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**FAFEN Preliminary Report on 117th session of the Senate**

**Senate: Seven bills passed during the 117th session**

ISLAMABAD, July 29, 2015: Seven bills were and passed and two resolutions adopted while the House continued to witness low attendance of the lawmakers, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

The session spanned over five sittings, started on July 6 and was prorogued sine die on July 10. The session lasted for a total of 15 hours and 15 minutes. On average, each sitting started two minutes behind the schedule with 15 members present at the outset and 36 at the end.

Since the Senate 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 the members on the floor of the House.

The Prime Minister did not attend of any of the five sittings while the Leader of the House and the Opposition Leader attended all five sittings for 95% and 88 % of the proceedings’ time, respectively.

The Chairman and the Deputy Chairman attended all the five sittings and presided 79% and 21% of the proceedings, respectively. Among the parliamentary leaders, the BNP-M, PkMAP and NP leaders attended all the sittings, followed by JUI-F, MQM, PTI, PML-F and PML leaders who attended four sittings each while the PPPP parliamentary leader attended three sittings.

The House passed seven bills during the session. Two bills passed during the second sitting included the Legal Practitioners and Bar Councils (Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Seed (Amendment) Bill 2015. Four other bills that were passed during the fourth sitting included Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government Bill 2015, the Federal Employees Benevolent Fund and Group Insurance (First and Second Amendment) Bills and the Capital University of Science and Technology Bill, 2015 whereas the Credit Bureaus Bill 2015 was passed during the fifth sitting.

On the other hand, four bills were not considered by the House, which included Safeguard Measures (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Countervailing Duties Bill 2015, the Anti-Dumping Duties Bill 2015 and the National Tariff Commission Bill 2015.

The House adopted two resolutions regarding ban on manufacture & usage of polythene bags, and the need to take effective steps to counter the activities of foreign intelligence agencies in fomenting terrorism in Pakistan. Three resolutions not taken up by the House were related to expediting work on the on-going power projects, provision of free and compulsory education to all the children and launching housing schemes for the low paid government employees.

The House adopted the proposed amendments in Rules 9, 79, 158, 166, 182 and 277 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Senate, 2012 along with the insertion of new rules 162-A and 262-A.

Two commenced motions under Rule 218 were debated by the House. One of these was about the spread of hepatitis and the other one was regarding depletion of water level in Balochistan. Two other commenced motion under Rule 218 were not discussed which were about gas load shedding and intrusion of FC in the affairs of the Provincial Government.

Three motions under Rule 218 were moved for discussions which were about the responsibility of the Federation in pursuance of Article 148 of the Constitution, broadening the tax base and issuance of fake degrees. Two motions regarding steps to eradicate polio and situation arising out of unemployment were not moved due to absence of movers.

The House took up six calling attention notices (CANs) regarding non-regularization of services of over 1,200 teachers of FGEI & Cantonment Garrison, non-provision of funds and other facilities to the National Commission for Human Rights, ban on the INGO Save the Children, illegal and forcible grabbing of land in villages of Islamabad, destruction of homes and infrastructure along the working boundary due to heavy mortar shelling from the Indian side and allotment of full quota of Umra Visas by the Saudi Embassy to the private agents.

One of the unaddressed CAN was about the instructions being given by the Ministry of Water and Power to PESCO and other DISCOs to carry out seven-hour electricity load-shedding in industries during Ramadan.

Two adjournment motions appeared on the agenda during the session. One of the adjournment motions was about un-constitutional and illegal steps taken by the Election Commission of Pakistan for holding Local Government elections in Islamabad Capital Territory was withdrawn while other about proposed conversion of 1,400 acre land of National Agricultural Research Centre by the CDA into residential/commercial plots was admitted for discussion.

Two periodic reports about construction of Khanpur road by NHA and splitting Peshawar into two parts were not taken up by the House. Another report about charging of tax on the free domestic air tickets being issued to the employees of PIA was deferred.

State Minister for Parliamentary Affairs responded a public petition regarding non-installation of Machine Readable Passport System in the Embassy of Pakistan, Manila for Pakistani community residing in Philippines.

The House witnessed presentation of 15 periodical reports by ministers on matters referred by the House. In addition, 17 reports by various Senate Standing Committees were also presented during the session of which ten were related to legislative bills.

Thirty-six of 92 (39%) starred questions were taken up during the session. Additionally, the senators raised 103 supplementary questions. One question of privilege was submitted by PPPP lawmaker against PIA official, which was referred to the relevant committee.

A total of 91 points of order were raised during the session which consumed 124 minutes of the session’s duration. The entire opposition staged a token walkout for one minute during fourth sitting against the announcement of schedule for local government elections in Islamabad without any legislation.

*This publication is based on direct observation of the Senate proceedings conducted by PATTAN Development Organization – a member organization of FAFEN. Errors and omissions are excepted.*