

Agencies

NAB constitutes 'businessmen body' to resolve issues

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Monday constituted a six-member committee of businessmen to remove their reservations, resolve issues and improve the country's economy.

According to a NAB press release, the committee has been mandated to forward its recommendations directly to the bureau chairman for implementation. Recommendations of the committee, constituted under Section 33-C of the National Accountability Ordinance, will be reviewed by a three-member NAB committee comprising the bureau's deputy chairman, prosecutor general (accountability) and director general (operations).

The NAB committee would review recommendations of the businessmen committee and forward its final recommendations to the NAB chairman who will issue directives to resolve issues of the business community.

Its recommendations will be reviewed by a committee of anti-graft watchdog and sent to chairman for implementation

Members of the businessmen committee included Saarc Chamber of Commerce and Industry vice president Iftikhar Ali Malik, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry president Daro Khan Achakzai, former president of Bank Alfalah Atif Bajwa, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Anjum Nisar, Millat Tractors chairman Sikandar Mustafa Khan and former head of Citizens-Police Liaison Committee Jamil Yousuf.

Issues of the business community would be resolved through mutual understanding, a NAB spokesman said, adding that the bureau chairman's decision would be final. Complaints against the references already filed would not be considered. The businessmen committee will be a consultative one and has nothing to do with the powers conferred on NAB under its ordinance.

The spokesman said the bureau respected the business community and all possible steps would be taken for progress, prosperity and betterment of the economy.

It may be recalled that earlier this month, the business community met both Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and Prime Minister Imran Khan.

According to the Inter-Services Public Relations, the army chief told businessmen that the country's "improved internal security environment" had "created space for increased economic activity".

“Accessibility and responsiveness of the government economic team to the business community and the displayed understanding between public and private institutions is a good sign for the desired positive trajectory in economic activity,” Gen Bajwa was reported to have told the audience.

The businessmen had reportedly complained that NAB was interfering in business activities. However, they assured that they would cooperate with the authorities to ensure that government policies were implemented and would “play their part” by paying taxes and investing in a “socially and economically responsible manner”.

The following day, in separate meetings with business barons, Prime Minister Khan assured them that a strategy had been finalised to address the concerns of the business community regarding NAB.

During one meeting, the prime minister told the businessmen that the government had decided to form a committee comprising senior persons of the industry. The committee would have the mandate to decide which cases regarding businessmen should be taken up by NAB and which should not.

At a press conference on Oct 5, NAB Chairman retired Justice Javed Iqbal had refuted reservations expressed by the business community about the accountability watchdog as “completely baseless”. He announced that a four-member committee had been formed, the mandate for which was being determined. He said that it could be seen as an “advisory” institution that would discuss the problems of the business community and find solutions to them.

“I want to clarify that the formation of a committee doesn’t mean that NAB is not an independent institution or that NAB is subservient,” he said.