

DAWN

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# Minister to lobby for GSP plus in Eastern Europe

By Our Staff Reporter ✓

ISLAMABAD, Nov 21: In what appears to be a self-contradiction, the ministry of commerce has said to have launched a fresh round of economic diplomacy to ensure a favourable majority in the European Parliament for the grant of generalised system of preferences (GSP) plus facility for Pakistan.

Top officials of the ministry had said at a press conference on Nov 6 that the GSP plus scheme had been approved by the European Parliament, but the claim proved to be wrong. The European Parliament will meet next month to approve the GSP plus scheme for three years for Pakistan and nine other countries.

The ministry said in a statement on Wednesday that Minister of State for Commerce, Textiles and Privatisation Khurram Dastgir Khan had left for Eastern Europe to begin a fresh round of economic diplomacy.

An official said that the ministry had confused the blockade of a proposal in the International Trade Committee of the European Parliament seeking de-clubbing of 10 member countries selected for the GSP plus scheme with the approval of the scheme.

According to experts, it is not clear whether it was an intentional move or the ministry did not understand the nature of the decision of the trade committee which rejected the de-clubbing proposal.

Some European countries were against the decision of Brussels to treat all 10 countries as one for the GSP plus scheme and wanted to seek a vote on the basis of individual country because some of them were believed to have problems with Pakistan.

According to a source, the decision for grant of GSP plus will be taken by the council of ministers / European parliament.

According to the ministry's statement, the visit of the minister of state to Eastern Europe follows a successful round of economic diplomacy in October at the European Parliament in Strasbourg as well as in Paris, Madrid, Rome and London.

By engaging friendly countries across Europe, "we shall Insha Allah achieve the formal grant of GSP+ in December", it said.

The immediate objective of the minister's minister visit to Eastern Europe is to ensure a smooth vote in favour of Pakistan by the EU Parliament.



## Model Customs Collectorates to remain open tomorrow

### RECORDER REPORT

**ISLAMABAD:** The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has announced that all the Model Customs Collectorates will remain open and observe normal working hours on Saturday (November 23), 2013 to facilitate the trade and industry in getting their cargo cleared for imports/exports along with payment of duty and taxes.

In this regard, the FBR has issued instructions to all Collectors of Customs here on Thursday.

According to the FBR's instructions, the Chief Collectors of Customs may coordinate with management of the State Bank of Pakistan and National Bank of Pakistan to provide banking facility through its designated branches on the said date to ensure the collection of duty/taxes. The port authorities/ port operators may also be advised to synchronize their working accordingly, FBR added.

