

Opposition senators urge govt to revisit finance bill

ISLAMABAD: Terming the federal budget for financial year 2019-20 “anti-poor budget” that could cause an increase in crimes, members of the opposition parties in the Senate on Friday demanded that the government revisit the finance bill.

Taking part in the budget discussion in the house, they observed that the document lacked a direction and its sole purpose appeared to be generating revenue by overburdening the common man already paying dozens of different kind of indirect taxes regardless of their income.

They also criticised the government for curtailing allocations in the health, education, development and agriculture sectors.

JI, PPP, PML-N and NP members term the federal budget an anti-poor document

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) chief Senator Sirajul Haq said that the budget would carve out a Pakistan for the affluent and another for the poor. He said if passed in the present form, the budget would send more people below the poverty line and cause an increase in crime rate.

Terming it a budget of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), he said the government had apparently launched a ‘suicide attack’ on the poor.

He said the budget lacked vision to promote industry and agriculture and was based on the principle of squeezing the poor to pay back just interest of the ever-rising loans.

He demanded that a commission be formed to investigate a sudden rise in the prices of sugar. He said there were some individuals who owned a number of sugar mills in the country.

In his speech, former interior minister Senator Rehman Malik of the Pakistan Peoples Party thoroughly examined the finance bill and said he did not find anything that could be termed as relief for the common man.

He said the budget overburdened the people already finding it difficult to make both ends meet.

He said that former president Asif Ali Zardari had in his speech in the National Assembly on Thursday had presented a comprehensive roadmap to overcome the ongoing economic crisis in the country.

He said Mr Zardari suggested that the government and opposition should sit together to discuss issues affecting the economy and formulate a common strategy with a national consensus.

While rejecting the budget, Senator Malik urged the government to revisit the “anti-poor budget” as it would force the poor to commit suicide.

Senator Mushahidullah Khan of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz indirectly criticised the recent remarks of a top Supreme Court justice about the performance of parliament.

Senator Tahir Bizenjo of the National Party said the budget would give rise to extremism and terrorism.

The house will meet again on Monday at 4.30pm.

Khaleeq Kiani