

By Nasir Jamal

Traders to protest against CNIC condition on Oct 9

LAHORE: Traders from across the country plan to organise a protest in Islamabad on Oct 9 against the government's efforts to bring them into the tax net after breakdown of their two-month long talks with the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on issues ranging from their mandatory sales tax registration, CNIC condition and fixed tax regime.

'Our talks with the FBR have collapsed because of the board's refusal to accommodate our concerns,' All Pakistan Anjuman-iTajiran (APAT) leader Naeem Mir told Dawn on Saturday.

'We have now decided to launch a march on Islamabad next month to finalise our future course of action, which will include countrywide shutter-down strike and sitins,' he added.

The last meeting between the traders and FBR officials took place four days ago where the deadlock persisted. 'The attitude of the officials during the last meeting clearly showed that they are not willing to listen to or understand our concerns and point of view.

Therefore, we are left with no choice but to organise the protest.

The traders had observed a nationwide strike in July following the introduction of measures to bring them into the tax in the budget for the current fiscal year.

The traders from across the country had overwhelmingly responded to the strike call, following which the FBR delayed implementation of the CNIC condition till the end of this month and agreed to sit down with traders to find a mutually agreed solution to the issue.

Mir claimed that traders' representatives from all district and tehsils of Pakistan, AJK and Gilgit Baltistan would participate in the planned protest in Islamabad against the government's 'illegitimate' taxation measures.

He said the CNIC condition remained the cause of disagreement during talks with the FBR, while adding that the differences had also persisted on sales tax registration and the draft for introduction of the fixed tax regime.

He also claimed that FBR had already started issuing tax notices to traders and started implementation of the CNIC condition from Sept 13 despite talks.

'The FBR's actions clearly show its lack of interest in reaching a settlement of issues with traders,' he concluded.