

THE KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AASAN KAROBAR ACT, 2025
(KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA ACT NO. XXIII OF 2025)

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THE KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AASAN KAROBAR ACT, 2025

(KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA ACT NO. XXIII OF 2025)

(First published after having received the assent of the Governor of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the Gazette of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (Extraordinary), dated the 15th September, 2025).

AN
ACT

to provide for reforms of the regulatory regime applicable to business, trade and investment in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and to establish, regulate and manage a one window business facilitation portal to streamline regulatory approvals and enhance ease of doing business in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

WHEREAS it is expedient to provide for a legal framework for reforms of the regulatory regime applicable to business, trade and investment to enhance the ease of doing business in the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient to establish a one window business facilitation portal, to be known as Aasan Karobar Portal, for streamlining the processes of business registration, licensing, certification and other regulatory approvals;

AND WHEREAS it is essential to provide a legal framework for the mandatory integration of relevant government departments, authorities and regulatory bodies into a unified digital platform, ensuring efficiency, transparency and accountability in the processing of business-related applications;

It is hereby enacted by the Provincial Assembly of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as follows:

1. Short title, extent and commencement.---(1) This Act may be called the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Aasan Karobar Act, 2025.

(2) It shall extend to the whole of the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

(3) It shall come into force on such date as the Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, specify.

2. Definitions.---(1) In this Act, unless the context provides otherwise,-

- (a) **“Aasan Karobar Portal (AKP)”** means the one window digital platform established under this Act to facilitate digital processing of registrations, licenses, certifications, and other permits (RLCOs) for businesses, entrepreneurs and investors in the Province;
- (b) **“AKP Operating Unit”** means a unit established by the Board within the Ease of Doing Business Directorate for the purpose of developing, rolling out, operating, maintaining, expanding, enhancing, replacing and marketing the Aasan Karobar Portal and its allied services;
- (c) **“applicant”** means any individual, sole proprietor, partnership, company or other legal entity applying through the Aasan Karobar Portal for RLCOs or any other business facilitation service;

- (d) **“automatic escalation”** means an automated process by which applications and grievances that are not processed within the Service Level Agreement timeframe are escalated to higher authorities for immediate resolution;
- (e) **“authorised entities”** means any other entity that the Government may, through notification, authorize to access data, RLCOs or any other documents or information from the Aasan Karobar Portal in accordance with the provisions of this Act and any rules made thereunder;
- (f) **“Board”** means the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade, established under section 3 of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade Act, 2015 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Act No. XI of 2015);
- (g) **“burden”** means financial costs, including compliance, time, administrative costs, as well as administrative inconvenience, uncertainty, delays, measures adversely affecting consumer choice, efficiency, productively, and profitability;
- (h) **“business”** includes any lawful enterprise, trade, profession or occupation whether or not incorporated or registered;
- (i) **“digital ID”** means a unique electronic identifier assigned to a registered user of the Aasan Karobar Portal, which may include biometric verification, encrypted authentication tokens, or other recognized means of identity verification as specified by the AKP Operating Unit;
- (j) **“e-payment system”** means the digital mechanism integrated into the Aasan Karobar Portal for the electronic collection of application or service fees, regulatory charges, and other payments;
- (k) **“Ease of Doing Business Directorate”** means the Directorate established under section 3 of this Act for mapping RLCOs, reviewing and modernizing regulatory frameworks, and drafting proposals for legal and administrative reforms aimed at enhancing ease of doing business;
- (l) **“electronic document”** means any document submitted, processed, issued or stored electronically through Aasan Karobar Portal, having the same legal effect, validity and enforceability as a physical document;
- (m) **“Government”** means the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;
- (n) **“grievance redressal mechanism”** means the structured process within the Aasan Karobar Portal for receiving, processing, tracking and resolving grievances related to delays, rejections or inefficiencies in the issuance of RLCOs, as managed by the AKP Operating Unit and subject to prescribed timelines;
- (o) **“Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulatory Registry”** means the registry established under section 5 of this Act.
- (p) **“Lead Agency”** means the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade or any other authority notified by the Government to oversee the implementation and administration of Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (q) **“management facility”** means the facility set out in section 15 of this Act;

