

Shabbar worries over IRS officers' exclusion from posting abroad

ISLAMABAD: Chairman FBR Shabbar Zaidi has raised its concern over Ministry of Commerce decision to exclude Inland Revenue Service (IRS) officers for posting abroad as Trade and Investment officers.

According to official communication sent out from Chairman FBR Shabbar Zaidi to Secretary Commerce stating that as per past practice, the Inland Revenue Service had always been considered eligible for these posts. That in view, majority of the Officers of Inland Revenue Service under the FBR had made preparation and had legitimate of posting as Trade & Investment Officers in Pakistan missions abroad. However, in the latest advertisement, the Chairman FBR stated that the eligibility criteria for Public Sector candidates has been reframed; barring the Inland Revenue Service Specially from being considered for these posts as under.

“Officers who have served for at least there (03) of the last eight (08) years on relevant positions in Federal Government in Commerce Division, Trade Development Authority (TDAP), Economic Affairs Division, Federal Board of Revenue (Customs), Board of Investment, Privatization Commission, Textile Division, Ministry of Production; Provincial Department of Revenue & Finance, Commerce, Investment and Industries (length of experience not required for BS-18)”.

It is pertinent to mention here that Inland Revenue Service has direct understanding of trade and investment, associated taxation and facilities in Pakistan. Officers are well-versed in matters relating to interaction with BOL, EAD, MOFA & foreign business entities. International Taxation, Transfer pricing avoidance of double taxation, import and export taxes etc. are specifically dealt with in the laws administered by the Inland Revenue Service. As such, officers of the Inland Revenue Services are the pristine source for advice relating to trade and investment in and from Pakistan.

Foregoing in view, it is strongly recommendation that in the interest of facilities of trade and investment, the Inland Revenue Service should be made eligible as per past practice for the current positions and in future, enabling the best most suited candidates to represent the nation, the chairman FBR stated.

However, the sources said that Ministry of Commerce has invited applications for posting of trade and investment officers in Pakistan missions abroad. The written test would be conducted by IBA Karachi. Interestingly two service groups Inland Revenue service (IRS) and Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service (PAAS) have been excluded from eligibility criteria. The move has created unrest among two financial services as historically both these services were allowed to compete for these postings.

This eligibility criterion for public sector candidates given in this year's advertisement is different from previous criteria on two visible grounds; firstly experience in federal revenue department was eligible in previous criterion and provincial revenue department was not eligible. However, this time federal revenue department has been made ineligible while provincial revenue department has been added as eligible. Secondly federal and provincial finance divisions were eligible in previous

criterion however the new criterion has excluded federal finance division and retained provincial finance department as eligible. The outcome of these changes has resulted in exclusion of two financial services IRS and PAAS from competitive process while PAS has gained as all PAS officers working as ACs and DCs in provinces have now been made eligible through new criterion.

In addition, previous government has introduced a selection process where written exam carried 80% weightage and 20% weightage was given to interview. So that those candidates who have performed better in exam should not be outmaneuvered by those who can manage interview through their political connections.

However, this time the weightage for written exam is reduced to 60% and interview has been given 40% weightage, which is again a move allegedly aimed to allow liked one officers to get more marks in interview just to deny the right to deserving candidates.

When contacted to one top official of the Commerce Ministry, he defended the change for giving more weightage to interview arguing that the past experience showed that the trade officers posted abroad with good speaking skills had performed much better than those officers who obtained good marks in written exams.

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