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**FAFEN’s Report on the 19th Session of the Balochistan Assembly**

**Balochistan Assembly: 58% MPs remain inactive in budget debate**

* **Chief Minister present in all sittings**
* **Budget debate consumes 54% of session time**

ISLAMABAD, June 29, 2015: The 19th session of the Balochistan Assembly was marked by passage of the Finance Bill, 2015 and low interest of lawmakers in the budget debate, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

Thirty-eight out of the total 65 lawmakers did not contribute to the budget debate. Six of them were female legislators while 32 were male lawmakers. Half of the female lawmakers were from PML, followed by two from PkMAP and one from JUI-F. Similarly, of the 32 inactive male members, 15 belonged to PML-N, followed by NP (six), JUI-F (three), PkMAP and BNP-M (two each) and PML, MWM and BNP-A (one each). One independent lawmaker was also among the non-participating male members.

Of the 27 members who took part in the budget debate, six were female and 21 male. The female lawmakers debated the budget for 71 minutes whereas their male counterparts debated for 391 minutes. Two of the six female members were from NP while one each was from PML-N, PkMAP, JUI-F and PML. Similarly, nine of the male members debating the budget were from PkMAP, followed by PML-N, NP, JUI-F (three each), PML (2) and ANP (one).

The Advisor to the Chief Minister on Finance presented the annual budget 2015-2016 as well as the supplementary budget statement for the year 2014-2015 during the first sitting. He took 66 minutes to present the budget. The Leader of the Opposition opened the Budget debate in the second sitting and spoke for 47 minutes.

The House adopted 54 demands for grants for the year 2015-16 and also 27 supplementary demands for grants for the year 2014-15.

The session, comprising six sittings, started on June 17 and ended on June 25. On average, each sitting started 30 minutes behind the schedule with 32 lawmakers (49%) present at the start and same number 32 (49%) at the time of adjournment.

The Chief Minister and the Advisor to Chief Minister on Finance was present in all the sittings. The Opposition Leader attended four sittings (52% of the session time). Among parliamentary leaders, the PML-N, PkMAP and PML leader attended all the sittings, followed by the leaders of ANP (five) and MWM (one). The BNP-A and BNP-M leaders did not attend any sitting.

Nearly 94% of the session was chaired by the Deputy Speaker while the remaining 6% was consumed in breaks. The seat of Speaker has been lying vacant after the acceptance of Speaker’s resignation on May 22, 2015.

Lawmakers raised 16 points of order, consuming 6% (47 minutes) of the total session minutes while the House also passed a motion to fill vacant seats of Provincial Standing Committees.

The House passed three bills – the Balochistan Finance Bill 2015, the Balochistan Revenue Authority Bill 2015 and the Balochistan Sales Tax on Services Bill 2015.

The opposition lawmakers boycotted the first sitting of the session due to the reservations over allocation of development funds and nomination of Public Accounts Committee Chairman, without taking them into confidence. The 5th sitting witnessed a protest by female lawmakers against the remarks of the Chief Minister’s Advisor on Livestock.

*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.*