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Plea bargain between two ex-FBR officials and NAB approved

KARACHI: Two former officials of the Federal Board of Revenue have reached a plea bargain with the authorities in a fake sales tax returns processing scam.

An accountability court also approved the plea bargain for Iqbal Ahmed Magsi and Muhammad Waseem.

They were booked in two references for processing sales tax returns to various companies against dubious, fake and flying invoices and causing losses worth millions of rupees to the exchequer in 2016.

The accused moved applications through their counsel under Sections 25(b) of the National Accountability Ordinance, 1999 pleading to the court to approve the plea bargain deal they had made with the National Accountability Bureau.

Applicant Magsi submitted that he had offered to return voluntarily an amount of Rs7.797 million and Rs7.114m, the liability determined against him in both the references pending against him.

Applicant Waseem also submitted that he had offered to voluntarily return an amount of Rs1m in the relevant reference.

The counsel informed the court that the applicants had entered into a plea bargain with NAB authorities without any force or fear, adding that the NAB-Karachi director general had duly accepted the offers made by their clients.

The court was pleaded to approve the plea bargain between the applicants and the NAB authorities in the terms of Section 25(b) of the NAO, 1999.

NAB prosecutor Shahbaz Sahotra argued that since the NAB-Karachi chief had accepted the offer made by the applicants, therefore, there was no impediment in approving such an arrangement between the parties.

After hearing arguments and examining the record, the judge approved the plea bargain of the applicants with NAB.

Judge Dr Sher Bano Karim observed that since the applicants had availed the benefit of the plea bargain as such they shall be deemed to have been convicted for the offence of corruption and corrupt practices, as specified in the schedule of the NAO, 1999.

The judge ruled that the applicants would immediately cease to hold any public office, if any held by them.

The judge also ruled that both the applicants stand disqualified for a period of 10 years for seeking or from being elected, chosen, appointed or nominated as a member or representative of any public body or statutory or local authority or in service of Pakistan or any province.

Similarly, the applicants cannot avail loan from any financial institution, as required under the law.

The judge ordered the release of both the applicants, if their custody was not required in any other inquiry, investigation or case.