

**PM Imran forms body to ease business registration**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday approved the constitution of a steering committee on Pakistan Regulatory Modernisation Initiative (PRMI) to help devise a regulatory framework for simplifying the process of business registration.

The government said that the high-powered body will support the business community to start new ventures and attract investments by improving the 'ease of doing business' ranking of the country.

Among 190 economies, Pakistan ranks at 136, according to the World Bank report on ease of doing business.

The steering committee will be jointly headed by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Establishment Shahzad Arbab and Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razaq Dawood.

The decision was taken at a PRMI meeting, which was chaired by PM Khan. Besides the two advisers, special assistants to the premier Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan and Yousuf Baig Mirza as well as chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Shabbar Zaidi attended the meeting.

Parliamentarians from ex-Fata areas raise federal excise duty issue with PM

Giving a detailed briefing on the initiative, Adviser Shahzad Arbab informed the meeting that its basic objective was to ease registration of new ventures, issuance of permits and no-objection certificates.

Under the PRMI, the process of mapping, rationalisation, modernisation and automation would be initiated, Mr Arbab said.

The prime minister was told that the business body would help reduce corruption and provide opportunity of automation to Small and Media Enterprises (SMEs).

PM Khan said the SME sector had been affected adversely in the past due to the legal requirement of obtaining NOCs from different government departments and lack of automation.

"Where conditions of NOCs and registrations from different departments have paved the way of corruption, foreign investment has also been affected," he added.

The meeting was told that the PRMI steering committee would be jointly headed by Mr Arbab and Mr Dawood, while the commerce secretary, FBR chairman, chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP), chairman of the Board of Investment (BOI), president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), presidents of the chambers of commerce and industry of Lahore, Karachi and Faisalabad and representatives of Pakistan Business Council (PBC) will be members of the steering committee.

Mr Khan said PRMI's formation was an important step in government's reforms agenda. "The basic idea behind improvement in the process of regulation and improve it on modern lines to provide ease of doing business to the business community of the country," he added.

#### Fata merger

In a separate meeting, parliamentarians representing the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) raised the issue of Federal Excise Duty (FED) with Prime Minister Khan.

They said the Federal Excise Duty (FED) was still imposed in the tribal areas even after their merger with the provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The prime minister assured them that their reservations would be addressed soon. He highlighted the need for early fulfilment of all commitments made with the people of tribal areas.

They also discussed problems in the way of ongoing development activities in the tribal districts.

PM Khan said keeping in view of the needs of the people of the tribal areas, the federal government had, for the first time, allocated Rs83 billion development budget for the erstwhile Fata.

He was of the opinion that people of the tribal areas had given countless sacrifices. "The government is well aware of these sacrifices and will fulfil all promises made with them," he added.

Mr Khan called for involving people's representatives in development activities in ex-Fata and addressing demands of the people areas.

Also, US-based leader of the ruling party Sajjad Barki met the prime minister and discussed with him his [PM's] upcoming visit to the US.

Besides, the prime minister also met MNAs Bashir Khan, Mehboob Shah, Sher Akbar and Sibghatullah in his chamber in the parliament house.

Syed Irfan Raza