



PRESS RELEASE

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

Tel No: 021-99332675-6, Fax: 021-99332677, Email: info@pajcci.com

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Pak-Afghan trade may not be affected by political tensions: Zubair Motiwala

In lieu of violent disturbance and alleged cross-border terror attacks, the borders between the two countries have been closed for long that has significantly affected the trade activities between the two countries. The traders on both the sides are facing immense losses that also reflects upon the confidence across the border.

Zubair Motiwala - Chairman & President PAJCCI, in his interview with Voice of America commented that the sanctity of Pakistan and Afghanistan comes first and PAJCCI stands by all relevant measures that are required to be taken. However, closure of borders for such long duration intermittently causes permanent, long-term damage to the bilateral and transit trade. The recent figures are showing a rise in Afghanistan's trade with Iran and a corresponding decline in business with Pakistan. Pakistan-Afghanistan trade has dropped significantly in the last 1½ years because of bilateral tension, which is estimated to be approximately 40% decline in recent years. Currently, hundreds of trucks loaded with fresh fruits, vegetables, poultry and other edible items are stranded on the borders, which are near to waste. Additionally, heavy demurrages, waiting time, uncertainty and diversion of both bilateral and transit trade to other avenues is causing psychological rift and is resulting in long-run instability in relations with the prime neighbor of Pakistan.

In a recent press conference in Afghanistan, Khan Jan Alokozai, First Vice Chairman ACCI and Co-President PAJCCI presented the impacts of the recent political tension and shutdown of the Afghan- Pak Border on bilateral and transit trade and added that almost five thousand Afghan and Pakistani Cargo is halted at both sides of the border. He established that by having the transit agreement with Pakistan and also as a member of WTO, SAARC and ECO, it is urged that Pakistani Authorities should consider this matter as utmost priority as sealing of border causes damages in millions of dollars, which is now intolerable for the Afghan business community.

He mentioned that 1200 Afghan transit cargo is halted in Pakistan; therefore the Government of Afghanistan should take necessary steps to bring the cargo to Afghanistan without charging any tax or custom duties.

While representing the sentiments of the Afghan business community, he feared that transit route of Pakistan may not be utilized until the establishment of appropriate climate for the businesses is ensured by the Pakistani Government. He further assured the people of Afghanistan that within one week 25000 megaton food item will be imported to Afghanistan from central Asian countries and Europe. Yonass Momand, Vice President of PAJCCI and ACCI also urged the Government of Afghanistan that keeping in view the turbulent business environment, air cargo system for exporting Afghan fresh fruits to the rest of the world especially to India may be ensured.

Motiwala strongly urged both the governments to segregate business and trade ties from political tensions, establish strong security measures that are vital for stabilization and sustainability of both the countries without compromising upon the sentiments of the business community across the border. He also established that a number of Afghan nationals that are seeking treatment for a variety of ailments and were visiting Pakistan for medical purposes are also stuck on this side of the border and have also run out of medicine and money. It is also observed that only ambulances transferring the dead from the Pakistan side have been allowed to pass.

He believed that both the Governments would keenly follow-up the matter and would develop measures of a long term nature, for ensuring overall economic stability in the region. He also lauded initiative of Interior Minister, Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, for resolving visa issues of citizens of Afghanistan in Pakistan that has aggravated due to closure of Pak-Afghan border.