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## PHC Blocks Security Deployment at Tobacco Plants

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The Peshawar High Court (PHC) has issued an interim order suspending the deployment of Rangers and other law enforcement personnel at tobacco processing units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, following a legal challenge against the Revenue Department's directive.

On August 2, 2025, the court heard a writ petition filed by representatives of the tobacco industry who argued that the Revenue Department had exceeded its authority by ordering the deployment of paramilitary personnel at industrial tobacco facilities. The petitioners claimed the presence of security forces at these sites would interfere with normal business operations, intimidate workers, and violate their constitutional right to operate freely without undue state interference.

The PHC bench, whose members were not named in public court records, found the arguments compelling enough to grant an interim injunction. This ruling temporarily suspends the enforcement of the Revenue Department's directive, pending a final decision on the matter. The court also instructed the Revenue Department to submit a written explanation justifying the legal basis for its deployment order before the next hearing, which is expected later this month.

The Revenue Department had earlier defended the decision, stating that the measure was intended to increase transparency and combat tax evasion in the tobacco sector. Officials maintained that law enforcement deployment was a preventive move, not an intrusive one, and emphasized the department's responsibility to ensure compliance with federal tax laws.

However, industry representatives welcomed the court's intervention. Several business leaders expressed relief, saying that while they support lawful oversight, the presence of armed personnel on their premises was unnecessary and potentially disruptive. One spokesperson noted that such deployments could damage worker morale and foster an atmosphere of suspicion rather than cooperation.

Legal analysts believe the outcome of this case may set an important precedent for the limits of administrative authority in regulating private industry. The dispute highlights broader tensions between government efforts to tighten oversight of sensitive industries and the rights of businesses to operate without what they consider excessive interference.

For now, tobacco processing units in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will continue operating without a security presence. The industry awaits further court proceedings to determine whether the Revenue Department's directive will ultimately be upheld or struck down.