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**Lack of Interest Marks 10th Session of Punjab Assembly**

ISLAMABAD, October 29, 2014: The Punjab Assembly passed seven bills, adopted nine resolutions and took up four Calling Attention Notices (CANs) as low attendance and lack of interest by members marred its 10th session, says the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its preliminary report based on direct observation of the Punjab Assembly.

On average, the session witnessed low attendance as 40 members (11% of the total members of 367) were present at the outset and 47 (13%) at the adjournment of each sitting. The Speaker was present in all sittings and presided over 83% of the session’s total time while the Deputy Speaker also attended the entire session and chaired 14% of the session. The remaining 3% of session time was consumed by breaks.

The Leader of the House and the Leader of the Opposition remained absent from the entire session while all parliamentary leaders except for PPPP did not attend most of the sittings. The parliamentary leader of JI attended two sittings while of PML-Z one sitting.

The 10th session began after a gap of more than three months and held six sittings from October 20 to 27, 2014. The six-sitting session met for 17 hours and 33 minutes with an average delay of 67 minutes at the start of each sitting. The quorum was visibly lacking during various stages throughout the session but was not pointed out by any of the legislators except for once during the fifth sitting by a PML legislator; however, it was found to be complete after a headcount.

Despite the low attendance and lack of quorum, the House passed seven bills including three bills related to new local government elections while others include the Punjab Overseas Pakistanis Commission Bill 2014, the Punjab Registration of Godowns Bill 2014, the Punjab Strategic Coordination Bill 2014 and the Punjab Free and Compulsory Education Bill 2014. Five ordinances were also laid in the House and two bills were introduced. During the session, eleven reports were laid before the House.

Of 11 resolutions tabled in the House, nine were adopted about different issues including issuance of blue passports to Speaker, Deputy Speaker and Secretaries of Punjab Assembly Secretariat, use of drugs and a ban on broadcasting video footages of rape victims at all television channels. Through the resolutions, the House congratulated education rights activist Malala Yousafzai on receiving the Nobel Peace Prize and condemned the Indian aggression on the Line of Control and Working Boundary.

Other resolutions include extending period of the NUR International University Lahore Ordinance 2014 and the Punjab Explosives (Amendment) Ordinance 2014 for 90 days with effect from November 6 and November 16, 2014, respectively. Through a resolution, the House recommended the federal government and the parliament to legislate under Third Proviso of Clause 1 of Article 27 for ensuring the implementation of policy principles enshrined in Article 37(f) of the Constitution. The House also adopted a resolution for strengthening democracy in the country.

Additionally, the House took up four out of six CANs tabled in the House regarding firing by a proclaimed offender in Gujrat which resulted in bullet injuries to several people, a robbery incident in Gujrat, alleged killing of a youth by police in Sargodha and a dacoity incident in Lahore. A PPPP lawmaker walked out of the House twice for not getting permission to speak on a point of order and also protested once when the Speaker did not allow him to move an adjournment motion.

The House took up 46 of the 201 starred questions while the members also asked 88 supplementary questions. Moreover, 10 members tabled 24 adjournment motions, of which, half (12) were taken up and disposed of while the remaining were not taken up. Nine of the 12 adjournment motions were regarding governance issues, followed by one each on health, environment and education.

As many as 17 MPAs – male (16), female (one) - spoke on 35 points of orders consuming 4% of the session’s time. Most (19) of the points of order were on the rules of business, followed by ministerial absence (two) and blasphemy (two) etc.