

Four Years of the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan

A Citizens' Report on Performance

August 2022

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PILDAT is an independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit indigenous research and training institution with the mission to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan.

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Islamabad Office: P. O. Box 278, F-8, Postal Code: 44220, Islamabad, Pakistan
Lahore Office: P. O. Box 11098, L.C.C.H.S, Postal Code: 54792, Lahore, Pakistan
E-mail: info@pildat.org | Website: www.pildat.org

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PREFACE

The 15th National Assembly of Pakistan has completed four (4) years of its five (5) year term on August 12, 2022.

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, third and fourth year of the assembly. This report also highlights the major events held during the fourth year of the assembly. The combined performance of the four years is also compared with the four-year performance of the previous (14th) National Assembly wherever data could be accessed. This report covers the period from August 13, 2018 to August 12, 2022.

Disclaimer

This report has been prepared using the information and data 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 2022

Abbreviations and Acronyms

CCI	Council of Common Interests
CII	Council of Islamic Ideology
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KPIs	Key Performance Indicators
MNA	Member National Assembly
NAB	National Accountability Bureau
NEC	National Economic Council
NFC	National Finance Commission
OGRA	Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority
PILDAT	Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development And Transparency
PM	Prime Minister
PML-N	Pakistan Muslim League–Nawaz
PPPP	Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians
PTI	Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SNGPL	Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited
SSGL	Sui Southern Gas Company Limited
VoNC	Vote of No Confidence

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Performance of the Assembly based on Key Performance Indicators

After witnessing an in-house change of the Prime Minister through a vote of no confidence against Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan on April 9, 2022 and the swearing in of new Prime Minister, Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on April 11, 2022, the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan has officially completed the fourth year of its 5-year term on August 12, 2022.

This report looks at Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in reviewing performance of the 15th National Assembly of Pakistan. In addition to comparison among four years, the report also draws comparative analysis of performance between 4 years of the 15th National Assembly and the same period of 14th National Assembly.

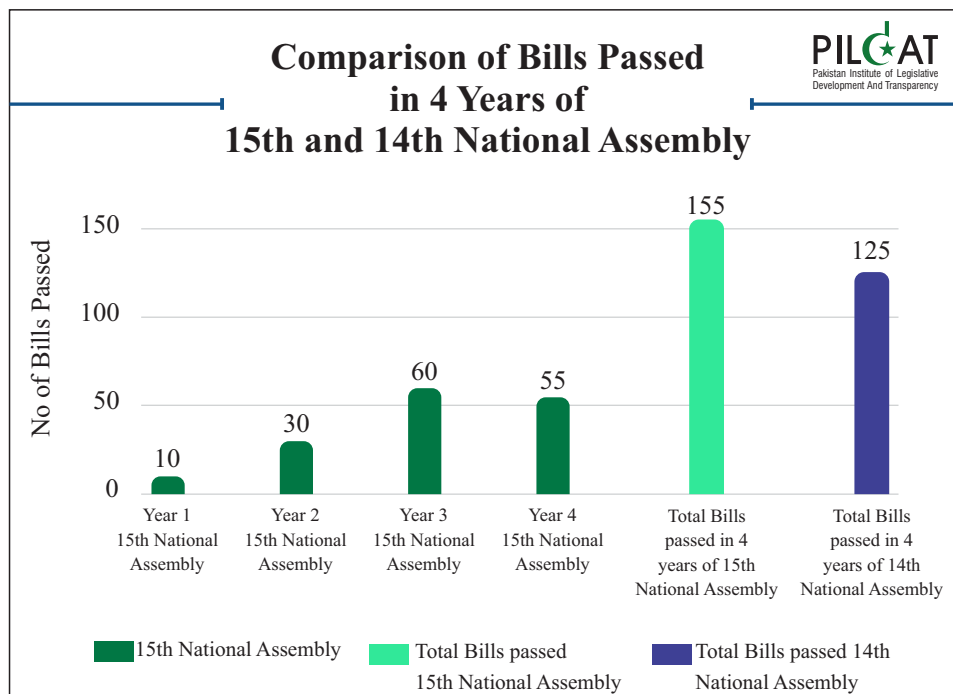
Since outgoing Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan and his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf were elected on the promise of change, this report specifically looks at how the three years and 8 months period of the National Assembly under Prime Ministership of Mr. Khan was different from the same period in the 14th National Assembly.

Legislation

Legislative activity witnessed a decrease of 8 per cent in the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly as it passed 55 laws compared to 60 bills passed during the third year of the Assembly. Thirty (30) bills were passed during the second year while only ten (10) bills were passed in the first year of the 15th National Assembly.

