

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF PAKISTAN



FAFEN PARLIAMENT MONITOR

35th SESSION

September 2-9, 2016

FREE AND FAIR ELECTION NETWORK

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ABBREVIATIONS

AJIP	Awami Jamhoori Ittehad Pakistan
ANP	Awami National Party
APML	All Pakistan Muslim League
AMLPP	Awami Muslim League Pakistan
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
BNP	Balochistan National Party
CANs	Calling Attention Notices
CDA	Capital Development Authority
FATA	The Federally Administered Tribal Areas
ICT	Islamabad Capital Territory
IND	Independent Member
JI	Jamaat-e-Islami
JUI-F	Jamiat-e-Ulema-Islam (Fazlur Rehman)
MQM	Muttahida Qaumi Movement
MUR	Motion under Rule
NP	National Party
NPP	National Peoples Party
PKMAP	Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party
PML	Pakistan Muslim League
PML-F	Pakistan Muslim League (Functional)
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz)
PML-Z	Pakistan Muslim League (Zia-ul-Haq Shaheed)
PPPP	Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
QWP-S	Qaumi Watan Party (Sherpao)

Total
Sittings

6

NA Session Marked by Politicking and Low Attendance

- Private Members Agenda Becomes Victim of Absenteeism
- PPPP, ANP Parliamentary Leaders Attended all Six Sittings

Working
Days

8

The National Assembly could not take up a considerable portion of its agenda during 35th session owing to low attendance and political tussle between treasury and opposition benches.

fluctuating trends and one sitting was adjourned due to lack of quorum.

A number of legislative proposals were dropped or deferred while several standing committee reports could not be presented due to the absence of relevant lawmakers. The private members agenda also became casualty of low attendance.

Cumulative
Duration

16

Hours & 1 Minutes

The session began with a resolution against the provocative statements of MQM supremo Altaf Hussain against Pakistan and ended with a walkout by parliamentarians of MQM against "pushing the party to wall" despite dissociating itself from the remarks of its founder. Remainder of the session was described by the controversy emanating from the rulings of the Speaker on the disqualification references against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, PTI Chief Imran Khan and other lawmakers. The opposition parties accused the Custodian of the House of showing partisanship in his rulings. They protested on floor of the House as well as staged walkouts from the proceedings.

The treasury legislation focused on taxation, security and agriculture while the private members' legislative proposals were concerned with transparency, accountability, human rights and matters of federation.

Human Rights Issues

The lawmakers underlined a number of human rights issues during 35th session by bringing legislative proposals and seeking government oversight through questions. Unlike the previous session, no human rights issue was raised on Calling Attention Notices or Motions under Rule 259. The main issues discussed during the proceedings were related to forced conversions, misuse of blasphemy laws, state of

Total
Break Time

22

Minutes

Both the Prime Minister and the PTI leader are often criticized for staying absent from the Parliament, however, the two attended one sitting each during this session. The attendance of other lawmakers showed

Average
Sitting Delay

4

Minutes

Members at Outset
(Average)

33
present

Members at End
(Average)

41
present

Maximum Members
(Average)

203
present

minorities, rehabilitation of families affected by war on terror, and violence against women and children. Some of these issues were raised during the last session which had remained unaddressed.

Though some human-rights specific legislative proposals were similar as submitted during last session, but there was a new government bill namely the Hindu Marriage Bill 2016 providing for solemnization of marriages between the people of Hindu community. The community has been demanding a law for registration of their marriages since long. However, this bill could not be introduced despite being on the agenda twice. The bills on protection of minorities and minorities' rights commission, pending since last session, were deferred again. A bill providing for rehabilitation and welfare of disabled persons was also dropped due to the absence of relevant lawmaker.

The lawmakers also highlighted issues of human rights during Question Hours by asking seven questions related to the forced conversion of religious minorities, violent crimes against women, establishment of minorities commission, rehabilitation of families affected by the military operations, Pakistanis stranded in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, misuse of blasphemy laws and the status of refugees in the country.

Duration and Attendance

The proceedings started almost on the schedule during the reporting session except for one occasion when the sitting was delayed by 16

minutes. The cumulative duration of six sittings was 16 hours and one minute while the House took a 22-minute break during the session. On average, every sitting continued for two hours and 40 minutes and was attended by 203 (60%) lawmakers.

The Leader of the House (Prime Minister) attended only the last sitting for 57 minutes while the Leader of the Opposition came to four sittings and remained present for four hours and 57 minutes. Major portion of the proceedings (65%) was presided over by the Speaker while the Deputy Speaker was present in one sitting only and chaired the proceedings for just 25 minutes. The remaining proceedings were presided over by a Member of the Panel of Chairpersons. The parliamentary leaders of PPPP and ANP were most regular among others as they attended the entire session.

