

Introduction of 'risky taxpayers' term opposed

The Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Wednesday took a very strong exception to the Federal Board of Revenue for introducing a new regime of fear and harassment by coining the term "Risky Taxpayers" that is bound to hit government moves aimed at widening the tax net. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the LCCI President Zafar Iqbal Chaudhry, Senior Vice President Ejaz A Mumtaz and Vice President Faisal Iqbal Sheikh expressed their surprise over the very idea of picking up some of the taxpayers and then declaring them risky ones at this point in time when both the trade and industry were facing the most challenging times. "This is the high time to announce special package of incentives for the encouragement of the business people in the larger interests of the economy but it seems that the people in the FBR have little understanding of the ground realities or the challenges being faced by the trade and industry." There was a time when the businessmen used to take pride for being taxpayer but from now onwards they would be doing their businesses under the fear that they were at the mercy of tax collecting machinery and could be declared Risky Taxpayer any moment, they added. The LCCI office-bearers said that there was no justification for squeezing the existing taxpayers when a large number of businessmen were registering themselves as new taxpayers. They further said that such unilateral decisions were also bound to hit the credibility of the chambers and other trade bodies in the country therefore it was imperative for those sitting at the helm of affairs to take these bodies into confidence before taking any such decision. They said that the system of identification of Risky Taxpayer also seemed faulty as Pakistan Steel Mills has also been declared as Risky Taxpayer and all their buyers were facing the threat of investigative audit. The LCCI office-bearers said that the FBR Chairman should visit all the Chambers to have their feedback on the steps being taken by the Federal Board of Revenue as without the involvement of stakeholders the economic policies would not be yielding any tangible results. It is pertinent to mention here that the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has identified around 10,000 "risky taxpayers" on the basis of one-year data from July-2008 to June 2009, taking into account abnormal tax profiles. FBR is of the view that the tax behaviour of these taxpayers has shown abnormal trends during the last one year.