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**FAFEN Session Report on 112th Session of the Senate**

**Points of Order Consume Half of Senate’s 112th Session**

ISLAMABAD, March 12, 2015: The last session of the Senate’s 12th parliamentary year witnessed half of the proceedings’ time being consumed by points of order (POs) which was otherwise allocated for regular agenda, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) on Thursday.

The session – comprising four sittings – started on March 6 and ended on March 11; lasting eight hours and 22 minutes. A total of 73 POs were raised during the session which consumed 250 minutes (50%) of the proceedings’ time. Thirty-nine POs consumed 72% of the third sitting, while 26 POs took up 85% of the fourth sitting. In addition, eight POs consumed 10% of the second sitting.

Since the Senate Secretariat does not share the attendance of lawmakers with the public, FAFEN conducts a headcount of lawmakers at the start and end of each sitting and documents the actual time spent by lawmakers on the floor of the House. The session continued to witness low attendance of lawmakers, with an average of 15 senators (14%) present at the start and 31 (30%) at the end of each sitting.

The prime minister was absent during the entire session. The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman attended three sittings each; presiding over 75% and 25% of the session respectively. The Leader of the House also attended three sittings, while the Opposition Leader was present in all four sittings. Among parliamentary leaders, the PkMAP and ANP leaders attended all the sittings, followed by the leaders of PML-N, PPPP and PML-F (three each), JUI-F and PML (two each) and NP, MQM and BNP-A (one each).

The House passed two private bills – namely the Provincial Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Privatization Commission (Amendment) Bill 2015. Another three private bills sponsored by a JUI-F lawmaker were also introduced during the session. Two bills sought amendments to the Constitution, while the third was related to correct pronunciation of the Holy Quran and its recitation with translation.

The House adopted eight resolutions during the session – including a supplementary resolution in connection with International Women Day. Other resolutions dealt with intrusion along the coastal areas of Sindh and Balochistan, establishing universities in each district across the country, allocating sufficient airtime to broadcast public service messages on television channels, conducting the sixth population census in the country, lauding the Senate Chairman’s vision as the President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly, expressing grief over the demise of former senator Mir Abdul Rehman Jamali and paying tribute to the Senate Chairman, Deputy Chairman, Leader of the House and Opposition Leader for their constitutional services.

One of the resolutions demanding review of continuation of perks and privileges for a former chief justice was deferred after being opposed by the Leader of the House. In addition, the House also left a resolution to provide subsidy on manufacturing/import of mechanized agricultural products unaddressed during the session.

Five motions under Rule 218 appeared on the list of business, of which two were taken up. Tabled by PPPP senators, the taken up motions dealt with the overall standard of education and the performance of hospitals being run by the federal government.

On the other hand, the unaddressed motions were related to the performance of National Highway Authority, the federal government’s decision to merge Benazir Income Support Program (BISP) with Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, and the overall economic situation in the country.

Ten out of 60 starred questions were taken up during the session, while the Senators raised 23 supplementary questions. The House discussed a question for 47 minutes under Rule 60 which dealt with privileges for former chief justices of Pakistan. Moreover, the House also passed a motion of thanks to express gratitude with the president for his address to both the Houses of the Parliament on June 2, 2014.

A total of 24 reports were presented before the House during the session. Three reports were related to legislative bills, while five reports dealing with privilege motions, a starred question, a point of order and lawmakers’ visit to the Czech Republic were also presented. In addition, 16 periodic reports prepared by various standing committees were also presented.

The House also took up a CAN jointly sponsored by ANP and PPPP lawmakers regarding issuance of a presidential order to regulate the election of senators belonging to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA).

The session witnessed a total of four walkouts. The first walkout was staged by opposition lawmakers along with members from FATA against the presidential order to regulate the Senate’s elections. The second walkout was also staged by opposition lawmakers during the second sitting against police baton-charge on farmers in Punjab.

The entire opposition (except MQM members, two PPPP members and an ANP senator) walked out of the House during the third sitting to demand the withdrawal of privileges for a former chief justice. In addition, MQM and PPPP staged another walkout during the last sitting to protest the Rangers’ raid at the MQM Headquarters in Karachi on Wednesday.

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