

July 11th, 2012

Cross-LOC trade beginning of a new era: Slathia

SRINAGAR: Maintaining that initiation of trade and travel between the divided parts of the State is one of the most significant Confidence Building Measures (CBM) taken by the governments of India and Pakistan, the Minister for Industries and Commerce, S.S Slathia on Tuesday said that the activity is most promising development in recent years to normalise the relations between the two neighbouring countries through enhanced economic and human interactions.

Speaking at the inaugural session of the three day cross-loc trade conference at SKICC here on Tuesday, the minister hoped that the enhanced economic interactions through cross-loc trade would also act as a catalyst for ameliorating the conflicts and resolution of the disputes between the two neighbouring countries. The conference has been organized by the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation with an objective to explore the future possibilities, opportunities and challenges of the Cross-LzOC trade by bringing together the stakeholders from both sides of the LOC.

About 60 participants representing various trade and business organisations of J and K and AJK are participating in the conference. Slathia said that the initiation of cross- LOC trade across J and K in October, 2005 signaled the beginning of a new era in the sub-continent adding that there was an urgent need to push forward it on sustained basis.

Slathia said that the State Government is keen to promote cross-LOC trade adding that the number of trade days have been increased from two to four a week. He said 21 approved trade items are being traded which are guided by a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP). In addition, both the countries have established Trade Facilitation Centers (TFCS) near the entry points on both routes. He said efforts are underway to replace present 'Barter' System of trade by providing Banking Transaction facility to the traders.

Former Union Foreign Secretary, Salman Haider, Presidents of Joint Chamber of Commerce and industries POK and J and K, Zulifkar Abbas and Dr. Mubeen Shah, Amit Chadha of Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDR) and Sushabha Barve also spoke on the occasion.