**FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No.2, Session No.16 of the National Assembly**

**Low Attendance Persists in National Assembly**

ISLAMABAD, November 27, 2014: Starting 27 minutes behind the schedule, the National Assembly continued to witness low attendance as only 15% of the lawmakers were present at the start and 11% at the adjournment during the second sitting of the 16th session on Thursday, says Free and Fair Election Network in its daily factsheet based on direct observation of the proceedings.

The House resumed the debate on the President’s address to the joint session of the Parliament on June 2, 2014 in which four lawmakers – one each from JUI-F, MQM, PPPP and an independent member participated for 55 minutes.

A PML-N lawmaker staged a walkout to express his reservation with political parties in Sindh, alleging that they have politicized the issue of minor girls handed over to a family by a teacher over non-payment of debt.

The House took up two calling attention notices (CANs) – one on Estate Office’s failure to vacate the government’s residential accommodations from illegal occupants and the other regarding unjustified gas load management.

The Speaker chaired the sitting for 73 minutes, while the remaining proceedings were presided over by a member of Panel of Chairperson. The Prime Minister, the Opposition Leader and the Deputy Speaker did not attend the sitting.

The following are some key observations of the House proceedings:

**Members’ Participation in the House Proceedings:**

* The National Assembly met for three hours and four minutes.
* The sitting began at 1127 hours against the scheduled time of 1100 hours, witnessing a delay of 27 minutes.
* The Speaker chaired the sitting for 73 minutes, while the remaining proceedings were presided over by a member of Panel of Chairperson.
* The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition were not present during the sitting.
* Fifty legislators (15%) were present at the start; while 37 (11%) lawmakers were seen at the time of adjournment. A maximum of 112 members (33%) were observed to be present at one point of the sitting.
* The parliamentary leaders of PkMAP, APML, JI, MQM, QWP and PML-Z attended the sitting.
* Seven non-Muslims lawmakers were present in the sitting.

**Representation and Responsiveness**

* The House resumed the debate on the President’s address to the joint session of the Parliament in which four lawmakers – one each from JUI-F, MQM, PPPP and an independent member – participated for 55 minutes.
* The House took up two CANs – the first on the Estate Office’s failure to vacate the government’s residential accommodations from illegal occupants and the second on unjustified gas load management.
* The House took up 11 out of 37 starred questions (requiring oral as well as written responses) while the members raised 13 supplementary questions.
* A JI lawmaker moved a privilege motion against the Director General of Immigration & Passport for not initiating an inquiry into alleged corruption at the passport office in Dir. However, the lawmaker withdrew the motion after receiving assurance from the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs to probe this issue at the earliest.

**Order and Institutionalization**

* Nine points of order consumed 29 (16%) minutes of the proceedings’ time.
* A PML-N lawmaker staged a walkout to express reservation with political parties in Sindh, alleging that they have politicized the issue of minor girls handed over to a family by a teacher over non-payment of debt.

**Transparency**

* ‘Orders of the Day’ was available to the legislators, observers and others.
* Information on members’ attendance was not shared with the 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 lawmakers.

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