



## Free and Fair Election Network

### FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No. 1, Session No. 90 of the Senate

#### **Senate: First Sitting Marked by Low Attendance; Ministerial Absence**

- **56% of Sitting Time Consumed by POs**
- **Agenda Left Unaddressed**

ISLAMABAD, January 21, 2013: Starting 45 minutes late, the first sitting of the 89<sup>th</sup> session of Senate was marked by low attendance and ministerial absence. Only eight senators were present at the start and 11 at the time of adjournment. A maximum of 39 senators were observed to be present at one point of sitting, which met for three hours and 53 minutes on Thursday.

Twenty-one points of order were raised which consumed two hours and 10 minutes (56%) of the sitting time. None of the POs attracted Chair's formal ruling.

A bill and a calling attention notice (CAN) appearing on the Orders of the Day were not taken up because of absence of relevant ministers. The house unanimously adopted two condolence resolutions to pay tribute to late Bashir Bilour and Professor Abdul Ghaffoor Ahmad.

The Chairman chaired the sitting for an hour and 48 minutes and the rest of the sitting was chaired by the Deputy Chairman. The opposition leader and the parliamentary leader of MQM, PML, BNPA, ANP, JUIF and PMLF did not attend the sitting.

Following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

#### **Members' Participation in House Proceedings**

- The Senate met for three hours and 53 minutes.
- The sitting started at 1645 hours against the scheduled starting time of 1600 hours, witnessing a delay of 45 minutes. There was a prayer break of 32 minutes.
- The Chairman chaired the sitting for an hour and 48 minutes. The rest of the sitting was chaired by the Deputy Chairman.
- The Leader of the House attended the sitting for an hour.
- The Leader of the Opposition was not present.
- The parliamentary leader of only NP attended the sitting while those of MQM, PML, BNPA, ANP, JUIF and PMLF remained absent.
- Only eight senators (8% of the total membership) were present at the start, while 11 were there when the sitting was adjourned. A maximum of 39 senators were observed to be present at one point of sitting.
- Three of the four minority senators in the upper house attended the sitting.
- Eight senators applied for leave.



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### Representation and Responsiveness

- Only six of the 17 starred questions (requiring oral replies) appearing on the agenda were taken up and responded to by the relevant ministries. Additionally, 10 supplementary questions were asked.
- A calling attention notice (CAN) appearing on the orders of the day was deferred because of absence of relevant minister.

### Output

- A bill – The Pakistan Academy of Letters Bill 2012 – appearing on the orders of the day was deferred because of absence of the relevant minister.
- Two supplementary condolence resolutions were raised by a PPPP legislator to pay tribute to late Bashir Bilour and Professor Abdul Ghaffoor Ahmad – ex-senator. These were unanimously adopted by the house.

### Order and Institutionalization

- Twenty-one points of order were raised which consumed two hours and 10 minutes (56%) of the sitting time. None of the POs attracted Chair's formal ruling.
- The PMLN senators staged a walkout over the absence of relevant ministers during Question Hour one minute before the prayer back. However, they returned to the house when the sitting was resumed after the break.

### Transparency

- Orders of the day were available to the legislators, observers and others.
- Information on senators' attendance was unavailable to observers and the public.
- The quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the sitting. However, it was not pointed out by any of the legislators.

*The Daily Factsheet is based on direct observation of the Senate proceedings conducted by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), a member organization of FAFEN*