

NAB chief wonders why ordinance wasn't voided if it's bad

MULTAN: Saying the National Accountability Bureau and corruption cannot go together, NAB Chairman retired Justice Javed Iqbal chided past governments for not abolishing or amending the NAB law if it was a "black law".

"Every evening they (an apparent reference to TV talk shows) call the NAB law a black law. Many a Socrates and Plato who have never read the NAB law criticise it and call it a black law," he said while addressing a ceremony here on Thursday.

The speech was aired live on the state-run PTV as no private media was invited.

The NAB chairman said the bureau always welcomed criticism, but it should be positive. "The critics should identify wrong and right while criticising it. The opinion should not be personal. A few days back a gentleman said that NAB is the largest institute of money laundering. Even if we buy his claim, believe me this money laundering is for the sake of public and not for the sake of making properties in Paris, making agriculture farms in Australia and building towers in Dubai and Muscat. This is only to compensate the people who lost their lifelong earnings," he added.

He regretted that an aggressive and poisonous propaganda was under way against the anti-graft watchdog that it was not taking up mega cases. "Those who criticise NAB, their eyes are closed. They are unable to observe that there is not a single case from which NAB is avoiding. Whoever is involved in corruption, including prime ministers, chief ministers, MNAs, MPAs and industrialists, they are facing the consequences. NAB actions are under way and will continue. However, every action will be taken according to constitution and law.

"There is no question of politics, enmity or being personal. If the case is on merit, it will be lodged and if it is not on merit it will not be lodged and it will be done irrespective of the fact that who is who. Lodging the case on the detection of anybody is out of the question. Record of the matter will be examined while lodging the case as we are not fond of lodging the cases," he said.

Justice Iqbal said Pakistan's debt had reached \$95 billion, but its spending in the country was not visible; however, it is visible in terms of towers in Dubai, properties abroad and Panama-like matters. "The country would have not faced the financial crisis, had this money been spent in the country."

He said that due to the presence of NAB, no mega financial scandal appeared during the last one year.

He said there was blame on NAB that it was more active in Punjab. "Punjab is the largest province with the largest budget and resources. There are mega cases in Punjab. How can I go to Quetta while ignoring Punjab where budget and resources are the least? NAB has no affiliation with anyone and its only affiliation is with Pakistan and with its people. We have to do our job silently as we do not have enmity or friendship with anyone."

Justice Iqbal said a false impression was being created that economic and trade activities in the country had slowed down because of NAB's actions. "I held a meeting with representatives of chambers of commerce in Islamabad and asked them to identify a single action taken by NAB which caused economy slowdown, but not a single complaint was made. In fact the people who are saying that NAB and economy cannot coexist are wrong. They should rather say that NAB and corruption cannot coexist but NAB and economy can," he said.

Similarly, he said, bureaucrats from the federal government and Punjab were asked to identify a single wrong act of NAB because of which bureaucracy had stopped working, but they failed to identify even a single act. “Believe me no power could dictate or force NAB to lodge a case against any person and it will be not happen ever. Mistake apart, nothing wrong can be done intentionally.”

The NAB chairman said that no person, including the common man, bureaucrat or industrialist, had been handcuffed nor would they be. “Only those people will be handcuffed about whom there will be fear that they could escape and leave the country.”

He regretted that every evening it was being said that the NAB law was black law, but no one identified what was black in it. “If you think it is a black law, why this law was not repealed as every government and party had chance of it. You remained in power for years why did you not repeal this law. You did not revoke this law as it was being implemented on others and when it was implemented on you, it has been termed a black law,” he added.

Justice Iqbal recalled that in the Asfandiyar Wali case, the Supreme Court had examined NAB laws comprehensively and if it was a black law the court would have scraped it. “If the judges of Supreme Court did not revoke it then why are you terming it a black law? Believe me NAB law is not a black law rather the hands are black that use it wrongly,” he said.

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