

## Daily Excelsior

<http://pugodesk.winwinhosting.net/dailyexcelsior/trans-loc-traders-appeal-india-pak-pms-for-hassle-free-trade/>

Excelsior Correspondent

SRINAGAR, July 10: The Trans-Line of Control traders today appealed Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan for hassle-free and liberalization of the LoC trade in Jammu and Kashmir.

The joint appeal was made during the first day of the three day Intra-Kashmir Cross LoC conference here today. The conference has been organized by New Delhi based Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation. The event has been organized in order to bridge the gap between the traders of the Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK).

Over 60 participants representing various trade and business organizations of Jammu and Kashmir and PoK are participating in the conference. Out of this 12 delegates belong to PoK. The conference has been entitled “Cross LoC Trade, Regional Development: Opportunities and Challenges”.

Former Foreign Secretary, Salman Haider, who attended the inaugural function, said that dialogue between the traders would help in resolving the misgivings on the two sides and it would lead to better understanding among the traders of the two countries.

Sharing their views the traders from both sides of the Line of Control (LoC) said that although the trans-LoC trade was started with pomp and show in 2008, the results have not been upto the expected levels. They said that both India and Pakistan should make the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir and PoK a free trade zone. “When the trade was started in 2008 promises were made with the traders that the trade would be smooth. Four years down the line the problems exist and they remain unresolved. Assurances were given that the trade will be made duty free, but that did not happen,” said Zulfikar Abbasi, President Chamber of Commerce, PoK.

Abbasi expressed his disappointment that the trade continues to be carried on barter system and there is no transaction of the money in this whole process. He said the banking facilities should be started at the earliest so that the trade assumes the shape of an organized trading activity.

Abbasi said the cross-LoC traders, after the convention, would compile a list of joint recommendations that would be submitted to the India-Pakistan Joint Working Group (JWG) on cross-LoC confidence building measures, which is scheduled to meet on July 19.

Abbasi said that lack of banking facilities, communication facilities, disputes regarding goods transactions and payments were some of the issues to be discussed in the meeting. He said that India and Pakistan should expand the list of 21 items that are allowed for trade through cross-LoC routes for realizing its true potential.

Dr. Mubeen Shah, President, Jammu and Kashmir Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JKJCCI) highlighted the importance of interaction between the traders on the either side of the LoC. He said meetings between the traders would ensure a better future and give a chance to them to decide their future.

He said that there should be no limit on the tradable items adding that the number of tradable items has fallen to 15. He said the cross LoC trade has the potential to take the shape of a full fledged trade and under which 200-300 items can be traded.

Sushoba Barve, Executive Director, CDR-New Delhi said that the conference has been organized to provide a platform to the traders of Jammu and Kashmir and PoK to discuss their problems.

In his speech, Minister for Industries and Commerce, Surjit Singh Slathia said 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. He exuded confidence that the trade relations would help in normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.

“The State Government is keen to promote cross-LoC trade and the increase in the number of trade days from two to four a week is an example in this respect. As of now 21 approved trade items are being traded and these are guided by a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP)..