

PM wants NAB not to harass civil servants

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday asked civil servants to improve their performance being the 'backbone' of the state and said that the bureaucracy should not be harassed by anti-corruption watchdogs.

Addressing a delegation of participants in 109th National Management Course from the National School of Public Policy, Mr Khan said: "I have also asked National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman retired Justice Javed Iqbal that his organisation should avoid undue harassment of civil servants so that they can serve the country without any fear and mental stress."

He said the government's policy of de-politicisation of institutions, meritocracy and transparency offered a great opportunity to bureaucracy to improve its performance and play its due role in translating political vision into reality. "Being backbone of the state, bureaucracy has a huge responsibility to deliver and come up to the expectations of the nation," he added.

Vows to protect rights of minorities and ensure equal opportunities

A participant of the meeting told Dawn that the prime minister said NAB should carry out its operations but not affect mega development projects and investment. Mr Khan said the government recently got vacated state properties/land from illegal occupation worth billions of rupees, but now bureaucrats were afraid of giving approval for other utilisation of the vacated land.

Highlighting the country's huge potential in the form of human

capital, mineral wealth, strategic location and other resources, the prime minister underscored the need for better management of available resources, improving service delivery, and most importantly, a commitment and passion to serve the nation to the best of one's abilities.

Discussing the current economic situation and various other challenges faced by the country, PM Khan said the government was focusing on stabilisation measures and undertaking institutional reforms aimed at improving vital sectors such as education, health and governance.

During the meeting, a participant asked why the government in its 'mini-budget' cut Rs10 billion grant allocated for overcoming the problem of stunted growth in the name of austerity measures, despite the fact the premier in his median speech had vowed to address the issue.

In response, the prime minister said the government had inherited worst financial crises and, therefore, such steps were taken. "But we will overcome the situation soon and will meet all our commitments."

Talking about Pakistan-India relations, the prime minister said he believed in open borders, but now he had realised due to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's policy that why father of the nation Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah had presented the two-nation theory. "Modi only acts for the supremacy of Hindus and is trying to isolate Pakistan by all means," he said.

Referring to Pakistan's recent initiative to improve relations with the neighbouring country and their disappointing response, he said it was unfortunate that the Indian leadership failed to realise that the biggest challenge confronting this region was poverty alleviation by improving socio-economic condition of the people.

Christian delegation meets Imran

Later, a delegation of bishops from various churches of Pakistan called on the prime minister and assured him that the Christian community would support him in translating his vision for equality into reality.

During the meeting, Mr Khan said the Constitution provided equal rights to all citizens irrespective of cast, colour or creed and the government would continue to protect rights of the minorities and ensure equal opportunities to participate in national life.

He acknowledged and appreciated the services of non-Muslim communities, especially the Christian community, in various fields including education, health and social welfare. The prime minister highlighted the need for promoting inter-faith harmony and working hand-in-hand for the development and prosperity of Pakistan.

The delegation apprised the prime minister of the issues concerning the Christian community and put forward suggestions to promote inter-faith harmony.

The delegation comprised Bishop Irfan Jamil (Lahore), Bishop Alwin Samuel (Sialkot), Arch Bishop Arshad Joseph (Islamabad), Arch Bishop Sebastian Shah (Lahore), Dr Qaiser Tuller (Lahore), Dr Liaqat Qaiser (Lahore), Bishop Leo Paul (Multan), Pakistan Bible Society general secretary Anthony Lamuel, ex-director of Christian Study Centre Jennifer Jaq Jiwan, representative of Pentecostal Churches Dr Jamil Nasir and Rubina Feroz.