

### **Pak-Afghan trade plummets to \$1.7 billion: PAJCCI**

PESHAWAR: The Pakistan and Afghan traders have said the trade between two countries has a potential of \$10 billion, but it has plummeted to \$ 1.7 billion due to the policies of the governments on both sides.

They said Afghanistan was the only country with which Pakistan enjoyed a trade surplus and it was decided by the leadership of both the countries that mutual trade would be taken to its actual quantum \$5 billion, but due to negligence and trust deficit it has plunged at \$1.7 billion.

The recent irritant, they said, remained the dilemma of the delayed release of over 2000 empty containers and trucks further slowed down trade between the two countries.

Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) wrote a letter to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani to personally look into the matter. The letter received an overwhelming response and immediate intervention was initiated at the Afghan side, the PAJCCI said.

To get a similar response a delegation of stakeholders from both the sides led by PAJCCI's chairman Zubair Motiwala met Razak Dawood, Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce, Textile, Industry, Production and Investment.

The traders' delegation urged the prime minister advisor to help resolve the issue at the Torkham border, which is not only increasing the cost of doing business, but it is also repelling the most lucrative business transactions.

They informed Razak Dawood that over 7000 containers remained stranded in December last year around 5000 of these have been re-routed through Iran causing immense loss to the traders and more than 2000 trucks and containers are still awaiting return to Pakistan and onward shipment to other destinations.

They also sought a waiver or relaxation in terms of detention charges for these trucks and containers.

Razak Dawood, the press release of the PAJCCI said, has assured the traders that the government would expedite the process for truck and containers clearance and directed and director general, Transit Trade to look into the matter and rectify the issues at Torkham border crossing. The advisors also inducted Motiwala in the committees of Tariff Rationalization and Textile Reforms, the release said.

Our Correspondent