

Football from Sialkot featured in FIFA World Cup

Chairman Pakistan Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PSGMEA) Hasnain Iftikhar Cheema has said that the football production activities had been increased to many folds as FIFA Cup is inches away in this export-oriented and hub of cottage industry of the country.

Talking to Business Recorder on Wednesday he said that although Pakistan Football team will not be participating in world cup but Sialkot made "Telstar" official match ball will shine FIFA Cup and represent Pakistan and it is expected that more than 10 million footballs would be exported from Pakistan on the eve of World Cup.

Sialkot had a great honor for producing Brazuca for last world cup and now Telstar football for FIFA Cup 2018. Hasnain further stated that Sialkot made footballs will be used in FIFA World Cup 2018 and its great honor for Sialkot adding that business community and craftsmen engaged with sports goods were making adequate efforts to keep the national flag higher and higher. The international buyers were busy to secure their supply chain, building strong and long term business relations with local exporters he said. In 1980 Sialkot he said gained international celebrity status when it produced the "Tango" ball used in FIFA World Cup in 1982 which led to further growth of Soccer ball industry of Sialkot. Hasnain said that the success story of Sialkot based industries based on the unmatched skill and craftsmanship of local workers.

PSGMEA Chairman pointed out that soccer ball industry was shocked when mechanized ball was used in world cup matches. In order to protect the soccer ball industry, the federal governments had set up Sports Industry Development Centre (SIDC) for modernizing soccer ball industry and resolve the problems confronted by the industry. Replying to a question he disclosed that according to a rough estimate there are more than ten thousand cottage industries, producing sports goods and related products in Sialkot.

Answering a question, he sought government support for modernization and industrialization and said that SMEs are unable to upgrade their workplaces and to obtain modern technologies for bringing innovation in products to cope with changing trends and demands of foreign buyers. Under the prevailing situation the government should provide interest free loans to SMEs enabling them to upgrade their workplace and to obtain latest industrial technologies he mentioned.

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