

~~JI chief blasts past governments for crippling IPP deals~~

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ISLAMABAD:

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) leader Hafiz Naeemur Rehman criticized previous governments, including those led by former military ruler General (retd) Pervaiz Musharraf, PPP, PML-N, and PTI, for making agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) that are detrimental to the public. Addressing a press conference at the JI sit-in at Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh, which entered its fifth day, Hafiz Naeem highlighted that the protest has sparked hope among the 250 million citizens of Pakistan. The current electricity bills, he argued, are unaffordable, impacting children's education and household expenses. Hafiz Naeem demanded that the IPP agreements be made public, accusing the government of incompetence and corruption for failing to renegotiate these deals. Welcoming and thanking PTI's supremo Imran Khan for supporting the protest, Hafiz Naeem noted that the PPP initiated the IPP agreements while the PTI government negotiated with 35 companies. FBR employees, he claimed, are involved in corruption amounting to one trillion rupees annually. He urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to announce that no minister or government official would use vehicles larger than 1300cc, asserting that such a move could save 1350 billion rupees. Criticizing the government for not implementing this policy, Hafiz Naeem accused the rulers of living in luxury at the expense of the public. The banking sector, Hafiz Naeem asserted, benefits the most from Pakistan's economic downfall, emphasizing that interest (usury) is prohibited in Islam. The country's debt, both domestic and foreign, amounts to 65 trillion rupees, with nine trillion rupees paid in interest. Vowing to rid the nation of the usurious system, he highlighted the adverse impact of rising interest rates, which lead to more interest payments rather than debt reduction. Warning that the protest would expand if the government did not act swiftly, Hafiz Naeem mentioned plans to block highways and start a sit-in outside the Governor House in Karachi, with potential protests in Peshawar as well. The intention, he stated, is not to disrupt peace but to ensure their demands are met. The sit-in, he declared, will not end until their demands are addressed, with plans to escalate the protest across the country. The JI chief expressed gratitude to the PTI Chairman for praising their protest and mentioned ongoing contacts with the Tehreek Tahaffuz-e-Aeen Pakistan (TTAP). Clarifying JI's position, he stated that they would not join any alliance but welcomed TTAP's support for new elections, despite their inconsistent stance on Form 45. Urging the government to avoid confrontation and address their demands, he warned that failure to do so would lead to nationwide unrest.