



Asad Umar's privatisation statement criticised

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KARACHI: Representatives of various political parties, trade unions, rights' and lawyers' bodies on Sunday formed 'Awami (People's) Action Committee' to resist Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's plans to privatise public entities by implementing the International Monetary Fund's agenda in the country.

They met at the National Trade Union Federation Pakistan's (NTUF) office and the meeting was presided over by Salahuddin Gandapur, vice chairman of the Sindh Bar Council.

Nasir Mansoor, deputy secretary general, NTUF, condemned a recent statement of a PTI leader and finance minister-in-waiting Asad Umar vis-à-vis privatisation of 200 public establishments.

He said such anti-people actions were being planned to fulfil the IMF's conditionalities to get loans.

"The privatisation has failed across the globe and it has failed to produce any positive result, which was evident from the disasters that the country witnessed by privatising its assets in the past."

The participants said the situation was alarming for working class as workers' guaranteed constitutional rights were being questioned while privatisation plans unveiled by the finance minister-in-waiting required workers to resist them.

Mr Gandapur said how the government was not able to run its big companies when some of the same companies in Pakistan, which had been sold out to foreigners in the past were being run by the companies owned by governments abroad.

He said PTI's next government would be playing the role of a political representative of the establishment, which would deal with the IMF at the cost of the country's future.

Dr Riaz Shaikh of the Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology rejected the notion that a welfare state could be established by throwing away public sector companies.

He said at present all welfare states such as in Scandinavia had more than 70 per cent of economy in public sector and under the state control.

"In United Kingdom, Labour Party has gained public supporter after its announcement that all industries which were privatised during Thatcher's era would be nationalised when they came to power again."

Prof Tauseef Ahmed Khan, secretary of the Progressive Writers Association Karachi, said the country, in fact, survived because of the 1970s nationalisation policy of the then prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, which helped it getting rid of global debt and strengthened the economy.

Ramzan Memon, president of the National Party Sindh, Zafar Aslam, president of the Mazdoor Kisan Party, Rasheed Taj of Communist Party of Pakistan, Zehra Kan, secretary Home Based Women Workers, Majeed Shaikh, PIA Workers Union, Manzoor Malah and Muqadar Zaman of Railway Workers Union, Sajjad Zaheer of Democratic Student Federation, Ghulam Mehboob of PC Hotel Workers Union, Bashir Mehmoodani, president Ship Breaking Workers Union, and others spoke.

They decided to hold demonstration against privatisation of national assets and unending contract system on Saturday near the Arts Council of Pakistan Karachi building.

The meeting appealed to workers, rights activists and professional bodies to take part in the protest.

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