

There's no tampering with record: FBR chief

Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Dr Mohammad Irshad Friday categorically ruled out possibility of tampering with tax records of any person and said that over 95 percent records was handed over to Joint Investigation Team (JIT) and the missing record was related to those years in which the concerned taxpayers did not file wealth statements. He was talking to media at the FBR House at a function of a formal launch of a hand book as well as a documentary on the recently-concluded budget 2017-18 exercise.

Most of the questions asked from the chairman were related to JIT allegations against the FBR. If the JIT and apex court of the country penalize on the basis of money trail beyond five years period, it would be definitely challenged in the court of law. "Yes, it would be challenged in the court if the court decides tax cases beyond five years period," Special Assistant to PM on Revenues Haroon Akhtar Khan responded to queries of reporters here on Friday.

However, during the media talk when a journalist asked why JIT was complaining about the FBR for non-co-operation, the chairman FBR replied that the tax machinery has not hidden any record from the JIT. "We have provided them tax records since 1982 despite the fact that we are not supposed to go beyond five years period," he added. He said there was one episode when the JIT sought the tax record of someone and the FBR provided them after one day. The tax record, he explained, was lying in the Commissioner's office so it required time to retrieve record from 1.5 to 2 million files.

Dr Mohammad Irshad said the tax record from 1982 has been provided to the JIT and it is incorrect to say that the FBR is not co-operating with the Supreme Court and the JIT. He said if the JIT had asked for up to five years or record, it would have been more relevant.

The chairman FBR said that only one taxpayer's partial record was missing but he did not belong to the ruling family. He also insisted that the FBR did not tamper with the record. He said only the record, which was not available with the FBR, has not been provided to the JIT. For instance, there were years when the requirement to file the wealth statement had been abolished. Similarly, the non-resident Pakistanis too were not required to file their income tax returns, said Dr Irshad without mentioning the fact that the PM's sons were abroad so they were not required to file their returns during those years.

Meanwhile, senior FBR officials opined that JIT constituted by the Supreme Court of Pakistan had obtained records of last three decades but the tax officials are arguing that tax cases beyond a five-year period would open up a new Pandora's Box as it would become a precedent and would not be limited to family members of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

Addressing the gathering, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Revenue Senator Haroon Akhtar Khan said the past year has been quite a challenging one for FBR on the revenue generation front but there are substantial signs that revenue collection target would be met by the FBR despite a number of relief measures and subsidies granted in export sectors and agriculture.

The SA to PM on Revenue said the revenue authority were registering an accumulative growth of 75 per cent in revenue generation over the last four years despite a continuously declining inflation and massive tax relief measures announced by the government for different sectors.

He said the tax proposals incorporated in the recently-approved Finance Bill had been drawn up after threadbare discussions and lengthy sessions with members and office-bearers of all leading chambers of commerce and industry, trade bodies as well as tax bar associations of the country. He said the tax proposals finally adopted were realistic.

Speaking on the occasion, the chairman FBR lauded the FATE wing team for developing a very informative documentary which explained and highlighted the important role played by FBR and its officers in the budget-making process. Member Administration FBR Majid Qureshi also spoke on the occasion. Later, the copies of FBR's handbook were distributed among members of the media following the screening of a six-minute documentary detailing the entire process of budget-making in FBR.

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