

Government says budget to ensure economic sustainability

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Sunday said that there will be deduction in expenditures of all government departments in the new budget to be presented on June 11.

Speaking at a presser along with Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Accountability Shehzad Akbar, she said that the government has set all its priorities about the new budget as it is being presented keeping in view the issues need to be solved in order to put the country on path to development.

She said that the upcoming budget will be the first financial document of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government which will go a long way to ensure economic sustainability, and setting economic goals for the next five years.

About cut in defence budget, she said that despite economic challenges, the government is not ignorant of country's defence needs. Elaborating on the recent voluntary budget initiative by the Pakistan Armed Forces and refraining from a budget increase in the armed forces budget for the fiscal year, Awan said that the Defence Military has not asked for a budget increase and that money will be directed to development and prosperity of Balochistan and the erstwhile tribal areas.

"The government has set priorities for the upcoming budget and those spreading rumours and badmouthing the sincere efforts being made by the government to stabilize the economy are doing disservice to the country," she added. Expanding upon the details of the budget Awan said: "Those willing to voluntarily declare assets must do so before June 30. The Federal Budget for the fiscal year 2019-20 will be announced on June 11."

Talking about the opposition leader Shahbaz Sharif's return to the country after an extensive stay in UK, she said that "Shahbaz Sharif is on a leisure trip to Pakistan." Getting back to the budget Awan said that the Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed the economic team to put special emphasis on taking care of and providing for the needy and poor strata of the population.

She said that the government has tried its best to keep the budget people-friendly. "The salient features of the budget will be presented during the economic survey," Awan added. She said that the federal budget will be a direct reflection of PTI's election manifesto.

Taking note of the recent miscreant activities in the tribal district, she said that some powers are trying to destabilize the peace efforts being undertaken by the government and the armed forces and also trying to hinder development initiatives in the region.

"People of the tribal region have laid down their lives and fought for peace, the martyrs of the armed

About her recent defamation lawsuit against PNML-N stalwart Rana SanaUllah, she said that the opposition leader is perhaps unknown to the sanctity of the word "sister". She said that personal attacks in politics do not set a good precedent and only issues should be a topic of discussion rather than attempts at character assassination and mudslinging.

Touching upon the opposition gearing up for an apparent campaign against the government and its policies soon, she said that protest was a due right which the opposition was entitled to but anarchy in the name of protest will not be tolerated and consequences will follow if that is the case. Speaking on the occasion, the special assistant to the prime minister on accountability, claimed that government has traced assets worth \$12 billion owned by Pakistanis abroad.

He said that the government is making all efforts to stop money laundering, adding the data of 150,000 accounts from 26 countries have been collected besides tracking down assets worth \$12 billion owned by Pakistanis abroad.

"The implementation of benami law has become need of the hour [and] all benami assets will be confiscated. We've signed an MoU with UK, through which both countries can share banking information about citizens of their respective countries," he added.

He said that during PML-N government the assets of Salman Shehbaz, the son of Shehbaz Sharif witnessed 85 percent increase, while his another got a Rs 1.3 billion through a direct transaction, but the father is not ready to answer about the sources of the amount.

"May be Shehbaz Sharif will tell us the details about these transaction as he's returned from UK after a long stay," he said. To a question about initiating probe against Khusru Bakhtiar and Faisal Wawda, the two PTI ministers, he said that complaints against the assets owned by the duo are in verification process at National Accountability Bureau (NAB). "The NAB is looking into the complaints but I think Wawda has declared his assets," he added.

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