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**FAFEN’s Report on 13th Session of the Punjab Assembly**

**Punjab Assembly Session Marked by Low Interest of Lawmakers**

* **CM absent during entire session**
* **58 out of 368 MPAs participate in pre-budget debate**

ISLAMABAD, April 9, 2015:The 13th session of the Punjab Assembly witnessed pre-budget debate amid low attendance and participation of lawmakers, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its session report.

The session – comprising seven sittings and lasted 19 hours – started on March 27 and ended on April 6, 2015. On average, each sitting started 83 minutes behind the schedule with 25 members (7%) present at the outset and 33 (9%) at the time of adjournment.

Since the Punjab Assembly does not share the members’ attendance record with the public, FAFEN conducts a headcount of lawmakers at the beginning and end of each sitting and documents the actual time spent on the floor of the House by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chief Minister and the Opposition Leader.

The Chief Minister did not attend any of the sittings while the Opposition Leader was present in only one sitting. The Deputy Speaker presided over the entire session, as the Speaker was acting as the Governor of Punjab.

The parliamentary leaders of PML, PML-Z, BNA-P and PNML did not attend the entire session. On the other hand, the JI and PPPP leaders attended one sitting each.

The session consumed 30% (339 minutes) of the proceedings’ time on pre-budget discussion. Of the total 368 members in the House, 58 lawmakers- male (44) and female (14) - expressed their views on the upcoming provincial budget.

All 14 participating female legislators were from PML-N, while, out of 44 male members, 38 were from PML-N, followed by PML (3), one each from PPPP and JI and one Independent lawmaker.

The House adopted two resolutions. The first condemned the attack on Christians in Youhanabad, Lahore while the other was about regulating the publication of federal and provincial laws. Five resolutions appearing on the agenda were deferred due to the ministerial absence. Two resolutions dealt with provision of vaccines in government hospitals; while the remaining three were related to reduction in airfare in the wake of decreasing oil prices, hiring of additional staff at NADRA offices, and regulation of import of tranquilizers.

The House witnessed the passage of three bills, including the Punjab Disabled Persons (Employment and Rehabilitation) (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Lahore Arts Council (Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Punjab Social Protection Authority Bill 2015.

Three bills- the Fatima Jinnah Medical University Lahore Bill 2015, the University of Sahiwal Bill 2015 and the University of Jhang Bill 2015- were introduced while two ordinances were also laid during the session.

The lawmakers raised 59 points of order that consumed 52 minutes (5%) of the session. In addition, a privilege motion of PML-N lawmaker regarding submission of wrong answer by Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Department was disposed of by the House.

A total of 52 out of 226 starred questions (requiring oral replies) were taken up and responded to by the relevant ministries. Moreover, 98 supplementary questions were raised by the members during the session.

As many as four reports were presented during the session. Among these, two were related to the legislation, while one deals with the privilege motion and the fourth one was a special audit report related to Livestock and Dairy Development Department. The House passed two motions to extend the presentation period of two outstanding reports, while the Chair under Rule 36 (1) of Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab 1997, informed the House about continuous absence of 28 members from the House over the past 40 consecutive days of its sittings without leave of the Assembly.

The House took up two calling attention notices (CANs) regarding law and order situation while two other CANs on the same subject were not taken up. As many as 45 adjournment motions on a variety of issues were on the agenda, however, 21 among them were taken up and disposed of by the House.

The quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the session and was pointed out during the 2nd, 6th and 7th sittings. However, the quorum, pointed out by JI Parliamentary Leader, was found to be complete upon counting during the 2nd sitting while 6th and 7th sittings were adjourned due to lack of quorum after being pointed out by an Independent lawmaker.

The House witnessed a walkout by PPPP lawmakers during the second sitting due to the absence of Finance Minister during the pre-budget discussion. It consumed 10 minutes of the proceedings.

*This Session Report is based on direct observation of the Punjab Assembly proceedings conducted by PATTAN Development Organization – a member organization of FAFEN. Errors and omissions are excepted.*