

Textile Industry Under Siege: APTMA Denounces Unlawful Actions of Department of Plant Protection (DPP) Karachi by blocking imported cotton

The All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) urgently appeals for the intervention of the Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif to address a critical issue threatening the textile industry. The industry faces severe challenges due to the illegal actions of the Directorate General of the Department of Plant Protection (DG DPP) Karachi, which has resulted in the prolonged detention of imported cotton shipments at the ports.

For the past three to four months, cotton imports from the USA and Brazil have been blocked at the port, leading to significant financial burdens due to escalating demurrage charges, which now exceed 50 million PKR. These charges are being paid in dollars to foreign companies, exacerbating the economic strain on the country.

The shipments in question were dispatched under valid Import Permits. However, unforeseen delays during transit, which were beyond the control of the importers, have resulted in the shipments arriving after the expiry of the Import Permits. Detailed documentation of these delays and the Import Permits have been previously submitted for review.

Despite multiple appeals and commitments from the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR), the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Interior, and other relevant authorities, the DG DPP has failed to act. Even after assurances from the MNFSR following a letter from the Prime Minister's office, the DG DPP has not granted the necessary release orders. This situation is particularly perplexing given that similar cases have been resolved in the past by the DG DPP, who possesses the authority to grant release orders.

The textile industry is a vital component of Pakistan's economy, significantly contributing to export earnings and providing employment to millions. The ongoing blockage of cotton shipments is causing severe disruptions, leading to escalating demurrage charges and threatening the industry's ability to meet export targets and maintain competitiveness in the global market.

The DG DPP is withholding release orders under the pretext of actions taken by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) against his department. Allegedly, the DG DPP is linking the issuance of release orders to the FIA's investigations, stating that until cases against DG DPP are resolved, he will not release shipments with expired import permits despite the provision in the rules.

This arbitrary decision, intended to create pressure against the FIA, has resulted in numerous cotton shipments languishing at ports, accruing heavy demurrage charges that

are detrimental to both the foreign companies involved and the Pakistani economy at large. Furthermore, this obstruction is severely hampering our ability to meet export demands and maintain the competitiveness of the textile sector.

In light of these circumstances, APTMA urgently requests the Prime Minister to direct the MNFSR to instruct the DG DPP Karachi to issue a one-time release order for the blocked cotton shipments, leveraging their advisory powers to resolve the issue immediately. The release may be subjected to importers submitting an affidavit agreeing to comply with any fines or regulations following the amendment of the Pakistan Plant Quarantine Rules 2019 (S.R.O).

The refusal to release shipments on the grounds of unresolved FIA cases indicates a blatant misuse of authority and unjust punishment inflicted upon the entire industry. Despite earnest appeals and interventions by the Secretary of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, no tangible action has been taken by the DG DPP to address the issue.

APTMA have faith in in the Prime Minister's commitment to upholding justice and fostering a conducive environment for business and trade in Pakistan. Your swift action on this urgent matter is crucial to alleviate the financial burden imposed by external remittances and prevent further harm to Pakistan's economy and textile exports.