

ISLAMABAD: The government admitted in Senate on Wednesday that losses in PIA and Pakistan Railways had gone up massively since the PPP-led government took power in March 2008. Defence Minister Syed Naveed Qamar told the house during the question hour that PIA had faced a loss of Rs42.4 billion in 2008 which now swelled to 141.4bn and Railways Minister Ghulam Ahmed Bilour said total losses of Pakistan Railways stood at Rs16.85 billion when the government came to power in 2008 and these had now gone up to Rs31 billion with an average of Rs2.58bn a month. The ministers gave figures of losses in the two state institutions in response to a question raised by Nuzhat Sadiq of PML-N. The Railways minister further said that losses of Pakistan Railways were still increasing despite a 40 per cent increase in passenger fares and 55 per cent increase in freight charges over the past four years. Referring to an independent audit conducted on instructions of the Public Accounts Committee last year, the defence minister attributed PIA losses to inadequate fleet, roaring fuel bill, dollar-to-rupee disparity, cash flow problems and repairs and maintenance of fleet and mismanagement. Giving details of recent cases of embezzlement in the organisation as pointed out in last four audits, the defence minister told the house that PIA suffered a loss of Rs127.41m due to acceptance of bogus cheques and non-receipt of cargo sale. He said that disciplinary action had already been taken against two officials who had been found guilty and they had been retired. Similarly, he said, PIA suffered another loss of Rs46.218m because of irregular and unjustified payments to Muhammad Saleem Sayani, the deputy managing director, whose services had been terminated and an investigation was in process. PIA, he said, suffered a loss of Rs16.200m because of irregular retention of a pilot appointed on bogus certificates. Initiating disciplinary action, he said, the PIA management had punished the guilty person Faisal Younus by three-year loss in seniority. Moreover, he said, audits had also pointed out losses of Rs2.41m because of irregular re-employment of a retired officer and another Rs1.8m due to fraudulent billing by a laundry contractor. On Dec 14, in response to a query, the ministry of food security had conceded that the number of people falling under the poverty line had been increasing constantly and more than 58 per cent population of the country was food insecure by 2011 against 48.6 per cent in 2009.

Courtesy: Dawn