- (r) **“on boarding”** means the process of integrating a Participating Agency into the Aasan Karobar Portal, including the digital adaptation of its regulatory processes, capacity-building of its personnel, where necessary, alignment of its operational procedures with the Portal's framework and enabling its full functionality within the system.
- (s) **“Participating Agency”** means any Government Department, attached Department, a statutory autonomous or semi-autonomous entity, authority or regulatory body of Government or any company or corporation owned or controlled by Government, notified by the Steering Committee under this Act to process applications, issue approvals or provide services in relation to RLCOs through the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (t) **“prescribed”** means prescribed by rules and regulations;
- (u) **“Province”** means the Province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa;
- (v) **“regulations”** mean the regulations made under this Act;
- (w) **“RLCOs”** means Registrations, Licenses, Certifications and Other Permits, including all provincial regulatory compliance measures required by businesses, entrepreneurs, and investors to legally operate within the Province as mandated by applicable laws, rules, regulations and regulatory authorities;
- (x) **“rules”** mean the rules made under this Act;
- (y) **“Service Level Agreement”** means an agreement between the AKP Operating Unit and a Participating Agency, as provided under section 11 of this Act, specifying performance standards, procedural requirements and timelines for the processing of RLCOs and other regulatory functions through the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (z) **“Steering Committee”** means the committee established under section 8 of this Act to oversee ease of doing business reforms in the Province and the administration, governance, strategic direction and compliance of the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (aa) **“Technical Reforms Unit”** means the unit established within the Ease of Doing Business Directorate under section 3 of this Act;
- (bb) **“Unified Application”** means a single, standardized application form available on the Aasan Karobar Portal, which consolidates multiple licensing and registration requirements from different Participating Agencies into a single submission process; and
- (cc) **“unique verification code”** means a system-generated alphanumeric identifier assigned to each RLCO issued through the Aasan Karobar Portal, which is linked to the applicant's digital ID and serves as the primary mechanism for authentication and verification by Government authorities or any authorized entity.

(2) Any other expressions used but not defined in this Act, shall have the same meanings assigned thereto in the respective laws and rules made thereunder for the time being in force.

3. Establishment of Ease of Doing Business Directorate.---(1) There shall be established, within the Board, a directorate to be known as the Ease of Doing Business Directorate.

(2) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate shall consist of a Technical Reforms Unit and an AKP Operating Unit.

(3) The Board shall appoint a Director to lead the directorate who shall be an officer of Government in BPS-19 or a person from the private sector appointed through a competitive process, on such terms and conditions in the manner as may be prescribed.

(4) The Board shall appoint such persons, including technical experts, as may be required, from amongst officers of Government or the private sector, on such terms and conditions in the manner as may be prescribed.

(5) Government may, where deem necessary, second officers for a prescribed period from Participating Agencies or other relevant entities to the AKP Operating Unit through a competitive selection process to support the implementation and operations of the Aasan Karobar Portal:

Provided that retention or extension in the secondment period shall be subject to objective performance assessment by the AKP Operating Unit as per its performance evaluation benchmarks or human resource policy.

(6) The AKP Operating Unit may enter into partnerships, including public-private partnerships, or itself develop, procure, or acquire fully or partly the requisite software, hardware, system code, data, infrastructure, or anything ancillary thereto for the effective functioning of the Aasan Karobar Portal:

Provided that such software, hardware, system code, data, infrastructure, or anything ancillary thereto shall at all times be accessible to and remain the property of Government.

