

NUZHAT NAZAR

Cabinet for softening lockdown

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Tuesday decided to ease lockdown restrictions. A meeting of the National Coordination Committee is scheduled on Wednesday in Islamabad to take decision regarding relaxation in lockdown after Saturday.

During a post-cabinet briefing, Information Minister Shibli Faraz said all four chief ministers will attend the meeting to deliberate on next strategy.

The cabinet also decided that the prime minister and his cabinet members, including all federal ministers, the premier's advisers and special assistants will donate their one month's salary to the PM's Corona Relief Fund, he said.

He said the gesture has been made in view of the prevalent situation, and difficulties faced by the people.

The cabinet allowed export of hand sanitizers made in the country.

Shibli Faraz said Planning Minister Asad Umar gave a comprehensive presentation to the cabinet regarding the COVID-19 situation in the country.

The meeting was also apprised on the implementation of the relief packages that the federal government has announced for various sectors in the wake of the pandemic.

Shibli Faraz said relaxation in lockdown will still require that people take precautions.

He said war against corona pandemic can be won only by staying at homes.

On the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Law Ministry has been directed to prepare a report on holding of elections on transparency to ensure election process transparent and trusted by the people, the minister said.

The prime minister also directed the Ministry of Interior to take steps to improve the situation of police stations, he further added.

The minister said the cabinet deliberated on the issue of ban on import of goods from India, except life-saving drugs.

The prime minister directed to make sure that there is no violation of this ban.

The forum also accorded approval to reconstitution of National Commission for Minorities.

Besides, the meeting rejected a proposal by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to give up the varnish coating of existing banknotes for the time being, due to the coronavirus.

The cabinet approved Naveed Asghar's appointment as member finance of the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) who is currently working for Wapda as general manager, finance power.

The meeting also approved inclusion of 61 food and non-food items in the Compulsory Certification Mark Scheme of Pakistan Standards and Quality Certification Authority (PSQCA), he said.

The products added to the list will no longer be sold in the market without the PSQCA mark.

Information Minister Shibli Faraz urged the opposition to focus on tackling the coronavirus outbreak instead of holding press conferences criticising the federal government.

Responding to a question from a reporter, he said: "The pandemic affects all of us. It doesn't affect one particular party or government."

The information minister was referring to a press conference held by PML-N leader Marriyum Aurangzeb a day prior. "You should ask this question from the opposition; when they make such claims we have to respond. Not responding means we are admitting that what they are saying is correct," he said.