****

**FAFEN’s Preliminary Report on the 24th Session of the National Assembly**

**NA Session: 12 Bills Passed, Nine Resolutions Adopted amid Low Attendance**

* **Prime Minister attends one out of 14 sittings**
* **11% lawmakers present at the start, 15% at the end of each sitting, on average**

ISLAMABAD, August 13, 2015: The 24th session of the National Assembly was marked by the passage of twelve government bills and adoption of nine resolutions as the House continued to witness low attendance of lawmakers, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

The session, comprising 14 sittings, started on July 27 and was prorogued on August 13, 2015. On average, each sitting started 32 minutes behind the schedule and lasted three hours and four minutes.

Lawmakers’ attendance remained low throughout the session, with an average of 38 (11%) members present at the start and 52 (15%) at the end of each sitting. The Prime Minister attended only one sitting, while the Opposition Leader was present in nine out of 14 sittings.

The Speaker, who was present in 11 sittings, presided over 52% of the session. The Deputy Speaker was present in 13 sittings and chaired 41% of the proceedings. The House took three breaks consuming 7% (179 minutes) of the session time.

Twelve government bills – the National University of Medical Sciences Bill 2015, the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government Bill 2015, the Islamabad Subordinate Judiciary Service Tribunal Bill 2015, the Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill 2013, the Credit Bureaus Bill 2015, the Electoral Rolls (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Delimitation of Constituencies (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Safeguard Measures (Amendment) Bill 2015, the Countervailing Duties Bill 2015, the Anti-Dumping Duties Bill 2015, the National Tariff Commission Bill 2015 and the State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2015 – were passed during the session.

In addition, four bills – including two private – were introduced and sent to the relevant standing committees while another five (including four private bills) were not taken up by the House.

The House rejected two private bills including the National Database and Registration Authority (Amendment) Bill 2015 and the Constitution (Amendment) Bill 2015 (Amendment of Article 25-A) whereas the Income Tax (Amendment) Ordinance 2015 was also presented in the House.

The House adopted nine resolutions, of which five were about extension in period of five ordinances including the Safeguard Measures (Amendment) Ordinance 2015, the Countervailing Duties Ordinance 2015, the National Tariff Commission Ordinance 2015, the Anti-Dumping Duties Ordinance 2015 and the Publication of Laws of Pakistan (Regulation) Ordinance 2015. The other resolutions adopted by the House were regarding renewing commitment to ensure sovereignty of the Parliament, condemning the Kasur incident, steps to control electricity pilferage and ensuring protection of minority rights in the country.

One of the resolutions was debated by the House for 71 minutes. The resolution urged the government to construct new water reservoirs to control the water shortage in the country. Thirteen other resolutions were not taken up which appeared on the agenda on three private members’ day of the session.

Twenty-one Calling Attention Notices (CANs) addressed to various ministries/departments were taken up during the session. Six of these CANs were related to Cabinet Secretariat followed by two each to Ministries of National Health Services; Finance; Religious Affairs; Climate Change; Water and Power and one each to Ministries of Communication; Housing and Works; Interior and Narcotics Control; National Food Security and Foreign Affairs. One of the CAN addressed to Capital Administration and Development Division was not taken up by the House.

In addition, the House witnessed the presentation of 27 Standing Committees' Periodic Reports, three reports of Standing Committee on Rules of Procedure and Privileges. Four reports on bills were presented while second and third Quarterly Reports for the year 2014-15 of the Central Board of State Bank of Pakistan and 2nd Biannual Monitoring on the implementation of 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) Award (January-June, 2014) were also presented. An authentic copy of President’s address was also laid by the house in 4th sitting

The House took up only one out of 14 motions under Rule 259 to debate the steps being taken by the government to form a National Commission on Minorities. On the other hand, motions dealing with foreign policy, allotment of plots to federal government employees, disenfranchisement of women, performance of Pakistan Cricket Board, climate changes, sweet homes of Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal, sale of counterfeit medicines, unavailability of female medical staff in Federal Government hospitals, cross-border terrorist activities, new Islamabad Airport, Kala Bagh Dam, non-utilization of Railways’ assets and deaths in Sindh and other areas due to heat wave were left unaddressed.

The House took up 99 out of 385 (26%) starred questions appearing on the agenda, while the lawmakers raised 197 supplementary questions during the session. In addition, the members raised a total of 205 Points of Orders that consumed 661 (26%) of the session while a Motion of Thanks to express gratitude to the President of Pakistan for his address to the joint session on June 4, 2015 was moved by the Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination but not debated.

The House did not consider amendment in rule 192 of the Rules of Procedures due to absence of the mover while insertion of new rule 125-A was rejected by the House which was about attaching a certificate with notice of legislative bills, assuring that the bill is not in contradiction with the injunctions of Islam.

Two motions under Rule 44 – one each submitted by MQM and JUI-F lawmakers – to deseat the PTI lawmakers who did not show up in the Assembly for more than 40 consecutive days without leave application were on the agenda during three sittings. However, the House passed two separate motions during 9th sitting moved by MQM and JUI-F lawmakers seeking withdrawal of their motions under Rule 44.

The session witnessed three walkouts that consumed 62 minutes (3%) of the session. PPPP and PTI lawmakers walked out of the House during 11th sitting for three and 17 minutes respectively to protest the exclusion of their submitted agenda items from the Orders of the Day. The proposed agenda items were aimed at condemning the child abuse in Kasur.

During the 13th sitting, MQM’s parliamentary leader, Dr Farooq Sattar, announced the resignation of his party’s lawmakers from the Lower House of the Parliament.

In the same sitting, MQM lawmakers also walked out for 27 minutes to express sympathy with victims of Kasur incident and against the alleged target killing of one of their party worker.

In the last (14th) sitting, the Opposition lawmakers staged a walkout for 15 minutes against the ministerial absence and treasury lawmakers’ low interest in House proceedings.

*This session report is based on direct observation of the National Assembly proceedings conducted by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) – a member organization of FAFEN. Errors and omissions are excepted.*