

Senators slam govt for ‘outsourcing’ economic management to IMF

ISLAMABAD: The government came under fire in the Senate on Friday for what the opposition described as outsourcing the country’s economic management to the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Taking part in the discussion on an adjournment motion on the recent increase in the prices of petroleum products, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Raza Rabbani said that the IMF was currently in the process of dictating the budget for the next financial year.

He likened the situation to an agreement signed by the then Mughal emperor with the East India Company following his defeat in 1765. He said the revenue officers had been replaced by the company’s men who looted the subcontinent’s wealth to take it to England. Mr Rabbani said Pakistan’s economy appeared to have been handed over to the IMF in the same fashion.

He said the previous governments had also approached the IMF but the nature of agreements had never been like a sellout. He said it was obvious that the finance minister had been replaced by the IMF’s man.

PM’s adviser on finance criticised for putting Steel Mills on privatisation list

The PPP leader said a serving official of the IMF had been appointed governor of the State Bank of Pakistan. He said the appointment of the new FBR chairman was a clear case of conflict of interests as he would be dealing with the business houses he used to provide consultancy with as a partner in A.F. Ferguson.

Mr Rabbani said there were reports that the government would further increase gas and electricity tariff. He said it was also heard that the IMF was seeking withdrawal of Rs700 billion tax exemptions. He criticised the PM’s adviser on finance for putting the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) on the list of entities the government wanted to privatise.

However, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Azam Swati said the PSM was not being privatised. He said there was a plan for public-private partnership instead.

PPP parliamentary leader in the Senate Sherry Rehman said that after a change in the government’s economic team, the IMF was talking to the IMF. She criticised the unprecedented price hike and said there were rumours about a possible imposition of petroleum development levy. She regretted that while the elite had been offered an amnesty scheme, a ‘petrol bomb’ had been dropped on the common people as a Ramazan gift.

Javed Abbasi of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz in his speech said the government continued to drop bombs on the people contrary to the false claims made by it prior to the 2018 elections.

He said the increase in petroleum prices led to a surge in prices of all essential commodities. He said the government had enhanced gas tariff by 143 per cent, adding that prices of medicines had been increased by between 300 and 600pc.

The PML-N leader said now the IMF would impose its agenda under which subsidies would be withdrawn and more taxes would be levied.

Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidri of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl criticised the government for its failure to fulfil the promises it had made to the people before the 2018 elections about breaking the begging bowl, bringing about an economic revolution that would attract foreigners to seek jobs in Pakistan and building five million houses.

On the contrary, he said, the government had bulldozed houses, thrown people out of job and increased prices of essential commodities.

Iftikhar A. Khan