Legislation

Important pieces of legislation appeared on the agenda of Lower House during 35th session, including a government bill that provides for inquiry into Panama Papers as well as a Tax Laws (Amendment) Ordinance. A treasury bill providing for solemnization of Hindu marriages also became part of agenda but was not introduced. In total, the House passed two government bills while three government bills were sent to the relevant Standing Committees for further scrutiny.

Besides the bills on Panama Papers inquiry and taxation ordinance, the treasury legislation included amendments to the

PARLIAMENTARY LEADERS ATTENDANCE



Syed Naveed Qammar



PPPP

6

attended



Ghulam Ahmed Bilour



ANP

6

attended



Aftab Ahmed Sherpao



QWP-S

5

attended



Sahibzada Tariqullah



JI

4

attended



Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed



AMLP

3

attended



Muhammad Ijaz-ul-Haq



PML-Z

3

attended



Iftikhar Uddin



APML

2

attended



Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman



JUI-F

2

attended



Ch. Pervez Ellahi



PML

2

attended



Mahmood Khan Achakzai



PkMAP

1

attended



Saddar-ud-Din Rashidi



PML-F

1

attended



Imran Khan



PTI

1

attended



Dr. M. Farooq Sattar



MQM

1

attended



Engr. Usman Khan Tarakai



AJIP

0

attended



Sayed Essa Nori



BNP

0

attended



Sardar Kamal Bangulzai



NP

0

attended



Ghulam Murtaza Jatoi

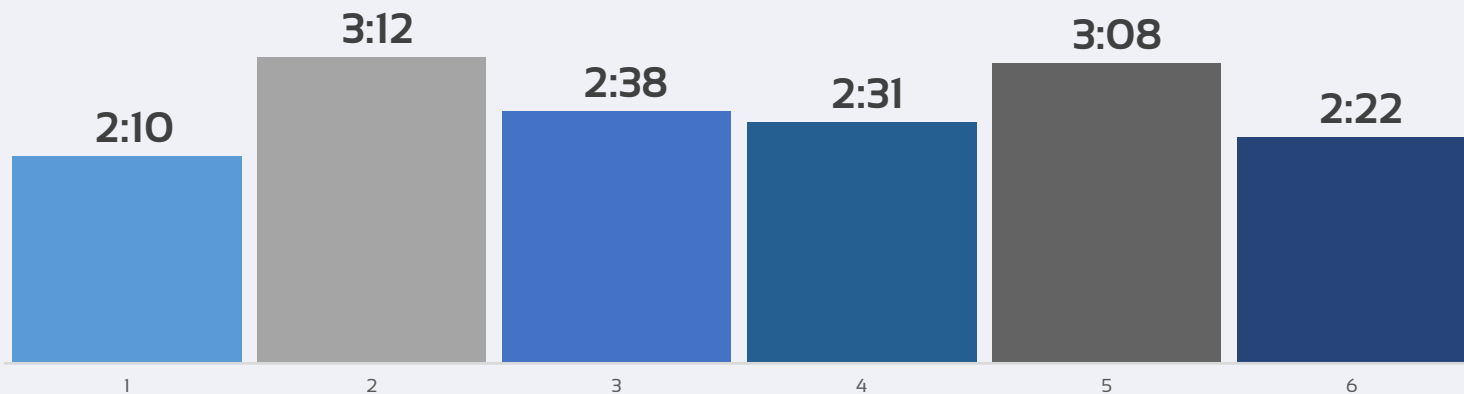


NPP

0

attended

TOTAL SITTING TIME (hh:mm)



