

Pakistan Knitwear & Sweater Exporters Association

1014-16, Park Avenue, PECHS Block 6

Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi-75350

Tel: 34544035 SG: 34544039, email: kho@paksea.com

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PM approves establishment of trade facilitation board



Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved the establishment of a Trade Facilitation Board (TFB) to streamline the country's trade supply chain and address non-tariff barriers to cross-border trade.

The prime minister will chair the proposed board himself, which will take decisions on issues affecting the entire trade supply chain and devise a roadmap for trade promotion, a Trade Facilitation Index and a monitoring strategy.

The prime minister while charting a high-level meeting on trade facilitation, also directed the relevant authorities to work on an emergency basis to improve the capacity and efficiency of the country's ports.

He called for the formation of working groups to focus on port efficiency, coordination among government departments, regulatory compliance and pre-arrival clearance.

The groups will also examine ways to facilitate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in international trade.

The prime minister directed the authorities to make the movement and clearance of goods at ports easier for importers and exporters and provide them with maximum facilities.

In a briefing, officials told the meeting that port charges had been reduced as part of ongoing reforms, resulting in a significant improvement in the use of ports.

It was also briefed that the facility for submitting goods declarations before the arrival of vessels was steadily increasing.

The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb, Minister for National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain, Commerce Minister Jam Kamal, Economic Affairs Minister Ahad Cheema, and Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production Haroon Akhtar, Minister of State Bilal for Finance Azhar Kayani and senior government officials.

Nadia Iqbal Soomro
Deputy Secretary
021-34544035 Ext 103