



PAJCCI'S COMMUNIQUE

INSIGHT ON PAK-AFGHAN NEWS HIGHLIGHTS

September 7, 2017



○ **H.E. President Ashraf Ghani's Message to Pakistan on Eid-ul-Adha**

President Afghanistan while wishing for Eid-ul-Adha called on Pakistan to engage in all-inclusive peace negotiations and commented that: "We are ready for comprehensive political talks. Peace with Pakistan is in our national agenda".¹

In response to this, Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said that Pakistan always intended to see peace and stability in Afghanistan. There are already mechanisms for dialogue with Afghanistan in place and Pakistan will do its part in all initiatives aimed at securing peace.

○ **PAJCCI urges COAS to include economic committee in proposed Pak-Afghan Army working group: Zubair Motiwala**

President PAJCCI acknowledged the recent recommendation of General Qamar Javed Bajwa to form a Pak-Afghan Army working group to jointly work and formulate security proposals for government level discussion of mutual concern. He believed it is a dire need but established that keeping current confidence level and business stagnance in view it would be significantly vital to also include an economic committee in the same working group to help re-establish confidence building measures.

Motiwala elaborated that Pakistan Afghanistan Joint Chamber (PAJCCI), since its inception, has been making all relevant endeavors to improve and stabilize confidence building measures between the two countries and ensuring that business communities across the border attain mutual benefits in terms of trade, transit, security, peace and prosperity. However, recent political turmoil has resulted in permanent, long-term damage to the bilateral and transit trade whereby recent figures are showing a rise in Afghanistan's trade with Iran and a corresponding decline in business with Pakistan. Pakistan-Afghanistan trade has dropped significantly in the last 2-3 years because of bilateral tension that caused other countries to penetrate in Afghanistan easily, as India has recently acquired a very strong hold both socially and economically in the Afghanistan, causing double damage to the Pakistani economy and neighborly relationship.

Keeping the economic imbalance and deteriorating business situation between the countries, formation of such economic committee, comprising members from each country's private sector and think tanks, to deal with the respective Governments on pertinent matters would be of significant importance. This committee would act as economic and confidence building catalyst to ensure achievement of previous business levels and further enhancement of bilateral trade, rejuvenate regional linkages and promote joint investments. In this context, PAJCCI offers its

services as a bilateral entity, having its members in both the countries, to act as a joint platform and support overarching objective of peace, prosperity and economic connectivity.

Additionally Zubair Motiwala strongly urged both the governments to segregate business and trade ties from political and military tensions, though, 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. He emphasized that both the governments should take immediate steps to enhance confidence building measures to revive the peace and economic prosperity between the both countries in order to save the business communities across the border from losing long-term association established since ages. Historically, it has been proven that peace follows economic initiatives and not otherwise, hence Governments should allow economics to function freely and help politics rather than obstructing the free flow of economic activities.ⁱⁱ

○ **Newly appointed Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Afghanistan**ⁱⁱⁱ

H.E. Zahid Nasrullah Khan is a newly appointed Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Afghanistan who replaced H.E. Ibrar Hussain. Before joining this position, he was the Ambassador of Pakistan to the Republic of Korea (Dec 2013 - Jun 2017).



He has also held various diplomatic assignments in Pakistan Missions abroad, namely in Berne (1994 - 1997), Jeddah (2000 - 2004), London (2005 - 2007) and Doha (2007 - 2011). In November 1987, he joined “Foreign Service of Pakistan” and served at different positions. He also served as Director - Kashmir Affairs, Russia & Europe (1999-2000 & 2004-2005).

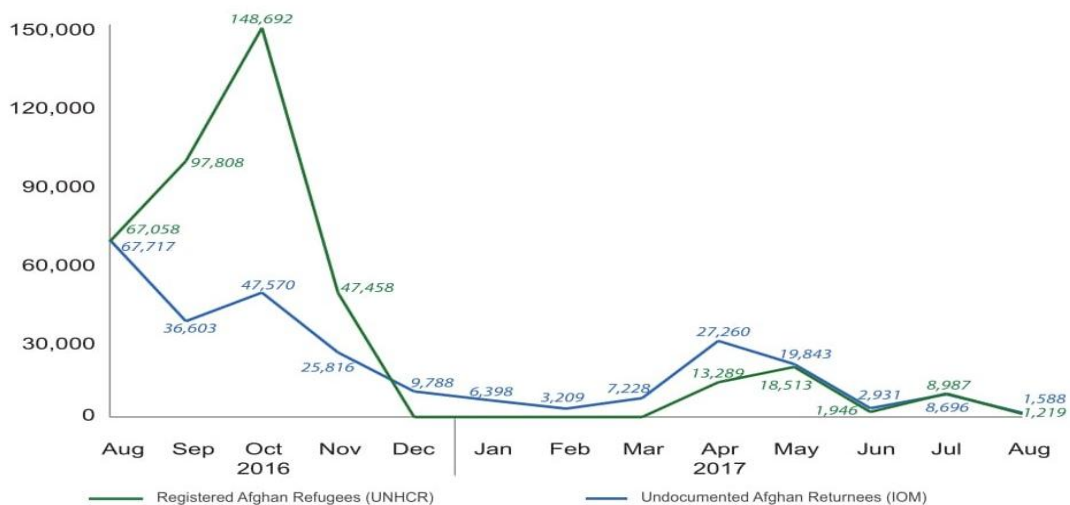
Upon resuming his position, he affirmed H.E. President Ashraf Ghani that his diplomatic efforts will be effective in strengthening and expanding the current relations between the two countries.^{iv}

○ **Afghan Refugees and Undocumented Afghans’ Repatriation**

The first wave of Afghan refugees to Pakistan began during the Soviet war in Afghanistan in the late 1970s. By the end of 2001, there were over four million Afghan refugees living in Pakistan. Most have returned to Afghanistan since 2002. According to UNHCR report, as of 31st July 2017, there are **1,395,521 registered Afghan citizens** still remaining in Pakistan, out of which mostly are in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (68%).

