

## Pakistan rejects US opposition to IMF bailout

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**ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Abdullah Hussain Haroon on Wednesday rejected United States opposition to an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout package for his country as uncalled for and inappropriate.**

“It is totally wrong to link any IMF package with CPEC,” the foreign minister said at a press conference at the Foreign Office while responding to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s criticism of a bailout programme for Pakistan by the international lender.

Mr Haroon said the US “statement was completely inappropriate” and he was “bewildered as to why this needed to be said” especially at a stage when Pakistan had not asked for it.

Mr Pompeo, in an exclusive interview with CNBC on Monday, disapproved the idea of an IMF bailout for Pakistan saying China would benefit from such a deal.

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“Make no mistake, we will be watching what the IMF does,” the US secretary of state said when asked about the reports that Pakistan was planning to seek a \$12 billion bailout package to rescue its economy.

“There’s no rationale for IMF tax dollars — and associated with that, American dollars that are part of the IMF funding — for those to go to bail out Chinese bondholders or China itself,” he had further said.

Mr Haroon said: “Third parties cannot weaken our collective resolve to make CPEC a success story”.

The foreign minister clarified that the caretaker government did not have the mandate to seek an IMF package. “This is a policy matter to be decided by incoming government. I want to say it loud and clear so that it is heard internationally,” he added.

Referring to hostile US policies towards Pakistan, he asked Washington “to be more reasonable in dealing” with Pakistan.

Mr Haroon said that State Department spokesperson’s remarks expressing desire to negotiate a mutually beneficial relationship with the new government in Pakistan and Secretary Pompeo’s remarks about IMF bailout package were contradictory.

He expressed concern over the implications on regional strategic stability arising from the continued US assistance to India in nuclear and dual use technologies, as is evident by the recent grant of individual licences for the high technology weapons amounting to \$9.7bn.

Apart from the discriminatory approach in this area, Pakistan’s achievements in the counter terrorism area remain largely unacknowledged.

“It is high-time that both countries work towards promoting shared goals of peace and development in South Asia and beyond,” he added.

On Tuesday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said the IMF had its own standards and operating rules when cooperating with countries.

“I believe they will handle it appropriately,” he told reporters, without elaborating.

Anwer Iqbal adds from Washington: The International Monetary Fund said on Wednesday that it remains committed to helping Pakistan and its people but it has not yet received a request from Islamabad for financial support.

Responding to a query from Dawn, an IMF spokesperson said that all decisions on requests for financial support were taken by consensus.

“The IMF remains committed to helping Pakistan and its people (but) it has not received a request for financial support from Pakistan,” the spokesperson said.

She pointed out that the IMF was closely engaged with Pakistan, including through the Post-Programme Monitoring (PPM) and the regular Article IV consultations. The last PPM report was discussed by the IMF Executive Board in March 2018. The dates for the next Article IV consultation have not been decided yet.

“The IMF is a multilateral international financial institution guided by a strong consensus-based decision-making process in its Executive Board,” the spokesperson said.

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