However, in a comparison of legislation between four years of 15th and 14th National Assembly, the 15th National Assembly has passed 155 bills in the 4 year period while the 14th National Assembly had passed 125 bills in its first 4 years. The 15th National Assembly has therefore passed 24% more laws in the same period compared to the previous Assembly.

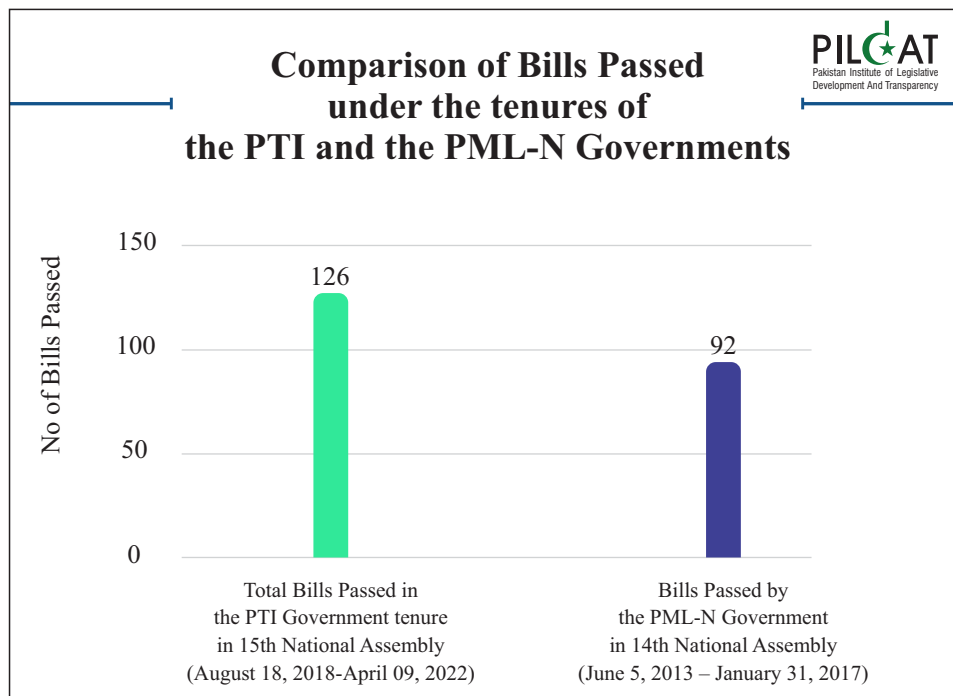
Figure 1: Comparison of Bills Passed in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



It must be noted here that 126 of the 155 bills were passed during August 13, 2018 to April 9, 2022 when Mr. Imran Khan was Prime Minister. In the similar period during the tenure of the 14th National Assembly, only 92 bills were passed. This means that a 37 per cent increase in legislation took place under Prime Ministership of Mr. Imran Khan.

During the fourth year of the Assembly, 32 government bills were introduced compared to 31 bills introduced in the third year. while Private Members introduced only 46 bills which is a decline from third year when 74 bills were introduced.

Figure 2: Comparison of Bills Passed under the tenures of the PTI and the PML-N Governments