4. Functions and powers of the Ease of Doing Business Directorate.---(1) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate's Technical Reforms Unit shall have the following functions:

- (a) to map all RLCOs throughout the Province;
- (b) to establish and maintain the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulatory Registry;
- (c) to ensure entry of all RLCOs in the Province in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulatory Registry;
- (d) to coordinate with federal entities, when required, for mapping RLCOs for entry into and compatibility with any applicable national registry established at the federal level;
- (e) to review laws and RLCOs for the purpose of assessing the burden imposed on businesses;
- (f) to coordinate with Provincial entities to eliminate, simplify and modernize RLCOs and their associated processes;
- (g) to conduct business process re-engineering aimed at modernizing, digitizing, and improving Government procedures relating to the processing and issuance of RLCOs;
- (h) to draft proposals for reforms in laws, rules, regulations and administrative procedures for submission to Government;

- (i) to propose inclusions or modifications to the Aasan Karobar Portal to further enhance ease of doing business in the Province;
- (j) to engage with Federal and Provincial entities to enhance ease of doing business in Pakistan; and
- (k) any other function assigned to it by the Board.

(2) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate's AKP Operating Unit shall have the following functions:

- (a) to develop, deploy, operate, maintain, expand, upgrade and enhance the Aasan Karobar Portal and its allied systems and services;
- (b) to negotiate and enter into Service Level Agreements with Participating Agencies as specified in section 11 of this Act;
- (c) to maintain a grievance redressal mechanism as specified in section 13 of this Act;
- (d) to develop Unified Applications as specified in section 14 of this Act;
- (e) to develop and maintain a management facility on the Aasan Karobar Portal in accordance with section 15 of this Act; and
- (f) to maintain and operate e-payment system as specified in section 17 of this Act.

(3) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate shall operate under the direct supervision of the Board and in coordination with all relevant entities as provided under this Act.

5. Establishment of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Regulatory Registry.--- (1) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate shall establish and maintain an electronic registry to be known as the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Registry for cataloguing and mapping of laws and RLCOs.

(2) The Ease of Doing Business Directorate may procure requisite software, hardware, systems codes, data, infrastructure or other material to effectively manage and operate the Registry and for its future expansion and such software, hardware, systems, codes, data, infrastructure or other material shall, at all times, be accessible to and remain the property of the Unit.

6. Establishment of Aasan Karobar Portal.---(1) Government shall, by notification in the official Gazette, establish a facility to be known as the Aasan Karobar Portal for the purpose of facilitating RLCOs required by businesses operating within the Province.

(2) The Aasan Karobar Portal may adopt and apply any technological means available, or that may become available in the future, to enhance its operational efficiency, enable digital integration, and facilitate the paperless processing of business-related approvals.

(3) Government may provide such financial, human and administrative resources as it deems necessary for the establishment, operation, maintenance, expansion, enhancement, and, where required, the succession or replacement of the Aasan Karobar Portal to ensure its continued efficiency and technological relevance.

(4) The Lead Agency shall ensure the mandatory integration of Participating Agencies into the Aasan Karobar Portal, ensuring that applications for RLCOs and other regulatory approvals are processed exclusively through the Portal, except where expressly provided otherwise under this Act:

Provided that the Steering Committee, may waive, in whole or in part, temporarily or otherwise, the requirement for participation of any Participating Agency, for reasons to be recorded in writing.

(5) Where any law, rules, regulations, by-laws, notifications, orders, procedures, instructions, or circulars related to RLCOs require amendment, rescission or repeal, such modifications shall not be made except after giving prior notice through publication in the official Gazette or by electronic means, seeking input from stakeholders likely to be affected:

Provided that the Steering Committee may, on its own motion or upon a proposal by the Lead Agency or a Participating Agency, dispense with the requirement for prior notice, temporarily or otherwise, in cases of exigency for reasons to be recorded in writing.

7. Role and functions of the Aasan Karobar Portal.---(1) The Aasan Karobar Portal shall function as the single-entry point for the submission, processing, and issuance of RLCOs.

- (2) The Aasan Karobar Portal shall have the following functions:
- (a) to streamline RLCOs required for business operations through digital processing;
 - (b) to reduce human intervention in approvals and standardize inter-agency workflows;
 - (c) to provide a real-time tracking mechanism for applications;
 - (d) to provide business regulatory compliance and management tools for customers;
 - (e) to provide a coordination mechanism for Participating Agencies to conduct routine inspections jointly;
 - (f) to incorporate an e-payment system for efficient payment and processing of all fees and charges relating to RLCOs, service charges, or other payments;
 - (g) to establish an effective and time bound grievance redressal mechanism for applicants; and
 - (h) any other functions assigned to it by Government.

