

Punjab Govt ends yearlong tax exemption for Internet services

LAHORE: The Punjab government has withdrawn a yearlong tax exemption for Internet services by passing the Finance Bill 2017-18 with a majority in the Punjab Assembly on Tuesday.

The House also approved a modification in the stamp duty system for properties belonging to rural and urban areas in the province.

The opposition strongly opposed and rejected the imposition of taxes on the Internet services as well as reforms in the stamp duty system.

The opposition staged a token walkout after the treasury rejected opposition-sponsored amendments to the Finance Bill. Anyhow, the treasury passed the bill with a majority in the House.

Opposition Leader in the Punjab Assembly Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed, Dr Nosheen Hamid, Mian Aslam Iqbal, Arif Abbasi, Asif Mehmood and Dr Waseem Akhtar of the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) strongly opposed the Finance Bill 2017-18.

They said that the new system of stamp duty collection on immovable properties was confusing, especially for the illiterate people of rural areas.

They said that tax exemption on for Internet services would increase extra burden on internet users, especially students.

After the opposition members completed their speeches, Mian Mehmoodur Rasheed of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced a token walkout and one of his colleagues Nabila Hakim Ali pointed out quorum that was completed by the treasury soon.

Replying to the queries regarding imposition of tax on Internet services and modification in stamp duty system, Finance Minister Dr Ayesha Ghaus Pasha said that the government had not imposed any new tax but withdrew the yearlong exemption on Internet services.

She said that the modification in stamp duty collection system had been approved to collect the stamp duty at one place against the previous scattered system.

Later, the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children (Amendment) Bill 2017 and the Punjab Education Standards Development Authority Bill 2017 were tabled in the House, which were referred to the standing committees concerned by the chair for further consideration.

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