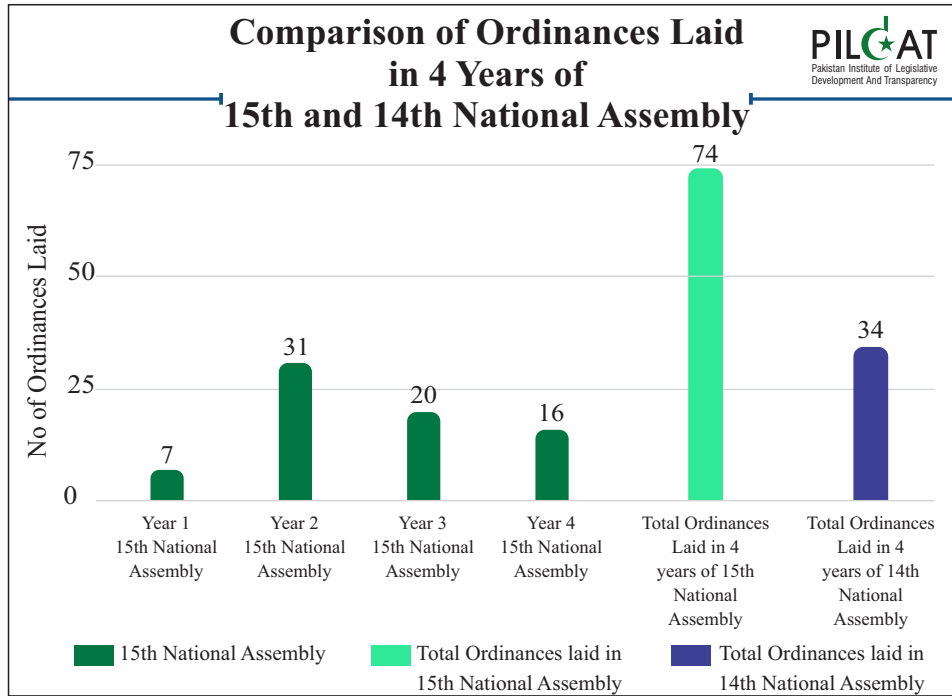
Ordinances

The triumph of passing more laws than previous Assembly in four years pales in comparison to the number of times law-making was carried out through ordinances during this period. Legislation by ordinances is the least-desirable constitutional power available to governments only when the Parliament is not in session. However, excessive reliance on issuing ordinances has been witnessed during four years of the 15th National Assembly through seventy-four (74) ordinances laid in the Assembly.

A slight decrease is seen in the number of ordinances laid by the Government in the National Assembly during its fourth year compared to the third year. Sixteen (16) ordinances were laid in the Assembly in the fourth year compared to twenty (20) ordinances laid in the Assembly during the third year which is a decrease of about 20%. Out of these 16 ordinances laid, 13 ordinances were further extended for a period of 120 days. It must be noted that fourteen (14) of these sixteen (16) ordinances were laid in the Assembly by the PTI government under Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan while the coalition government under Prime Minister Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has laid two (2) ordinances in the National Assembly during the fourth year. Thirty-one (31) ordinances were laid in the 15th National Assembly during the second year and seven (7) ordinances were laid by the Government during the first year of the 15th National Assembly.

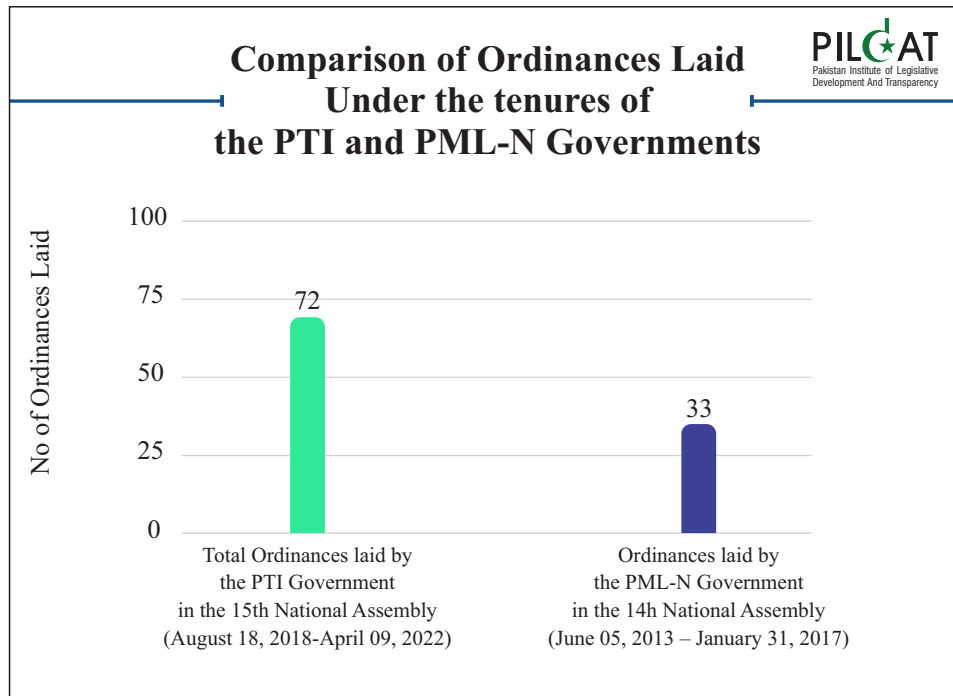
A comparison between 4 years of 15th and 14th National Assembly presents a rather grim picture. The previous PML-N government had laid thirty-four (34) ordinances in the 4 years of the 14th National Assembly while seventy-four (74) ordinances were laid during four years of the 15th National Assembly. This is a whopping 118% increase in legislation through ordinances in the current tenure of the Assembly.

Figure 3: Comparison of Ordinances laid in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



When comparing strictly the number of ordinances promulgated in the PTI government in 15th National Assembly during 3 years and 8 months with the same period of 14th National Assembly, the PTI government laid 72 ordinances in 3 years and 8 months in 15th National Assembly. In the same period, the PML-N government promulgated only 33 ordinances which is 54% lower than PTI government. This raises serious questions about the ability of the PTI government in facilitating legislation by elected representatives of the people as a key requirement of a democratic system. Lack of majority in the Senate has been cited as a key reason by the PTI government for its reliance on ordinances. This is, however, a lazy excuse and points to the inability of the outgoing government in taking along legislators and parties from across the political divide towards consensus-based legislation.

