

Asim Yasin

Winds are changing direction: NAB chief

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal on Tuesday said winds of change were moving through the country and no one should think that the present rulers were exempt from accountability.

Addressing an award distribution ceremony here, he strongly contested the allegation of one-sided accountability and said no deal, leniency or NRO will be offered to anyone and there will be no compromise on eradication of corruption.

“The NAB will take action against corruption and there will be no compromise on it, as the threats of powerful and influential end outside the gates of NAB,” he said. Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal said they were heading towards another front to dilute the false impression of one-sided accountability.

He said the target of the NAB was achieving a corruption-free Pakistan and no one could deter him from performing the national duty of eradication of corruption. “The process of accountability would continue come what may,” he said.

He said the NAB had no enmity or friendship or personal grudge towards anyone and will continue to work in accordance with the law and take action on corruption complaints. Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal said people were sharing a single hospital bed in the country, while there were others who were going abroad to "London or US" for treatment even "if they catch cold".

He said people say that the NAB had done nothing in the Peshawar BRT case but it was as the apex court that had barred it and this was why the NAB was not taking any action in the case and was trying to get the restriction removed.

“The NAB could not proceed ahead due to Lahore High Court’s stay orders in Muslim Commercial Bank (MCB) (privatization) case.”

He said the allegation that the NAB was pursuing one-sided cases was incorrect, as it was their job to look into the cases of those who had been in power for the last 30 to 35 years. However, he said the Bureau will have to look into cases of those people who had been in power for the last 12 months.

He lamented that the Bureau was not being allowed to work in a province (Sindh), adding whenever they initiated a case, a provincial minister appeared on the TV screens and started criticising the NAB.

“If the health budget of a province is in billions of rupees, and vaccine of dog bite is not available, then questions would be raised,” he said. The NAB chairman said 1270 references involving Rs940 billion were still pending with various accountability courts and only 25 judges were available for hearing the references.

He urged enhancing the number of judges to at least 50 for prompt disposal of corruption references. "The NAB must not be blamed for delay in disposal of cases in such a situation.

He urged the media to go ahead with constructive criticism of the NAB. "Indeed, the investigations white-collar crime are extremely difficult as the crime is committed in Lahore and property reveals in London. "The corruption money travels from a country to several countries and landed in another country," he said.

He said the media alleged last day that the NAB Rawalpindi had summoned the mother of former chief minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akram Khan Durrani.

"On his confirmation, the news proved fake. The NAB has the policy to avoid the arrest of women suspects but only send them questionnaires," he said. Justice (R) Javed Iqbal said the NAB had so far recovered Rs328 billion including Rs150 billion indirectly since inception.

"The NAB has deposited Rs1.16 billion in the government exchequer by doing away with the inappropriate benefits being provided to certain telecom companies," he said. Brushing aside fears of bureaucracy, he said from out of over 1,200 pending references not more than 10 references were against the bureaucrats.

However, he said characters like Mushtaq Raisani and Liaquat Qaimkhani do exist in bureaucracy where millions of rupees were recovered from their homes. "Even the State Bank's currency counting machines were unable to count the recovered currency from their homes," he said.

He said the NAB wanted to contribute to developing the country on the patterns of Riasat-e-Madina. The chairman NAB conferred shields and cash prize of Rs25000 each to outstanding officers of NAB who recovered record Rs2.13 billion and Rs11.16 billion in plea bargain of fake account case, Steel Mills land and Nooriabad Power Company.