

**Shabbar appointed FBR chairman**

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thurs-day appointed Syed Moham-mad Shabbar Zaidi, a chartered accountant, new chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for a period of two years amid strong opposition from top tax officers.

He will take charge of his post on Friday. Mr Zaidi has become the first FBR chairman who was appointed on a pro bono basis, an honorary position without salary. The FBR chairman can be appointed from the private sector in terms of Section 3 (3) of the FBR Act 2007 through a proper advertisement.

The FBR chairman also holds the position of revenue division secretary. However, Mr Zaidi cannot be appointed its secretary as he is from the private sector.

A well-placed source in the establishment division told Dawn that government would change the position of incumbent FBR chairman and revenue division secretary Jehanzeb Khan. He will be asked to continue working as revenue division secretary — a position responsible for all official correspondences and decisions.

According to the source, a notification is expected on Friday to designate Jehanzeb Khan as revenue division secretary only to give continuity with the ongoing budget process.

The Islamabad High Court has already laid down procedures for appointment of a person from the private sector as head of a government organisation. These include, for example, public advertisement for the post and interviews with the candidates.

Pro bono appointments are being made by the government without advertisements such as the appointment of chairmen of the Prime Minister's Inspection Commission and the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission.

Earlier, Moinuddin Khan was appointed FBR chairman from the private sector in 1998 for a brief period of seven months. However, his appointment was on a regular basis. Ali Arshad Hakeem was the second person appointed from the private sector as FBR chairman in July 2012. He was removed from the post on IHC order in April 2013.

The Customs Officers Association announced that it would not challenge the appointment of Mr Zaidi as FBR chairman, saying their focus was on ensuring maximum positions for the customs group. "We will not resist the appointment. We will not be part of any resistance," an office-bearer of the association told Dawn.

On Wednesday, officers of the inland revenue service and customs groups had held an hour-long meeting and expressed displeasure over the appointment of FBR chairman from the private sector without fulfilling the laid down criteria. However, the customs group changed their position after the issuance of notification for the appointment.

The Inland Revenue Officers Association held several meetings after the notification. "We will finalise our strategy by tomorrow [Friday]," one of its members told Dawn.

As a senior chartered accountant dealing with some of the largest businesses enterprises in the country for decades, Mr Zaidi brings with him a wealth of experience and knowledge about the tricks of the trade that are commonly used for tax evasion. He was picked for the slot by Prime Minister Imran Khan.

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter