

Govt fails to achieve cotton target, PA told

LAHORE: Punjab Assembly on Monday started a debate over the issue related to the fare and subsidy on Orange Line Metro Train, a project initiated in the last tenure of PML-N.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf MPAs opposed any subsidy for the project and the House was told that so far, Rs191 billion had been spent on the project and until its completion, expenditures could exceed to Rs200 billion.

The PA session, which began with a delay of nearly one and a half hour with Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi in chair, first held question-hour session related to Agriculture in which Minister Malik Nauman Langrial responded to the queries of legislators. He told the House that the government had failed to achieve the cotton targets this year due to rains.

Later, during the debate on Orange Line Metro Train Project, Azma Zahid Bokhari of PML-N suggested that fare of the Orange Train must be fixed at Rs40. She said the poor population could not afford higher rates so it was necessary to fix the fare at a suitable level.

She said the Orange Train in Punjab had been completed at a lesser cost than spent by any country on this project and the country was facing a fine of Rs51 million everyday due to the delay in its operation.

Rana Mashhood Ahmed of PML-N while participating in the debate said that N-league gave the largest share to Southern Punjab during its tenure. He said the PTI was merely paying lip-service to its plans whereas PML-N established 55 hospitals in the province.

Regarding the Orange Train Project, he said that PTI opposed this project at the international level. He said the international companies had planned to invest in this project after which the subsidy could have been reduced to a great extent but PTI opposed it. He said the main culprit behind the sugar crises was facilitated in the name of subsidy and was allowed to escape the country.

Syed Yawar Bokhari of PTI in his speech said that the entire province was looted in the name of development in Lahore. He said these mega projects were initiated to deceive the foreign national adding this project of Orange Line should have been an underground project which could have made it more effective. He said the Asian Development Bank had also stated the same but it wasn't done.

Punjab Law Minister Raja Basharat while speaking on the floor of the House said that so far an amount of Rs191 billion have been spent on this project and the day it would start functioning, the cost might exceed Rs200 billions.

He said the only in three districts, the government had to give a subsidy of Rs30 billion to run transport. He said it was a point to ponder as to what had been the fault of other districts that were paying this heavy price for these projects.

Raja said it was unfortunate that in other cities of Punjab, even the clean drinking water wasn't available to the people. Punjab Assembly would decide about the fare and subsidy issues for this project, said the Law Minister.

Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi also expressed displeasure over the non-serious attitude of the government and showed anger towards universities for poor research over developing new seeds. The Speaker remarked that there was a time when Punjab used to produce the top quality wheat but it seemed universities were doing nothing.