

FBR awaits PM's green light for inquiry against two top officers

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan is yet to give go-ahead to the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) for initiating an inquiry against two senior officials of the tax machinery in Grade 20.

The request to prime minister for initiating an inquiry was sought last month. However, the FBR's Integrity and Performance Management Unit (IPMU) has become fully functional and so far, it has suspended 76 officials on corruption charges and dismissed 10 officials.

The FBR high-ups conceded that Adviser to the PM on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh was not happy with the working of IPMU and work was underway to propose changes in the working system bring more improvements.

Briefing reporters in a joint press conference at the FBR Headquarters here on Monday, spokesman Nadeem Rizvi, Member Human Resource Management Hafiz Muhammad Ali Indhar and Member Administration Bakhtyar Mohammad said the prime minister had instructed completion of all the inquiries within 90 days in order to take a stern action against the corrupt officers.

They said the FBR had not received any red letter from the PM's Complaint Cell and all 355 complaints received from the PM Office had been disposed of properly. To another query against the officers who provided rewards in Karachi and Quetta, the FBR's Member said no legal violation had been made while providing multiple rewards to officers.

He said the FBR was bringing changes in the reward rules in order to make the process more transparent. He said there was provision of rewards for achieving targets under the Pakistan Raises Revenues (PRR) project funded by the World Bank with loan facility of \$400 million but so far, no amount had been given to officers for such facility.

Now the FBR's top guns are considering different changes for the reward rules, he added. When asked about the names of grade 20 officers against whom PM's permission had been sought for initiation of inquiry, the FBR officers refused to share their names arguing that mentioning their names in the media would not serve any purpose, as the premier might consider the charges against them.

Member Administration Bakhtiar Muhammad said out of 76 cases, inquiry was underway against certain officials. The FBR has also submitted two cases of Grade-20 officers to the prime minister and sought approval for initiation of an inquiry.

The PM is the competent authority to approve an inquiry. Once the FBR gets approval, the tax department would initiate an inquiry against these Grade-20 officials. A fact-finding inquiry is also underway against a Grade-21 official and if the FBR moves to the Prime Minister for initiation of disciplinary proceedings, it will seek approval for the said inquiry.

Bakhtiar said if these three officials (two Grade-20 and one Grade- 21 officer) were put on the list, a total of 79 officers were facing disciplinary proceedings. There are more complaints against the IRS officials than against the Customs officials. Most of the complaints are related to corruption. However, the FBR has to follow the Civil Servant Act for taking action against the tax officials. This may take some time, but significant progress would be visible in this direction.