

Pakistan pushing for more free trade with GCC

By [Ashfaq Ahmed](#)

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Islamabad: Pakistan is trying hard to sign Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Gulf countries to give boost to its ailing economy, said a senior official.

“One of the main purposes of President Asif Ali Zardari’s recent visit to the UAE was to negotiate the FTA. We are asking our brotherly countries to use their influence to help us sign this multilateral agreement signed with the GCC countries,” revealed Iftekhar Aziz, director general for Middle East and Gulf countries in Pakistan’s foreign ministry.

Briefing a UAE delegation of journalists, Aziz said the GCC has already signed FTA with Turkey and Pakistan wanted to emulate that and have greater trade links with the Arab countries.

“During the President’s visit, we wanted to establish strategic dialogue at the highest level as we have already been working on this issue at the level of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) headed by foreign ministers of both the countries.

“We have geared up our efforts, though the signing of the FTA is expected to take some time. We are requesting all the individual countries in the GCC to help Pakistan in the early finalisation of the FTA.”

Aziz said that though the FTA negotiations had been going on since 2004, the process had met with a couple of snags and had been a bit slow in the past.

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