Three Years of the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan
A Citizens’ Report on Performance

August 2021
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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CII  Council of Islamic Ideology
FATF  Financial Action Task Force
IMF  International Monitory Fund
KPIs  Key Performance Indicators
MNA  Member National Assembly
NA  National Assembly
NAB  National Accountability Bureau
PAT  Pakistan Awami Tehreek
PILDAT  Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency
PM  Prime Minister
PML-N  Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz
PPP  Pakistan People’s Party
PTI  Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
**Preface**

The 15th National Assembly of Pakistan has officially completed three years of its 5-year term on August 12, 2021.

In keeping with the PILDAT tradition of compiling assessment of performance of the National Assembly from the citizens’ perspective since 2002, this report examines, based on key performance indicators, on how the 15th National Assembly has carried out its constitutional role.

In order to provide a comparative assessment on key performance indicators, this report compares the performance during the first, second and third year of the assembly. The combined performance of the three years is also compared with the three-year performance of the previous (14th) National Assembly wherever data could be accessed. This report essentially covers the period from August 13, 2018 to August 12, 2021.

**Disclaimer**

This report has been prepared using the information and date obtained from public sources. PILDAT team has made every effort to ensure accuracy of data and content in this report and any omission or error is therefore, not deliberate.

August 2021
Executive Summary

This report looks at Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in reviewing performance of the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan as it completed third year of its 5-year term. In addition to comparison between three years, the report also draws comparative analysis of performance between 3 years of the 15th National Assembly and the same period of 14th National Assembly.

Legislation

Legislative activity has seen a sharp increase in the third year of the 15th National Assembly as it has passed 60 laws. This is 100 % increase over 30 bills passed in the second year by the Assembly. The first year had seen the passage of only 10 bills.

The 15th National Assembly has passed 100 bills during the first three years, compared to 69 total bills which were passed by the 14th National Assembly in its first 3 years. The increase in legislative activity in the 15th National Assembly in its first three years is, therefore, 45% higher than the legislation during the first three years of the previous (14th ) National Assembly.

Figure 1: Comparison of Bills passed in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly

Ordinances
Another positive development has been the decrease in the number of ordinances laid by the Government in the Assembly during the third year. 20 ordinances were laid in the Assembly in the third year, compared to 31 ordinances laid in the Assembly during its second year, which is a decrease of about 35%.

How situation in this context is not so encouraging when it is compared to the previous assembly. 29 ordinances were laid by the previous government in the first 3 years of the 14th National Assembly compared to 58 ordinances laid by the current government in the 15th National Assembly in three years, showing 100% increase.

**Figure 2: Comparison of Ordinances laid in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly**

![Comparison of Ordinances laid in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly](image)

**Working Days**

During its third year, the 15th National Assembly has met only for 79 working days, which have seen a decline of 11% from 89 working days in the second year. On the average, 15th National Assembly has met for 88 working days per year in its first 3 years. In comparison, the previous (14th) National Assembly had met for an average of 99 working days per year during its first 3 years. In that sense also, the performance of the 15th National Assembly has declined by 11% compared to the 14th National Assembly.

**Figure 3: Comparison of Working Days in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly**

![Comparison of Working Days in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly](image)
Working Hours

In its third year, the 15th National Assembly has met for 217.10 hours (or 217 hours and 6 minutes). The working hours have declined by 36% from the second year of the Assembly when it had convened for a total of 340.34 (340 hours and 20 minutes). The average working hours of the 15th National Assembly in three years are 284.87 (284 hours and 52 minutes). In the first 3 years of the 14th National Assembly, the average working hours of the Assembly were 312.08 (312 hours and 5 minutes). The average working hours per year have declined in the 15th National Assembly by 27% compared to the previous (14th) National Assembly.

