



Sitting Marked by Low Interest, Ministerial Absence

- **Points of Order Consume 70% of Sitting Time**

ISLAMABAD, April 16, 2013: Starting 41 minutes late, the second sitting of the ongoing 92nd session of Senate was marked by low attendance of Senators, ministerial absence and Points of Order interrupting the regular proceedings of the Upper House, says Free and Fair Election Network in its Daily Factsheet.

Only 10 Senators were present at the outset while 12 were there at the adjournment of the sitting. A maximum of 28 Senators were observed to be present at one point of the sitting.

Besides the Question Hour, the sole Motion under Rule 218 on the Orders of the Day about the law and order in the country was left unaddressed. However, Senators used the opportunity to raise Points of Order on same issue. A total of 16 Points of Order consumed an hour and 30 minutes of the sitting time. Interestingly, none of the Points of Order attracted the Chair's formal ruling. Unless the Chair gives a formal ruling on a Point of Order, it does not lead to any assembly output.

Only two out of 27 Starred Questions (requiring oral replies) were taken up and responded to by the relevant Ministry. Additionally, five Supplementary Questions were raised by Senators. The Minister for Finance and Revenue was not present during the Question Hour.

Following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

Members' Participation in House Proceedings

- The Senate met for two hours and 10 minutes.
- The sitting started at 1111 hours against the scheduled starting time of 1030 hours, witnessing a delay of 41 minutes.
- The Chairman chaired the entire sitting. The Deputy Chairman did not attend the sitting.
- The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition attended the sitting.
- The parliamentary leaders of NP, MQM, JUIF and ANP attended the sitting while those PML, PMLF and BNPA of remained absent.
- Only 10 senators (10% of the total membership) were present at the start, while 12 were there when the sitting was adjourned. A maximum of 28 senators were observed to be present at one point of sitting.
- One of the four minority senators in the Upper House attended the sitting.
- Four Senators applied for leave to be absent.



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Representation and Responsiveness

- Only two out of 27 Starred Questions (requiring oral replies) were taken up and responded to by the relevant Ministry. Additionally, five Supplementary Questions were raised by Senators. The Minister for Finance and Revenue was not present during the Question Hour.
- The House did not debate the Motion under Rule 218 about the prevailing law and order in the country. However, Senators raised the similar issues on Points of Order.

Output

- No Bills appeared on the Orders of the Day.

Order and Institutionalization

- Sixteen Points of Order were raised which consumed an hour and 30 minutes (70%) of the sitting time. None of the Points of Order attracted the Chair's formal ruling.
- There were no instances of Protests, Boycotts or Walkouts during the sitting.

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