

**Government removes names of Bilawal, Murad from ECL: Upcoming 'mini-budget' termed 'reform package'**

The government on Thursday removed the names of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah from Exit Control List (ECL) following the orders of the Supreme Court.

Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Accountability Mirza Shahzad Akbar flanked by Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Media Iftikhar Durrani while addressing a press conference said that the names of Bilawal and Murad Ali Shah have been removed from no-fly list in the wake of a Supreme Court judgement.

About the upcoming mini-budget, he said it is an economic reform package through which no new tax will be imposed.

The federal cabinet on the recommendations of the joint investigation team (JIT) on December 27 placed the names of 172 persons being investigated in fake account case on the ECL, including Pakistan People Party (PPP) Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Faryal Talpur, Murad Ali Shah, Farooq H Naek and several other leaders and provincial ministers belonging to the PPP.

He said that it is constitutional responsibility of the government to implement the apex court's verdict. However, if National Accountability Bureau (NAB) feels it necessary to place the names of Bilawal and Murad Ali Shah on ECL and forward recommendations in this regard to cabinet then the federal cabinet will review it, he said.

Akbar said the impression that the names of Bilawal and Shah will be deleted from the case is totally wrong. "There is no written order regarding deleting names of both PPP leaders; therefore, the names of both would not be deleted from the case," he said.

To a question, he said that out of 172 names placed on ECL, the names of 35 people have been shortlisted by the review committee. The review committee would summon these individuals and also ask from the JIT that on which ground these names should be placed on the ECL, he said, adding that there is nothing in the apex court verdict that the government placed names of 172 people on the ECL in haste or on the orders of someone.

Akbar said that the JIT has prepared the report on the directions of the apex court but an impression has been created that this is a mere report and it would be trashed. As per the court order, complete material of JIT and its report would be presented to NAB and all the members of JIT would be associated with the Bureau for the purpose of assisting the investigation.

He said that according to court's order, the JIT will assist NAB and continue its investigation regarding the matter which it has discussed in its report. The NAB will complete its investigation in two months, he said, adding that a reference will be filed in the Accountability Court in Islamabad and Rawalpindi as this was a specific recommendation of the JIT. Keeping in view the situation in Sindh province, the apex court has ordered to file a reference in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, he added.

He said that the Supreme Court verdict regarding dismissal of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) appeal against the Islamabad High Court (IHC) judgement that suspended verdict and granted bails to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz and son-in-law Muhammad Safdar in the Avenfiled apartment case has been presented out of context. Those who presenting that verdict out of

context should read it because seven points have been given in that judgement on how the order of granting bails and suspension of sentences was faulty, he said.

Durrani said that the cabinet has approved technical supplementary grant of Rs 297 million as non-development budget and Rs 423 million as development budget for Ministry of Interior. The government also approved GBP 233,450 for solicitor pursuing cases in the UK, he said, adding that the Prime Minister has directed the Foreign Office to inform cabinet about the number of cases in the last 10 years, the status of these cases and how much fees had been paid.

To a question about upcoming 'mini-budget', he said this is not a mini-budget and it is an economic reform package to facilitate businessmen and industrialist. No new tax will be imposed in it, he said.

He said that cabinet has directed provincial governments to control rates of cement. Out of 20 aircraft with Ministry of National Food Security and Research, the cabinet has approved auction for 15 planes as these plane are very old, he said.

Durrani said the cabinet has approved proposal of Ministry of Communication to organise an international convention for economic development and trade. The government has approved a supplementary grant of Rs 235 million for government employees who embraced martyrdom during their service, he said.

He said that Member Technical of Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Amir Azeem has been appointed as chairman PTA. The government approved Rs 750 million as supplementary grant for NAB, he said, adding, "We hope that NAB would use this money for enhancing its capacity."

He said the government under section 44 of Provincial Government Smuggling Act has authorised district and sessions judges to take legal action against smuggling and money laundering in Qalat, Mastun, Pashin and Chamman.

He said that Ali Raza Bhutta, a grade-21 officer, has been appointed as Secretary Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP).

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