

Transporters' strike hits transit of cargoes to and from Karachi Port

RECORDER REPORT

KARACHI: The indefinite strike by goods transporters on Thursday ceased the supplies of import and export cargoes to and from Karachi port, as exporters fear delay in their shipments to the world markets.

Official sources in Karachi Port Trust (KPT) told Business Recorder the strike hit the supplies of containerized goods at east and west wharves of the harbour. "The supply of coal clinker has already been stopped for the last three days as transporters are on strike," they said.

Goods transporters went on strike on Dec 4 to protest inaction against the criminals who continue to hijack loaded trucks on highways, besides the bad attitude of motorway police, President Karachi Goods Carrier Association (KGCA), Khalid Khan, told Business Recorder.

"The goods transporters strike will lead to a huge financial loss due to delays in shipment to global markets," Central Chairman Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PHMA), M. Jawed Bilwani, told Business Recorder.

He said a large number of exporters are feared to fail to

catch ships for loading their export-bound cargo because of the transporters strike. "The strike will cause a huge financial loss to exporters to supply their consignments by air," he showed apprehensions.

Official sources said the national highway authority had limited the transportation of coal clinker to 50 tons while the transporters were against the weight restrictions. "Transporters believe the weight restriction will increase their costs of transportation and stop their loaded trucks at Karachi port since Dec 4," they said.

Bilwani termed the transporters strike "justified" which is in protest against the "strong bhatta mafia and frequent kidnapping of drivers and their loaded trucks on highways. He said the lawlessness on highways has forced the transporters to go on strike.

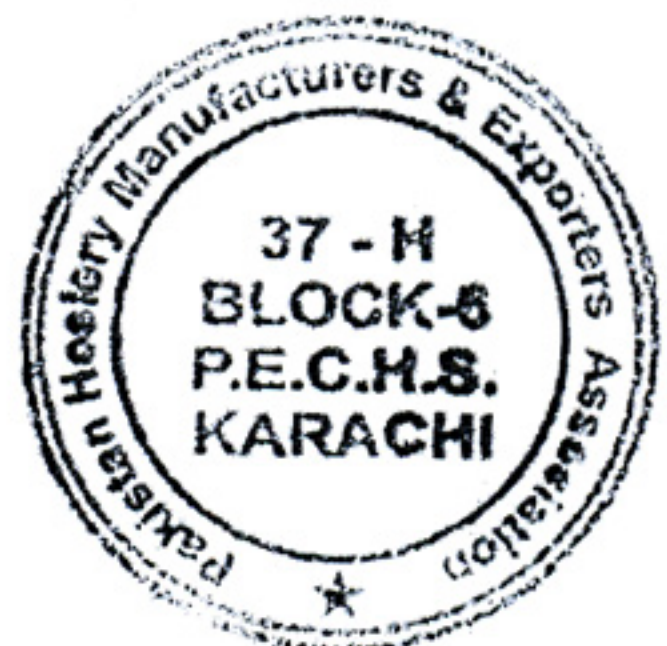
A group of 37 different unions of goods transporters formed United Goods Transporters Alliance which is on strike since Dec 4 for indefinite period against the growing insecurity to their trucks and crew besides the heavy handedness of National Highways and Motorway Police,

Khalid Khan said.

KPT sources said that there were a large number of loaded trucks standing with NATO military vehicles, which the strike may also put on hold for days. They said the coal clinker halt has, however, given a much-needed relief to the resident of Keamari as they were largely suffering breathing problems from dust. They said dozens of trucks loaded with coal dust would go round the clock from Karachi port.

When contacted, KPT spokesman told Business Recorder that "port operations continue unabated as ships were loading and unloading cargo round the clock". He said the transporters strike has not affected the supply of import and export bound cargoes as the port has other transportation sources like NLC and railways to depend on.

The goods transporters in afternoon also staged a protest demonstration on Native Jetty to press the government to fulfil their demands. Hundreds of transporters participated in the sit-in which latter peacefully dispersed. They said they will not end strike until government meets their demands.



Goods carriers' strike hits export

By Aamir Shafaat Khan

KARACHI, Dec 7: The strike by goods transport carriers is creating problems in movement of export goods from industries to the port, besides disturbing schedule of shipment/arrival of goods.

Transporters are on a strike against incidents of thefts, extortion and challans by the motorway police. Site Association of Industry acting chairman Naseem Anwar said that 50 per cent export-oriented units in SITE area, out of a total of 2,700 operating units, are facing crisis as containers are stuck up and there are delays in export shipments while LCs are expiring.

He said importers of Pakistani goods at foreign destinations are demanding their shipments by air which is not possible.

The government should resolve the issue as industries are already facing problems owing to gas/power load-shedding and water crisis.

A local manufacturer at Korangi Industrial Area said that goods destined for local and foreign shipments have piled up at units, forcing many units to curtail their production.

CEO of North Karachi Development Management Company, Syed Usman Ali, said that he had talked to the police high-ups to provide protection to transporters so that export and local shipments could be resumed. He said the industries remained shut in Muharram holidays besides facing gas suspension on Sundays.

North Karachi industrial area comprises 2,500 units in which 80 per cent are export-oriented.

Karachi Wholesalers Grocers Association (KWGA) chairman Anis Majeed said the grain and food market at Dandia Bandia can sustain the negative impact of the strike for another two to three days as supply of food

items from the port to the wholesale market had been suspended for the last three to four days.

Even shipment of food items from the up-country to city and from Karachi to other parts of the country had also been suspended.

He said that the impact of the strike on prices is yet not being felt due to thin demand of commodities and slow lifting of items by retailers. He, however, said that importers/traders would have to pay demurrage at the port by approximately Rs1,000 per container for failing to lift items in five days from the date of arrival.

Supplies of over 25,000 tons of DAP urea from Fauji Fertiliser Bin Qasim Plant to dealers and farmers of the country are suspended for the last four to five days.

If supplies of DAP are not restored immediately, sowing of wheat may be delayed in major parts of the country as application of phosphates is highly recommended at the time of sowing, sources said.

This is in addition to the fact that some politically-motivated elements are harassing truckers in transit at Hyderabad Toll Plaza on clumsy grounds.

According to the FFBL sources, the intervention of higher authorities is needed to resolve the issue immediately in the best interest of the country.

FFBL, the only urea and DAP production plant situated in the outskirts of Karachi, is unable to transport its DAP and urea for farmers across Pakistan which has created shortage of DAP in upper parts of the country.

Sources said that this situation may result in huge loss to agriculture sector and wheat sowing target of the government may also be affected.

