to the business community but creating troubles for the businessmen for the recovery of its outstanding dues just to meet the revenue targets and for the sake to show its performance.

Talking about the WASA water tariff for industrial and commercial users, he highlighted that the WASA water tariff for industrial and commercial users for extracting water through tube-wells is set at the rate



of Rs100,000 per month for 1 cusec which is considerably higher as compared to other cities in Punjab.

The water tariff in Faisalabad is Rs 13,000 per month for textile processing units and Rs 19,320 per month for general industry.

"The WASA water tariff for Lahore needs to be rationalized. During a recent meeting with Vice-Chairman WASA at LCCI, it was decided that the water level should be checked in industrial areas for setting the water tariff.

If water level is more than 700 feet, then the tariff would remain the same. Otherwise if the water level is below 300 feet to 400 feet, the water tariff would be reviewed and considered as industrial water not for drinking.

All the same, nothing has been done in this regard till now," the LCCI VP said.

Deliberating on the issue of sealing the premises of industry or food point by Punjab Food Authority (PFA), the LCCI SVP mentioned that at present the Authority is working in a style that it acts as administration and then judiciary and declares any premises of carrying out adulterated business immediately after taking the samples and did not wait for lab reports.

The LCCI VP said that the food authority teams while visiting any food business premises imposes heavy fines and even seal the premises on very minor issues.

"This very act is creating unrest and an atmosphere of harassment among the food businesses".

He said that premises closure also render workers jobless, who were working at these premises.

The Food Authority should sit with the stakeholders and carve out a strategy which should not damage the businesses and their reputations unless the adulteration is proved, he said, adding that the Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar, Chief Secretary and Secretary Food Punjab must take notice of the situation and order immediate remedial measures.

The Punjab Government should stop the Punjab Food Authority (PFA) from sealing the premises of any industry or food point carrying out food-related business till samples taken from these premises are proved of having adulteration, Chaudhary demanded.

Shedding light on Customs related issues of the business community, he stated that importers have been facing numerous problems while transporting imported goods from the ports to their warehouses as they are frequently stopped by Customs personnel on various checkpoints. "Consignments once cleared by Customs Authorities are being checked time and

Profile

Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary is a leading businessman with a career spanning over 30 years. He did his Bachelors in Commerce from Hailey College of Commerce, Lahore and Masters in Public Administration from the Punjab University.

BUSINESS PROFILE:

- M/s Lever Engineering Industries(CEO)
- M/s LeverLock Hardware Co.(CEO)
- M/s Lever International. (CEO)
- M/s Lever Fasteners Industries. (CEO)
- M/s Lever Packing. (CEO)
- M/s Lever Industries. (CEO)

SERVICES: LCCI Executive Committee Member

For the years, 2002-2005, 2017-18, and 2020-21

- Convener: LCCI Standing Committee on Local Government Affairs in 2002-2005 & 2017. LCCI Standing Committee on Law & Order in 2017.

LCCI Standing Committee on Diplomatic & Foreign Mission in 2002-2003.

LCCI Standing Committee on Engineering Industries in 2001.

LCCI Standing Committee on SAARC & ECO in 2000-2001.

LCCI Standing Committee on Insurance in 1996.

Chairman: LCCI Citizen-Police Liaison Committee (CPLC), Police Complaint Commission, Lahore, Home Department Government of Punjab.

Brandreth Road Traders Alliance.

- Former Central Chairman Pakistan Hardware Merchants Association.
- Former Zonal Chairman

Pakistan Hardware Merchants Association.

He has travelled all over the world to find out new avenues for trade and investment.



complained that sometimes their shipments are assessed for valuation on retail price of imported commodities which is higher than the wholesale price.

The Customs officials must understand that containers are booked in bulk and cut-rate prices are mentioned in import documents.

Moreover, he said, Customs Officials for valuation apply different parameters while assessing the valuation of different import consignments containing similar items. Similarly, the consignment containing uniform packing should only be inspected. The current practice at Karachi Port of examining or de-stuffing the consignments should be stopped.

"Additional charges at Lahore Port are also causing problems for importers and should be withdrawn.

Else, it will induce the importers to get their valuation done at Karachi Port," the LCCI VP said adding that the Customs Officials deputed at Airports should act as facilitators rather than causing unnecessary problems for the importers and exporters.

While talking about weak mobile signals in major Lahore markets, Chaudhary said that weak mobile signals in major Lahore markets are affecting businesses badly, therefore, cellular companies and the Pakistan Telecommunication

Authority (PTA) need to look into the matter urgently as it is hampering business activities.

The problem of poor mobile signals has been increasing and cellular companies were not paying attention to the complaints, he said, adding that the cellular companies are earning billions of rupees from the consumers, but signal quality is going down with every passing day.

The LCCI has received a number of complaints that signal quality is very poor in different parts of the city, the LCCI SV said, explaining further that only customer's care can ensure the growth of telecom sector, therefore not only the cellular companies, but the government should take notice of this issue resolve it immediately.

With the passage of time, the world has become global village and all the means of communication and business mode have shifted to cellular base that should be strong enough, he concluded.

again while moving to upcountry regions," the LCCI VP said adding that unnecessary delays in clearance of goods on part of Customs Department should be minimized to save businesses from incurring financial losses besides the government should employ all the resources to control smuggling at the borders.

The staff of Frontier Corps should be equipped with state-of-the-art equipment so that better vigilance can be ensured.

"We oppose the raids of Customs officials at godowns and confiscation of goods/consignments.

It is creating a lot of harassment among the business community. We propose that businessmen should be given at least three days to provide the necessary documents to prove that all the formalities have been completed", he added.

The LCCI SP said that LCCI Members have

