

### **FBR asked to 'aggressively' work on broadening of tax base**

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Finance Hafeez Shaikh on Wednesday asked the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to aggressively follow up on its agreement with traders to expand the tax base, work optimally to enroll nearly 20,000 points-of-sales in the country and ensure timely payment of refunds.

"An efficient and robust communication with the public and stakeholders should be at the centre of every activity undertaken by FBR to harness public support for its efforts for broadening the tax base and promoting a tax-compliant culture in the country," Shaikh said during a visit to FBR House.

The finance adviser asked taxmen to redouble their efforts for an optimal revenue collection in view of the current economic condition of the country where the people are looking more towards FBR. "Each dollar not earned by the revenue authority would have to be borrowed from somewhere else, affecting the future choices of the country," he said.

Shaikh advised the FBR management to follow an integrated media and communication plan using all modern tools of information and expertise of top-level service and content providers in the market to communicate with the public, frequently share with them the results of efforts on revenue collection and tax facilitation, particularly its agreement with the traders, and follow up progress on release of tax refunds, changes in Form H and the result of other reforms undertaken so far by the FBR.

"These areas should be the focus of the FBR team in the new year," he said. PM adviser assured the FBR of all-out support. He hoped that the revenue collection arm of the government would not disappoint the nation.

Earlier, FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi and his team apprised the adviser of the results of various revenue collection initiatives and reforms, key challenges, public facilitation and confidence-building measures to boost the revenue growth and resource mobilisation. Secretary Finance Naveed Kamran Baloch, Special Secretary Finance Omar Hamid Khan and FBR members were also present.

Zaidi said FBR registered a 16.3 percent growth in revenue in the first half of the current fiscal year of 2019/20 as it collected Rs2.083 trillion during the period. It was Rs292.3 billion more than the revenue collected in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year.

FBR received 2.168 million tax returns till 31st December. At least 600,000 more people are likely submit their returns in the time extended till end of this month, he said.

FBR chairman also dilated on the domestic tax collection which rose significantly. There was growth of 21 percent in domestic income tax, 34 percent in domestic sales tax and 25.6 percent in domestic federal excise duty, raising the share of domestic revenue to Rs1.172 trillion in the overall tax collection in July-December FY2020 as against Rs934.5 billion in the corresponding period a year earlier.

Zaidi said the FBR has doubled its focus on the taxpayer facilitation and automation of processes.

“Now all steps of interaction of taxpayers with the department, including registration, issuance of certificates, filing of returns, audit and monitoring are fully automated.” Zaidi said the FBR released tax refunds worth Rs100 billion to the taxpayers so far this year as against Rs36 billion disbursed last year.

FBR chairman said that he had appointed five new complaint commissioners for the redressal of complaints and “by March many of the pending cases would be resolved”. He expressed commitment to provide results of their sector-wise collection and progress on new initiatives and implementation of reforms to the PM adviser during the next week.