8. Steering Committee on Ease of Doing Business.---(1) There shall be a Committee for the purpose of ease of doing business in the Province to be known as the Steering Committee on Ease of Doing of Business.

- (2) The Steering Committee shall consist of the following, namely:
- | | | |
|------|--|-------------|
| (a) | Chief Minister, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; | Chairperson |
| (aa) | Minister/elected Advisor/elected Special Assistant to Chief Minister for Industries. | Member |
| (b) | Chief Secretary to Government; | Member |
| (c) | Secretary to Government, Finance Department; | Member |

| | | |
|--|---|--------|
| (d) | Secretary to Government, Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Department; | Member |
| (e) | Secretary to Government, Labour Department; | Member |
| (f) | Secretary to Government, Law, Parliamentary Affairs and Human Rights Department; | Member |
| (g) | Secretary to Government, Science and Technology Department; | Member |
| (h) | Vice Chairperson of the Board; | Member |
| (i) | President Chamber of Commerce and Industry to be nominated by the Chairperson periodically for a period of one year; and | Member |
| (j) | President Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry to be nominated by the chairperson periodically for a period of one year. | Member |
| (3) The Chairperson may, in case of necessity, delegate to any member of the Steering Committee the power to convene and chair meetings thereof. | | |
| (4) The Steering Committee shall decide all matters by a majority vote of its members present and in the event of a tie, the Chairperson shall have a casting vote. | | |
| (5) The Steering Committee may, by resolution, constitute committees comprising two or more of its members for the performance of any task or inquiry, and such committees shall submit their recommendations or reports to the Steering Committee within such period as it may determine. | | |
| (6) The Steering Committee may invite any persons or representatives of trade or professional bodies to participate in its deliberations, make recommendations, submit reports and provide assistance; provided that such persons or representatives shall have no right to vote. | | |
| (7) The Steering Committee shall have the following powers and functions, namely: | | |
| (a) | to oversee all initiatives in the Province regarding ease of doing business; | |
| (b) | to review and approve proposals for elimination, simplification, and modernization of RLCOs and their procedures; | |
| (c) | to ensure Provincial alignment with National aims and objectives for ease of doing business; | |
| (d) | to oversee the strategic direction of the Aasan Karobar Portal; | |
| (e) | to ensure that Participating Agencies comply with its mandates and resolve inter-agency conflicts affecting its implementation; | |

- (f) to review its performance, impose corrective measures and issue appropriate directions to the Participating Agencies or the Lead Agency, as the case may be;
- (g) to recommend system enhancements or policy changes as required; and
- (h) to perform such other functions as may be prescribed by rules.

(9) Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, establish a secretariat of the Steering Committee at such places as it may determine, to perform such functions as may be prescribed.

(10) The Chief Executive Officer of the Board shall-

- (a) act as the *ex-officio* Secretary to the Steering Committee;
- (b) convene meetings of the Steering Committee with the prior approval of the Chairperson or any member who have been delegated the power to convene or chair the meeting under subsection (3) of section 8 of this Act and after giving notice to its members;
- (c) head the secretariat of the Steering Committee; and
- (d) maintain records of the proceedings of the Steering Committee and communicate the same in a timely manner to the relevant authorities.

9. Lead Agency.---(1) Unless the Government determines otherwise, the Board shall be the Lead Agency for the purposes of the Aasan Karobar Portal established under this Act.

(2) The Lead Agency shall-

- (a) facilitate the establishment and operationalization of the Aasan Karobar Portal in coordination with Participating Agencies;
- (b) ensure the integration of Participating Agencies with the Aasan Karobar Portal and their adherence to procedural requirements;
- (c) issue directions to the AKP Operating Unit as necessary to ensure compliance with the provisions of this Act;
- (d) develop and recommend operational guidelines and protocols necessary for the effective use and management of the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (e) monitor the compliance of Participating Agencies with Service Level Agreements and take measures to address delays in processing applications;
- (f) facilitate the resolution of challenges faced by Participating Agencies in integrating with the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (g) undertake awareness and capacity-building initiatives to promote the adoption and effective use of the Aasan Karobar Portal by businesses and regulatory authorities; and
- (h) perform such other functions as the Government may prescribe by rules.