Figure 4: Comparison of Ordinances laid under the tenures of the PTI and the PML-N Governments



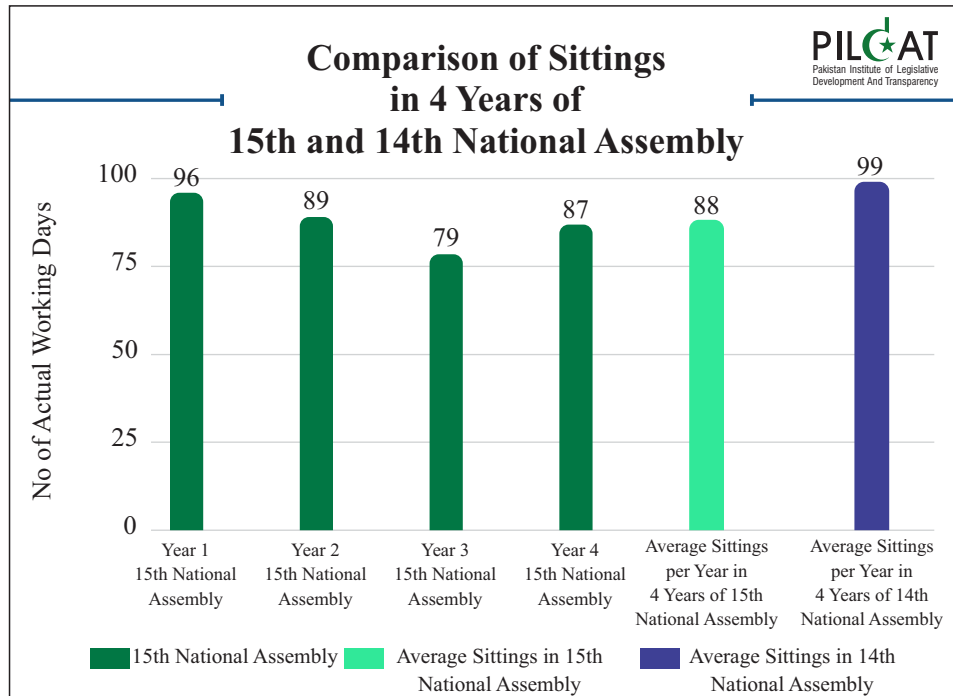
Working Days (Actual Sitzings)

The 15th National Assembly of Pakistan has only met for 87 days in the fourth parliamentary year. The Assembly has met for 10% more days than it was convened during its third year, which were 79 sittings. However, on the average, 15th National Assembly has met for 88 working days per year in its first 4 years in comparison with an average of 99 working days per year in the previous (14th) National Assembly. This is an 11% decrease in the performance of the 15th National Assembly compared to the 14th National Assembly.

There is a minimum constitutional requirement for the Assembly to meet for at least 130 working days in a year. However, lawmakers have provided in the Constitution that in counting required yearly working days, up to two days of adjournment between Assembly sittings and joint sitting of the Parliament can be included in the count of working days. While this clever provision helps in counting the constitutional requirement of working days of the Assembly under Article 54 (2), it does little in maintaining productivity of the Assembly. The average professional works for 240 to 260 working days in a calendar year. Global data shows that Parliaments, such as the UK Parliament, meets for an average of 150 days a year, Indian Parliament for 120 days a year and the US Congress for upwards of a 100 days in a year. Instead of focusing on increasing the efficiency, the 15th National Assembly has met consistently for fewer days during a year compared to previous years.

A look at how much it costs the citizens to fund a working day of the National Assembly provides another window of analysing the performance of the Assembly. During the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly, a working day cost works out to PKR 64.15 million.

Figure 5: Comparison of Sittings in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