Figure 4: Comparison of Working Hours in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Attendance of MNAs

The third year of the 15th National Assembly has also seen an average 65% attendance of MNAs which is slightly above the 64% average attendance of MNAs during the second year. The combined average of MNAs attendance in first three years of the 15th National Assembly stands at 67%. This is an improvement of 12 percentage points over 55% average attendance of MNAs per year during the first 3 years of the previous 14th National Assembly. The Attendance figures are useful for comparison but these may, however, be misleading as the attendance figures may include all those MNAs who attend even for a brief period of 10 minutes. A more scientific system of computation of attendance is required showing, for example, the maximum and minimum attendance during a sitting.

Figure 5: Attendance Comparison of MNAs in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Attendance of Prime Minister

Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Imran Khan, MNA has only attended 9% of the Assembly sittings in the third year, which is consistent with his attendance during the second year. On average, Prime Minister has attended 12% sittings in the first 3 years of the 15th National Assembly. Former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mr. Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, had attended, on average 16% of the sittings in the first 3 years of the 14th National Assembly of Pakistan.

Figure 6: Attendance Comparison of Prime Ministers in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Attendance of Leaders of the Opposition

Leader of the opposition in the 15th National Assembly, Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA, has attended 13% of the sittings of the Assembly in its third year. This has improved from only 4% of his attendance during the second year of the 15th National Assembly. However, when compared with the average attendance of the previous Leader of the Opposition in the 14th National Assembly, Syed Khurshid Shah, who attended, on average 75% of the sittings of the 14th Assembly in its first 3 years, the average attendance of Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA, is only calculated to be 24% in three years. This may, however, be added that Mr. Shehbaz Sharif had either been unwell or in the custody of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) for a considerable period leading to his extended absence from the Assembly. Mr. Shehbaz Sharif had resigned as Chairman, Public Accounts Committee on the same grounds.

Figure 7: Attendance Comparison of Leaders of the Opposition in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Budget Session

Despite consistent calls for reform in the budget process in respective National Assemblies, no change has been brought in to allow adequate amount of time required in the most crucial pieces of annual legislation, i.e., Finance Bill. In the third year of the 15th National Assembly, only 16 days have been spent in scrutiny and passage of the Finance bill 2020-2021, a day less than what was spent during the second year. This has been in keeping with the historic average of budget sessions in the National Assembly of about 15 days.

The 15th National Assembly has also seen a decrease of a little under 2 hours in the total time spent during the budget session. However, the 3 year average of time spent in budget session during the 15th National Assembly is 99 hours, which is a 49% increase in average time spent in budget session during three years of the 14th National Assembly.

Figure 8: Comparison of Budget Sittings in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Figure 9: Comparison of Time Spent in Budget Sittings in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly
Comparison of Time Spent in Budget Sittings in 3 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly

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Analysis

Functions of the National Assembly

It is important for citizens to understand what the National Assembly is delivering through its performance.

The National Assembly has three key functions: Representation or to represent the citizens and their issues and interests; Legislation, or to make laws on important issues facing the country; and Oversight, or to monitor the performance of the elected government through plenary and in ministry-wise committees. But how much has the National Assembly been able to effectively discharge these functions?

Representation

In its third year, the 15th National Assembly has only met for a 217.10 hours which translates into an average of 2.75 hours per working day. This average, almost historically consistent with previous Assemblies, is low by any standard. The Lok Sabha in India maintains its normal working hours from 11 am to 6 pm during its sessions, which works out to be 7 hours per sitting.

A closer look at the orders of the day during the third year of the National Assembly shows that in 58 sittings out of 79 sittings, or in 73% of the sittings held during the third year, on average 56% of the planned agenda could not be concluded and was left over for the next sitting. The highest percentage of agenda left over was as high as 96% and lowest was 1% of the planned agenda before the sittings were adjourned. The shortest duration of a sitting during the third year was recorded at 10 minutes on July 19, 2021. The longest sitting of the National Assembly during the third year was 12 hours and 52 minutes on June 23, 2021.

