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Circular to members # 83/2026-27
November 21, 2026

Preferential tariff concessions

Exporters can enhance competitiveness in global markets: TDAP

BUSINESS RECORDER

Consultant, Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Kamal Sheharyar has said that Pakistani exporters can significantly enhance their competitiveness in international markets by effectively utilising preferential tariff concessions available under various trade agreements and schemes, while foreign buyers can independently assess the duty benefits of importing Pakistani products through the Preferential Trade Access Database (PTAD).

Delivering a detailed presentation on the PTAD portal during his visit to the Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI), Kamal Sheharyar added that the platform had been developed to provide free, easy and worldwide access to information concerning preferential trade arrangements, tariff concessions and market-access opportunities available to Pakistani products.

The presentation was attended by President KCCI Talat Mahmood, Senior Vice President Aslam Pakhali, Vice President Arif Jameel Ur Rahman and members of KCCI's Executive Committee.

The TDAP delegation comprised Director General TDAP Abdul Karim Memon, Deputy Director TDAP Tariq Idrees, Assistant Manager TDAP Noman Badar Siddiqui, and Research Associate TDAP & Helpdesk Officer TDAP Mahendar Kumar. The presentation was organised as part of TDAP's recent initiative to establish a helpdesk at KCCI, aimed at facilitating the business community and providing exporters, importers and other stakeholders with direct access to trade-related information, guidance and support.

Kamal Sheharyar further noted that foreign buyers often ask Pakistani exporters about the customs duty applicable to products they intend to import from Pakistan, but exporters themselves may not always have readily available or updated information regarding the concessions offered under various trade arrangements.

The PTAD addresses this information gap by enabling buyers anywhere in the world to independently access the portal and determine the tariff benefits available on imports from Pakistan.

He explained that preferential tariff access is available under different arrangements, including Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs), regional and multilateral trade agreements, as well as Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) schemes extended by various countries. Pakistan is a beneficiary of 15 GSP schemes, covering different countries and product categories, and PTAD enables users to identify the products covered under these arrangements and the tariff advantages available on them.

Highlighting the commercial significance of tariff concessions, Kamal Sheharyar explained that preferential tariffs allow products to enter a market at lower customs duties than the applicable Most Favoured Nation (MFN) rates.

Giving an example, he said that if a shipment worth USD 100,000 attracts an MFN tariff of 12 percent but qualifies for a preferential tariff of 3 percent, the foreign buyer would save USD 9,000 in customs duty. Such savings can make Pakistani products more attractive to international buyers, improve price competitiveness and encourage greater sourcing from Pakistan, thereby creating enhanced market-access opportunities for exporters.

He pointed out that businesses previously faced considerable difficulties in obtaining this information, as tariff concessions and trade agreement details were scattered across lengthy documents, annexures and tariff schedules available on different websites.

Identifying the relevant HS Codes, determining whether a product was covered under a particular agreement and calculating the actual tariff advantage required considerable time and effort.

PTAD simplifies this process by consolidating the relevant information and presenting it in an accessible and user-friendly manner.

Kamal Sheharyar stated that the portal covers 29 trade arrangements involving 95 countries, with Pakistan enjoying preferential trade arrangements in 93 countries for export purposes.

Each arrangement has been placed in a separate module containing relevant information, including product coverage, MFN and preferential tariff rates, tariff advantages, Rules of Origin, origin procedures and export-import documentation requirements.

This enables users to access comprehensive information relating to a particular trade arrangement from a single platform.

He particularly emphasised that PTAD is unique in covering both export and import perspectives, unlike many international tariff portals that primarily provide information concerning imports into their respective countries.

The platform allows Pakistani exporters to identify markets where their products enjoy preferential access, while local importers can also explore sourcing opportunities and determine whether imported inputs are available under favourable tariff arrangements.

This is especially relevant for manufacturers who import raw materials and inputs, add value locally and subsequently export finished products, he added.

He urged Pakistani exporters to proactively share the PTAD portal with their overseas buyers and make it part of their export marketing and business-development efforts, as foreign buyers can directly verify the tariff advantages available on products imported from Pakistan.

He also encouraged importers to explore the portal for identifying potentially beneficial sourcing arrangements, while emphasising that chambers of commerce, trade associations and their research departments could play an important role in educating members and promoting effective utilisation of the platform.

Kamal Sheharyar stressed that PTAD could also serve as a valuable resource for government agencies and trade-negotiating teams by providing consolidated tariff information and facilitating the assessment of existing trade arrangements and future negotiations.

He expressed the hope that wider awareness and utilisation of the platform would enable Pakistan's business community to make more informed trade decisions, take greater advantage of existing preferential arrangements, diversify export destinations and strengthen the country's international trade competitiveness.

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