Working Hours

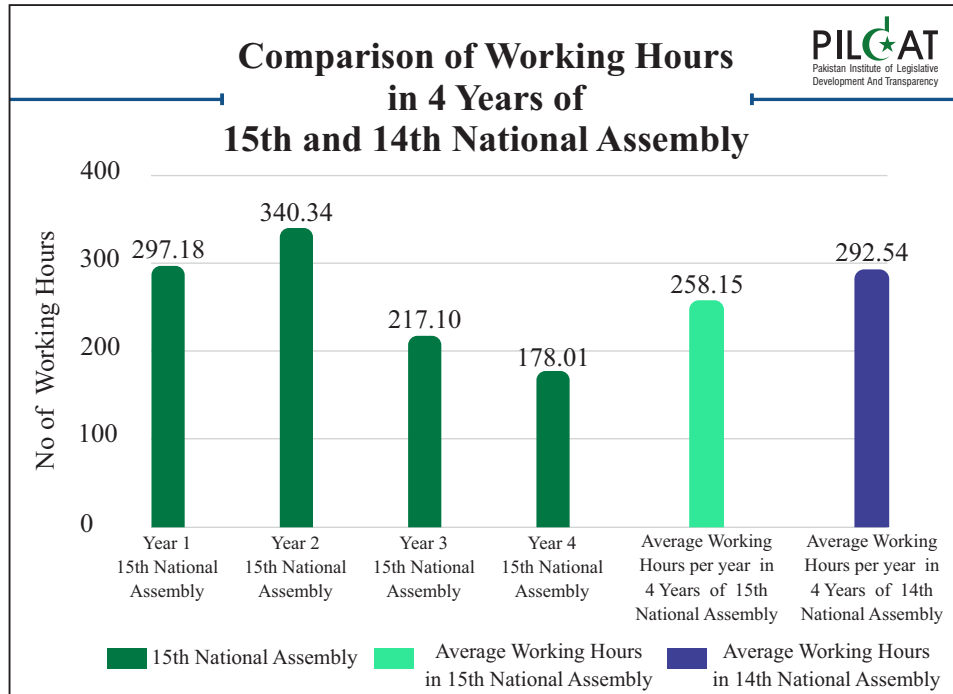
Working hours of the Assembly in a year are another way to gauge efficiency and productivity of the Assembly. In its fourth year, the 15th National Assembly has met for 178 hours and 1 minute. This means that the working hours of the Assembly have declined by 18% from the third year of the Assembly when it had convened for a total of 217 hours and 10 minutes.

The average working hours of the 15th National Assembly in four years are 258 hours and 15 minutes. These stood at 292 hours and 34 minutes average working hours in the first 4 years of the 14th National Assembly. Instead of improvement in performance and productivity, 15th National Assembly has worked for 12% fewer working hours compared to the previous (14th) National Assembly.

Another way to look at the efficiency of the Assembly is the average hours Assembly spends during a working day. The average working day is calculated to be a mere 2 hours and 3 minutes during the fourth year. The average hours spent per sitting during four years of 15th and 14th National Assembly have seen no improvement as the 15th National Assembly maintained the average of 2 hours and 56 minutes per sitting and the 14th National Assembly at 2 hours and 58 minutes on average in their respective first 4 years.

Compare this 3 hours average working day of the National Assembly with that of House of Commons, UK, which maintains an average sitting of about 8 hours a day and Lok Sabha, India, with an average working day of about 6 hours.

Figure 6: Comparison of Working Hours in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



The average working hours per year are 230 hours during the PTI government in the 3 years and 8 months period in the 15th National Assembly while in the same period of 14th National Assembly, average working hours per year were 269 hours which is 20% higher than the PTI government.

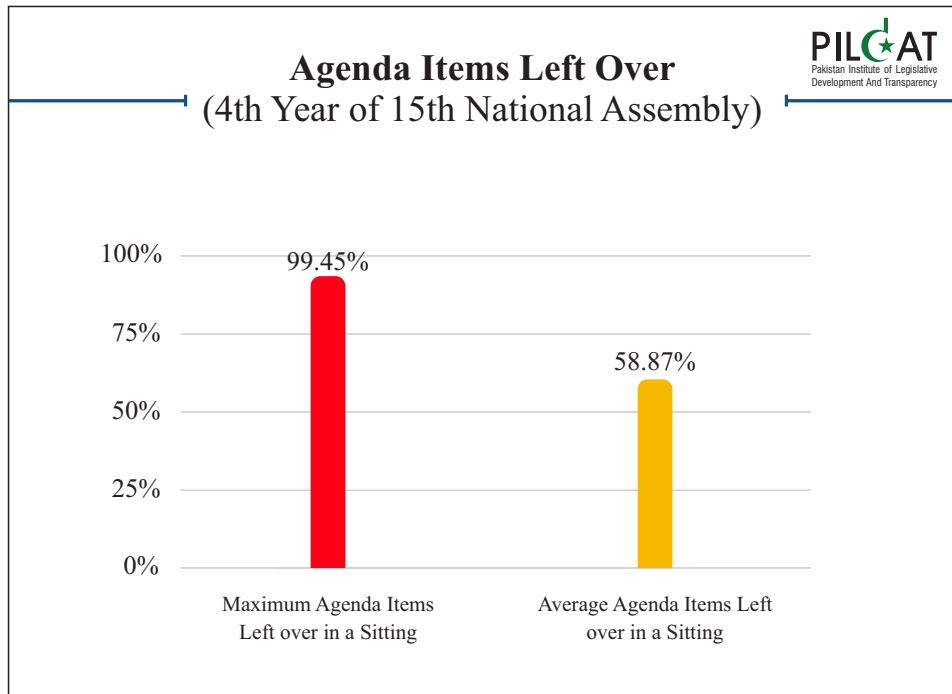
What does it actually cost taxpayers to fund a working hour of the National Assembly? During the fourth year, per working hour costs comes to PKR 31.35 million.

