

**IMF bailout: Government not in a hurry, Umar tells NA**

Finance Minister Asad Umar on Fri-day made it clear that the government would never succumb to any pressure to sign such an IMF package which is against the interests of Pakistan's economy and people.

"Neither the government is in a hurry to sign the IMF package nor will it come under any pressure to take any decision which can burden the country's economy and its people," said the finance minister while giving a policy statement on the floor of the National Assembly with regard to government's engagement with the IMF.

About talks with the IMF, he said the government is not in a hurry for the IMF package as alternative arrangements have been made to address immediate economic needs of the country. However, he further said that talks with the IMF would continue and only that package would be acceptable that would serve the interests of the country and its people.

The finance minister said that Pakistan has already signed an economic assistance package with the Saudi Arabia while talks with other friendly countries are under way, adding the government would have to take steps to reduce trade, current account and budget deficits.

Asad Umar said that a 15.5 percent increase has been witnessed in the remittances over the last three months, saying that overseas Pakistanis have sent additional one billion dollars to Pakistan during this period. "Increase in remittances during the last one month was 30 percent," he informed the House.

About the prices of petroleum products, the finance minister said the government has substantially reduced taxes on diesel. "Taxes on diesel were over 100 percent which now have been reduced considerably," he said.

Umar urged the opposition not to do politics on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as it will not augur well for the country.

He pointed out that it was for the first time that a government is taking the Parliament into confidence regarding talks with the IMF, saying in the past there was no such practice. "I want to tell those who give us lectures on democracy that democratic system is strengthened only when Parliament is taken into confidence on important national issues," he further said.

The minister also advised the leadership of opposition parties that such statements should not be given which could make the CPEC a controversial project.

Taking strong exception to criticism unleashed in his speech by Shehbaz Sharif against the Prime Minister, he said the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif himself was expert in taking U-turns.

He further said Shehbaz Sharif, when he was Punjab chief minister, used to say that he would hang Asif Ali Zardari for his corrupt practices and drag him on roads. "But now he alleges that the government is trying to create gulf between him and Asif Zardari," he added.

The finance minister also referred to statements of Nawaz Sharif when he had made commitment to continue the "mission" of the late General Zia-ul-Haq.

Responding to the points of opposition members on the martyrdom of SP Tahir Dawar, Minister of State for Communication Murad Saeed said those involved in the despicable act will be brought to justice. He pointed out that Pakistan has rendered innumerable sacrifices in the war on terrorism.

He said certain elements do not want peace in Pakistan and also want to sabotage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. He said that India also stands exposed on the Ajmal Kasab case.

Pakistan People's Party MNA Raja Pervaiz Ashraf appreciated the government's decision to construct Kartarpura corridor, saying it will promote religious tourism in the country and will also have a positive impact in the regional context.

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