

### **Show no leniency to tax evaders, finance minister directs FBR**

KARACHI: Finance Minister Asad Umar on Monday asked the tax authorities to show uncompromising attitude towards high net-worth and high profile evaders, while assuring logistics and other supports required for broadening of tax base drive, well-placed sources said on Monday.

The sources said Umar presided over a meeting at the Income Tax Building.

Member Inland Revenue Operations Seema Shakil, Member Customs Operations Agha Jawad, chief commissioners Inland Revenue, chief collectors and other officials attended the meeting.

A senior official told The News that the finance minister directed the tax officials to take 'extreme' measures against tax evasion by high net-worth and high-profile individuals. The minister was informed about the difficulties in taking actions against high net-worth individuals who were influential and able to stop proceedings, the official said, requesting anonymity.

"The finance minister said the government will support all transparent measures taken by the FBR (Federal Board of Revenue)," the official quoted the minister as saying. He (the finance minister) directed the concerned departments to provide logistics support to the tax officials in taking actions, the official added.

Regional Tax Office-II last week requested the FBR to provide logistics support, including assistance of law enforcement agencies, to actions against high-profile and high net-worth individuals. Another official, who attended the meeting, said the finance minister appreciated performance of FBR's officials but he said he would not tolerate 'black sheep'. The minister directed the officials to focus taxpayers who evaded billions of rupees in taxes.

The FBR faced revenue shortfall of Rs233.2 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year of 2018/19 and it is projected to increase to Rs485.9 billion till June-end. The sources said the FBR urged the ministry of finance to revise downward the annual collection target of Rs4.398 trillion.

The FBR officials briefed the finance minister on measures to bridge the revenue gap during the current fiscal year. The high net-worth individuals are executives and directors from corporate sector, while high-profile people belong to showbiz, sports and politics.

The FBR officials apprised the meeting of the latest position of revenue collection. Besides, the matter for broadening of tax base and actions against tax evaders were also discussed.

Member Customs Operation briefed the finance minister about the transparent procedure adopted for customs clearance. The meeting also discussed massive smuggling of betel nuts and it was decided to make a framework of duty and taxes for import of the product.

The finance minister also met with Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan Chairman Farrukh Sabzwari and Pakistan Stock Exchange Managing Director Richard Morin at the Income Tax building.

The sources said Sabzwari and Morin made presentations on pension system in Pakistan.

The government wants to reduce the burden of pensioners and the regulator is finalising a plan for the purpose, they added.

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