



PRESS RELEASE

PAKISTAN AFGHANISTAN JOINT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

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PAJCCI urges Governments to immediately open Afghanistan-Pakistan borders for the clearance of stranded consignments: Zubair Motiwala, Chairman

A joint delegation from Pakistan and Afghanistan private sector met under the aegis of Beyond Boundaries- A CRSS led project to discuss difficulties arising out of the abrupt closure of Pakistan-Afghanistan border on February 17, 2017. The meeting took note with grave concern that the border has been closed for 5 times during the short span causing immense financial losses that also reflects upon the confidence across the border.

The delegation was led by Zubair Motiwala - Chairman & President PAJCCI and is comprised of private sector members from both the sides. The PAJCCI delegation also included Junaid Makda, Faiza and Ahmad Shah.

The members unanimously reiterated the significance of national sanctity and security and supported all measures that respective Governments may take to ensure the same. However, the same may not be continued at the beset of hurting the economic and social ties across the border through measures such as abrupt closure of the border for an indefinite period resulting in massive monetary losses and trust deficit.

At the outset, it was also decided to constitute a 6 member committee, comprising 3 members from each country's private sector and think tanks, to deal with the respective Governments on pertinent matters as in the instant case matter of closure of borders. The joint committee should be consulted for advice before taking extreme measures such as closure of borders or revision of economic policies in general. The committee should also be taken into confidence before such actions that may hamper the overall business ties. This committee would act as economic and confidence building catalyst to ensure further enhancement of bilateral trade, rejuvenate regional linkages, promote joint investments.

The delegation also met H.E. Mr. Omar Zakhilwal, Ambassador Afghanistan in Pakistan to ensure prompt resolution of the matter in hand and extend support on behalf of business communities from both the sides. Motiwala, on behalf of the forum, demanded both Governments to immediately open the border for the clearance of stranded cargo at Torkham

and Spin Boldak to clear the cargo from Karachi port. He further 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.

Mr. Ahmad Shah, Director PAJCCI – Afghan Chapter, for a waiver of any applicable port charges (detention / demurrage) applied to Afghan consignments / containers accruing from the closure of the border to limit the monetary losses of the business community.

H.E. Afghanistan Ambassador strongly established that these issues are not only aggravating business ties with Pakistan, but also the social connectivity between the two countries. He stated that Governments should allow economics to function freely and help politics rather than politics obstruct the free flow of economic activities. He mentioned that such economic disturbances cause other countries to penetrate Afghanistan as India has recently announced lower fares and extension of immediate visas to patients from Afghanistan for continuing their treatment in India at a subsidized rate.

Motiwala highlighted that 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. He believed that both the Governments should keenly follow-up the matter and develop measures of a long term nature, for ensuring overall economic stability in the region.

The delegation will also meet National Security Advisor, Lt. Gen (retd) Nasir Janjua, Federal Minister for Trade and Commerce - H.E. Khurram Dastagir Khan, Chairman Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Assembly of Pakistan - Mr. Awais Leghari, Chairman Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group - Mr. Aftab Sherpao and Commerce Committee of the National Assembly of Pakistan.

