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Day 2: No trade at ICP

Central Warehousing Corp invites striking traders for talks

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A day after the bilateral trade between India and Pakistan came to near halt at Attari, there were no exports via Attari-Wagah land route today although a few trucks loaded with gypsum and cement arrived from Pakistan. However, sticking to their stand, the traders did not lift the goods imported from Pakistan.

The protesting traders have been formally invited for talks with the Central Warehousing Corporation (CWC) officials concerned in New Delhi on Tuesday.

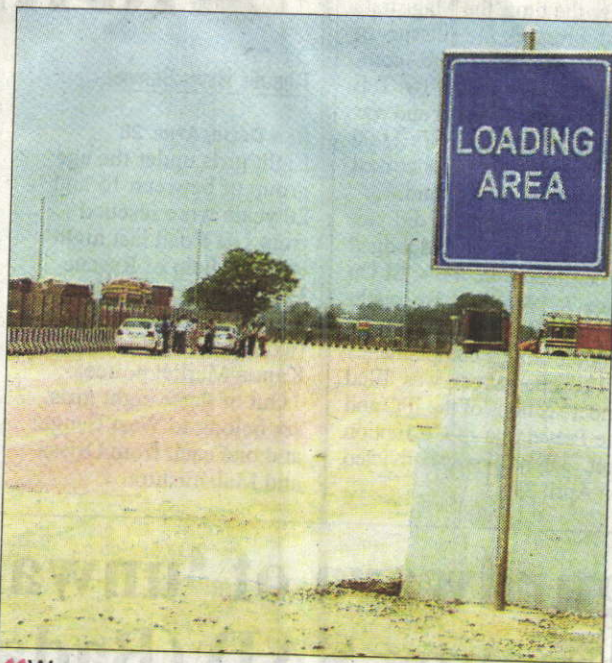
Talking to The Tribune, Rajdeep Uppal, vice-president, Amritsar Exporters Chambers of Commerce, said a delegation of traders would be in Delhi in the coming week to hold deliberations with the CWC officials so as to resolve the issue. He said the traders would like the government to review the charges levied on them at the ICP and offer some relaxation to the trading

community.

"We are ready for negotiations provided it is in the interest of the trade." He said they appreciated the government for raising such a massive infrastructure in the form of the ICP, but felt that the authorities should not look at the ICP as a "profit-making venture" as it would hurt the trade.

The traders have been lamenting "excessive" handling charges at the ICP right from the days when its trial run began early this month. Their woes aggravated after the ICP was made functional on April 13. They argued that the charges were increased by over 40 per cent as compared to the old check post, which was unfair. They said they were not even taken into the confidence before implementing the hike.

"The labour charges are the same for a majority of goods, but we are paying 25 per cent extra to the CWC as handling charges. Besides, we are paying Rs 200 per truck as entry fee, both for import and export,



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— **Rajdeep Uppal**, vice-president, Amritsar Exporters Chambers of Commerce

12 per cent service tax and storage charges," they said, adding that there were no storage charges at the old check post and they were free to lift their stock any-

time within four days of its arrival. "Being a key stakeholder, the traders should have been involved in the process of revising the charges," they contended.