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Kayani for strengthening SME financing to boost exports

BUSINESS RECORDER

The government has noted the under-utilisation of the dedicated financing facility for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), prompting the Finance Division to seek coordinated measures to improve exporters' access to financing, technology, and international markets to boost Pakistan's exports.

Minister of State for Finance, Bilal Azhar Kayani, chaired the second consultative meeting on enhancing exports by Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs). The meeting discussed ways to help SMEs engage with exporters, review existing government support measures and identify practical steps to address challenges affecting SME exports.

The meeting brought together SME exporters and industry representatives from textile, processed food, auto parts, engineering goods, information technology, fans and other sectors. The Minister of State emphasised the need for coordinated efforts to improve exporters' access to financing, strengthen awareness of available incentives, and facilitate entry into international markets. He expressed the resolve of the Government to take strategic initiatives to empower SMEs, boost their global competitiveness, and unlock their full potential as key drivers of national export growth.

The meeting reviewed the Export Finance Scheme (EFS), Long-Term Export Growth Finance Facility (LTEGFF), long-term export financing, export credit insurance and performance-based rebates on incremental exports. Noting the under-utilisation of the dedicated SME window under the EFS, the Minister of State for Finance called for stronger coordination among the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) and other relevant institutions to improve outreach, facilitate eligible exporters and raise awareness through chambers of commerce and targeted information campaigns.

Participants also highlighted challenges relating to participation in international trade fairs, access to machinery and technology, and sector-specific requirements.

The meeting discussed opportunities to facilitate IT and software businesses in accessing venture-capital and private-equity investment, as well as the need to strengthen export-related infrastructure, value addition and support for agricultural and food products, particularly in Gilgit-Baltistan. The concerned ministries and institutions were asked to coordinate with exporters and industry associations to examine these matters and identify practical solutions.

The Minister of State for Finance emphasised continued engagement with relevant stakeholders and the importance of incorporating exporters' proposals into efforts to sustain Pakistan's access to international markets.

Kayani thanked participants for their input and directed the concerned institutions to coordinate follow-up actions, in line with the Prime Minister's directives, to strengthen SME exports and enhance Pakistan's competitiveness in international markets. Reaffirming the Government's unwavering commitment to economic empowerment, the Minister of State for Finance assured participants of full institutional backing to eliminate operational, financial, and regulatory bottlenecks facing small and medium enterprises. Through targeted policy interventions, streamlined export facilitation mechanisms, and expanded access to finance, he added, the Government aims to significantly reduce the cost of doing business and enhance industrial productivity.

The meeting was attended by Senior Technical Advisor to the Prime Minister's Office on Trade, Tariff and Institutional Reforms, Dr. Saeed; Special Secretary Commerce Syed Hamid Ali; senior officials from ministries and provincial departments, along with SMEDA and TDAP; and a large number of exporting SMEs.

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