A cursory look at the issues raised by members in the Assembly shows that MNAs raise various constituency-related issues in the house. Most of the issues raised by members in the assembly relate to the provision of basic services to their constituents which is somewhat understandable in a country where, despite developments in seven decades, the system of basic service delivery to citizen has not improved tremendously. MNAs, therefore, much like their counterparts in Provincial Assemblies, tend not to focus on big-picture policy issues facing the country such as the outlook on economy, direction of Pakistan, national security construct or foreign policy paradigm of Pakistan. Instead, their energies and time is mostly spent in serving as a channel to facilitate their constituents. The function of Representation, therefore, does not generally extend beyond constituency concerns. Focus on constituency issues is compounded by the absence of effective elected local governments transferring the burden of local issues to elected members of the National and Provincial Assemblies.

Legislation

The situation is not much different when it comes to effective discharge of the responsibility of Legislation. In the parliamentary form of government traditionally, most of the legislation is considered the forte of the elected government which introduces the laws that require Assembly’s review and passage. Some private members’ bills are also passed by the assemblies. However, an increasing trend has
been observed that more and more draft legislation presented in the Parliament is brought in now to fulfil international commitments. According to an estimate more than one-fourth of the acts passed by Parliament since August 2018 are meant to give effect to one international treaty or the other. During the third parliamentary year alone, of the 60 bills passed by the National Assembly, 15, or 25% relate to Pakistan’s commitment to the IMF and the FATF alone.

An analysis of the reports of the Standing Committees during the third parliamentary year shows that of the 60 bills passed by the National Assembly in third year, 52 or 87% bills were referred to the Standing Committees while 8 or 13% of the bills were not scrutinized by the relevant committees before their passage.

Finance bill is one of the most important legislations every year that requires review and consent of the National Assembly. However, year by year, the time spent in scrutiny and passage of the annual budget hovers between 15 to 17 days or sittings in which the Assembly only goes through the motion of passage of the budget without much time for scrutiny. In the third parliamentary year, the 15th National Assembly held 16 sittings, same as spent during the first year though the sittings had nominally increased to 18 during the second year.

The 13th National Assembly, during the PPP rule, had passed an amendment to rules of procedure and conduct of business of the National Assembly which, under rule 201 (6) required Government Ministries and Divisions to share the proposed Public Sector Development Plan (PSDP) to the counterpart standing committee for input before the PSDP is finalized by the ministries/divisions. PILDAT had requested the Assembly Secretariat but was unable to obtain the information regarding the implementation of this important rule such as how many ministries / divisions actually shared their PSDP with the concerned Standing Committees, how many committees provided the input to the ministries / divisions and how far were the recommendations of the standing committees incorporated in the PSDP before presentation to the assembly.

On April 19, 2021, the National Assembly, by rare consensus between the treasury and the opposition members, passed the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Bill 2020. The law, with minor amendments was passed by the Senate in June 2021. However, after its passage, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs wrote to the Speaker National Assembly in July 2021 to seek a review of the bill by the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) to ascertain whether the bill was repugnant to the injunctions of Islam. It is inexplicable as to why, instead of before, a bill passed by the Parliament should be referred to CII for its advice. This indicates lack of scrutiny of the bill at the committee stage or during debate in the plenary.

The PTI government introduced key amendments to the Elections Act, 2017 pushing for electoral reforms including the use of biometrics and electronic voting machines in elections. The Elections (Amendment) Bill 2020 was bulldozed through the National Assembly on June 10, 2021 alongside 21 other laws. The bill, introduced in the National Assembly on October 16, 2020, was cleared by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs on June 8, 2021 through the protest of opposition members. Similarly, the Election (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2021

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(Ord. No. XI of 2021) was also extended by the National Assembly through a resolution on August 6, 2021. While each piece of legislation requires parliamentary scrutiny, laws regulating elections deal with providing level playing field to all political players in a country and therefore require political consensus.

**Ordinances**

Even though the 15th National Assembly met for a total of 11 sessions during the third parliamentary year, the government seemingly continues to rely on legislation through promulgation of ordinances.

During the third parliamentary year, 20 ordinances were laid by the government in the National Assembly. 17 of these ordinances were extended by the National Assembly each for a period of 120 days as per the constitution. In addition, 4 ordinances laid by the government in the National Assembly during the second year were also extended by resolution in the 15th National Assembly during the third year.

