

Act against proscribed outfits or face the music: FATF

ISLAMABAD: Financial Action Task Force (FATF) has asked Pakistan to take all-out strict actions against proscribed outfits in order to comply with the UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) of 1267 and 1373 otherwise there is a likelihood that Pakistan would move to the blacklist from the grey list. The FATF has given loud and clear message to Islamabad that the country would have to showcase its progress against proscribed outfits arguing that if such outfits could contest the last general elections by changing names, it would not work anymore.

Pakistan would have to demonstrate legal actions, effective investigation and prosecution in months ahead, official sources confirmed to The News here on Thursday.

Despite expressing satisfaction over Pakistan's submitted report on 27 actionable plan on account of Terror Financing Risk Assessment Report, the FATF also observed that Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) at federal level and Counter Terrorism Departments (CTDs) at provincial levels were required to enhance their capacity as well as coordination to investigate and prosecute cases of terror financing effectively.

The FATF review meeting appeared to be satisfied with the actions taken by the government against money laundering especially cases of fake accounts and details of all big cases were presented before the meeting.

"FATF wants clear and strict actions against proscribed outfits as practical steps on legislation, effective enforcement and demonstration on front of prosecution will be required to show on accounts of confiscation of properties, assets and freezing of bank accounts as well as Islamabad will have to take action to curb their donations," top official sources told quarters concerned in their initial feedback from Sydney after attending the three-day FATF review meeting that ended on Thursday.

Pakistan's 10-member delegation led by Secretary Finance Arif Ahmed Khan attended the FATF review meeting held at Sydney from January 8 to 10 in which the message given by FATF was crystal clear that Islamabad would have to showcase its progress otherwise the country could not come out of grey list.

Official sources said that the upcoming reviews on progress of 11 immediate outcomes (IOs) out of 27 actionable plans in May and September 2019 could be quite critical for Pakistan to come out from the grey list and in case of unsatisfactory progress Pakistan could slip into blacklist. Interestingly, Afghanistan is not in grey list which also exposes the working of the FATF and causing doubts about politically motivated move undertaken at the behest of USA and other western allies.

The FATF meeting did not raise any objections to Pakistan's stance that there was no need for further amendments to Anti-Terrorism Act 1997 because the presidential ordinance issued by the last PML-N led government in February 2018 had already lapsed.

On part of Sectoral Risk Assessment of Cash Smuggling prepared by the FBR and Customs authorities have been accepted by FATF. This report dwelt upon three major points including identifying provision of high intensity of cash couriers for smuggling of currency through Torkham, Chaman and Taftan borders.

Secondly, on short term basis, joint anti-smuggling strategy led by the Customs with participation of FC, Rangers and Coast Guards could become effective to curb currency smuggling. On medium and long term basis, this report suggested establishment of permanent Customs Border Force (CBF) comprising 3,500 personnel to be deployed on Pak-Afghan, Pak-Iran borders and Coastline. This force will be placed at second line to borders.

Thirdly, technology oriented solutions like development of linking Customs Currency Declaration Systems with IBMS of FIA and access to advance passengers information could help overcoming currency smuggling that could be one source of terror financing.

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