

### **Truckers strike slows down export shipments**

KARACHI: A transporters strike entered the third day on Wednesday, starting cargos hold ups at ports with exports shipments delayed, traders said.

Cargo and goods transporters are on strike over restrictions in axle load and imposing of hefty fine on traffic violation. All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) said the ongoing strike by the transport sector is going to impact exports significantly "as there are no empty containers are available in upcountry for exports".

In a statement issued to the press, Spokesman of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association said that "As a result of unavailability of empty containers in upcountry due to strike of transport sector, exporters are missing shipment deadlines," APTMA spokesman said in a statement.

"One additional factor that is a major cause of the scarcity of containers is the large number of orders that have been received from China after the effectiveness of the Phase II of the Free Trade Agreement between China and Pakistan."

APTMA said that even if the containers were to be dispatched from Karachi at the earliest "they would take three days to reach upcountry where exporters have already have had two days without containers; effectively a further week of exports would have been delayed/lost".

"Under these circumstances, we request the government to take immediate action for resolving the issue so that no more exporting deadlines are missed." Manufactures said strike has badly affected export shipments and they are unable to fulfill their commitments.

Javed Bilwani, chairman of Pakistan Apparel Forum, said that Karachi's ports handled around 9,827 containers on a daily basis, of which 4,665 were for exports and 5,162 for the import. "If the strike is not ended, the country will suffer a loss of nearly Rs10 billion/day," Bilwani said.

He urged the government to take notice and resolve the issue, as export shipments were being affected due to the unavailability of containers. "If containers were not available, export orders will be met through air shipment, which will cause huge expenses," Bilwani added.

Malik Sher Khan, senior vice president of United Goods Transporters Alliance told The News that almost 90 percent vehicles observed strike in the country. "Around 15,000 to 16,000 vehicles enter and exit from Karachi on a daily basis, of which 90 percent are on strike," he added.

Transporters said a 22-wheeler vehicle is allowed to carry 58.5 tons as per law, however the new axle load regime had restricted this limit to 32 tons for being triple-axle vehicle.

The federal government had recently approved revised rates of fines against traffic violations on highways. The penalty, which was Rs750 on every kind of violation, is now being categorised. For speeding, the fine would be Rs1,500 for motorbikes, Rs2,500 for cars, Rs5,000 for trucks, and Rs10,000 for public service vehicles. Khan said they would continue their strike until the government implementation agreed rules.