The government had promulgated 31 ordinances in the second parliamentary year and 7 ordinances during the first parliamentary year.

PILDAT has continued to advocate for the promotion of a democratic culture so that governments resist autocratic short cuts and instead submit to the sovereign will of the people represented in the Assemblies. PILDAT also believes that the provision of ordinances in the Constitution should be abolished. Till such time, the Government should limit the use of this instrument to the absolute minimum and during real emergencies when it is not practical to convene a session of Parliament.

**Oversight**

Another key function of the National Assembly is to effectively oversee the policies and performance of the elected government. While oversight is carried out in the plenary by raising questions, it is the committees which mainly carry out departmental or ministerial oversight of the executive.

The 15th National Assembly has 34 ministries-related standing committees, each dealing with a federal ministry and its related bodies. During the year these committees convened a total of 233 meetings with an average of around 7 meetings per committee during the year. Apparently, the Standing Committee on Law and Justice held the highest number of meetings, 23, during the year; the second highest, 20, number of meetings were held by the Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue followed by 13 meetings by the Standing Committee on Power.

During the past three years, 34 standing committees convened 651 meetings with 159 in the first year; 197 in the second and 233 in the third year thus registering an 18% increase in the most recent year. With 62 meetings, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs has held the most number of meetings in 3 parliamentary years. The Standing Committee on Law and Justice met 55 times in 3 years, followed by the Standing Committee on Interior that has held 36 meetings.
In terms of presentations of reports, however, the Standing Committee on Interior presented the most number of reports, 33 in the third parliamentary year. However, the committee had had to seek the house to condone delay in the presentation of its reports 31 times during the year. The Standing Committees on Law and Justice and Federal Education Professional Training, National Heritage and Culture each presented 22 reports to the house during the 3rd parliamentary year though the latter sought the house to condone delay in presentation of its reports 17 times while the former required condoning of delay of reports 14 times. Given that 2021, just like 2020, remained a year of fighting the coronavirus pandemic, the Standing Committee on National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination held 11 meetings in third parliamentary year and presented 11 reports to the house, seeking condoning of delay in presentation of report 8 times. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held 4 meetings during the year and presented one report, seeking extension in time for submitting its report during the year.

The Public Accounts Committee is a crucial body that oversees spending of Government money by examining Auditor General’s Reports for the ministries, divisions, corporations and other independent and semi-autonomous bodies. While no detailed data is available on the working of the PAC, it held its 61st meeting on August 06, 2021. The Public Accounts Committee, which was earlier chaired by Leader of the Opposition who resigning from the Chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee during the second year, is chaired by Rana Tanveer Hussain, MNA. The PAC has been taking care of the backlog of 10 years Audit Reports from 2010-11 to 2019-20. It has set-up seven Sub-Committees for Audit Reports and another Sub-Committee on Monitoring & Implementation. Commenting on its performance in July 2021, a press release by the PAC stated that “1,863 Grants & 28,288 Paras, including backlog of previous 25-years PAC Reports, are pending for examination for which PAC and its Sub-Committees have held 303 meetings and examined 7,376 paras out of which 57 paras were referred to NAB, 27 to FIA and 2,319 paras were referred for pursuance at Departmental Accounts Committee (DAC) level.... As a landmark achievement, recovery of Rs. 461,411.31 Millions on the directions of the PAC has also been verified by AGP.”

The Parliamentary Committee on National Security, which became functional on April 26, 2019, with the election of Honourable Speaker as its Chairman had held only one meeting in the first two years. No other meeting of the committee was held during the second year. The military briefing to the Parliament held on July 01, 2021, has been reported as a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on National Security.

The Parliamentary Committee on COVID-19, which was formed in April 2020 under the chairpersonship of the Speaker National Assembly, only managed to hold three meetings during April 2020. Its fourth and latest reported meeting was held on November 25, 2021. It is not reported if the Committee prepared or submitted a report.

