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**FAFEN’s Report on the 16th Session of the Punjab Assembly**

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

* **Chief Minister remains absent throughout the session**
* **11 bills Introduced, one passed**

ISLAMABAD, September 9, 2015: The 16th session of the Punjab Assembly was marked by low attendance of lawmakers as the House witnessed passage of one and introduction of eleven government bills, says the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

The session, comprising ten sittings, started on August 26, 2015 and concluded on September 8, 2015. On average, each sitting started 95 minutes behind the schedule and lasted an hour and 36 minutes.

FAFEN conducts a headcount of members at the start and end of each sitting and documents the actual time spent by the legislators, including the Chief Minister, Opposition Leader, Speaker and Deputy Speaker.

According to FAFEN’s observation, the lawmakers’ attendance remained low throughout the session – with an average of 30 (8%) members present at the start and 46 (12%) at the end of each sitting. The Chief Minister remained absent throughout the session, while the Opposition Leader attended seven out of ten sittings for a total of 43% of the session’s time. Two sittings (seventh and ninth) were adjourned due to lack of quorum pointed out by a PTI and an independent lawmaker respectively.

Nearly 11% of the session was chaired by the Speaker, who was present for only one sitting. The rest of the nine sittings were presided by the Deputy speaker making 87% of the session’s time. In addition, the sixth sitting was suspended during the question hour for 22 minutes (2% of session’s time) due to absence of Secretary Schools Education Department.

Fourteen bills sponsored by the government appeared on the list of business. Of these, only the Punjab Institute of Qura’n and Seerat Studies Bill, 2015 was passed by the House. Two bills including the Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill, 2015 and the University of Okara Bill, 2015 were not taken up by the House while 11 Ordinances were presented before the House and were referred to the relevant committees in the form of bill.

According to the Sub section 6 of section 91 of Rules of Procedure of the Provincial Assembly of the Punjab 1997, “an Ordinance laid before the Assembly under clause (2) of Article 128 of the Constitution shall be deemed to be a Bill introduced in the Assembly on the day it is so laid”. The eleven introduced bills included the Punjab Safe Cities Authority Bill 2015, the Punjab Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Punjab Forest (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Punjab Local Government (Second Amendment) Bill 2015, the Punjab Drugs (Amendment) Ordinance 2015, the Punjab Food Authority (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Punjab Drugs (Second Amendment) Bill 2015, the Punjab Special Protection Unit Bill 2015, the Punjab Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Infrastructure Development Authority of the Punjab Bill 2015 and the Punjab Pure Food (Amendment) Bill 2015.

The House unanimously adopted nine resolutions during the session. One of the adopted resolutions was about paying tribute to former Punjab Home Minister Col (R) Shuja Khanzada and other victims of suicide bomb attack on August 16, 2015. Nineteen lawmakers– PML-N (13), PTI (4), PPPP (one) and an Independent lawmaker– participated in debate on this resolution for 91 minutes.

During the 3rd sitting of the session, the House adopted a resolution to condemn the statement of former diplomat, Wajid Shamsul Hasan for criticizing Bhutto’s decision of declaring Ahmadis as non-Muslims. The two resolutions adopted during the 6th sitting were regarding seeking extension of ninety days for the Punjab Safe Cities Authority Ordinance 2015 and the Punjab Forest (Amendment) Ordinance 2015.

Lawmakers raised 101 Points of Order which consumed 112 minutes (11%) of the session’s time. Out of 285 starred questions, only 74 (26%) were taken up during the session and responded by the relevant ministries/departments. The MPAs also raised 148 supplementary questions to gain further clarity on government’s responses.

Two reports were debated in the House during 7th and 8th sittings. Minister for Industries, Commerce & Investment debated Annual Report of the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority for the year 2011-12 for two minutes while Parliamentary Secretary for Services and General Administration Department spoke for three minutes on Annual Report of the Punjab Public Service Commission for the years 2012 and 2013 during 7th sitting.

During the 8th sitting, seven lawmakers – five from PML-N and two from PTI – participated in debate on Annual Report of the Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority for the year 2011-12 and Annual Report of the Punjab Public Service Commission for the years 2012 and 2013. They spoke on the said reports for 46 minutes while Minister for Industries, Commerce & Investment concluded the debate during his four minutes speech.

The House witnessed presentation of three legislative reports and one report of the Privileges Committee. Seven others reports presented in the House included the Financial Statement of Government of the Punjab for the financial year 2008-2009; the audit report on the Accounts of Drought Recovery Assistance Program Project (DRAPP) Punjab for year 2009-2010; the audit report on Management of Hill Torrents in CRBC Area (Stage-III) in D.G Khan and Taunsa District Dera Ghazi Khan, Irrigation Department for audit year 2011-12; the audit report on dualization of Lahore – Faisalabad – Jhang – Bhakkar Road (length 42-33 KM), Communication & Works Department for audit year 2011-12; audit report on dualization of Faisalabad Sammundri Road (Section between Faisalabad bypass of Sammundri), Communication & Works Department for audit year 2012-13; Special Audit Report on the Accounts of Sargodha Improvement Trust, Housing, Urban Development & Public Health Engineering Department for the year 2009-2010 and Audit Report on Widening/Improvement of Road from Bunga Hayat-Pakpattan-Arifwala, Communication & Works Department for audit year 2011-12.

The session witnessed a protest and a walkout during its 6th and 8th sitting respectively. PTI lawmakers protested within the House for three minutes when the House rejected a motion to consider an out-of-turn resolution condemning gas price hike. The Opposition lawmakers walked out for 17 minutes over non-allocation of development funds to MPAs.

*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*