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Hecklers And Harassers May Find Themselves In Hot Water Soon

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ISLAMABAD – Hecklers and harassers are likely to find themselves in hot water soon as they may get their national identity cards blocked and will be unable to operate their bank accounts after a recent warning issued by Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah Khan to the opposition PTI.

In a recent announcement, the interior minister cautioned diehard followers of chairman PTI Imran Khan saying that computerized national identity cards (CNICs) and passports of those would be blocked, who were found involved in harassing the citizens in public and especially the leaders of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N).

Rana Sanaullah made the announcement after last week's incident in which some supporters of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) had heckled federal minister and PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal at a restaurant in Bhera service area on Lahore-Islamabad Motorway.

And this is not the first kind of such incident in which a politician has been heckled as such events have occurred in the past in which PTI supporters harassed politicians and key government functionaries in public while labeling them as “corrupt and thieves”—a so-called slogan given to them by their party leader Imran Khan.

The Interior Minister in a statement has appealed to the masses to report to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA)'s Cyber Crime Wing if they face any intimidation at public places from the followers of chairman PTI Khan.

He had explained that the citizens should make an identifiable video of the scene and send the same to the agency for further action against such “culprits.”

The action includes registration of cases, making arrests and blocking of such people's CNICs and passports to ensure the right to freedom of movement of citizens as guaranteed under Article 15 of the Constitution, Rana Sanaullah said earlier this week.

The blocking of anybody's passport simply means that he or she would face travel restrictions and would not be able to travel abroad.

The accused person would have to approach the Ministry of Interior and the court against this decision of the government.

The blocking of CNIC would also have serious consequences for the person concerned. The blocked CNIC means that the accused person not only will be unable to operate his/her bank accounts but also he/she cannot avail any facility in which biometric verification is involved, a senior official of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) told The Nation.

The biometric verification is needed for transfer of vehicles, financial transactions, and issuance of cellular phone SIMS besides other routine matters.

In the specific case, the FIA first would have to register a case against the person on the basis of the complaint and then the agency would get an order from the court for blocking CNIC of the accused. According to the NADRA official, the accused would also have to approach the court for unblocking his/ her CNIC as the authority cannot unblock the card on its own.

The official explained that there is a very clear judgment of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in the case of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) leader Hafiz Hamdullah that NADRA has not been vested with powers to suspend or block the CNIC of any citizen and it could do so on the confirmation of the competent authority.

He said that NADRA only used to block CNIC of any Pakistani citizen on the orders of the courts. The investigation agency concerned including FIA has to approach the court to get any person's card blocked while stating reasons for the action, he added.

A legal expert who closely deals with the matters of NADRA wishing anonymity said that there is another Lahore High Court judgment stating that NADRA has no powers to block any citizen's card. But the authority is still uncertain on the implementation of both the judgments of the high courts, he said and added, "NADRA has challenged the IHC judgment in the Supreme Court as well."

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