In addition to traditionally chairing the Business Advisory Committee, Honourable Speaker of the National Assembly also chairs Special Committee of the Parliamentary

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Leaders in the National Assembly, Special Committee on Agriculture Products, Special Committee on Balochistan and Special Committee on Disabled Persons.

However, key information that is of most interest to citizens such as how active is a committee, issues discussed in a committee etc., are not provided by the Assembly. Unlike the Senate, which also provides attendance records of Senators in each committee, National Assembly has not yet adopted this practice.

Following 9 reports were laid in the Assembly during the third parliamentary year:

2. Council of Common Interest (CCI) for the years 2017-18, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020
3. Board of Directors of the State Bank of Pakistan on the state of Pakistan’s Economy for the year, 2019-2020
4. 1st Biannual Monitoring on the Implementation of NFC Award for the period of July-December, 2019
5. Mid-Year Budget Review Report FY 2020-2021
7. Annual Report 2020 of the Election Commission of Pakistan
8. 2nd Biannual Monitoring on the Implementation of 7th NFC Award (January-June, 2020)
9. Audit Reports of the Auditor General for the Audit Year, 2020-2021

Address by the President

According to article 56 (3) of the Constitution, the President of Pakistan is required to address the first session after each general election to the National Assembly and at the commencement of the first session of each year. Article 56 (4) states that Provision shall be made in the rules for regulating the procedure of a House and the conduct of its business for the allotment of time for discussion of the matters referred to in the address of the President. As required, therefore, the third year of the National Assembly began by address of the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi to the joint session of Parliament on August 20, 2020. As opposition members staged a walkout, President recounted the performance of the PTI government over the past two years including successful management of coronavirus pandemic, fighting terrorism and highlighting the issue of Kashmir, among others. However, during the entire parliamentary year, no debate was held on the address of the President, even though it remained as unfinished agenda on most orders of the day of the Assembly during the year. It was only on the concluding day of the third parliamentary year on August 12, 2021 that the Assembly gave vote of thanks to the President for his address a year earlier.

How much do the National Assembly proceedings cost tax payers?

In its 3 years since August 12, 2018, the budget of the 15th National Assembly has increased from PKR 4,155 million in the first year to PKR 4,605 in the second year and PKR 5,409 million in the third year. This also means that per member budget allocation has also changed from PKR 12.15 million per member in the first year to
13.46 million per member in the second year. During the third year between August 2020-2021, this budget allocation has come to be PKR 15.82 million per member.

Another way to understand what it costs taxpayers to fund an actual work hour of the National Assembly is to know that during the third year the per working hour cost comes to PKR 24.91 million. Based on the number of hours that the 15th Assembly actually met during the second year, the per hour cost was PKR 13.531 million. During the first year of the 15th National Assembly, the per working hour cost was calculated to be PKR 13.981 million.

The cost per working hour during the third year, therefore, has increased by 84% over the cost per work hour computed during the second year. This increase is partly due to the increase in the budget allocation but largely due to the reduction in the number of work hours during the third year compared to the second year.

Despite the steep cost of holding assembly sittings, the 15th National Assembly has only met for 79 days in the third year from August 13, 2020 to August 12, 2021, including two days of the joint sitting of Parliament. The 15th National Assembly has met consistently for fewer days during a year compared to the previous year. During the first year from August 2018-2019, the National Assembly met for a total of 96 sittings. This was reduced to 89 sittings in the second year between August 2019-2020 and down to 79 days in third year including 2 days of the joint sitting of the Parliament.

In its third year, the 15th National Assembly has also met for fewer hours than in previous two years. The Assembly was convened for a total of 217.10 hours. This is down from 340.34 hours that the Assembly sessions were convened for in the second year and 297.18 hours of Assembly sittings during first year.

Prime Minister of Pakistan only attended 7 sittings, including 2 sittings of the joint session of Parliament during the third year. This shows that the National Assembly, which serves as the electoral college of Prime Minister, could only be attended by the PM for 9% of its sittings during the third year. This is consistent with Prime Minister’s attendance of the National Assembly sittings during the second year. In the first year of the 15th National Assembly, Prime Minister Imran Khan had joined 19% of the sittings of the Assembly.

