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## Economic hitman': PTI says federal budget against 'nation, country's interest

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ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has termed the budget 2024-25 presented by the federal government in the National Assembly last week against the interests of the country and nation. "This budget was made by an economic hitman," said Opposition Leader Omar Ayub Khan while addressing on floor of the National Assembly on Thursday. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government has set a challenging tax revenue target of 13 trillion rupees (\$46.66 billion) for the year starting July 1, a near 40% jump from the current year, in the budget that looked to strengthen the case for a new bailout deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The ambitious revenue targets for the fiscal year through June 2025, presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in parliament on June 12, were in line with analyst expectations. Total spending was 18.87 trillion rupees (\$68 billion). Speaking about the ambitious

targets set in the federal budget, Ayub said the investors do not inject their capital in countries where the rule of law is not supreme. The opposition leader said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had asked the government to negotiate with all stakeholders to evolve consensus over the federal budget. “The wings of this finance minister [Muhammad Aurangzeb] have been clipped,” the PTI secretary-general claimed, alleging that the government’s economic figures are based on lies. He further said that the unemployment and inflation increased substantially and per capita income also declined in the country. On Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s announcement that he would eliminate corruption from the country, Ayub laughed off his statement, saying: “The pot calling the kettle black.” He said PM Shehbaz, despite being implicated in National Accountability Bureau (NAB) cases, pledged to rid the country of corruption. Ayub said those involved in the “corruption cases cannot eliminate corruption from the country”. “Charity begins at home. Start [accountability] charity from Hudaibiya Paper Mills, London flats and Sugar mills,” he said referring to the references filed against the Sharif family in the past. “This government is of and for the corrupt people. This government is based on corruption,” the opposition leader said, reiterating allegations that his party’s mandate was stolen in the February 8 elections. Speaking at a Senate session, PTI lawmaker Ali Zafar said the budget for the next fiscal year cannot deliver amid political polarisation in the country. “This budget cannot work until the stolen mandate is

returned,” he said, holding the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) responsible for the prevailing political crisis. “The budget has been imposed upon the people due to ECP, hence I challenge the legitimacy of this budget.” The PTI senator also made a spooky prediction that the tax-heavy budget could bring “revolution” in the country. Citing examples of unrest caused by heavy taxation, Senator Zafar said people torched the parliament in the UK against the imposition of heavy taxes by the king. “Likewise, revolutions in the US and France were also triggered by the taxes. If all proposed taxes in the budget are approved then the revolution in the country would come soon,” he claimed.