

Competition Ord to be re-promulgated soon: govt

By Mehtab Haider

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the Economic Advisory Council (EAC) held here on Saturday assured the dysfunctional Competition Commission of Pakistan's chairman that the lapsed ordinance would be re-promulgated probably soon after the prorogation of the joint sitting of parliament.

The meeting was co-chaired by Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh and head of the EAC Dr Hafeez A Pasha.

The Competition Ordinance lapsed on March 27.

Now elements enjoying political patronage from both the government and opposition sides are free to exploit the voiceless consumers as the institution which was responsible to rein in cartelisation, abuse of dominance and deceptive marketing practices has ceased to exist. Now profiteers have got a free hand to milk consumers. This is evident from the fact that prices of certain commodities have shown an upward trend after

March 27.

The chairman of the defunct CCP, Khalid Mirza, was invited to the EAC meeting, especially as he also has been made part of the high-profile EAC, which is considered crucial in decision-making process.

When contacted to seek his comments that whether the actions taken by the CCP as well salaries of its staff would be protected in case of re-promulgation of the ordinance, he said he was told that certain clauses related to protecting the actions as well as other matters were inserted in the proposed ordinance sent to the Prime Minister's Secretariat by the Ministry of Finance.

Mirza was, however, confident that the government would re-promulgate the Competition Ordinance 2010. "Yes, the government has communicated us about re-promulgation of the Competition Ordinance after prorogation of the National Assembly," he said.

Malpractices such as cartelisation and price fixing, he hoped, would come to an

end if the CCP was allowed to work independently for another three years.

Mirza warned that if a competition law was not enacted, then the genie of cartels would resurface again in the country.

He said the Competition Ordinance was recognised at international forums and its decisions were quoted all around the world.

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

He said competition laws were important for the growth of the national economy and helped bring foreign direct investment in the country. The absence of competition laws would scare away potential investors from the country, he added.

Mirza said competition laws were necessary to protect middle-level businesspeople and consumers from unfair marketing practices by big industrialists.