Compared to the Prime Minister, Leader of the Opposition attended 10 or 13% of the sittings of the Assembly. However, Mr. Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif was arrested on September 28, 2020 and was behind bars until the end of April 2021 during the third year of the Assembly.

**Attendance of MNAs**

During the third year of the 15th National Assembly, 65% MNAs have attended the Assembly sittings. This is up from 64% attendance during the second year, but down from 73% attendance during the first parliamentary year.

The absence of Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries has been consistently criticized not just by the opposition but also through the displeasure of chairs numerous times during three years. During the third parliamentary year, presiding
officers severely criticized absence of relevant ministers and parliamentary secretaries at least on 4 occasions.

The lack of MNAs attendance has resulted in multiple adjournments in the 77 sittings of the third year of the 15th National Assembly. While lack of quorum was pointed out in 49 sittings out of 77, 24 sittings or 31% of the sittings had to be adjourned due to lack of quorum in the Assembly.

**Delayed submission of annual statements of assets and liabilities by MNAs**

Annually, members of the Parliament and Provincial Assemblies are legally bound to submit their individual statements on Assets and Liabilities to the Election Commission of Pakistan latest by December 31 each year. The ECP is empowered by law to suspend the membership of legislators if they fail to submit the statements by this date until they submit the statements, and also to make public the names of the members who fail to submit the requisite statement. Despite this being legally binding for nearly two decades, every year many MNAs routinely miss the deadline of this annual requirement and their membership is suspended by the ECP for a period until they submit the statements of their assets. During the first year of the 15th National Assembly, the ECP suspended the membership of 72 (21%) MNAs. During the second parliamentary year, 70 (20%) MNAs did not submit their statements of assets and liabilities to the ECP on time. The number has reduced to 48 (14%) MNAs during the third parliamentary year whose membership was suspended for some time by the ECP for non-submission of their assets and liabilities.

**Toxicity of Politics**

While politics in Pakistan has not yet fully evolved to be rid of political rancour, the 15th National Assembly has been extraordinarily confronted with a relatively high degree of political toxicity which was largely absent from previous National Assemblies especially the National Assemblies during the terms of 2008-2013 and 2013-2018 although the 14th National Assembly faced an extended sit-in and assault to the premises by the then opposition PTI and its ally PAT.

When it comes to political blows, the year has been free for all. From calling former Prime Ministers as ‘traitors’ to bringing in children of political opponents in the forte of politics, the 15th National Assembly has seen and heard it all. As a result, the Assembly has witnessed serious disruptions which have been caused through mayhem in the house with treasury and opposition legislators coming nearly to blows, latest during the budget session in 2021, and by loud protests in 12 or 15% of the sittings held in the Assembly.

This toxicity has also affected the issuance of production orders for MNAs. Rule 108 of the National Assembly gives the Speaker of the Assembly the power to produce members in custody for a sitting of the Assembly or meeting of Committee. Given that in the peculiar political context of Pakistan, legislators are not taken into custody just because they have committed a criminal offence but often strong political motives are

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at play for their incarceration, the rule has been used traditionally by presiding officers of all legislatures. However, Prime Minister has been specifically vocal against the use of production orders to bring opposition members to the Assembly proceedings, announcing publicly that “no dacoit will get a production order” ⁴ at multiple times. ⁵ In the third parliamentary year, therefore, Mr. Khurshid Ahmad Shah, MNA, who has been behind bars since September 18, 2019, only got production orders twice to attend the Assembly sittings on February 20, 2021 and June 26, 2021. The Speaker issued production orders thrice for Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA and Leader of the Opposition, to attend the Assembly sittings on February 20, 2021, May 16, 2021 and June 10, 2021. Mr. Ali Wazir, MNA, who has been behind bars since December 16, 2020, was able to attend just one sitting of the Assembly on June 26, 2021.

just one sitting of the Assembly on June 26, 2021.