

Senate panel rejects proposals causing price hike

ISLAMABAD: After witnessing walkout by two senators from treasury benches, the Senate Standing Committee on Finance rejected the Finance Bill 2019-20 in totality, saying they could not stamp taxation measures causing price hike and burdening the common people more.

The recommendations of the Upper House of Parliament are not binding on the National Assembly to approve and approval of Senate is not required on money bill, however, total rejection of the finance bill will cause loss to the ruling PTI politically.

The opposition senators termed the taxation measures very harsh and possessed the potential to cause storm of protests after approval of the budget.

The senators from opposition benches including Ayesha Reza Farooq from PML-N, Senator Talha Mehmood from JUI-F and Imam Uddin Shouqeen from PPP voted in support of the resolution tabled by the Chairman of the Senate Standing Committee on Finance Farooq H Naek, stating that the taxation measures which are burdening more the common people is rejected in totality.

Two treasury members including Senator Mohsin Aziz from ruling PTI and Dilawar Khan, who won as independent, supported the government and preferred to walkout in protest just ahead of voting where the senators rejected the taxation measures unanimously in the absence of senators belonging to treasury benches.

Senator Talha Mehmood said, on the occasion, that the taxation measures would bring a storm of price hike so it should be rejected in totality. The price of everything will go up, so he will not make part of burdening people more.

Senator Mohsin Aziz opposed this proposal and argued that they had worked hard in the last four days, so there was no rationale to reject the whole Finance Bill in totality. He said that he remained part of this standing committee without having political consideration and point-scoring and made all out efforts to improve the budgetary proposals.

Senator Ayesha Reza Farooq stated that every government had presented deficit budget but this government had taken such measures in the last 10 to 12 months that people had starting crying as the disposable income dropped significantly and inflation was heading towards double digit. She said that export reforms could not be done in the last five years. Senator Mohsin Aziz said that he did not want to make this committee a debating club as the last government ran the economy on the basis of wrong figures as the public debt had gone up phenomenally. He said that this committee should not play with the gallery. He said that there are many people sitting in Parliament who are wearing Rolex watches and coming on luxury vehicles but they are not paying due taxes. He did not want to mention their names publicly.

Senator Talha Mehmood came forward and replied that the loan was utilised to overcome power outages and construction of roads and highways in last five years. He said that the government must arrest those who are not paying their due taxes. He again asked for total rejection of the finance bill, especially those clauses which are hurting common man of the country.

Senator Mohsin Aziz raised a question who could be defined as common man as those who are eating products of processed food of some renowned food brands could not be declared as common man. Senator Ayesha Reza said that the lower middle income class was used to eating processed food for their kids and the government hiked its prices that would affect the common man of this country. Senator Dilawar Khan reminded the unwarranted incident in Senate on Wednesday without mentioning any name and stated that the outright rejection of the bill would not give a right message to anyone.

Senator Mohsin Aziz threatened to stage a walkout if the chairman of the committee tabled a resolution for voting for rejection of the finance bill and stated he would consider himself “stupid man” for discussing this budget in the last four days if the committee had taken such decision. When the chairman did not listen, Mohsin Aziz and Dilawar Khan walked out from the proceedings of the committee.

Finally, the committee passed the tabled resolution and rejected the finance bill 2019-20 in totality where the government proposed further burdening the poor people of the country.

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