

### **Cabinet committees dealing with economic matters reconstituted**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has reconstituted three major committees of the cabinet dealing with economic matters by appointing his adviser on finance and revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Shaikh as their head.

The reconstituted bodies include Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP), Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) and Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet. The reconstitution was necessitated by the exit of former finance minister Asad Umar from the cabinet.

According to three separate notifications, the cabinet division also expanded the membership of the ECC from the existing 12 members to 14 by inducting the minister for maritime affairs and the minister for poverty alleviation and social safety (yet to be appointed) as members of the ECC.

The decisions of all the reconstituted committees would have to be endorsed by the federal cabinet to give them legal cover.

Other members of the ECC would include the ministers for law and justice, petroleum, power, planning and development, railways, communications, national food security and research, privatisation and water resources besides the prime minister's advisers on commerce and textiles and institutional reforms and austerity.

The eight-member CCoP to be led by Dr Shaikh will comprise the minister for communications, law and justice, planning and development, privatisation, power and the prime minister's advisers on commerce and institutional reforms.

Likewise, the seven-member reconstituted CCoE will also be led by Dr Shaikh and comprise the ministers for maritime affairs, petroleum, planning and development, power, railways and adviser to the PM on commerce.

Officials said that there were no set rules and standards directing who should head the ECC or other sub-committees of the cabinet.

Different prime ministers have made varying decisions in the past. It is the prime minister's prerogative under the Rules of Business, 1973, to appoint as many committees of the cabinet as he or she desires and to assign any sub-committee of the cabinet to anyone of their cabinet colleagues.

Former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi had decided to head the ECC himself after replacing the finance minister at the time, Ishaq Dar.

Mr Abbasi's decision had brought back the direct control of the prime minister's office over federal ministries and divisions that it had enjoyed when Shaukat Aziz was the prime minister under retired General Pervez Musharraf's rule.

Former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gillani initially continued with the arrangement when he became the prime minister. Syed Naveed Qamar was finance minister at the time. The authority was later transferred when Shaukat Tarin took over the reins of the ministry.

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had delegated all economic and financial powers to Mr Dar who reportedly headed, at one time, more than four dozen committees, including those on legal, constitutional and political affairs.

The Newspaper's Staff Reporter