



## Govt mulls over ‘tough decisions’, public anger

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**ISLAMABAD:** Three weeks after assuming power, senior leadership of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) reviewed the country’s political and economic situation and resolved to take some “tough decisions” in the coming days after evaluating the possibility of a strong public reaction.

A strategy was also devised at a meeting, which was presided over by PTI chairman and Prime Minister Imran Khan, to deal with possible reaction to government decisions in near future.

There was no official word about the “tough decisions” the government would have to take due to “crippling economic situation”, however, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry while talking to Dawn after the meeting hinted at further increase in the prices of electricity and gas.

### *PTI leadership devises strategy to expose wrongdoings of PML-N government*

The meeting, which was also attended by several federal cabinet members and provincial ministers from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa at Banigala, devised a plan to defend government decisions in the media. The information minister said the participants also decided to highlight the “wrongdoings” of the past rulers and the economic mess created by the previous government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz.

“The party has decided to take tough decisions due to crippling economic situation in the country,” said Mr Chaudhry without elaborating the nature of “tough decisions”.

He said the decisions would be before the public in the “coming days”. But he hinted at the possibility of rise in electricity and gas tariff when he said Finance Minister Asad Umar, Planning and Development Minister Khusró Bakhtiar and Minister-designate for Energy Umer Ayub Khan would have to take “bitter decisions that may spark public reaction”.

Recently, the prime minister had given a go-ahead to increase gas tariff by 46 per cent on average.

The prime minister also reviewed progress on the 100-day reforms plan of the PTI-led coalition government and called for prompt implementation of it, he said, adding that the meeting also discussed the issue of distribution of party tickets for the Oct 14 by-elections.

The PTI’s spokesperson and those of the planning and development, energy and finance ministries were directed at the meeting to remain updated on the measures being taken by their respective departments so that they could defend the decisions in the media and highlight the government’s point of view why such steps were being taken.

The meeting, which also reviewed austerity measures taken by the government and their impact, was told that the government had saved Rs80 billion through abolition of discretionary fund of the prime minister and federal ministers.

Mr Chaudhry said it was decided that the government would expose wrongdoings of the previous government to make people aware of the difficult economic situation.

The information minister said the PML-N had initiated several mega projects purely on political grounds, therefore, the present government had decided to review all such projects as well as international agreements inked by the last regime.

The PTI leaders at the meeting criticised the past government for what it called “ruining” state institutions and making no progress in upgrading the energy sector. They said the last government did not take any step to resolve the issue of outdated electricity distribution system. Similarly, they said, no step had been taken for gas exploration and improvement in gas distribution and supply with the result that the PTI government would have to increase gas and electricity tariffs to bear losses in both sectors.

Finance Minister Asad Umer criticised former PM Nawaz Sharif for taking wrong decisions and leaving behind unrealistic targets for the PTI government. He also opposed the last government's decisions of tax exemptions which he said caused a huge loss to the national exchequer.

*Published in Dawn, September 10th, 2018*

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