



Unnecessary imports

Page NO.09 Co I No.04

IT IS quite apparent that we are facing great economic challenges. We spend more than we earn. The monthly import bill is \$6 billion, whereas our monthly exports are only \$2 billion. We clearly need to reduce our imports and increase exports.

I was in Karachi last month and saw imported soda ash from Kenya being loaded on to trucks. I remember from my school days that soda ash has been produced at Khewra (Jehlum) since 1940. The question is: why are we allowing the import of soda ash when it is already being produced in Pakistan? I do not understand why the government does not reduce imports of all products where domestic capacity is higher than demand.

The government needs to support local manufacturers and discourage imports through non-tariff barriers so that imports of products being manufactured in Pakistan are reduced.

In India, they have the regular customs duty and then a plethora of non-tariff barriers in the form of cess, for example education, infrastructure, etc, that add on to the import bill, hence, rendering the import uncompetitive vis-à-vis the local production.

Pakistan, on the other hand, appears to be an 'import happy' nation that forms strategies to encourage imports and discourage domestic manufacturers. This has to change if we are to change.

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