(3) The Lead Agency shall furnish annual performance reports to the Steering Committee, outlining progress on the development, deployment, operation and performance of

the Aasan Karobar Portal, including achievements against benchmarks set by the Steering Committee and any other information as the Steering Committee may require.

(4) The Steering Committee may prescribe performance benchmarks for the AKP Operating Unit and monitor its compliance therewith.

10. Mandatory participation.---(1) All Participating Agencies responsible for processing RLCOs, when on boarded onto the Aasan Karobar Portal, shall exclusively utilize the Aasan Karobar Portal for application processing.

(2) The AKP Operating Unit shall ensure the on boarding and capacity-building of each Participating Agency for full integration into the Aasan Karobar Portal in accordance with a schedule to be determined by the Lead Agency.

(3) Participating Agencies with inspection functions under any laws, rules or regulations shall utilize the coordination mechanisms provided in the Aasan Karobar Portal to jointly organize inspections to reduce burden on businesses:

Provided that spot-inspections, inspections brought about as a result of a complaint or other reasonable non-routine inspections shall not be subject to such coordination requirements unless determined otherwise by the Lead Agency.

(4) RLCOs shall not be processed manually by any Participating Agency outside the Aasan Karobar Portal system, except where exemption has been granted by the Steering Committee:

Provided that exemption shall not be granted unless the head of the Participating Agency supplies a clear transition plan to the Steering Committee for complete integration into the Aasan Karobar Portal:

Provided further that exemption shall not be granted to a Participating Agency for a period longer than six months.

11. Service Level Agreements.---(1) The AKP Operating Unit shall enter into an Service Level Agreement with each Participating Agency, which outline the terms and conditions for integration with the Aasan Karobar Portal.

(2) Each Service Level Agreement shall, at a minimum, provide for-

- (a) the specific job tasks to be processed through the Aasan Karobar Portal;
- (b) the steps and procedures for handling applications;
- (c) the officers authorised to approve applications;
- (d) the designation of an alternate officer in case the authorised officer is unavailable;
- (e) the defined timelines for the approval of applications;
- (f) the maximum period within which additional information may be sought from applicants;
- (g) the mechanisms for the provisional approval of applications, where applicable, including deemed approval of applications where response is not provided within the stipulated time;

- (h) the procedure for the automatic escalation of an application to a senior officer where approval is delayed;
- (i) the lines of communication between the Participating Agency and the AKP Operating Unit;
- (j) the data protection protocols to be adopted;
- (k) the designation of a focal officer responsible for the implementation and coordination of the Service Level Agreement;
- (l) the mechanisms for resolving disputes, including referral to the Lead Agency or the Steering Committee; and
- (m) the timeframe for processing complaints filed by applicants.

(3) The terms and conditions of the Service Level Agreements shall be binding on all Participating Agencies and failure to comply shall be subject to review and corrective measures as determined by the Steering Committee.

(4) Adherence to the standards agreed in the Service Level Agreement shall form part of the performance evaluation of responsible officers and persistent violation may constitute grounds for disciplinary proceedings.

(5) Where an application remains unresolved despite escalation under the automatic escalation mechanism, it may be granted provisional approval, subject to such conditions as may be determined by the Steering Committee.

12. Memoranda of Understanding with non-Provincial entities.---(1) The Lead Agency may enter into Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), agreements and contracts with entities not subject to this Act, including Federal, statutory or independent entities, involved in RLCOs to integrate them into the Aasan Karobar Portal.

- (2) Such entities include, but are not limited to:
- (a) the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA);
 - (b) the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP);
 - (c) the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR);
 - (d) the Pakistan Single Window (PSW);
 - (e) the Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA); and
 - (f) the Employees Old-Age Benefits Institution (EOBI).

