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## Sindh's Finance Committee Tightens Grip on Budget Oversight, Rejects Sports Grant, and Defers Major Requests

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In a recent meeting, the Finance Committee of the Sindh Cabinet approved several large financial grants while postponing or rejecting others due to a lack of adequate documentation. The committee's decision reflects growing concerns over budget misuse and a renewed

push for fiscal accountability, particularly amid ongoing questions surrounding the transparency of the current administration.

Chaired by Local Government Minister Saeed Ghani and Home and Law Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar, the committee greenlit several high-cost initiatives but sent a clear message to departments operating without proper financial discipline. A proposal from the Sports and Youth Affairs Department, seeking Rs2 million (roughly \$7,200) from non-development funds to organize a football tournament in Malir's PS-89 constituency, was flatly denied. The committee instructed the department to utilize its pre-approved budget, indicating that any budget shortfall may only be considered for reimbursement at the end of the fiscal year.

Several large grants were approved, primarily focused on education and infrastructure in rural areas. These included Rs115 million for the continued construction of the Government Degree College in Ghorabari, Thatta District, and Rs248 million for installing solar-powered water pumps and storage tanks at the Ex-Nara Canal in Sanghar District. The inclusion of renewable energy highlights a practical focus on sustainability in water management, though it remains to be seen whether the funds will be used efficiently.

A one-time grant of Rs45 million was approved to transport and install agricultural machinery gifted by China to Pakistan's federal government. Although Sindh's share of the machinery was part of this gift, committee members criticized the added cost and advised that future deliveries should be made directly to Karachi Port to avoid such avoidable expenditures.

Another significant allocation involved Rs141 million to settle dues owed to retired employees of the Sindh Seed Corporation, following a court directive. However, the committee was clear that no additional funding would be entertained in the future for similar claims, indicating a move to curb repeated bailouts stemming from departmental mismanagement.

The most controversial decision came with the approval of a hefty Rs300 million grant from non-development funds for the repatriation of illegal Afghan nationals residing in Pakistan. While the issue of undocumented migration remains contentious, the committee's allocation indicates a commitment to supporting national-level repatriation efforts, though critics argue that the burden should be shared more equitably with the federal government.

Some proposals were put on hold for failing to meet documentation standards. These included Rs15 billion requested by the Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB) and funding for a Langar Khana (community meal service) at the shrine of Sachal Sarmast. The committee requested more detailed breakdowns and records of revenue sources, including donations received at the shrine, before any public funds would be committed.

In closing, ministers directed all department heads to ensure that future funding proposals include complete working papers, budget justifications, and transparent usage plans. This renewed emphasis on procedural compliance is seen by many as an attempt to assert control over a bloated and often loosely regulated public finance system.