KEY MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE



Speaker

Attended **6** Sittings | Presided for **65%** of total session's time



Deputy Speaker

Attended **2** Sittings | Presided for **2%** of total session's time



Prime Minister

Attended **1** Sittings | Spent **6%** time in the House

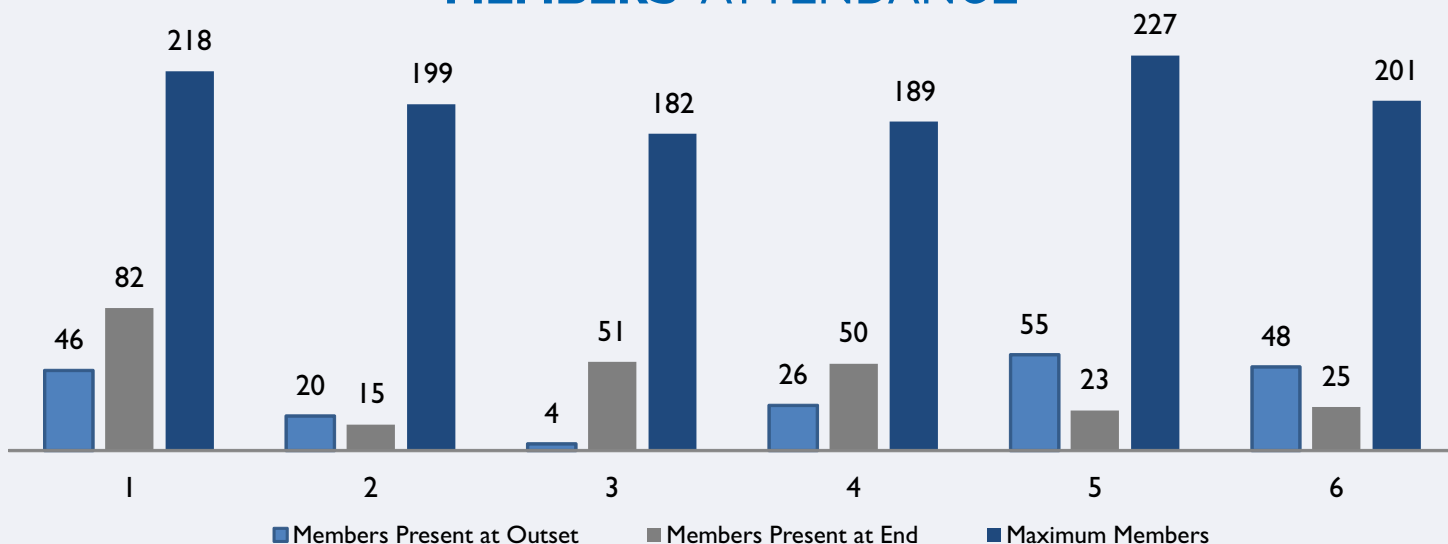


Leader of the Opposition

Attended **4** Sittings | Spent **24%** time in the House

A member of Panel of Chairpersons presided over the proceeding for 32% of session's total time.

MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE



S H I G H T S S E S S I O N S

2

Government
Bills Passed

National Command Authority Act 2010 and the Post Office Act 1898.

The pace of Private Members legislation slowed down as compared to the previous sessions as only one Private Member bill could be introduced in comparison with 11 bills introduced during the last session. The sharp fall could be blamed on low attendance of lawmakers as 11 Private Member bills were either deferred or dropped due to the absence of relevant lawmakers. The sole Private Member bill introduced sought to amend the law governing the Federal Public Service Commission.

matters and the powers of such commissions.

[The Tax Laws \(Amendment\) Ordinance, 2016](#)

The Ordinance provides for adjustment of provincial sales tax paid on services as an input tax against output tax liability under the Sales Tax Act, 1990.

[The Federal Public Service Commission \(Amendment\) Bill, 2016](#)

The bill seeks to expedite the recruitment process of the Federal Public Service Commission.

3

Resolutions
Adopted

Short Introduction of the Bills
Passed and Introduced

Passed Bills

[The National Command Authority \(Amendment\) Bill 2016](#)

The bill ensures continuous provision of funds for the authority and also defines the legal status of the employees of authority.

[The Plant Breeders Rights Bill 2016](#)

The bill seeks to promote and develop breeding of new plant varieties and protection of the rights of breeders of such varieties.

Resolutions

The National Assembly adopted three resolutions during the session while three others were dropped due to the absence of movers while one resolution was deferred. The House condemned the provocative statements of Altaf Hussain against the country as well as the death sentence of leader of Jamat-e-Islami Bangladesh Mir Qasim Ali. Meanwhile, a Private Member resolution adopted by the House sought establishment of separate counter for women at offices of National Database Registration Authority and Passport Offices.

0

Government
Documents Laid

Introduced Bills

[The Post Office \(Amendment\) Bill, 2016](#)

The bill provides for issuance of postal order of value more than fifty rupees.

[The Pakistan Commissions of Inquiry Bill, 2016](#)

The bill provides for setting up commissions of inquiry for various

Amendments to the Rules

The House could not take up a motion to amend the National Assembly Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business. The proposed amendment had sought to limit the days allotted for debate on Motion of Thanks to the President for addressing the Parliament.