Agenda Items Left Over

Another way to analyse performance of the Assembly is what it sets out to do each day in the Orders of the Day and what it manages to achieve during a sitting against that agenda. If in a sitting, some agenda items are not addressed, as planned, these make up the left-over agenda items showing that the Assembly could not accomplish what it had set out to do in each sitting.

A look at the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly paints a bleak picture in this regard. The 15th National Assembly could not dispose of nearly 59% of planned agenda items in 87 sittings, which is a bulk of the agenda by any standard. On average, 58.87% agenda items were left over in the sittings during fourth year of the Aassembly. The highest agenda items left over were 99.45% on May 17, 2022 while 100% agenda items were disposed of in only 17 out of 87 sittings in the fourth year of the assembly.

Figure 7: Agenda Items Left Over in 4th Year of 15th National Assembly



Attendance of MNAs

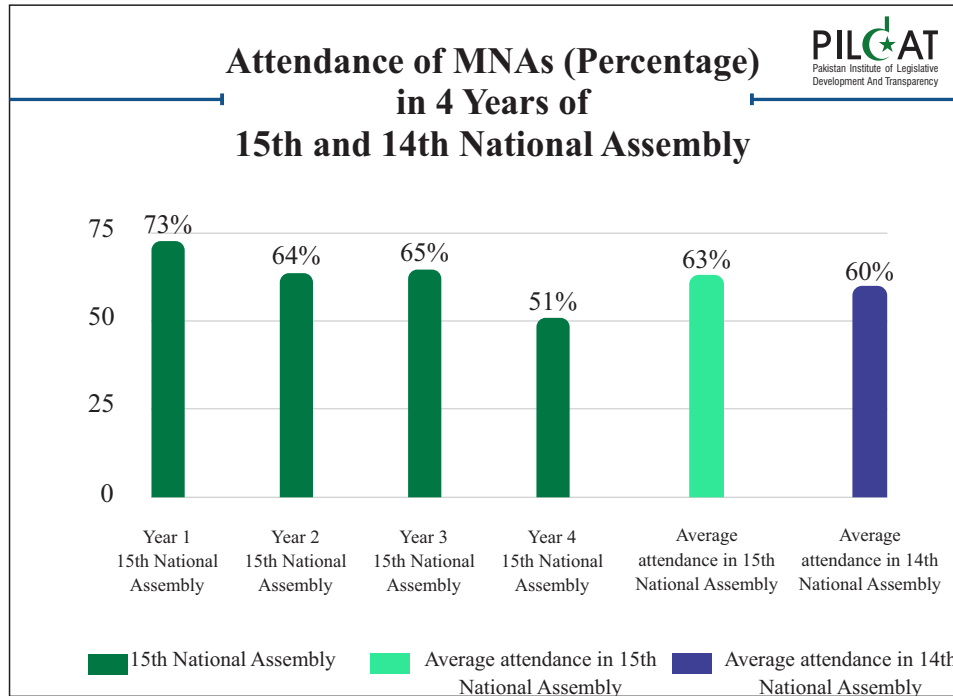
During the fourth year, average attendance of MNAs was recorded at 67% until April 9, 2022. After the PTI tenure, average attendance of MNAs during 4th year dropped to 51% which is 14 percentage points lower than the attendance of MNAs during the third year which was 65%.

However, there is negligible difference in combined average attendance of MNAs in first 4 years of 15th and 14th National Assembly. Average attendance of MNAs in first four years of the 15th National Assembly stands at 63%, an improvement of only 3 percentage points over 60% average attendance of MNAs per year during the first 4 years of the previous 14th National Assembly. Even after the resignations of PTI MNAs, the attendance is calculated on the basis of full house, i.e., 342 MNAs as their resignations are not accepted officially. It seems that the average attendance during the 4th year has improved even after the resignation of PTI MNAs.

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.

How can one understand the cost per-member spent by the exchequer during a year? Or in other words, what does the time of one MNA cost in a year to taxpayer citizens of Pakistan? The cost per MNA stands at PKR 16.32 million in the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly.

