



Free and Fair Election Network

Senate: Sitting Marked by Low Attendance

ISLAMABAD, April 18, 2013: Starting 35 minutes late, the third sitting of the 92nd session of Senate witnessed low attendance of the senators. Only four senators were present at the outset while 13 were observed at the time of adjournment.

The house discussed the excessive load shedding of electricity as the issue was raised by an MQM legislator through a supplementary adjournment motion.

The Standing Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges presented two reports before the house. The first quarterly report on the state of Pakistan's economy for the year 2012-13 was also laid before the house.

Eight Points of Order were raised which consumed an hour and 35 minutes (59%) of the sitting time.

Following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

Members' Participation in House Proceedings

- The Senate met for two hours and 41 minutes. There was a 22-minute prayer break.
- The sitting started at 1735 hours against the scheduled starting time of 1700 hours, witnessing a delay of 35 minutes.
- The Chairman chaired the entire sitting.
- The parliamentary leaders of only MQM and ANP attended the sitting while those of NP, JUIF, PML, BNPA and PMLF were absent.
- Only four senators (4% of the total membership) were present at the outset while 13 (13%) were there at the time of adjournment. A maximum of 25 (24%) senators were observed to be present at one point of sitting.
- None of the four minority senators in the Upper House attended the sitting.
- Fourteen senators applied for leave.

Representation and Responsiveness

- Only two of the 22 starred questions on the agenda were taken up and responded to by the relevant ministries. Additionally, five supplementary questions were asked.
- A supplementary adjournment motion regarding load shedding of electricity was raised and debated by the house. It was tabled by an MQM lawmaker.

Output

- The Standing Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges presented two reports before the house. One was about a senator's privilege motion regarding non-cooperative



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behavior of managing director of OGDCL and the other was regarding derogatory remarks made by an MNA against the Senate Chairman in a newspaper article.

- The first quarterly report on the state of Pakistan's economy for the year 2012-13 was also laid before the house.

Order and Institutionalization

- Eight Points of Order were raised which consumed an hour and 35 minutes (59%) of the sitting time. None of the Points of Order attracted the Chair's formal ruling.

Transparency

- 'Orders of the Day' was 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