

ZAHEER ABBASI

### **PM identifies major economic challenges**

ISLAMABAD: While acknowledging unemployment and inflation as major challenges, Prime Minister Imran Khan has sought a comprehensive and effective strategy in coordination with the provincial governments to lessen their impacts.

This was stated by the Special Assistant to the Prime Minister in Information Firdous Ashiq Awan at a news conference after core committee meeting chaired by the premier on Sunday to take stock of the overall political situation and economic situation as well as party's foreign funding case in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and governance issues. A participant said that provincial governments role against inflation would be through activation of price monitoring committee while Awan stated that core committee discussed inflation and the factors contributing to it.

Firdous Ashiq Awan state that core committee lauded Prime Minister's efforts to bring about economic stability as budget deficit, trade deficit, as well as current account deficit have been narrowed. The Prime Minister also wanted his economic team to ensure that impact of positive economic indicators is passed on to the people at grass root level. The members of the core committee suggested various proposals, short and long term policies were deliberated to continue and sustain the economic improvement.

She said that the core committee condemned desecration of Holy Quran in Norway in the strongest term and noted that such incidents hurts the feeling of the million of Muslims across the country and core committee unanimously decided to condemn in strong term and raise the issue at OIC and European Union.

She added that core committee also decided that a resolution through foreign office should be presented in the OIC meeting being held In Jeddah today (Monday) and same would be done in the EU so that repeating of such incidents could be prevented.

Special Assistant on Information further stated that core committee expressed reservations on what she called as false propaganda and baseless speculations propagated by the opposition parties in the media about PTI foreign funding case in the ECP. The meeting after it was shared all the details of the case decided to inform the people about the actual reality through media whereas a legal team though a legal strategy would approach the ECP and people for taking them into confidence about the actual facts to discourage the disinformation.

She said that PTI has already submitted its response to all the questions asked with regard to the case in the ECP under legal and constitutional parameters. She said that PTI condemned the term of foreign funding because foreign funding term is used when money is taken from foreign government or its department and not from overseas Pakistanis. The overseas Pakistanis provided funds to Imran Khan for the party and not by any government, she added.

We are ready to go through every procedure but wanted that other political parties are also meted similar treatment because allegations against them are very serious with regard to foreign funding, she added.

She said that ECP should also take up the case of other political parties against whom PTI has filed applications. This is important for ECP's own credibility, she added.

She said that ECP should also conduct the audit of all the political parties and the practice to target a single party must be discouraged. She said that party's legal team would inform the people through media, she added.

Replying to questions, she said that the empowerment and autonomy of the ECP is foremost priority of the Prime Minister. She said that opposition has been stated the 2018 general election conducted by the ECP not free and fair and over night decided to approach the same ECP to getting relief from it in a case against the ruling party.

We want the opposition to follow rule and regulations and accountability of all the political parties should be done and not one party would be targeted. We hope that ECP would entrain applications against all the political parties on merit

She said that judicatory and government decided to allow former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to go abroad for treatment on the basis of medical reports but since then a lot of questions have been created in the mind of the people. She said that it is right of the whole nation to know the reality and the nation wants to know the diagnosis of the disease whose treatment was not available in Pakistan.

The core committee also decided to improve the governance system and new priorities have been set to improve them and prime minister was given powers to make the required changes immediately. The reorganization of the party would also be undertaken as prime minister directed, she added.