Figure 8: Attendance Comparison of MNAs in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



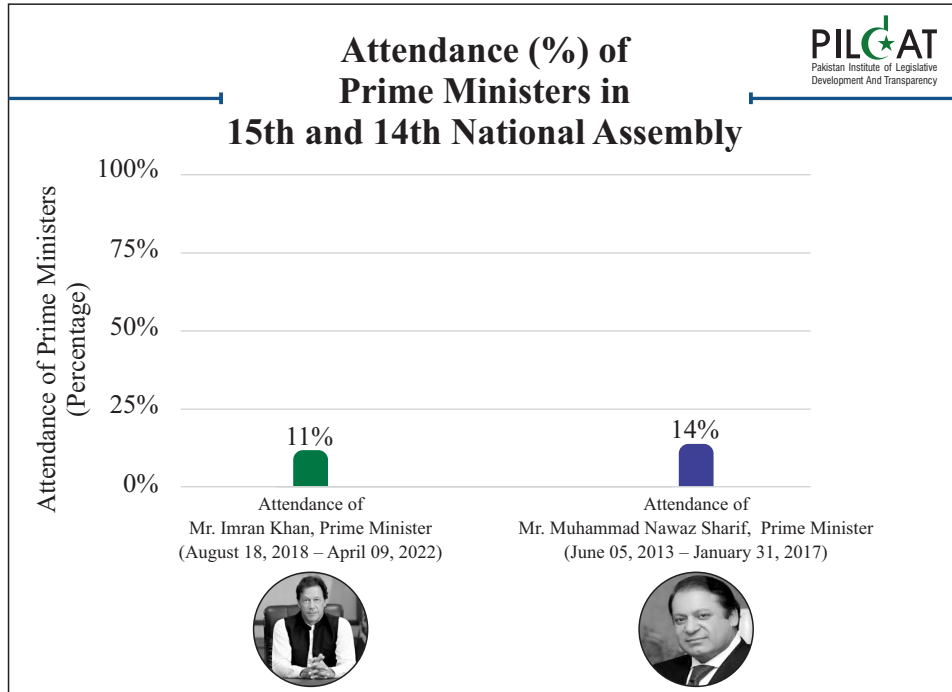
Attendance of Prime Minister

How many times did our Prime Ministers attend sittings of the National Assembly? This is a critical question to understand the importance respective Prime Ministers have placed on National Assembly beyond treating the House as mere electorate for the office of Prime Minister.

As Prime Minister and as MNA, Mr. Imran Khan displayed quite a disregard for attending National Assembly sittings. Except for a few and far-between occasions other than his election, vote of confidence and some other instances, he seldom gave National Assembly the importance it deserves as key legislature from which he drew strength of his government. During the fourth year of the National Assembly, Mr. Imran Khan, MNA attended only one (1) sitting (1.14%) of the Assembly while he held the office of Prime Minister. He attended a total of 34 or 11% sittings of the 15th National Assembly. In many ways, therefore, Mr. Imran Khan accorded similar or somewhat worse importance for attending National Assembly sittings as his predecessor and his proclaimed political nemesis Mr. Nawaz Sharif who had attended 52 or 14% sittings in the similar period of 3 years and 8 months of the 14th National Assembly of Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA, who took oath as Prime Minister of Pakistan on April 11, 2022, has attended 8 out of 43 or only 19% sittings of the National Assembly since.

Figure 9: Attendance Comparison of Prime Ministers in 15th and 14th National Assembly



