

CCP ordinance: Is govt favouring cartels over public interest?

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ISLAMABAD: For a government that has never been averse to promulgating and re-promulgating one presidential ordinance after another, it is clearly loathe to issuing one that really matters and direly needed in greater public interest: the Competition Commission Ordinance as the last one expired on March 28th.

With the National Assembly session prorogued on Friday, the government was also provided with the legal grounds to do so but clearly the lack of action is deliberate and not due to any restraining circumstances.

If the government does not re-promulgate the competition ordinance, it will expose itself to the charge of capitulating to the all powerful sugar, cement cartels and other corporate cabals.

Talking to The News here on

Friday, official sources pointed out that there was no excuse available with the PPP regime for not moving ahead with re-promulgation of the competition ordinance as two days were available (Friday and Saturday) for moving towards the desired direction as the joint session was summoned on Monday for Presidential address of Asif Ali Zardari.

When contacted, Chairman CCP, Khalid Mirza, said that he was confident that the government would re-promulgate the CO 2010. "Yes, the government has communicated to us about re-promulgation of competition ordinance after prorogation of the National Assembly session," he concluded.

Earlier, addressing a roundtable conference organized by The Network for Consumer Protection on "Importance of Competition Law",

Khalid Mirza said that the CCP ordinance needed to be re-promulgated in its original shape without any further delay.

The chairman CCP was confident that all malpractices like cartels and fixing of prices would come to an end if the CCP was allowed to work independently for another 3 years.

Mirza warned that if the competition law was not enacted then genie of cartels would resurface again in the country. He said that the CCP ordinance was state of the art law being recognized at international forums and its decision were quoted all around the world.

Replying to those who were averse of the CCP for taking stern action by imposing Rs6.5 billion fine against key sectors of economy, Mirza said that there were some reports which suggest that industrial sector

was posing a colossal loss to the tune of Rs1200 billion but the CCP took lenient view and imposed fine of only Rs6.5 billion.

To a question, he said that CCP was a national body dealing with, among others, inter-provincial issues, and the Supreme Court would be the best forum for any appeal against its decisions.

He said that the competition laws were important for the growth of national economy and helps bring fresh foreign direct investment in the country. He said end of competition laws would scare away potential investors from the country.

The chairman CCP said that competition laws were important for protection of middle level businessmen and poor consumers who had nothing to fall back upon in hour of unfair market practices by the big industrialists.