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Sentence for encroachers, hunters enhanced: PA passes two bills **By Our Staff Reporter**

KARACHI, Dec 2: The Sindh Assembly on Monday carried out legislation business for the first time since the November 24 session, which was prorogued after the election of 31 standing committees, by adopting two amendment bills unanimously.

Each committee, except the public accounts committee comprising seven members, has 11 members. According to an agreed formula between the ruling coalition and the opposition, of 31 committees four will be headed by the opposition members while nine will be headed by MPAs of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement. Each committee, however, will elect its chairman in its first meeting.

One of the two bills adopted in the Monday session was the Sindh Public Property (removal of encroachment) Amendment Bill No 13, which enhanced the imprisonment up to five years with a fine of Rs500,000 to a person responsible for encroachment. The minimum term for the offence is one year, according to the bill.

Earlier, Law Minister Ayaz Soomro moved the bill and said it was aimed at protecting precious government lands in urban or rural areas from encroachment. He said: "We want to crush land mafia to protect the government land everywhere and we will move a bill for setting up anti-encroachment courts to deal the mafia with an iron hand."

Syed Sardar Ahmad, Anwar Mehar, Munawar Ali Abbasi, Shama Mithani, Salim Khurshid Khokhar, Nuzhat Pathan, Bachal Shah, Amanullah Mehsood, Moin Khan, Arif Jatui, Haseeb Ahmad, Moqem Alam, Rafique Engineer and Sassui Palejo made brief speeches in support of the bill.

Closing the discussion, the minister assured the house that suggestions made by the members were noted.

The other bill, which was also unanimously adopted in the assembly, pertained to wildlife protection. Under the new bill punishment has been enhanced for illegal hunting of rabbit (hare) with imprisonment not less than one month or more than six months, with a fine up to Rs150,000 but not less than Rs100,000.

For hunting deer, hog deer or phara the maximum imprisonment has been enhanced to one year and the minimum limit has been fixed at two months, with a fine between Rs150,000 and Rs200,000. For hunting Sindh Ibex, wild goat and wild sheep the minimum and maximum imprisonment ranged between two months and 12 months, respectively, with a fine between Rs300,000 and Rs400,000.

Likewise, for the illegal hunting of partridge, sand grouse and waterfowl, imprisonment shall not be less than 15 days. The maximum term for the offence will be three months. Court can impose a fine of up to Rs1,000 but not less than Rs250 for each game animal, the bill stated.

The bill was piloted by Law Minister Ayaz Soomro.