

**Govt asked to disclose conditions linked to Saudi bailout package**

ISLAMABAD: Expressing disappointment over Prime Minister Imran Khan's address to the nation, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) on Wednesday asked the government to brief the nation about the terms and conditions on which Saudi Arabia had agreed to provide a bailout package to the country.

The leaders of the two opposition parties lashed out at Mr Khan for what they called his threatening tone for the opposition and called upon the government to take parliament into confidence regarding the proposed bailout package being offered by Saudi Arabia.

Talking to *Dawn*, PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb criticised the prime minister for not elaborating the terms on which Saudi Arabia had agreed to allow Pakistan to play the role of a mediator in its conflict with Yemen. She said this was a very serious and sensitive matter, but Mr Khan provided no details.

PML-N, PPP question premier's move of becoming mediator in Yemen conflict; warn against using threatening tone for opposition

"What is the strategic value of the (bailout) package? What economic benefits and relief will the people of Pakistan get from this (Saudi) loan?" she asked.

The PML-N spokesperson, who had served as the information minister in the previous government, said that instead of showing embarrassment over his failure to deliver, Mr Khan was still asking the people to wait for "good news". She asked the prime minister to apologise to the nation for making false promises with them during the past five years.

Ms Aurangzeb also criticised the prime minister over his announcement that no relaxation or deal would be offered to any politician, saying that Mr Khan should tell the nation as to who had been asking for a deal. Instead, she said, despite facing frivolous charges, the PML-N leaders were appearing before the Supreme Court, high courts and accountability courts.

She alleged that Mr Khan had been threatening the opposition as he wanted to protect the "group of thieves" around him.

Responding to Mr Khan's assertion that the previous government had put the country in a debt trap by obtaining huge loans, she said the PML-N government had fully utilised the loans on the betterment of the people by launching a number of development projects in the energy and transport sectors.

She said being in the government Mr Khan now possessed all the records of the loans and their utility and he could carry out audit of the projects launched by the previous government. She said the PML-N government did obtain loans but it effectively managed the economy and kept inflation at the historic low.

In a statement, PPP senator Raza Rabbani asked the government to take parliament into confidence regarding the proposed bailout package and the construction of oil refinery in or near Gwadar "in total disregard to Article 172 of the Constitution".

"It is demanded that the government should lay the terms and conditions of the recently-concluded financial arrangements between the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia before the parliament as these agreements will have strategic repercussions for Pakistan and the region,"

he said, adding that if there was anything sensitive, then the government could convene in camera sessions of either both the houses separately or a joint session.

Mr Rabbani regretted that during the short tenure of the present government, the parliament was “deliberately being reduced to a barn house where un-parliamentary language and insults are exchanged while the government continues to take important and strategic decisions without a debate or parliament being informed”.

The parliament, he said, had not been taken into confidence on the visit of the US secretary of state and the subsequent meeting of Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi with him, nor had parliament been taken into confidence on the conditions agreed to with the Financial Action Task Force.

Meanwhile, PPP senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, who is also the spokesman for PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, in his reaction over Mr Khan’s address said the person who was claiming that he would neither beg nor ask for loan from anyone was now not only roaming around the world with the begging bowl in his hand but also going from one country to the other and one institution to the other asking for loan and no one was ready to believe him.

He said Imran Khan should come to parliament and tell whether he had sold national asset of Reko Diq mines to get this loan or what else he had promised to the lender.

“Imran Khan has also claimed that Pakistan will play a role of mediator in Yemen conflict but has he read the resolution passed on the issue by the parliament?” he asked.

Senator Khokhar demanded of Imran Khan to clarify the mediation role he has claimed to play.

“Imran Khan should come down from the container” as people do not trust the person who has increased power tariff just on the day he addressed them, he said, asking Mr Khan to first create South Punjab province, before initiating the project of building five million houses.

Amir Wasim