

Mehtab Haider

Nationwide tax drive given go-ahead

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan and top military brass have approved an ambitious tax reforms plan including launching of nation-wide tax assessment and documentation drive as well as survey of immovable property all over the country. Both these nationwide surveys are aimed at identifying millions of potential tax evaders and bringing them into tax system.

The FBR's field staff has extended all-out support but also raised some important points such as pressing upon the need for taking into account past experiences and the reasons behind failure of all drives to achieve success on documentation front. All efforts remained futile irrespective of military or democratically elected regime in last two decades as Gen (R) Musharraf had launched nationwide survey but ended it in halfway. So how this documentation drive through nationwide tax assessment and documentation drive will become successful is not yet known.

This planned nationwide tax assessment and documentation drive will be done in two years and it will not have choking effect for the economy. It has been decided that its implementation will be prompt and not extended impasse. The FBR's field formation has suggested that there should be no unnecessary delays but there should be no indecent haste as well for undertaking these reforms.

The government also planned digital nationwide survey of immovable property, digital survey of Islamabad Industrial Area with geo tagging. This proposal has been given by Chinese side and it will be completed in 2 years. Meanwhile, the FBR's Inland Revenue Service Officers Association (IRSOA) has taken serious notice of proposed restructuring plan of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) saying that tax machinery collecting 86 percent of the total revenue collection and it will be left out completely at the planning stage.

According to a press statement of IRSOA issued here on Wednesday stating that Inland Revenue Service Officers Association (IRSOA) and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) held an emergency meeting at FBR HQs, Islamabad.

The association reaffirmed unwavering support to strategic reforms envisioned by the government in order to strengthen national revenue system, being the backbone for economically strong and prosperous Pakistan.

The Association took serious note of the 'ill-informed and ill-conceived' proposed restructuring plan of FBR, which prima facie, seems to be hastily sketched by vested interests and without taking input from the constitutionally mandated cadres of the relevant revenue services. The IRSOA expressed deep resentment that the department is collecting 86 percent of the total national tax revenue but it has been left out completely at the planning stage, the statement said.

The Association expressed hope that the alternative, indigenous and home-grown plan being submitted to authorities will be adopted which may further be improved through consensus by bringing in the input of all stakeholders within the system. The Association re-affirmed their commitment to uphold the sacred responsibility of the revenue collection and to safeguard the national revenue streams, which nourishes the whole governance architecture.