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Issues facing exporters

MoC to prepare actionable solutions for PM's review

BUSINESS RECORDER The Ministry of Commerce is to consolidate sector-specific and cross-cutting issues confronting exporters and seek responses from relevant ministries to develop actionable recommendations for consideration by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, as the government steps up efforts to improve Pakistan's export competitiveness.

The decision was taken at a high-level consultative meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan on October 21, 2026, at the Ministry of Commerce, where exporters and industrialists highlighted concerns over energy costs, taxation, gas levies, shipping delays, tax refunds, banking regulations and international market access.

The meeting brought together Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry, who participated virtually, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Bilal Azhar Kayani, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Industries Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, secretaries of concerned ministries, senior government officials and representatives of various export-oriented industries.

Opening the discussion, Jam Kamal Khan stressed the need to diversify Pakistan's export basket, promote value-added products, explore new international markets and remove structural barriers restricting export growth.

He acknowledged that rising energy prices, transportation and freight costs, taxation and changing global trade conditions were creating difficulties for exporters and undermining industrial competitiveness.

The minister said the government was directly engaging with industry stakeholders to identify practical solutions through coordinated efforts involving relevant ministries and regulatory authorities.

Bilal Azhar Kayani facilitated discussions with representatives of different export sectors, encouraging them to present specific problems and asking government officials to respond to the issues raised.

He emphasised that the exercise should result in documented concerns, departmental responses and actionable recommendations rather than remain confined to general discussions.

Business representatives appreciated the Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) scheme for exporters, describing it as a positive initiative to improve access to export financing and support businesses seeking to expand their international operations.

However, participants raised concerns about high energy costs, the captive power gas levy, provincial infrastructure levies and increasing production expenses, which they said were affecting the competitiveness of Pakistani products in international markets.

Petroleum Division officials provided clarifications regarding the gas levy mechanism, while exporters called for coordinated measures to address the broader cost of doing business.

International shipping delays, port facilitation, tax refunds and banking regulations also featured prominently in the discussions. Exporters proposed greater flexibility in payment settlement periods to accommodate disruptions in global logistics and prevent delays from adversely affecting export transactions.

Participants also called for examining markets where Bangladesh and India enjoy preferential trade advantages, recommending that Pakistan explore improved bilateral trade arrangements to secure better market access and strengthen its competitive position.

The meat and livestock sector highlighted challenges relating to foot-and-mouth disease, international sanitary requirements, border restrictions and access to Gulf markets.

Responding to these concerns, Jam Kamal Khan informed participants that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking a keen personal interest in livestock development, including disease control, investment, improved breeding and value-added exports.

The meeting was also informed of plans to establish a dedicated, private-sector-led livestock board aimed at supporting the sector's development and export potential.

Mineral exporters raised concerns over restrictions on mining explosives and withholding taxes, while Qaiser Saleem Shabbir, chief executive representing the surgical instruments sector, stressed the need for technological advancement, skilled human resources, industrial investment and modernisation to improve the international competitiveness of Pakistani manufacturers.

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials briefed participants on measures to improve tax-refund processing and digital invoicing. Exporters, however, highlighted difficulties associated with outstanding refunds, business visas and international compliance requirements.

The discussions underscored the need for a coordinated response to challenges spanning multiple ministries, particularly those relating to energy pricing, taxation, trade facilitation, financing and regulatory requirements.

Concluding the meeting, Jam Kamal Khan said the Ministry of Commerce would compile the issues raised by individual sectors alongside broader concerns affecting exporters and obtain responses from the relevant departments before preparing recommendations for the prime minister.

Bilal Azhar Kayani said the concerns would be systematically documented and reviewed with the relevant departments during the next consultation to ensure that specific issues were addressed and practical solutions identified.

The minister thanked business leaders and government officials for their participation, reaffirming the government's commitment to sustained public-private engagement, export diversification, industrial growth and strengthening Pakistan's position in international markets.

The consultation process is intended to provide a platform for resolving exporters' concerns through inter-ministerial coordination and developing recommendations to support export-led economic growth.

The Ministry of Commerce also requested PCMA to identify the non-tariff barriers faced by members during the import and export of chemicals.

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