



Free and Fair Election Network

FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No. 1: Session No. 40 of the National Assembly

NA Sitting Marked by Low Attendance

ISLAMABAD, March 14, 2012: The National Assembly met for three hours during the first sitting of the 40th session on Wednesday, reports the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its Daily Factsheet on the National Assembly proceedings.

The sitting was marked by low attendance with 65 Legislators present at the start and 64 were there when the sitting was adjourned.

The National Assembly unanimously passed the Industrial Relation Bill, 2012, and adopted a Resolution calling the Government to investigate the missing persons' cases.

Though 17 Points of Order which consumed 35 % of the sitting time, none of them attracted the Chair's formal ruling.

The Prime Minister attended the sitting for only seven minutes while the Leader of the Opposition was present for 54 minutes. The parliamentary leaders of the PML, MQM, ANP, NPP and PPPS attended the proceedings.

Following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

Members' participation in House proceedings

- The National Assembly met for three hours.
- The sitting started at 1740 hours instead of the scheduled starting time of 1700 hours. The proceedings started 40 minutes late.
- The Deputy Speaker chaired the sitting.
- The Prime Minister was present for only seven minutes while the Leader of the Opposition attended the sitting for 54 minutes.
- The Parliamentary Leaders of the PML, PPPS, NPP, MQM and ANP were present, while those of the MMAP, BNPA and the PMLF were absent.
- The Chief Whips of PML, MQM, ANP, PMLN, PMLF and PPPP were present.
- Sixty-five Legislators (19%) were present at the outset of the sitting while there were 64 MNAs (18%) at the end of the sitting. A maximum of 186 Members were present at one point of the sitting.
- A total of nine Members applied for leave to be absent.
- Nine minority Members were present.



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Representation and Responsiveness

- The House took up two Calling Attention Notices (CANs) which appeared on the Orders of the Day.
- The first CAN, moved by five PPP Members – one male and four females - was about “refraining women from casting their votes in the recent by-polls in many parts of the country”, which was directed to Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs.
- Moved by five PMLN Members – two males and three females – the second notice was about “purchase of new aircrafts by PIA in violation of Rules and Regulations is resulting in loss of billions of rupees” it was directed to the Ministry of Defence.
- Out of the 26 questions to be taken up during the Question Hour, only six were put up and responded by the relevant ministries.
- Six supplementary questions were raised during the sitting.

Output

- The Industrial Relation Bill, 2012 was passed by the House. This bill was submitted as supplementary agenda.
- The House adopted a Resolution calling the government to investigate the missing persons’ cases.
- The report on 2nd biannual monitoring on the implementation of National Finance Commission (NFC) Award (January-June, 2011) was presented to the House.
- A Standing Committee report regarding the Pakistan Academy of Letters’ Bill 2010 was also presented to the House.

Order and institutionalization

- Seventeen Points of Order were raised which consumed 63 minutes (35% of the sitting time). However, none of the Points of Order attracted the Chair’s formal ruling.
- Members of PMLN, ANP and MQM staged a token walkout against the kidnapping of a Hindu girl in Sindh. The walkout lasted two minutes.

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 Member.

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