

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry on Wednesday said Prime Minister Imran Khan could never strike any deal to facilitate former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his cronies, including former finance minister Ishaq Dar, who have been facing corruption and money laundering cases.

During a meeting with journalists, the minister said efforts were being made to bring Ishaq Dar to the country from Britain so that he could face justice.

Prime Minister's Adviser Arbab Shahzad was also present on the occasion.

He revealed that the government had decided to remove Pakistan Ambassador to the United States Ali Jahangir Siddiqui and Pakistan's High Commissioner in Canada Tariq Azeem as they were appointed on political grounds by the outgoing Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government.

"Repatriation of Ishaq Dar will be the first drop of rain," the minister said, giving an impression that the government will further tighten noose around the leaders of opposition parties allegedly involved in corruption.

| Efforts under way for Ishaq Dar's extradition from UK

Responding to a question whether Nawaz Sharif has been released under any deal with the Saudi government, the minister termed it an assumption and said it was totally wrong that the Saudi government had promised \$10 billion monetary assistance to Pakistan with the condition of Sharif's release. "Those who know Imran Khan cannot ask such questions because he is a man who cannot make such deals even if he is offered \$50bn financial support," he said.

He said the nation's wealth stashed in foreign countries would be retrieved and it would be started from the corrupt rulers.

"According to Ishaq Dar, who always tells lies, over \$220bn properties and bank accounts of Pakistanis have been detected in different foreign countries," he added.

Mr Chaudhry said 165 big tax defaulters had been traced and a stern action would be taken against them if they did not bring themselves under the tax net.

## CPEC project

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The minister said that although Saudi Arabia would invest in projects being carried out under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), it would not become a strategic partner of Pakistan or a part of the Joint Working Group or Joint Coordination Committee.

“Not only Saudi Arabia but many other countries also have shown interest in investment in Pakistan and CPEC-related projects,” he said.

Mr Chaudhry brushed aside a perception that Pakistan had not taken China into confidence regarding third-party investment by Saudi Arabia. He said Chinese authorities had been informed many times about this. “Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has also been apprised of Saudi investment during his recent visit to Pakistan,” he added.

When a reporter suggested that the people were fed up with the policies of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led government even in its first 40 days, the minister said it was a wrong impression attributed to the people, but the fact was that the people were quite satisfied and happy.

Talking about the recent increase in gas tariff, he said the decision would not affect 70 per cent people or poor as the new rate would apply to the elite class for consuming over 500 units per month.

## Mega schemes

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Prime Minister’s Adviser Arbab Shahzad said development schemes which were launched on political motivation would be wrapped up and those which were beneficial for the country would continue.

In reply to a question about new task forces on accountability laws and national security, the adviser said these would not act as parallel bodies of the National Accountability Bureau and National Security Committee of parliament, but as a “facilitator” to assist the cabinet and the government in bringing reforms.

About the bureaucracy, he said the prime minister had issued instructions that the bureaucracy would not be harassed, but the officials who did not perform their duties would be taken to task.

At this, Fawad Chaudhry said all bureaucrats and technocrats holding top positions in the PML-N government, including Pakistan Ambassador to the US Ali Jahangir Siddiqui and High Commissioner in Canada Tariq Azeem, will be pulled back. “I think both of them should give their resignation voluntarily. Otherwise, we will pull them back,” he added.

In reply to a question about the government’s plan to introduce a new local bodies system, the adviser said the plan had almost been finalised and it would be implemented as and when the prime minister gave a go ahead.

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