



## PRESS RELEASE

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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### **PAJCCI commended Prime Minister's initiative to keep Torkham border open round the clock**

The announcement of keeping the Torkham border open for 24/7 was highly well-received by the business communities across the border and is surely a step in the right direction, however, it is critical to ensure that upgraded infrastructure and well-equipped & competent staff is in place to tackle the challenges.

PAJCCI Chairman, Zubair Motiwala appreciated the initiative of Prime Minister with an aim to increase bilateral trade ties between the two countries, but he also iterated that this single step needs to be intertwined with other confidence building measures that should reduce the trust deficit across the border. The Border management system, including quick processing at the border, scanning facility in place, appropriate number of manpower with the desired skill set should also be ensured. The congestion and infrastructure challenges at port leading to delays which is further aggravated by dilapidated road conditions also reduces the speed of consignments reaching the border, which needs to be looked into to reap the benefits from this endeavor.

During a meeting with customs officials, it was highlighted that Torkham border has one gate which is used for the movement of all types of cargo, including Transit, Trade (Import / Export) and Empty Containers that limits the efficacy of border facilitation, this not only increases the time of processing but also creates a backlog. The electricity and internet disconnects also cause significant issues as it hampers the operation of WeBoC system, leading to the piling of documents that needs pre-processing for clearance of the consignments. The most critical issue highlighted was limited manpower on the border, which in normal working conditions is also not sufficient. Motiwala commented that it is heartening to see that these matters were taken under perspective by the Government and as highlighted during the visit of Chief Minister Mahmood Khan, the arrangement at border for ensuring round the clock functionality were deemed satisfactory. PAJCCI Chairman believed that if these issues are curbed then this investment at the border will surely support enhancement in trade and facilitation of transit. He also iterates the need to ensure the same across the border so that the benefits can be achieved mutually through an efficient border system on both the sides.

Co-Chairman PAJCCI, Khan Jan Alokozai also welcomed the initiative of Pakistan Government to keep the border operational 24/7 and hope to see it replicated at the Chaman and Ghulam Khan borders as well.