

Rabbani terms budget anti-labour

ISLAMABAD: Former Senate Chairman Senator Mian Raza Rabbani in the Senate Thursday criticized the formation of National Development Council (NDC) and asked the government to withdraw its notification for already the president had constituted the National Economic Council, envisaged in Article 156 of the Constitution.

Taking part in the discussion on the budget in the House, he questioned the logic behind replicating the already existing constitutional body in the shape of NEC. He saw no justification, whatsoever, in creation of this council, when juxtaposed with NEC with its members and ToRs.

He called the budget anti-people and anti-labour, which was prepared by the staff members of IMF and read out by the Minister for Revenue in the National Assembly. He also pointed out that the State Bank of Pakistan governor in his news conference two days back, had proudly owned the fact that all the conditions, set by the IMF had been fulfilled in the budget and now an agreement on the package be signed next month.

Rabbani noted that how one should construe the non-seriousness of this government as the minister for planning said on June 16 that Asian Development Bank would give Pakistan dollars 3. 4 billion as budgetary support and then Adviser on Finance tweeted to confirm it. However, the bank's local representative rejected the tweet of the advisor.

"I am disappointed that such an important matter took place and none had the courage to speak on this," he regretted. Rabbani said that IMF's conditions had been incorporated in the budget without taking Parliament or people into confidence before or after its presentation. None had an idea, as to what conditions had been agreed upon with IMF staff members and this raised questions over transparency, open governance, financial sovereignty and putting at risk Pakistan's security and hence Pakistan had been made a client state of the US, keeping the people in complete dark.

He warned that the government was caught in the Bermuda Triangle and the triangle consisted of IMF, crony capitalism, elitism and authoritarian development model of Ayub Khan which concentrated wealth in the hands of the elite and created 22 families. He regretted already as many as 37 different taxes apply on people.

"The IMF budget apart from being anti-people and anti-labour aims at elimination of the emerging middle and lower class and has very serious repercussions for Pakistan's national security priorities.

The recent Wikileaks document reveals US military use of IMF and the World Bank as unconventional weapons and this fact had been substantiated in news reported published on June 14, 2019, and which have not been contradicted by either the Foreign Office or the United States," he said.

Rabbani continued that US Ambassador Alice Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary told members of the Congress, "we have not seeing IMF package, yet be understand there has been an agreement reached

between the IMF and the government of Pakistan but certainly we have communicated our strong views and secretary of the state has done so publicly, on the need of any package to include real structural reforms". He quoted from the newspaper.

He also noted that certain key amendments were being made to the Customs Act, the Income Tax Ordinance, which would give sweeping powers to the prime minister at the cost of the federal cabinet as well as the commissioner to freeze assets of a person who was likely to leave Pakistan and was involved in offshore tax evasion.

The National Assembly Speaker, Asad Qaiser, was also present for some time in the Senate visitors' gallery, and the members welcomed him by thumping desks when Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, made announcement about his presence and welcomed him.

PkMAP Senator Usman Khan Kakar decried what he called the paltry allocations made for less developed areas in the four provinces and completely ignoring Balochistan with regards to the CPEC projects. He also complained that the interior, foreign policies were not reflective of the masses aspirations.

The senator from Balochistan alleged that the establishment wanted to impose presidential form of government and was continuously working on that. But he claimed people would not accept it, and it would also undermine the federation, forcing various nations to chalk out their future line of action.

He supported Pakhtoon Tahafuz Movement demands and insisted that it should be treated politically and said they believed in the Parliament and that was why they had attended the Senate special committee meetings.

Senator Kakar proposed formation of a parliamentary commission to investigate on loans obtained from the era of late president General Zia till to date. He called for issuance of production orders of PTM MNAs Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir.

He also demanded establishment of another parliamentary commission for accountability of the politicians, civilian and military establishment and the judiciary. He claimed there was an announced marital imposed on democracy, judiciary and the media.

Balochistan Awami Party Senator Anwarul Haq Kakar said that there was consensus among all that the target of the society was civilian supremacy and there was no room for French revolution-like scenario but for Glorious Revolution.

He lauded the sacrifices of the armed forces and the law-enforcement agencies and insisted that not extending support to them would encourage the terrorists, who were defeated by the valiant forces.

Mumtaz Alvi