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**FAFEN’s Report on the 17th Session of the Balochistan Assembly**

**Balochistan Assembly Session Marked by Low Attendance**

* **Chief Minister present in all the sittings**
* **Points of order consume 26% of the session**

ISLAMABAD, May 6, 2015: The 17th session of the Balochistan Assembly was marked by low attendance of lawmakers and the passage of three bills without referring them to the standing committees, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

The session, comprising seven sittings, started on April 18 and ended on May 5, 2015. On average, each sitting started 33 minutes behind the schedule with 20 lawmakers (31%) present at the start and 33 (51%) at the time of adjournment. The quorum was pointed by a JUI-F lawmaker during the last sitting. However, it was found to be complete upon headcount of members.

The Chief Minister was present in all the sittings for almost their entire duration. The Opposition Leader attended 36% of the session in four sittings. Among parliamentary leaders, the ANP leader attended all the sittings, followed by the leaders of PML (five); PML-N, JUI-F and PkMAP (three each); MWM (one) and BNP-M (none).

Nearly 28% of the session was chaired by the Speaker, followed by the Deputy Speaker and members of the Panel of Chairpersons (32% and 36% respectively). The House also witnessed the suspension of proceedings for 43 minutes (5% of the session time) to draft a resolution during the sixth sitting.

The House passed three bills – the Balochistan Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Balochistan Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Balochistan Assembly Members (Salaries, Allowances, and Privileges)(Amendment) Bill 2015. However, none of these bills were referred to the standing committees before their passage. Meanwhile, the Balochistan Protection of Women against Harassment at the Workplace Bill 2015 was left unaddressed due to its mover’s absence.

The Balochistan Urban Immovable Property Tax (Amendment) Bill aims to ensure transparency in assessment of taxes on individual properties through standardized annual rental value tables. On the other hand, the Balochistan Assembly Members (Salaries, Allowances, and Privileges) (Amendment) Bill increases the perks/privileges for chairpersons of standing committees. The House passed the Balochistan Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill in the wake of amendments/omissions in the Civil Servants Act 1973 by the federal government following the 18th Amendment. The bill deals with absorption of civil servants working in devolved ministries/divisions and those in attached departments/subordinate offices in the province.

The House also adopted two resolutions to condemn the MQM chief’s speech against the armed forces and to transfer major roads in the province to the National Highway Authority. Two other resolutions regarding up-gradation of Inter College Ziarat and giving a district status to sub-tehsil Sanjavi were not taken up.

The session witnessed 33 questions appearing on the agenda, of which only eleven (33%) were taken up on the floor of the House. In addition, the lawmakers also raised nine supplementary questions during the session.

The House also took up two adjournment motions dealing with proposed changes in Pak-China economic corridor and dilapidated electricity infrastructure in Panjgur. Fifteen lawmakers spoke on the first motion for 109 minutes, while six lawmakers debated the second motion for 44 minutes. Moreover, the members raised a total of 64 points of order that consumed 26% of session.

The session witnessed two walkouts, both of which were held during the second sitting. JUI-F members, led by the Opposition Leader, staged a walkout for 20 minutes; demanding the formation of a committee to probe the alleged demise of children from measles in Killa Saifullah. In addition, an ANP lawmaker also walked out against proposed changes in the Kashgar-Gwadar trade route for 18 minutes.

*This session report is based on direct observation of the Balochistan Assembly proceedings conducted by Center for Peace and Development (CPD) – a member organization of FAFEN. Errors and omissions are excepted.*