29

Committee
Reports
Presented

6

CANs
Taken Up

232

Questions
Asked

53

Starred
Questions
Taken Up

89

Supplementary
Questions Asked

Committee Reports/ Government Papers

The Standing Committees presented 29 reports to the House during the session. Ten of these reports were on the legislative proposals forwarded to the committees and three on the Questions of Privileges moved by the lawmakers. The remaining reports were periodical performance reports of the committees required under Rule 234-A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business.

Motions under Rule 259

The House did not take up five motions of Private Members under Rule 259 to discuss various matters of public importance, including the performance of the Council of Islamic Ideology, excessive billing of electricity, increase in the cost of construction of New Islamabad Airport, population growth rate and media's code of conduct. The Motion of Thanks to the President for addressing the Parliament also appeared on the agenda repeatedly throughout the session but was not discussed.

Calling Attention Notices

The lawmakers brought various issues of public concern to the floor of the House through nine Calling Attention Notices. The House took up six of these notices and the relevant ministers or parliamentary secretaries made statements on behalf of the executive. The parliamentarians of PML-N sponsored four CANs while PPP, PTI, MQM and JI lawmakers brought one CAN each. Moreover, one CAN was co-sponsored by

lawmakers of PTI, PML-N and JI.

The lawmakers highlighted the issues regarding mushroom growth of illegal housing societies in Islamabad, removal of top government officials from the Board of Interstate Gas Systems (Pvt.) Limited, delay in allotments of Bhara Kahu Housing Scheme, closure of Benazir Debit Card Centre in Buner, poor results of intermediate students of government colleges in Islamabad and non-payment of stipend to Interns under the National Internship Programme.

Questions

The Question Hour was held in five out of six sittings. The lawmakers asked 178 Starred Questions and 54 Unstarred Questions during five Question Hours. The Rules of Procedure require the executive to answer a Starred Question orally as well as in writing while the Unstarred Questions are to be replied only in writing. However, the National Assembly took up only 53 (30%) Starred Questions for oral answers.

The questions were addressed to 34 government ministries and departments with highest number of questions posed to the Ministry of Interior & Narcotics Control (33) followed by Ministry of Commerce (20) and Capital Administrations and Development Division (17).

Points of Order

The lawmakers raised 55 Points of Order (POs) consuming one third of the proceedings (five hours and 18 minutes). Most of the POs were concerned with constituency matters, political developments

4

Walkouts

2

Quorum
Identified

and current affairs.

Quorum

The opposition lawmakers belonging to PTI and PPPP pointed out quorum twice during the session. Once, the quorum was found complete on counting while on second occasion, it was incomplete and led to the adjournment of the sitting.

Protests

The opposition parties staged walkouts from the House against display of alleged partisan attitude of the Speaker on issue of references against Prime Minister, Imran Khan and other lawmakers. Besides this, the opposition also protested against the Tax Laws (Amendment) Ordinance, 2016. MQM lawmakers did not join their opposition colleagues in walkout against the Speaker and staged a walkout against harassing their party members in Karachi.

This report is based on direct observation of the proceedings of the National Assembly conducted by Free and Fair Election Network. Every effort has been made to keep this report, which deals with on-floor performance of the Members, accurate and comprehensive. Errors and omissions are excepted.

ABOUT FAFEN

- FAFEN is one of the most credible networks of civil society organizations working for strengthening citizens' voice and accountability in Pakistan since 2006.
- FAFEN has harnessed information technology for real-time monitoring, facilitation and technical backstopping of partners for effective and result-based program delivery.
- FAFEN is the only civil society group to have been invited by the Judicial Commission to present the evidence of illegalities and irregularities documented through the course of General Elections 2013 Observation. The systemic and procedural issues identified by FAFEN have been acknowledged by the commission in its detailed findings.
- FAFEN's recommendations for electoral reforms have contributed to the work of Parliamentary Committee for Electoral Reforms.
- FAFEN's advocacy for parliamentary transparency, accountability and reforms has shaped public discourse on parliamentary reforms. Improved citizens' access to parliamentary information including daily public release of parliamentarians' attendance records can be directly attributed to FAFEN's work.
- FAFEN deployed 18,000 and 40,000 non-partisan and trained observers for the systematic observation of general election 2008 and 2013, respectively, largest citizens' observation ever undertaken in Pakistan.
- FAFEN's evidence and recommendations for reforms have improved the quality of public and political discourse on elections, its issues and need for reforms. Leading political parties and media houses extensively use FAFEN's election findings and analysis to build a case for reforms.
- With more than 16,700 followers on Twitter and around 72,000 on Facebook, FAFEN is considered one of the most reliable sources of electoral and parliamentary information in the country.

Free and Fair Election Network
www.fafen.org

