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**FAFEN Preliminary Report on 16th Session of the National Assembly**

**Session Marked by Low Interest of Members**

* **Six bills remain unaddressed**
* **43 members observed at the start and 52 at the end on average**

ISLAMABAD, December 09, 2014: Low attendance of members, unfinished agenda, lack of quorum and points of order interrupting the regular proceedings marked the 16th session of the National Assembly, says a Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its preliminary report on Tuesday.

The session comprising nine sittings started on November 26 and was prorogued on December 8. The House met for 22 hours and 42 minutes, with each sitting lasting two hours and 31 minutes with a delay of 32 minutes on average.

The House did not take up six bills (one treasury-backed and five private members’ bills) appearing on the Orders of the Day, 202 starred (requiring oral replies) questions, six motion under Rule 259, five resolutions and two calling attention notices.

Five private member’s bills – the Pakistan Private Courier Services Regulatory Authority of Pakistan Bill 2014, the Compulsory Education of Arabic Bill 2014, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2014, the National Database and Registration Authority (Amendment) Bill 2014 and the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2014 (Amendment in Article 53) – were left unaddressed.

Since the National Assembly Secretariat does not make the members’ attendance record of public, FAFEN conducts a headcount of lawmakers at the beginning and end of each sitting and documents the actual time spent on the floor of the House by the Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Members’ attendance remained low during the entire session as 43 legislators were present at the beginning of each sitting and 52 at the end on an average. Although, the quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the session, it was not pointed out by any of the Members.

The Prime Minister did not attend the entire session while the Leader of the Opposition was present in four sittings for 17% of the session time. The Speaker chaired 54% of the total session time, while the Deputy Speaker presided over 33% of the session. The remaining time was chaired by a member of the Panel of Chairpersons.

The parliamentary leader of QWP attended eight sittings, followed by the leaders of PkMAP, PML-Z, JI and APML (seven each), MQM (six), PML-F (five), ANP (four), AMLP (three) and JUI-F and BNP (two each). The parliamentary leaders of NPP, AJIP, NP and PML attended only one sitting each.

Members raised a total of 110 points of order which consumed 23% of the total session time. Like previous sessions, the agenda for Private Members’ Day was ambitiously set, making it difficult for the House to complete it in a single sitting.

The House debated the motion under Rule 259 regarding the problems of internally displaced persons (IDPs) due to the ongoing military operation in the tribal belt. Nine members – two from PML-N and one each from PPPP, QWP JI, MQM, PTI and two independents – debated the motion for two hours and three minutes.

The House adopted three out of eight resolutions appearing on the list of business. Tabled by the State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, one of the adopted resolutions condemned the killing of former JUI-F senator Khalid Mehmood Soomro in Sukkur. The House adopted a PPPP-sponsored resolution urging the government to take care of people with disabilities and ensure implementation of their employment quota. The third adopted resolution requested the government to take steps in order to improve Pakistan International Airlines.

In terms of executive oversight, 45 members sponsored 17 calling attention notices, of which 15 were taken up. Similarly, 70 out of 272 starred questions appearing on the Orders of the Day were taken up and responded by the relevant ministries. Moreover, 92 supplementary questions were raised by the MPAs.

The session witnessed two walkouts. A PML-N member staged an eight-minute walkout against political parties of Sindh, alleging that they have politicized the issue of minor girls handed over to a family by a teacher over non-payment of debt. Similarly, JI members walked out from the House for 58 minutes against alleged police torture on visually-impaired protesters in Lahore.

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