

## **Promoting a culture of tax evasion**

Only in Pakistan can an individual who never pays any income tax, now buy property and vehicles worth millions of rupees. The government has offered a number of irrational and flimsy excuses to explain this anomaly.

Its first argument is that Article 23 of the constitution states "Every citizen shall have the right to acquire, hold and dispose of property in any part of Pakistan, subject to the Constitution and any reasonable restrictions imposed by law." Suffice it to say that payment of income tax is no longer considered a reasonable restriction imposed by law in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

The second explanation "differentiating between overseas Pakistanis, and younger people who might own a car but are not required to file tax returns" is simply lame. In fact it was a great opportunity to ask overseas Pakistanis to send their money through banking channels (instead of hundi) and a special provision could have been created for them. The tax is always based on the adequacy of one's earnings not age.

The new law is deeply disappointing and suggests bending interests of the state to favour corporate profits. The state ought not to be seen patronising tax evasion, black money, lawlessness and undocumented businesses.

Could we request the government and the parliament to please reconsider and reverse this self-destructive proposition?

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