

### **'Pakistan's trade facilitation improves since June 2018'**

ISLAMABAD: The World Trade Organization (WTO) has recorded a noticeable improvement in trade facilitation by Pakistan during the past two and half years, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) said on Friday.

Pakistan improved its implementation of WTO's trade facilitation agreement (TFA) from 34 percent in June 2018 to 79 percent in November, the FBR said in a statement.

Due to improvement in the implementation of TFA, Pakistan improved 31 positions in trading across border index, which contributed to rise of Pakistan from 136th position to 108th position in the Global Fund's Annual Ease of Doing Business 2020 report.

"Implementation of WTO's TFA by Pakistan is greater than regional countries like India and Bangladesh whose implementation rate is 78.2 and 36.1 percent, respectively," FBR said. "Pakistan's implementation rate is higher than those of average of all WTO members (which is at 65.5 percent) and the average of all developing countries (which is at 65.2 percent)."

Trade facilitation is an effective driver for stimulating economic activity, attracting foreign direct investment, promoting exports and generating employment.

Pakistan Customs and FBR followed an integrated plan to facilitate the trade (involved in imports, exports, and transit) for achievement of the strategic objectives of economic and export-led growth. The FBR designated dedicated project teams under Member (Customs) to ensure implementation of WTO's trade facilitation agreement in Pakistan. Salient TFA reforms / provisions that have been implemented are authorized economic operators program, advance ruling, electronic payments, pre-arrival processing, freedom of transit, opportunity to comment and information before entry into force, temporary admission of goods and inward and outward processing, risk management and post clearance audit. Amongst the most difficult-to-implement (and least notified) provisions are single window and border agency cooperation. "Significant work has been done on these important areas with the help of the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and these provisions would be implemented in Pakistan well within timelines," said the FBR. "Implementation of WTO's TFA by Pakistan is acknowledged worldwide."

According to the World Bank, Pakistan has made the top 10 list of governments that have done the most in the past year to improve the ease of doing business in their countries. OECD trade facilitation indicators data base 2019 has acknowledged Pakistan's best performance across the areas under TFA. Moreover, World Customs Organization said considering the recent advancement of Pakistan Customs administration for proceeding TFA, Pakistan Customs administration is suitable to be listed in the successful countries. "Pakistan Customs, Federal Board of Revenue is committed to implement to transform / upgrade the facilitation level for the trade but also to make Pakistan a regional hub of the trade activities," said the FBR.