

[AS INTRODUCED IN THE SENATE]

A

BILL

to provide control of prices of essential commodities and price-hike

Whereas it is expedient to ensure the prosperity of the masses and for this propose to control prices of essential commodities and price hike is the basic responsibility of the Federal Government according to Articles 37 (a) and 38 (a), (b) and (d) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan;

And whereas the teachings of Quran and sunnah, good example of the Prophet (PBUH) and blessings of the caliphates make binding every Muslim state that no individual of the state may sleep empty belly at night;

And whereas every citizen of the country is worried and lamented due to price hike, prices of essential commodities and unjustified increase in utility bills;

And whereas it is expedient to control price hike, prices of essential commodities and unjustified increase in utility bills;

It is hereby enacted as follows:-

1. Short title, extent, application and commencement.- (1) This Act may be called the Control of Prices of Essential Commodities and Price Hike Act, 2010.

(2) It shall extend to the whole of Pakistan.

(3) It shall be applicable to the following, namely:-

(a) All individuals and organizations of manufacturing, sale, supply and storage of essential commodities;

(b) Services (electricity, gas, water and telephone etc.) providing government, semi-government departments and corporations;

(c) departments related to petrol, diesel, kerosene oil and petroleum products;

(d) all individuals and organizations providing professorial services;

- (e) Government and semi-Government and private organizations related to real estate; and
 - (f) Government, semi-Government, private organizations and corporations providing air, rail, road transport and other means of traveling facilities.
- (4) It shall come into force at once.

2. Definitions.- In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context,-

- (a) "commodities" in its large context includes basic human needs bread, cloth, houses, education, health and journey related facilities;
- (b) "consumers protection councils" means such councils which may control standard, quantity, category, make and prices of essential items and to protect the interest of the consumers and to co-ordinate between industrialists, Government functionaries and suppliers;
- (c) "essential commodities" includes grain (wheat, rice, maize and pulses etc.) meat (cow, buffalo, goat, poultry and fish etc.) edible oil, sugar and vegetables etc.;
- (d) "price" means price of any item in whole, retail, printed and non-printed;
- (e) "professional services" includes health, law, agriculture, educational, industrial and other related services;
- (f) "services" includes electricity, gas, telephone and water etc.; and
- (g) "union council" means an administrative set up at gross root level.

3. Reduction and Stability in the Essential Items Prices.- It is imperative that the Government should reduce the prices of basic human needs by thirty percent (30%) at least which includes (Atta, ghee, rice, sugar, meat, vegetables and pulses) and to keep these prices freeze i.e. at the same level for a period of at least three years and the impact on prices increase due to inflation and other reasons should be subsidized by the Federal and Provincial Governments through special grants and to ensure uniform prices for the consumers.

4. Reduction in Services Tariff .- (1) Institutions and Corporations which are providing electricity, gas, water and telephone should issue thirty percent (30%) reduced new Tariff within one month after the promulgation of this Act and to receive its bills according to reduced rates.

(2) The institutions should reduce its administrative expenditures as so that reduction in prices may be insured.

(3) Sales tax and other Government charges on services should be abolished which will ultimately benefit the consumers.

5. Reduction of tariff on professional services.- All institutions and persons providing professional services should reduce its tariff by thirty percent (30%).

6. Prices of Petrol, Diesel, Kerosene Oil and other Petroleum Products. (1) The Federal Government immediately after the enactment of this Act shall constitute a high powered Parliamentary Committee to fix the prices of petroleum products.

(2) Prices of petroleum products shall be revised only when the prices go up in the international market and the benefit of decrease in petroleum prices at international market shall be passed on to the public and an automatic system evolved for this purpose.

7. Prices of Land and Housing Schemes. - The authorized Parliamentary Committee shall make a formula to fix prices of plots of different Housing Schemes and other development departments by ensuring the implementation of such formula.

8. Reduction in the Fare.- All Government and non-government Departments/Corporations, dealing with Air-liners, Railways and Road Transport, shall announce thirty percent (30%) reduction in the fare and the same shall also be notified accordingly.

9. Consumers Protection Council.- (1) Consumers Protection Council shall be established at all District and Tehsil levels.

(2) Persons, belonging to all walks of life, shall be given representation in the Council.

(3) Separate rules shall be made for the establishment of the council and to determine its legal status.

10. Functions of the Consumers Protection Council.- The Consumers Protection Council shall.-

- (a) provide information to customers regarding quality, quantity/number, effectiveness, purity and prices of products and services.
- (b) make access of the customers possible to the competitive prices of the maximum kinds of essential commodities;
- (c) take proper steps to control prices of essential commodities;
- (d) provide compensation to customers against negative trade attitude;
and
- (e) ensure availability of essential commodities.

11. Increase in Salary and Pension of Government and Private Employees and Pensioners.- (1) The salary and pension of the employees/pensioners of Government Departments and Industry, including workers and labourers of agricultural sector and kilns, shall be automatically increased each year in accordance with the rate of inflation and price-hike.

(2) The increase shall be made part of the basic salary of the employees or pensioners.

12. Procedure for Implementation of the Act.- (1) A complainant may submit his petition in the concerned District Session Court or in the Court of Senior Civil Judge.

(2) Consumers Protection Council may also submit a petition in the Session Court against unfair trade attitude.

(3) On receiving a petition, the Court shall issue a notice to the respondent for submission of reply within seven days.

(4) After hearing the parties or if the reply is not received, the Court, as it may deem fit, after investigation, may issue an order.

13. Penalty.- The violator of rights of the consumers under this Act should be awarded punishment upto two years imprisonment or fine upto Rupees one hundred thousand or with both.

14. Rules.- The Federal Government shall make rules for carrying out purpose of this Act.

STATEMENT OF OBJECTS AND REASONS

Due to day to day price hike in the prices of essential commodities on one hand it becomes out of the reach of common man and on the other hand due to this price hike the rate of inflation has been enormously increased. People are unable to fulfill their requirements relating to food, housing and living in their limited and meager sources of income particularly the salaried class is unable to cope with the increasing inflation rate. Purchasing power has been diminished especially the women who has to run domestic affairs and it is difficult for them to run their kitchens. In such kind of situation it is necessary that for remedy of hardship faced by the masses to legislate such kind of law due to which common men can easily get bread, clothes and shelter (Roti, Kapra aur Makaan) so that he can live with dignity and respect.

This bill seeks to mitigate the burden of price hike on poor masses and ensure the availability of essential commodities at cheaper rates, so that the unjustified increase in the prices should be controlled in future and to protect the rights of consumers.

This Bill is enacted to achieve the aforementioned objectives.

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