13. Redressal of grievances.---(1) The Aasan Karobar Portal shall include a grievance redressal mechanism to allow applicants to challenge wrongful delays, rejections or inefficiencies in the processing of RLCOs.

(2) An applicant aggrieved by any unjustified delay, rejection or system-related inefficiency in the processing of an application through the Aasan Karobar Portal may file a grievance electronically, in such manner as prescribed by regulations.

(3) The AKP Operating Unit shall establish a dedicated Grievance Redressal Cell to receive, process and resolve grievances within the timeframe specified under the relevant Service Level Agreements:

Provided that where a grievance remains unresolved beyond the prescribed timeframe, it shall be automatically escalated to the Lead Agency for further action.

- (4) The Grievance Redressal Cell shall-
- (a) review grievances related to delays, wrongful rejections or inefficiencies in the application process;
 - (b) seek reasons for the delays, wrongful rejections or inefficiencies in the application process from the Participating Agency;
 - (c) coordinate with the relevant Participating Agency on an urgent basis for resolution of the grievance;
 - (d) issue a decision to the applicant within the prescribed time limit;
 - (e) where necessary, escalate unresolved grievances to the Lead Agency for intervention; and
 - (f) maintain a publicly accessible dashboard on the Aasan Karobar Portal, displaying statistics on grievances received, processed and resolved, without disclosing applicants' personal data.
- (5) The Lead Agency shall-
- (a) engage with the relevant Participating Agency to facilitate the resolution of grievances referred under this section;
 - (b) where a Participating Agency persistently fails to adhere to its Service Level Agreement obligations, report the matter to the Steering Committee for corrective measures; and
 - (c) perform such other functions in relation to grievance resolution as the Government may prescribe.
- (6) Government may prescribe rules to regulate the procedures and time limits for grievance resolution under this section.
- (7) Participating Agencies shall provide timely information and respond promptly to queries raised by the Grievance Redressal Cell during resolution of grievances under this section.

14. Unified applications.---(1) The AKP Operating Unit may consolidate information required by various Participating Agencies into Unified Applications, to be used on the Aasan Karobar Portal for eliminating redundant information requirements.

(2) Sector-specific Unified Applications shall be designed to facilitate applicants by combining all necessary RLCOs required from the various Participating Agencies.

(3) The AKP Operating Unit, in consultation with the relevant Participating Agencies, shall develop sector-specific Unified Applications for sectors, including but not limited to-

- (a) industrial and manufacturing enterprises;
- (b) commercial establishments;
- (c) infrastructure and real estate development;

- (d) tourism and hospitality;
- (e) transport and logistics;
- (f) agriculture and agri-business;
- (g) information technology services;
- (h) mines and minerals; and
- (i) any other sector assigned to it by the Lead Agency.

(4) The AKP Operating Unit shall periodically review and update Unified Applications to incorporate regulatory changes, process improvements and feedback from Participating Agencies and applicants.

(5) All Participating Agencies shall recognize and accept the Unified Application as the sole submission mechanism for applications within their jurisdiction, and no agency shall require separate submissions outside of the Aasan Karobar Portal.

15. Management facility.---(1) The AKP Operating Unit may integrate a management facility into the Aasan Karobar Portal to enable applicants to store and manage RLCOs, track compliance requirements, receive prior notice of the expiration of RLCOs, register workers and employees, manage labour-related obligations, monitor scheduled inspections and audits and such other facilities as the Lead Agency in consultation with the AKP Operating Unit may determine.

(2) Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, specify the sectors in which the management facility shall apply.

(3) Upon such notification, businesses operating in the specified sectors shall be required to adopt and utilize the management facility in the manner as may be prescribed.

16. Sources of funding.---(1) The sources of funding for the development, operation, enhancement and upgradation of the Aasan Karobar Portal shall include-

- (a) allocations from Government as provided in the annual budget;
- (b) grants from Government, including project-based funding for system improvements and expansions;
- (c) revenue generated from the levy of service charges and fees, as prescribed under sub-section (2);
- (d) income generated through public-private partnerships, collaborations or other investment models approved by the Steering Committee;
- (e) funds provided by international organizations or foreign donors; and
- (f) any other source as may be approved by the Government, upon the recommendation of the Lead Agency.

