

**Info about assets, bank accounts: Data of 53 million Pakistanis uploaded**

The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and National Database & Registration Authority (Nadra) Friday launched "Tax Profiling System" containing data of 53 million citizens, giving access to the filers and non-filers to the information about their assets and bank accounts.

Addressing a press conference here at the FBR House on Friday, FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi said that both filers and non-filers have been allowed to do asset inquiry by accessing the Nadra website or FBR portal being launched. The online FBR Tax Profiling System would enable 53 million people to check their bank details, properties, utility bills and travel history data.

State Minister for Revenue Hammad Azhar said that the government has launched two web-portals, containing information about the assets of around 53 million people, with an objective to facilitate citizens to know about their data available with the government and make corrections accordingly.

This data containing information about lavished lifestyle of people, expensive wealth, huge expenditure and the un-declared information can be used for assessment purposes. It is not necessary that the information would not be used for assessment, Hammad Azhar clarified.

Senior officials from Nadra were also present on the occasion who showed a demo to the media to explain how information can be accessed on Nadra website.

Azhar said that the results of data integration exercise shall be made online. The data is spread over 2 portals; Nadra and FBR websites. It contains information about bank accounts, properties, travel history, utilities, etc, of 53 million citizens. Anyone can access their own data to check their details.

The FBR chairman said that FBR has placed security checks to ensure that only owner of data should have access to the system, he added.

There is no human intervention and no tax official can breach the data. We will not disseminate this data to the Regional Tax Offices (RTOs) till it is completely secured in the field formations and ensure that it would not be misused, Shabbar Zaidi said.

Hammad Azhad congratulated the FBR for being successful in data integration process which, he said, the past governments had failed despite making tall claims during the past decade.

He said that it is initial data and would be enriched with the passage of time, adding that currently the data is based on property, bank accounts, utility bills and travel history while the FBR has also done plaza mapping to collect data.

FBR Tax Profiling System allows the citizens to view their profile created by correlating their data from multiple data sources of assets, expenses and life styles available with the government of Pakistan. Non-tax filers are especially encouraged to view their tax profiles and become part of the tax system, he said.

FBR Chairman Shabbar Zaidi said that citizens can check their tax profile after paying a fee of Rs 500 to the Nadra. However, FBR's system would provide free of cost information.

He said the data has been compiled with the help of the NADRA. He said that anyone on the basis of one's computerised national identity card (CNIC) and cell phone number can request access to their information.

He said that security features have been added to the online profile system so that no one can access the personal information of another person.

Zaidi said Pakistan is entering a new era and tax assessment will now be made on the basis of available data as well as related information.

Zaidi, however, clarified that this information would not be the basis for any tax assessment as its main objective is to inform the people what of their asset information is available with the government so that they may correct their information. "The information has nothing to do with taxability," he clarified.

The chairman FBR said that the portal would be helpful for people as they might know what information is available with the government and they can correct their return filing data if it is incorrect.

Secondly, he asserted, it has been made fully secure and no other person can access information, adding the security could be further enhanced, if needed.

The ultimate objective of the portals is to bridge the gap and provide information to people at their doorsteps, he added.

The portals are foolproof and only genuine individual could access their personal asset information as the questions to be generated by the system would be based on the personal information of the individual, he added.

He said the information available on both the portals - one created by NADRA and another by the FBR - could be obtained by following the login process and after replying to some system-generated questions.

He said that the FBR website has been made simple and was developed keeping in mind the low literacy rate.

In addition, the portal is centralised to reduce human intervention and ensure that nobody could tamper or misuse it. Information of both filers and non-filers would be available on portals.

The FBR has no intention to harass taxpayers. In case anyone comes across any wrong information against his/her CNIC we would ensure to rectify the error.

"The objective of providing access to the information is positive and not negative," Zaidi said.

Nadra official said that their data does not contain bank accounts details, however, details about the bank accounts would be available in the FBR portal.

FBR Member Information Technology said that if a person has sold a vehicle and property in the past and it is still found to be recorded in the database on their names, there is no need to be worried about it. This would not form basis of assessment order, he added.

To a question, he said that the last date of Asset Declaration Scheme would not be extended as Pakistan is going to enter into International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, as the IMF board is scheduled to meet on July 3.

Responding to a query, the FBR chairman said that FBR did not write letters to the bank account holders having over Rs 0.5 million amount in their accounts and clarified that the banks at their own had written letters to trace out Benami Accounts.

SOHAIL SARFRAZ