

Talks on FTA next month, says Indonesian envoy

LAHORE: Ambassador of Indonesia Iwan Suyudhieamri has said that negotiations for converting preferential trade agreement (PTA) into free trade agreement (FTA) will be held next month between the ministries of two countries.

The Ambassador was speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry here in Saturday. He said that bilateral trade between the two sides should be enhanced as Pakistan and Indonesia are potential markets. He said that Pakistani products have great demand in Indonesia therefore the Pakistani businessmen should avail this opportunity.

He also invited the Pakistani businessmen to participate in 34th Trade Expo being held in Indonesia in October this year. He said the Lahore Chamber is playing a significant role to strengthen the trade and economic relations between the two countries. Indonesia and Pakistan have old historical links and enjoy cordial relations. The people of both countries are close to each other and share special bondage of friendship and companionship, he added.

Speaking on the occasion, LCCI Senior Vice President Khawaja Shahzad Nasir said Indonesia and Pakistan are members of OIC and D-8 Organization of Economic Cooperation. Both countries have old historical links and share special bondage of friendship and companionship.

LCCI Vice President Faheem-ur-Rehman Saigal said Indonesia is a major trading partner of Pakistan as among the top importing and exporting destinations of Pakistan, Indonesia comes at 5th and 16th places respectively. There already exists Preferential Trade Agreement between Pakistan and Indonesia. Last year, Indonesia allowed Pakistan to have free market access for 20 items with immediate effect. It would certainly help increase trade while offering greater opportunities to our exporters, he added.

For the last few years, the bilateral trade is following an increasing trend. In 2016, the volume of two-way trade was \$2.2 billion which reached to \$2.8 billion in 2018. He said that imports from Indonesia to Pakistan registered a sizeable increase from \$2.1 billion in 2016 to \$2.5 billion in 2018. Pakistan's exports to Indonesia are also picking up. In the same period, the value of exports increased from \$126 million to \$303 million, he added.

He said that Indonesia has earned respectable name in areas including petro-chemicals, rubber, plywood, telecommunication and tourism. Indonesian business community can make investment in Pakistan in these industries and can also enter into joint ventures with their Pakistani counterparts.

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