

Corrupt officials: parliamentary panel directs FBR to present details

A parliamentary panel has directed Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to present all details about corrupt officials of the organization before the committee within three months and expedite inquiries against them who caused billions of rupees losses to the national kitty over the years. A subcommittee of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance met here on Friday under the chairmanship of Senator Mohsin Aziz.

The panel gave these directions to the tax authorities while discussing issues pertaining to misconduct, irregularities, bogus refunds and other violations by the FBR officers and officials which caused multibillion rupees financial losses to the national kitty.

Briefing the panel, Chairman FBR Tariq Mahmood Pasha said that the FBR is following a zero tolerance policy against corrupt officials and assured that the strict action would be taken against those involved in any kind of malpractice or negligence causing monetary losses to the national exchequer. The meeting was attended by Senator Mohsin Khan Leghari and Senator Saud Majeed along with senior officials of the FBR. The meeting also decided to summon secretary establishment on the next hearing for having a briefing why there is no mechanism or timeframe for the completion of inquiries against corrupt officials of various government departments.

The panel was informed that most of the bogus refund cases are related to Karachi, wherein a gang or mafia is operating to issue refunds to selected people on fake documents. The panel directed to reopen the case of Abdul Majeed Abro who released refunds of Rs 170 million on fake documents. The meeting discussed in detail the grade-wise list of all inquiries conducted by the FBR and action taken under the efficiency and discipline rules, 1973 pending as on November 15, 2015 against corrupt officers of the FBR along with their outcome as on September 31, 2017.

The FBR chairman informed the panel that inquiries against officers involved in corruption and negligence are in process. However, he said that inquiries in some cases are pending due to stay orders issued by the courts. The FBR chairman said that he always believes in impartiality and does not give preferential treatment to any particular officer.

The panel observed that there should be an easy and transparent mechanism in the system to deal with the issue of stay order or other such issues, saying that the corrupt officials after causing serious losses to the national kitty easily get the court orders in their favour, which needs to be checked and in this regard, the Ministry of Law and Justice needs to pay due attention.

The committee expressing concern over slow process of inquiries directed the FBR to expedite the proceedings and submit report of all inquiries before the Senate Standing Committee of Finance within three months. Aziz said that the FBR is a national institution which is responsible to collect revenues with honesty. He said that presence of only a few black sheep in the FBR does not mean that the whole department is dishonest.

He said that there are a large number of dedicated and honest officers in the Board who are

working with diligence. The panel was informed that at present around 250 inquiries are underway in the FBR against various officials involved in embezzlement of billions of rupees. They said that National Accountability Bureau (NAB), Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and FBR are probing a number of cases.

The committee decided to hold an in-camera meeting to discuss the issue of nine corrupt officials against whom the prime minister recommended an inquiry. The panel said that the Ministry of Law and Justice should give opinion on the subject of those employees caught red-handed in corruption and the FBR removed them from services but they were reinstated by Federal Service Tribunal or other courts afterwards.

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