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FBR's Rs180m Stationery Spend Raises Eyebrows

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The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has allocated Rs180.36 million for computer stationery as part of its Rs560 million procurement plan for fiscal year 2025–26, according to an official notification. The significant allocation has drawn scrutiny amid Pakistan's economic challenges and efforts to meet ambitious revenue targets.

The FBR—responsible for tax collection and revenue enforcement—defended the allocation as necessary to modernize operations. The expenditure covers items such as printer paper, toner, and digital documentation supplies. Officials say the spending supports the federal government's push toward digital integration, as endorsed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on July 26, 2025, in a move aimed at improving tax compliance and transparency across supply chains.

The plan is part of a broader digital ecosystem effort, which also includes data integration from raw material imports to end-user sales. However, critics have questioned the balance between operational costs and direct revenue-generating reforms, especially after the FBR missed its Rs1.9 trillion revenue target for FY 2024–25 by Rs163 billion, according to budget reports.

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb defended the investment, stating that modern tax systems require “reliable resources” to function effectively. He added that improving digital capacity is critical to detecting tax evasion and streamlining compliance across sectors.

In the wider fiscal plan, the FBR has introduced Rs1.761 trillion in new revenue measures and set a tax collection target of Rs14.131 trillion for FY 2025–26. Meanwhile, the government faces macroeconomic challenges such as subdued sales tax performance, slow growth, and a projected fiscal deficit of Rs8.996 trillion, according to the Finance Division.

While the Rs180 million stationery allocation represents a small portion of the total, observers note that such spending decisions signal broader governance priorities. The FBR's stated aim of improving digital operations will likely be closely monitored as the fiscal year progresses.