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Rs300bn set aside for SMEs under EFS

BUSINESS RECORDER

The government has earmarked Rs300 billion exclusively for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) under the short-term Export Finance Scheme, while introducing a digital portal to improve transparency and facilitate access to bank financing for smaller businesses.

This was informed during a meeting on SME financing chaired by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb here on Monday.

The meeting reviewed progress on the SME Connect Portal and export finance initiatives, stressing the need to translate these measures into increased lending, investment and export activity.

The Finance Minister underscored the importance of expanding access to finance for SMEs, recognising their contribution to economic activity, investment and employment generation. He emphasised the need to ensure that financing reaches a wider segment of businesses, particularly smaller and export-oriented enterprises, in line with the Prime Minister's vision of strengthening the SME sector and advancing export-led growth.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) gave a presentation on the progress of the SME Connect Portal, launched on November 1, 2026, highlighting its role in facilitating access to financing and improving transparency in the application process. The portal provides a central platform for SMEs to register their business profiles, submit their financing requirements and track the status of their requests. It also enables the monitoring of banks' responses and processing timelines.

The Finance Minister emphasised that the portal would help establish greater visibility over the financing process and enable systematic monitoring of banks' performance against prescribed timelines. He highlighted the importance of comprehensive reporting on application status and banks' responses to support effective oversight.

The meeting discussed the portal as an important first step towards improving transparency and accountability in SME financing, while recognising that banks would continue to process applications through their respective systems and lending policies. The Finance Minister also stressed the importance of facilitating access for SMEs with limited digital and financial literacy, including through bank branches, and called for further improvements towards a more integrated, end-to-end digital financing experience.

The Export-Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank) also briefed the participants on export financing initiatives. It was highlighted that an allocation of Rs. 300 billion under the short-term Export Finance Scheme had been earmarked exclusively for SMEs, providing dedicated financing support to meet their working capital requirements and facilitate export activity.

The discussion also covered measures to improve SME access to long-term financing and facilitate investment in export-oriented projects. Greater financing opportunities were considered important for supporting business expansion, investment and export activities, with implementation to be monitored to assess progress and uptake.

The Finance Minister emphasised the need for sustained coordination among relevant institutions to strengthen monitoring, facilitate timely credit decisions and address the practical constraints faced by smaller businesses. He stressed that these efforts should translate into improved access to finance, greater SME participation in exports, increased private sector activity and export-led growth.

The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain; Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan; Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Masood Malik; Adviser to the Prime Minister on Industries and Production, Haroon Akhtar Khan; Minister of State for Finance, Bilal Azhar Kiyani; Governor, State Bank of Pakistan; Chairman, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan; Chairman, Pakistan Banks Association; Chief Executive Officer, SMEDA; federal secretaries from relevant divisions; and senior representatives of the Finance Division, SBP, SECP and Export–Import Bank of Pakistan (EXIM Bank).

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