



Free and Fair Election Network

FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No. 5: Session No. 29 of the National Assembly

29th NA Session: Low Attendance 5th Sitting Meets for 109 Minutes

ISLAMABAD, February 25, 2011: The National Assembly met for an hour and 49 minutes during the fifth sitting of the ongoing 29th session. The sitting which started 53 minutes late witnessed low attendance of Members, with only 60 Members present at the beginning and 87 present when the sitting was adjourned. A maximum of 112 Members was recorded at one point of sitting.

The House did not take up the National Commission for Human Rights Bill and the two Calling Attention Notices listed on the Orders of the Day.

The Prime Minister attended the sitting briefly for 23 minutes, while the Leader of Opposition remained absent. The Parliamentary Leaders of the PMLF and PPPS were the only ones present, whereas the leaders of other parliamentary parties did not attend the sitting's proceedings. The following are some key observations of the Parliamentary Business:

Members' participation in House proceedings

- ⇒ The National Assembly met for an hours and 49 minutes.
- ⇒ The fifth sitting started at 1053 Hours against the scheduled starting time of 1000 hours. The House proceedings started late by 53 minutes.
- ⇒ The Speaker and the Deputy Speaker were not present during the sitting. Two of the Members of Panel of Chairpersons presided over the entire sitting time.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister attended the sitting briefly for 23 minutes, while the Leader of Opposition remained absent.
- ⇒ The Parliamentary Leaders of the PPPS and PMLF were the only ones present, while the leaders of the PML, MMAP, ANP, MQM, NPP and BNPA were absent.
- ⇒ The Chief Whips of the PPPP, PMLN, PML, PMLF and ANP were present, while the chief whips of the MQM, MMAP, NPP and BNPA were absent.
- ⇒ A total of 60 (18%) members were present at the outset of the sitting, while 87 (26%) members at the end of the sitting.
- ⇒ As many as seven out of 10 minority members were present during the 5th sitting.



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Representation and Responsiveness

- ⇒ There were two Calling Attention Notices (CANs) on the Orders of the Day. The House did not take up any of the CANs
- ⇒ A total of 23 questions were listed to be taken up during the Questions Hour. However, only eight were raised and responded to by the relevant minister
- ⇒ A total of 20 Supplementary Questions were raised in the House during the fifth sitting.

Output

- ⇒ The National Commission for Human Rights Bill, 2010 was not taken up by the House during the proceedings.
- ⇒ One Standing Committee Report regarding a Question of Privilege raised by representative of NA-181 was presented to the House.

Order and institutionalization

- ⇒ The Prime Minister raised a Point of Order, which consumed six minutes of the sitting time. However, the Point of Order raised did not attract the Speaker's formal ruling.
- ⇒ The Parliamentary Leader of the PPPS spoke on the Motion Under Rule 259 regarding the Law and Order situation prevailing in the country for 25 minutes.
- ⇒ There were no instances of protests, walkouts or boycotts during the fifth sitting.

Transparency

- ⇒ Orders of the Day were available to legislators, observers and others.
- ⇒ Information on Members' attendance was unavailable to observers and the public.
- ⇒ The Quorum was visibly lacking at various stages during the sitting. However, lack of quorum was not pointed out by any of the Members of the National Assembly.