

PM takes notice of taxpayers' harassment

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday took notice of what he called harassment of taxpayers by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

Presiding over a meeting held to review revenue collection, the prime minister grilled Revenue Minister Hammad Azhar and said he had received complaints that the FBR was harassing taxpayers. "Instead of harassing the taxpayers, divert your attention to tax evaders," Mr Khan told the minister.

The prime minister called tax evaders "enemies of the nation" and directed FBR chairman Jehanzeb Khan not to show any leniency while dealing with tax evaders. He reportedly said that tax evaders and those who didn't pay tax should be exposed before the nation and indiscriminate action should be taken against them and the FBR officials who facilitated the tax dodgers.

The prime minister also admonished the FBR and said its focus should be on tax evaders and non-taxpayers instead of harassing the taxpayers.

The meeting was told that over 6,000 cases involving "high net worth individuals" were under review. A total collection of over Rs2 billion is expected from them, of which Rs1.3bn has already been received. The prime minister was informed that another 66 cases, following investigation, were also being examined and over Rs1.5bn had been collected in this regard.

The FBR chairman said that mapping of 2,000 plazas had been completed, while an automatic system to collect tax had been installed at over 2,500 points of sale. The new measures, he added, were expected to increase revenue collection by Rs24.818bn this year, of which Rs11.88bn had already been collected.

Sources told Dawn that the prime minister had also expressed displeasure over the inflated gas bills being sent to consumers and regretted that mass-scale irregularities had been reported in the energy sector. He said that those involved in the irregularities and issuance of inflated gas bills should be dealt with strictly.

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter