

**FAFEN’s Report on 11th Session of the Punjab Assembly**

**Punjab Assembly Session Marked by Low Attendance**

* **Chief Minister, Opposition Leader Remain Absent**

ISLAMABAD, January 6, 2015:The Punjab Assembly’s 11th session was marked by the passage of six bills and adoption of 15 resolutions amid low attendance, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

The House failed to take up the complete agenda on Orders of the Day, with points of order interrupting regular proceedings.

The session lasted 32 hours and met in 16 sittings. On average, each sitting lasted nearly two hours and started with a delay of 59 minutes.

Since the Punjab Assembly does not share the members’ attendance record with the 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, Chief Minister and the Opposition Leader.

The attendance of members remained low throughout the session – with an average of 20 (5% of the total membership of 371) members present at the beginning and 55 (15%) at the end of each sitting.

The Chief Minister and the Opposition Leader did not attend any of the sittings. The Speaker chaired the proceedings for 62% of the duration, followed by the Deputy Speaker (30%) and the members of the Panel of Chairpersons (2%). The remaining 5% of the time was consumed in breaks.

The parliamentary leaders of PML, PML-Z, BNA-P and PNML did not attend the entire session. On the other hand, the JI leader attended 13 sittings while the PPPP leader was present in eight sittings.

The quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the session and was pointed during the first, fourth, 12th, 13th, and 15th sitting. The first, 12th and 15th sittings were adjourned due to lack of quorum, while the quorum was found to be complete to be complete upon counting during the fourth and 13th sittings.

The Punjab Assembly adopted 15 resolutions. Eight resolutions (two each) were related to agriculture, child rights, education and health while seven resolutions (one each) dealt with overseas Pakistanis, rights of disabled persons, women rights, Islamic teachings, tribute to Majeed Nizami (late), registration of mobile repairing services and condemnation of a terrorist attack at a school in Peshawar on December 16, 2014.

The House unanimously passed six bills – three new pieces of legislation and three amendments to existing laws. Three bills were introduced, while one was not taken up. One ordinance was also presented during the session.

A total of 428 out of 461 starred questions (requiring oral replies) were taken up and responded by the relevant ministries. Moreover, 306 supplementary questions were raised by the members during the session.

The House witnessed three walkouts that consumed 28 minutes of the proceedings. The opposition benches staged walkouts during the second and third sittings to protest the mishandling of PTI workers in Faisalabad. Similarly, JI members staged a token walkout for two minutes over a tax waiver for a minority group in Pakistan.

*This session report is based on direct observation of the Punjab Assembly proceedings conducted by PATTAN Development Organization – a member organization of FAFEN. Errors and omissions are regretted.*