



Tobacco Industry to discuss the serious problems faced by the Industrial sector in AJK 's largest business hub of Mirpur division. Speakers including former President FPCCI and AJKCCI and ex AJK minister Ch. Muhammad Saeed, ex AJK minister Ch. Rukhsar Ahmad, President MCCI Omar Shehzad Jirral, Chairman District Council Mirpur-AJK Raha Naveed Akhter Goga, representatives of Walton Tobacco industry and others addressed the ceremony and called for early redressal of the grievances of the local industrial sector about the approach of redtapism by the stake holders causing a stumbling block in the industrial progress in Azad Jammu Kashmir.

Besides all segments of the civil society, former presidents of the AJK Chamber of Commerce including Zulfiqar Abbasi, sohaib Saeed Chaudhry and Syed Sabir Shah, KPC President Syed Abid Hussain Shah, Secretary General Raja Sohrab Ahmed Khan, senior Kashmiri journalist Altaf Hamid Rao, ex DG MDHA Zulfiqar Azam, political, social, business, legal and business fraternities and journalistic circles participated in the event.

Speaking on this occasion, key speakers including Arif Zia, special representative of the Walton Tobacco Industry, which had been closed for the past 8 months, gave a detailed briefing about the problems faced by the industry in the backdrop of the irrelevant actions of the state-sponsored stake holders and local administration, he added.

Mirpur AJKCCI President Chamber of Omar Shahzad Jaral said that the industries in Azad Jammu Kashmir were suffering from serious problems. “The problems of the local industries are directly causing the problems for the people including the major issue of unemployment in the area as a whole”, he observed.

Jirral continued that non of the political figures in AJK power corridors heard the grievances about the collapsed AJK industrial sector where, during the last three years, 133 units have been closed down due to the lack of interest by the stakeholders from the AJK government. He revealed that among the abandoned industrial uniys in Mirpur industrial estates, 22 mobile assembling units have been completely closed, leaving hundreds of young people jobless.

Currently, he continued, around 33 units are getting close to complete shut down, since Investors have informed authorities about the closure of units

He asserted that factories’ owners in Azad Jammu Kashmir were paying much more taxes as compared to the entrepreneurs in Pakistan. “Education tax which is not applicable in Pakistan is being collected by Azad Jammu Kashmir government which has no policy on sustainable small scaled industry. which the MCCI President described a big tragedy.

Omar Shehzad Jirral said that recommendations have been given to the AJKb Chief Secretary for the survival of industrial sector in AJK—since now the only solution is to close down the factories in AJK and hand over the keys to the AJK government, he declared.

The MCCI President asserted that AJK industrial sector was playing their role in CSR funds according to the rules. CSR funds cannot be invested in any building or club, he added.

Jirral further said It was not ever considered to ask the owners that who was responsible of the closure of the factories. He underlined that many industrial units in Mirpur AJK industrial estates were lying operational while the AJK state government authorities were, canceling the industrial plots in small and major industrial estates for their lack of apathy and slackness.” If this hostile trend of the AJK state stakeholders continued Mirpur industrial estates will turn into the graveyards of the local industry, the MCCI President warned.

Concluding, Omar Shehzad Jirral recalled that Azad Textiles mills, one of the largest business unit of its time in this region was closed due to immense problems faced by the owners because of the alleged bottlenecks caused by the concerned AJK state bodies despite the business group had been the annual contributors of heavy volume of levies to the tune of over Rs. 18 billion when it remained operational for years in Mirpur AJK till recent past, he concluded.