

Circular debt reaches Rs1300bn, Umar tells NA

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ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Omar Ayub Khan Friday said that circular debt has reached Rs 1,300 billion due to flawed policies of the previous government which paid no attention towards improving the system.

Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, he criticized the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government for not cutting down the line losses and improving the transmission lines of electricity.

The minister said the transmission lines cannot support electricity more than 19,000 megawatts, adding the previous government claimed to end load-shedding in the country but practically it did nothing to improve the system.

He also criticized the previous government for getting hefty domestic and foreign loans, saying PML-N government had been giving subsidy on electricity and gas, but did not mention it in the budget documents.

The minister said his government had been doing its best to come up to expectations of the people and they had been working hard to introduce reforms in all sectors including the energy.

Taking part in the budget debate, Aliya Kamran, a member of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) said the present government had overburdened the people with more taxes. She said the cut in development expenditures would increase unemployment in the country. She urged the government to reduce the energy prices.

She pointed out that the government had dispatched thousands of tons wheat to Afghanistan while people in Pakistan were facing acute food shortage. She also criticized the government for increasing prices of gas and electricity as that would directly impact the poor people.

PPP member Naz Baloch was critical of the government's decision to lease out the building of Radio Pakistan. She said the Pakistan Peoples Party always established important institutions including that of Pakistan Steel Mills, and gave the country a unanimous Constitution.

PTI member Asma Habib, however, lauded Finance Minister Asad Umar for presenting a balanced budget and trying to improve the tax net.

Abdul Akbar Chitrali of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal said the 'mini-budget' had already pushed up the prices of essential commodities. He urged the government to allocate special funds for ongoing development projects in Chitral.

PML-N member Rana Tanveer Hussain said the PTI government had promised to give jobs to the youth but it had started the process to layoff employees from different organisations.

Responding to a calling attention notice, Minister of State for Interior Shehryar Khan Afridi said that there are over 140 million computerized national identity cards (CNICs) out of which 181,270 are blocked due to various reasons.

Giving province-wise data of blocked cards of the Pashtun community, he said that 16,678 cards are blocked in Sindh, 13,951 in Punjab, 44,231 in KPK, 2,526 in Islamabad, 10 in Gilgit-Baltistan, 6,824 in erstwhile FATA, 18,287 in Balochistan, 486 in AJK and 266 cards of overseas Pakistanis are blocked.

The minister said that in 2017 total number of blocked CNICs in FATA was 12,056 while the number in 2018 had declined to 6,824.

He said that a new special unit in the National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) would be constituted to address the issue of blocked CNICs on emergency basis.

The issue of blocked CNICs has also been discussed in the federal cabinet and the government devised comprehensive policy to address the issue, he said, adding the government would not compromise on the issue of national security.

“We have only one agenda that there will be no compromise on the national security, we will not bow down, we will make the country secure, and for this we have to take some tough decisions,” he remarked.