(2) For the purpose of meeting operational expenses, system enhancements and upgradation, the AKP Operating Unit may levy fees or service charges for services provided by or on its behalf, subject to approval by the Lead Agency.

(3) The funds received under this Act shall be utilized exclusively for the operation and enhancement of the Aasan Karobar Portal, including but not limited to-

- (a) procuring, developing, maintaining, upgrading and securing all software, hardware, system code, data, and infrastructure;
- (b) capacity building, training and professional development of personnel engaged in Aasan Karobar Portal operations and Participating Agencies;
- (c) awareness campaigns, marketing, user support services and system enhancements to improve accessibility; and
- (d) any other expense necessary for the efficient operation and sustainability of the Aasan Karobar Portal, as approved by the Steering Committee.

(4) Subject to Articles 169 and 170 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the accounts of the AKP Operating Unit shall be subject to periodic review and audit by independent external auditors to ensure financial integrity, transparency, compliance with financial management rules, and the efficient use of resources.

17. E-Payments.---(1) The AKP Operating Unit shall integrate into the Aasan Karobar Portal an e-payment system to facilitate the electronic collection of all regulatory fees, service charges and other payments required for the processing of RLCOs.

(2) Once operational, the e-payment system shall be the exclusive method for collecting all regulatory fees, service charges and other payments associated with the processing and issuance of RLCOs.

18. Validity of electronic documents issued through Aasan Karobar Portal.---(1) An RLCO issued electronically by any Participating Agency through the Aasan Karobar Portal shall be deemed legally valid and enforceable, having the same legal effect as if it were issued in physical form.

(2) No Participating Agency, Government Department or other entity shall require endorsement, attestation, notarization or additional verification of an RLCO that has been issued through the Aasan Karobar Portal.

(3) Any requirement under law for the submission, retention, authentication, attestation or verification of documents related to RLCOs shall be deemed to have been complied with if such documents are submitted, processed or issued through the Aasan Karobar Portal in electronic form.

(4) Any electronic submission, approval, or issuance of RLCOs through the Aasan Karobar Portal shall be deemed legally valid and admissible as evidence before any court, tribunal or authority.

(5) All RLCOs issued through the Aasan Karobar Portal shall bear a unique verification code linked to the applicant's digital ID registered therein, which shall serve as the primary mechanism for authenticity verification.

(6) The AKP Operating Unit shall establish secure mechanisms to enable Participating Agencies and other authorized entities to verify the authenticity of any RLCO through the unique verification code.

(7) The AKP Operating Unit shall implement robust security measures to prevent identity theft, document fraud, and any other unlawful use of the Aasan Karobar Portal, ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of all transactions and records.

19. Data access and security.---(1) No person shall access, transmit, or receive information from the Aasan Karobar Portal or its allied systems unless duly registered or authorized in the manner prescribed by rules.

(2) The AKP Operating Unit shall ensure that data access is restricted and granted only to Participating Agencies and authorized entities based on operational necessity and in accordance with data protection and security protocols prescribed by rules.

(3) The AKP Operating Unit shall maintain an audit trail for a period of at least seven years, recording all system transactions, data access, modifications and transmissions to ensure security, accountability and prevent unauthorized use.

(4) The AKP Operating Unit shall periodically commission independent third-party audits of data access, security, and protection compliance under this Act, through auditors accredited by recognized accreditation bodies, and submit audit reports to Government.

20. Data retention and archiving.---Data retention, modification and deletion shall be governed in the manner as may be prescribed by rules.

21. Integration with National One-Window Business Portal.---(1) Upon the establishment of a national one-window business portal by the Federal Government, the Lead Agency shall ensure that the Aasan Karobar Portal is effectively aligned and technically integrated with it.

(2) The Lead Agency shall coordinate closely with the Federal Board of Investment and any other Federal or Provincial entities to guarantee interoperability, seamless data exchange and consistent regulatory standards across platforms.

