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Some recent transfers, postings in FBR raise eyebrows

ISLAMABAD: Some key changes in the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has once again demonstrated that the dream of introducing reforms into tax collection machinery is still a far cry despite the wish of the government to move ahead on this front. After recent transfer/postings into the FBR, many eyebrows have once again raised as some interesting and unusual happenings occurred into the fold of tax machinery.

The FBR's top management has posted an official in Hyderabad whose files are allegedly full of charges on account of issuance of bogus refunds.

His names were even echoed before the higher judiciary in the past and he was superseded during his mainly on account of integrity issues attached with him during his carrier. Now he has been appointed on a key position so the question arises after recent appointments that how the FBR will manage to collect its desired target of Rs5,550 billion when important positions are going to be filled with such appointments.

This scribe contacted to FBR high-ups and inquired them about their response on recent key changes into fold of tax machinery, they were of the view that they had asked the top management to get clearance of intelligence agencies on integrity issues before making key changes but they did not know about these specific cases whether it was done on merit or someone used influence to get favorite postings.

When asked about the strategy for achieving Rs5,550 billion target, the FBR officials said that they devised comprehensive plan to achieve the fixed target and with transfer/postings of few individuals would not impact overall endeavors for materialising the desired target. They further said that the revenue collection was showing good growth and they would make all out efforts to maximise revenue collection during the current fiscal year. They added that the Inland Revenue in shape of income tax and sales tax were showing impressive growth despite slowdown of economy that demonstrates that the tax machinery was putting whole hearted efforts to jack up tax collection.

“Such kind of officers who have bad reputation on integrity front had failed to get key positions even during the last ten years but now they are managing their positions without facing any problems,” said one top official and added that it exposed the claims of the incumbent regime that it was intended to improve governance structure of the country.

The personal files of these officers could be scrutinized to verify whether serious charges exist on the record or mere allegations were leveled against them, the official sources further said.

However, the sources said that the sorry state of affairs into FBR does not end here as FBR posted out two commissioners from an important city of Punjab to another city of the same province last month but both of them did not assume their charge. When the regional

commissioner brought this issue into notice of the FBR, then the Board's admin wing issued a show cause notice and sought explanation that why they did not assume their charge at their posted station. Instead of replying to this show cause notice, one officer managed to reverse back transfer order and retained his choice posting within few weeks' period.

“What kind of management is being done in the FBR; it clearly demonstrates that the element of ‘Safrish’ is on the rise in ranks of tax machinery,” said the official sources. The second commissioner did not join office of his new posting so far.

This had happened second time within one year as last time the same officer was transferred but he managed to reverse it back.

The official sources said that the FBR had transferred these two officers after receiving some complaints, sarcastically adding that now things have improved within few weeks' time.

The top FBR officials said that some officers were posted because of their seniority and they [top officials] were very cautious about integrity issues so they would not hesitate to reverse decision if found any appointment wrong but only with solid proofs. They said that professional jealousy also plays part in blaming each other in an organisations, and unless any wrongdoing is proved a person is considered innocent.