

### **Govt still to fill in key foreign posts**

ISLAMABAD: The mismanagement on economic front is in full grip as the PTI-led government has so far remained unable to fill key positions including the position of Senior Advisor to IMF's Executive Board based in Washington DC, The News has learnt.

The posts of three Economic Ministers at important foreign capitals is also vacant and such positions have never remained unfulfilled for such a long time in the country's history.

"Some key posts have been falling vacant from last several months including Senior Advisor to IMF's Executive Board based in Washington DC and three Economic Ministers at important capitals of the world such as in USA, Japan and China. The PTI led government has so far unmoved on filling these key posts", one senior government official confirmed to The News here on Thursday.

Once these posts were considered luxurious positions and top bureaucrats were always vying to clinch these prized positions but now there was an impression exist within the bureaucracy that most of them were not interested to get it owing to different reasons. Basically, the Ministry of Finance circulates these key positions and bureaucrats in grade 20 and above applied for these position who possessed experience in relevant economic fields as well as qualification to perform their responsibilities. Then secretaries committee took interview of shortlisted candidates and finally summaries were moved to prime minister for getting approval on these positions.

One former Economic Minister who served in an important foreign capital of the world told The News that such positions were quite important for economic diplomacy of the country. The Trade Minister at Washington DC Ali Sarfraz is looking after additional charge of Economic Minister. However, the position of Economic Ministers at Beijing and Tokyo were vacant after completing of tenure of officers. The position of Economic Minister at Beijing becomes immense important as after return of Mr Saleem almost one year back no one was selected to fill this position despite this fact that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had entered into phase of industrial cooperation under which the Special Economic Zones (SEZs) would be established to boost up exports.

The filling of these posts is now of immense importance because Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf government is exploring options to overcome balance of payment of difficulties by seeking assistance from both friendly countries as well as from the IMF.

The post of senior advisor to the IMF fell empty almost two years ago. It was left vacant by the last government on the pretext that Islamabad had exited the Fund programme and there was no hurry to fill post.

Some influential bureaucrats tried to secure the prestigious assignment, but were unsuccessful. In last few days of the PML-N administration's tenure, the then Prime Minister, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, approved a summary nominating Zafar Hassan, now Secretary Planning Ministry for the IMF position on the recommendation of finance minister Miftah Ismail.

However, the IMF's Executive Director Jaffar Mojarrad had communicated to Ministry of Finance that it should be left to the incoming government after general elections. Now almost six months have passed after coming into power by the PTI led regime but there is no progress on this front.

It is the standard procedure of the IMF's Executive Board that they requested the country's authorities to submit a list of three qualified candidates to them so as to select the candidate who best fits the job requirements, which is rather technical in nature.

When the IMF's Resident Office in Pakistan was contacted for comments, they replied that they do not know how the executive office at Board deals with Pakistan organizes itself. This is the question you should address to Pakistani authorities, they added.

This scribe requested to spokesman of Finance Ministry for seeking his comments over non filling of key posts two days back on Wednesday night and sent several requests for comments but got no reply till filing of this report.

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