

### **FBR hires consultants to set up land ports authority**

KARACHI: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) is hiring consultants to set up the country's first land ports authority to track cross-border movement of goods and people and build modern terminals for trade regulation, officials said on Monday.

The customs officials said the FBR received amount for establishment of the land ports authority. "On receipt of the amount, the revenue body started hiring consultancy services for the project."

The Asian Development Bank has already approved around \$800 million for the development of three border crossing points at Torkham, Chaman and Wagah. The project would gradually extend to other border points and inland ports.

The role of Pakistan Land Ports Authority (PLPA) will be to ensure the effective and efficient movement of goods, people and vehicle across international borders with a view to help increase efficiencies of business processes.

The project came under discussion in the previous government, but couldn't be materialised. The strategic trade policy framework (2012–2015) – presented by the ministry of commerce and approved by the government – envisaged establishment of the PLPA to improve regional trade.

A customs official said Pakistan has a strategic location in the region, and is on the trade route for China and land-locked central Asia states. "The location has been signified with the development of CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) and Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation – Regional Improving Border Services (CAREC-RIBS) corridor," the official said, requesting anonymity. Sources said the FBR stepped up efforts towards PLPA to facilitate cross-border movement of goods, especially in the wake of CPEC projects.

The sources said the government launched the project to supervise the multi-agency operated facilities at the border points and other inland dry ports for effective management of the cross-border movement of goods and people.

The government initiated an integrated transit trade management system, realising the importance of Pakistan's strategic location and to leverage its potential as a transit trade hub. A PLPA's project document said the system has been aimed at to boost trade, particularly exports, reduce cost of doing business to enhance competitiveness and enhance trade facilitation.

Cumbersome border crossing, complicated customs procedures and poor port physical infrastructure facilities are some of the key barriers to international trade and transit trade. The sources said there are many other federal ministries are engaged in the project.

Besides, provincial governments have also been given representation in the project. The sources said the land port entry points would be transformed into integrated check points to enable smooth cross-border movement of individuals, vehicles and goods under an integrated complex.

It would facilitate the processes of immigration, customs, cargo security, quarantine, sanitary and phyto-sanitary measures. The present infrastructural facilities would be upgraded wherever needed. The spadework to establish PLPA will be carried out by a committee to be headed by secretary ministry of commerce in close collaboration of other ministries, according to the project's document.