



Free and Fair Election Network

FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No. 01, Session No. 49 of the National Assembly

National Assembly: Points of Order Consumed 65% of Sitting Time

ISLAMABAD, January 21, 2013: Thirteen points of order (POs) consumed 65% of the sitting time of the first sitting of 49th session, which met for four hours on Monday. Most of agenda items appearing on the Orders of the Day were left unaddressed.

Fifty-six members were present at the outset while 47 were present at the time of adjournment. A maximum of 182 (53%) members were present at one point of the sitting.

A calling attention notice (CAN) about the increasing number of housing societies and construction of buildings on the fertile agricultural land in Islamabad was taken up by the house.

Three instances of walkouts were also observed during the sitting, which was started an hour late. The legislators from FATA staged a three-minute walkout over the killings in Bara and Waziristan, MMAP members walked off the house 10 minutes before the end of the sitting over imposing of Governor Rule in Balochistan, and PML member walked off the house eight minutes before the end of the sitting for not given permission to talk about the issue of South Punjab on points of order.

The Deputy Speaker chaired the entire sitting. The Prime Minister attended the sitting for 40 minutes while the Leader of the Opposition attended the sitting for 2 hours and 13 minutes.

Following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

Members' Participation in House Proceedings

- The National Assembly met for four hours.
- The sitting started at 1700 hours against the scheduled starting time of 1600 hours, witnessing a delay of an hour. There was a 41-minute prayer break.
- The Deputy Speaker chaired the entire sitting. The Speaker was not present.
- The Prime Minister attended the sitting for 40 minutes while the Leader of the Opposition attended the sitting for 2 hours and 13 minutes.
- Parliamentary leaders of PMLF and NPP were present while those of MQM, MMAP, ANP, PML, PPPS and BNPA did not attend the sitting.
- The chief whips of PPPP, PMLN, MMAP, ANP, and PML attended the sitting whereas those of MQM, PMLF, PPPS and BNPA remained absent.
- Fifty-six members (16% of the total membership) were present at the outset while 47 (14%) were present at the time of adjournment. A maximum of 182 (53%) members were present at one point of the sitting.
- Four minority members attended the sitting.
- Five members applied for leave.



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Representation and Responsiveness

- Six of the 23 starred questions (requiring oral replies) appearing on the agenda were asked and responded to by the relevant ministries. Additionally, seven supplementary questions were asked.
- One of the two calling attention notices (CANs) appearing on the agenda was taken up by the house. It was about increasing number of housing societies and construction of buildings on the fertile agricultural land in Islamabad.
- The other CAN regarding acute shortage of petrol in various cities of the country was not taken up.
- A motion under rule 259 about the law and order situation in the country was not taken up.

Output

- The house did not take up two bills appearing on the Orders of the Day.

Order and Institutionalization

- Twenty-three points of order (POs) were raised which consumed two hours and 35 minutes (65%) of the sitting time. None of the POs attracted the Chair's formal ruling and unless the Chair gives its formal ruling, it does not lead to any output.
- There were three instances of walkout during the sitting. The legislators from FATA staged a three-minute walkout over the killings in Bara and Waziristan, MMAP members walked off the house 10 minutes before the end of the sitting over imposing of Governor Rule in Balochistan, and PML member walked off the house eight minutes before the end of the sitting for not given permission to talk about the issue of South Punjab on PO.

Transparency

- Orders of the Day were available to legislators, observers and others.
- Information on members' attendance was not available to observers and the public.

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