22. Offences and Penalties.---(1) Any person who, without lawful authority, accesses, retrieves, transmits, or shares any information stored in the Aasan Karobar Portal shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding five hundred thousand rupees or both.

(2) Any person who knowingly submits false, forged or misleading documents through the Aasan Karobar Portal or who fabricates or misrepresents any data stored in the Portal for the purpose of obtaining an RLCO, misleading authorities, or securing an unlawful benefit, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to a fine not exceeding one million rupees or both.

(3) Any person, in their official capacity or under any contractual, regulatory or operational arrangement with Aasan Karobar Portal, including those associated with Participating Agencies, the AKP Operating Unit or any other authorized entity, who discloses, misuses or unlawfully shares applicant data obtained through the Aasan Karobar Portal without authorization shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to a fine not exceeding one million rupees or both.

(4) Any person who knowingly uses, sells, transfers or otherwise misuses another person's Aasan Karobar Portal digital ID without authorization shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding one year or to a fine not exceeding one million rupees or both.

(5) Any person who engages in an act that compromises the security, integrity or availability of the Aasan Karobar Portal, including but not limited to hacking, unauthorized modifications, cyberattacks, insertion of malicious software or interference with its infrastructure, shall be guilty of an offence and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding seven years or to a fine not exceeding ten million rupees or both.

(6) All offences under this Act shall be cognizable and non-compoundable.

(7) No court inferior to a Magistrate of the First Class shall try an offence punishable under this Act.

(8) For the purpose of passing any sentence authorized by this Act, the Magistrate of the First Class shall have the powers of a Magistrate invested on him under section 30 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 (V of 1898).

23. Annual reporting and system evaluation.---(1) The AKP Operating Unit shall engage a reputed independent third party to conduct an annual performance audit of the Aasan Karobar Portal, assessing system efficiency, user adoption, service delivery, and regulatory compliance and shall submit the audit findings to the Lead Agency and the Steering Committee.

(2) The AKP Operating Unit shall prepare and submit an Annual Report to the Steering Committee, detailing the performance of the Aasan Karobar Portal, instances of failure to abide by the Service Level Agreements by each Participating Agency, key challenges and recommendations for improvements.

(3) The Annual Report shall be made publicly available, except for any confidential information as determined by the Steering Committee.

24. Power to make rules.---Government may, by notification in the official Gazette, make rules for carrying out the purposes of this Act and ensuring the effective implementation of the Aasan Karobar Portal.

25. Delegation of power.---(1) The Steering Committee may, where necessary, delegate any of its specific functions to the Lead Agency, AKP Operating Unit or any Participating Agency, subject to such conditions and limitations as it may specify.

26. Power to make regulations.---The Lead Agency may, in consultation with the Steering Committee and by notification in the official Gazette, make regulations for carrying out the purposes of this Act; provided that such regulations shall not be inconsistent with the provisions of this Act or the rules made thereunder.

27. Removal of difficulties.---Within a period of one year from the commencement of this Act, if any difficulty arises in giving effect to the provisions of this Act, the Government may, by order, take such measures as it deems necessary to remove the difficulty:

Provided that no such order shall be inconsistent with the provisions of this Act.

28. Indemnity.---No suit, prosecution, or other legal proceeding shall lie against Government, members of the Steering Committee, the Lead Agency, the AKP Operating Unit, any Participating Agency, or any officer or person acting under their authority for anything done or intended to be done in good faith under this Act or any rules made thereunder.

29. Application of other laws.---Notwithstanding anything contained in section 30 of this Act, the provisions of the Pakistan Penal Code, 1860 (XLV of 1860), Electronic Transactions Ordinance, 2002 (LI of 2002) and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (XL of 2016), shall apply *mutatis mutandis* to the electronic submission, retention, authentication, legal validity and security of documents, records and transactions processed through the Aasan Karobar Portal.

30. Right to information.---Nothing in this Act shall limit or affect obligations under the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Right to Information Act, 2013, regarding the disclosure of public records except to the extent necessary to safeguard personal data, commercial confidentiality and the security of electronic records.

31. Overriding effect.---The provisions of this Act shall have effect notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force.