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Visa Hurdle for Pak, China stalls in trade fair: The Bengal Chamber

Visa hurdle for Pak, China stalls in trade fair

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Kolkata: Whatever goes on at the border, the Pakistan stalls at the ongoing trade fair at Science City remain the buyers' favourite. However, this year the number of stalls has gone down drastically — only 25 out of the 150 entrepreneurs slated to set up stalls here made it through the visa red tape. The case was similar for participants from China. Out of the 25 participants, only one made it.

This is the first time China has participated in the fair. While the problem of visa had been dogging Pakistani participants for years, post Doklam, the external affairs ministry has apparently become equally strict about granting visas to Chinese business entries.

Fair organisers Bengal Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCC&I) said that despite making repeated appeals to

FROM ACROSS THE GLOBE

21 | Number of countries this year

2 | New participants (China and Netherlands)

25 countries Target next year

16 | Participating states



A stall selling Pakistani garments at the fair; the only stall from China

We have requested the Chinese consulate here to facilitate the visit of participants at the fair next time



Prakash Shah | CHAIRMAN OF TRADE PROMOTION AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, BCC&I

the ministry, the visas of participants from Pakistan and China got mired in red tape, and they eventually couldn't make it. Fresh appeals will be sent out to the ministry and, from next year, early applications will be invited from Pakistan and China so that the visa process can start early.

"We were elated when we

got confirmation from Chinese participants because that country was participating for the first time. But we were heartbroken when only one arrived. We had hoped to showcase a range of Chinese products this time, from electronic and engineering products to agro and processed food," said Prakash Shah, chairman of the trade

promotion and business development committee of BCC&I.

The China stall at the fair stocked both natural and freshwater pearls in a variety of colours and affordable prices. "We have requested the Chinese consulate here to facilitate the visit of participants at the fair next time," Shah said.

Chinese consul general Ma

Zhanwu agreed that more participants from China should be encouraged to participate in popular fairs like these because they offer a ready connect with the common people here. "I will ensure that the participation is now routed through the consulate. Right now the focus of China is trade promotion in eastern India. With this aim we are regularly bringing in delegations from provinces like Yunnan, Shaanxi and Shandong. The trade fair will now be added to our list of co-operation," Zhanwu said.

Apart from onyx showpieces that have been popular at the fair for years now, Pakistani garments have become a hit with visitors this year. Embroidered tops and skirts, shararas, ghararas and lawn suits have found ready buyers. "We brought 20 containers this time, but we might just run out of stock," said Zahid Asraf, a happy participant from Pakistan.