According to recent UNCHR report, during the period from 1st January 2017 to 5th August 2017, **44,579** registered afghan refugees have returned to Afghanistan whereas **79,822** afghan immigrants have returned, who did not have complete documentations. It is noted that 1,898 individuals of the undocumented returnees were provided with needs-based assistance while 1,576 individuals of the registered Afghan refugee returnees were provided with cash assistance.^v

Returns of Afghan refugees and undocumented Afghans in 2017



Creation date: 9 August 2017

Sources: UNHCR Pakistan, IOM Afghanistan, IOM Pakistan

○ Fencing on Pak-Afghan borders

- In the last few months, Pak-Afghan border has been closed several times causing immense financial losses that also reflects upon the confidence across the border. On the other hand, the significance of national security is the most important element for all. A secure Pak-Afghan border is in the common interest of both the countries and a well-coordinated border security mechanism is essential for enduring peace and stability.
- ^{vi}Pakistani military spokesperson, Major General Asif Ghafoor identified that *Daesh terrorist group* has been gaining strength in Afghanistan along the Pakistan border. In this regard, measures to improve security situation along the Pak-Afghan border becomes necessary. Therefore, after re-opening of the border on March 21st 2017, the fencing has been started and till June 20th 2017, 43 border posts and forts have been constructed while another 63 border posts and forts are under construction. As many as 338 border posts and forts are in the pipeline, which is expected to be completed by 2019.^{vii}

○ Pakistan's request for holding 7th APTTCA Meeting

APTTCA is an agreement between *The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan* for strengthening the economic ties on mutually beneficial basis, with the motive to improve the agreement and to facilitate Transit Trade. ^{viii}

The last APTTCA meeting was held in Islamabad on February 14-15, 2016, after which the schedule of the 7th APTTCA meeting has not been finalized till date. The meeting is critical to be held at this juncture for resolving various unattended issues pending since 1.5 years approx.

○ Commodities for Tariff Concessions from Afghanistan

Lately, the Afghan Commerce Minister has sought list of ten items on which Pakistan desires to have tariff concessions. In this context, list of following ten items has been shared.

The duties in term of import, export and as per SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area) agreement are also given below with these items to show their current standing (Afghan Customs Department, Tariff Schedule - 2014).

Sr #	Item Chapter	PCT	Description	ID %	ED %	SAFTA % (+-)
1	Vegetables	0704.9000	- Other	25	0	25
		0703.9000	- Leeks And Others Alliaceous Vegetables	20	0	20
2	Fruits	0805.2010	- Kino (Fresh)	30	0	8
		0803.9000	- Other	16	0	12
		0805.9000	- Other	30	0	12
3	Rice	1006.4000	- Broken Rice	2.5	0	2.5
		1006.3090	- Other	-	-	-
4	Wheat	1101.0010	- OF Wheat	5	0	5
5	Sugar	1701.9910	- White Crystalline Cane Sugar	2.5	0	2.5
		1704.1000	- Chewing Gum, whether or not Sugar Coated	5	0	5
		1704.9090	- Other	20	0	20

6	Vegetable Fats & Oils	1515.2010	- Vegetable Fats and their fractions	2.5	0	2.5
7	Medicines	3003.3900	- Other	2.5	0	2.5
		3003.1000	- Containing Pencillins or Derivatives thereof, with a Penicillanic Acid Structure, or Streptomycins or their derivatives	2.5	0	2.5
		3004.3900	- Other	2.5	0	2.5
8	Dairy Products	0401.2000	- of a Fat Content, By Weight, Exceeding 1% but not Exceeding 6%	12	0	12
		0407.1900	- Other	5	0	5
9	Cement & Lime	2523.2900	- Other	10	10	10
10	Mineral Fuels	2710.1919	- Other	-	-	-

Sources:

Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan
Afghan Customs Department, Tariff Schedule (2014)

ⁱ <http://nation.com.pk/national/01-Sep-2017/afghan-president-ashraf-ghani-reaches-out-in-peace-to-pakistan>

ⁱⁱ http://www.pajcci.com/PressRelease/PressReleaseImage_89.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://pakembassykabul.com> (official website: Embassy of Pakistan in kabul)

^{iv} <http://medijungle.com/en/2017/07/06/president-accepts-new-pakistan%E2%80%99s-ambassador>

^v http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/afghan_returns_20170809_0.pdf

^{vi} <http://www.presstv.ir/Detail/2017/07/02/527205/Pakistan-Afghanistan-Torkham>

^{vii} <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1440449/phased-fencing-pak-afghan-border-begins/> [The Express Tribune](#) > Pakistan

^{viii} APTTA 2010 (Original Agreement)