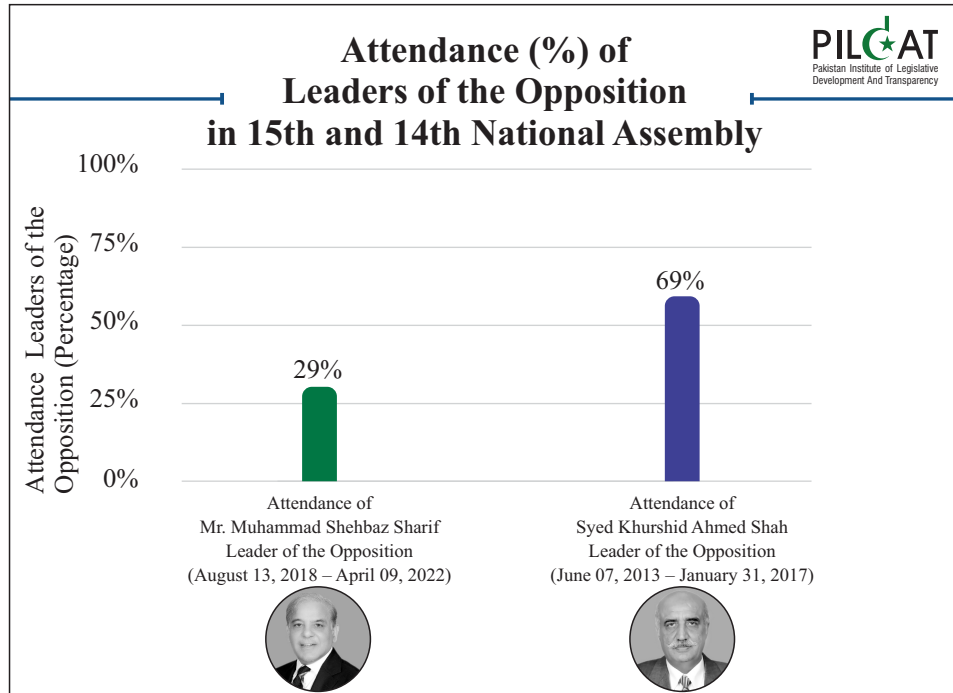
Attendance of Leaders of the Opposition

Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA, remained Leader of the Opposition till April 10, 2022, and in that capacity, attended 43% (19 out of 43) sittings of the Assembly in its fourth year. This was an improvement from his 13% attendance during the third 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 on average attended 71% sittings of the 14th National Assembly in first 4 years, average attendance of Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA, is only 29% in four years. This may also be on account of Mr. Shehbaz Sharif's custody in the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as he also resigned from the position of Chairman, Public Accounts Committee on the same grounds.

Raja Riaz Ahmad, MNA, who was declared as Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly on May 20, 2022, has attended 35% (13 out of 37) sittings of the National Assembly during the fourth year.

Figure 10: Attendance Comparison of Leaders of the Opposition in 15th and 14th National Assembly



Quorum

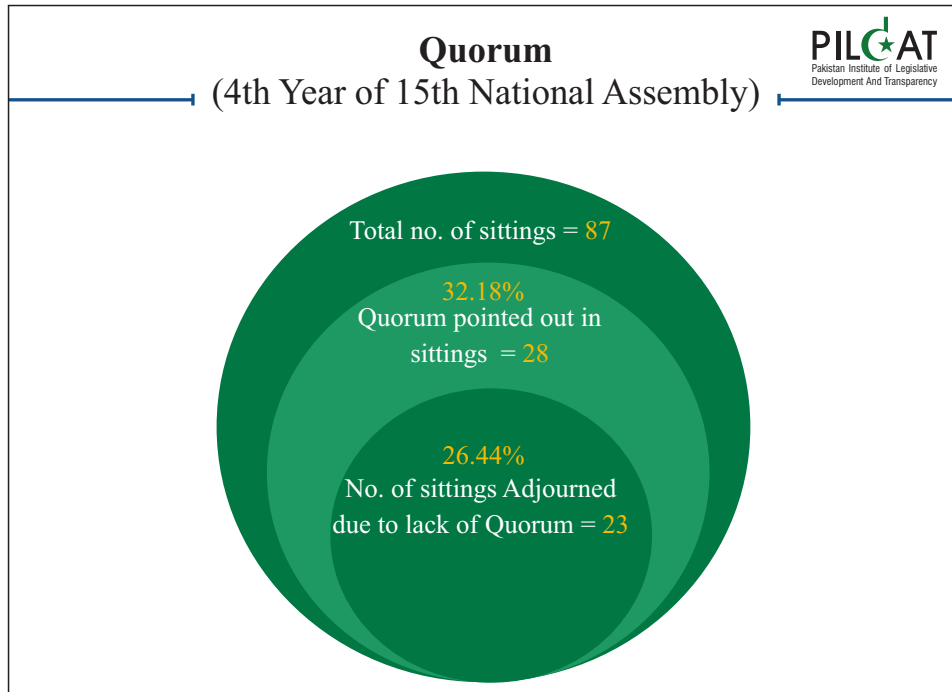
Quorum is another way to gauge the actual presence of MNAs during proceedings of the House though they may have been marked as present in the Assembly attendance register.

According to Article 55 (2) of the Constitution, at least one-fourth of the total membership of the Assembly has to be present during a sitting of the Assembly or the sitting has to be suspended or adjourned by the presiding officer.

During the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly, quorum was pointed out 34 times in 28 (32.18%) sittings out of 87 sittings. Out of these 28 sittings in which quorum was pointed out, 23 (26.44%) sittings were adjourned, even though on average 173 MNAs were recorded as present in the fourth year.

The consistent pointing out of quorum during sittings juxtaposed with the system of marking attendance of MNAs points to a larger problem. This means that while attendance of MNAs is marked, they do not necessarily attend the entire proceedings of a sitting resulting in frequent suspension and adjournment of already small number of sittings. Workable reform is required in the system of attendance of MNAs whose time is charged for their presence in the Assembly sittings.

Figure 11: Quorum Pointed out in 4th Year of 15th National Assembly



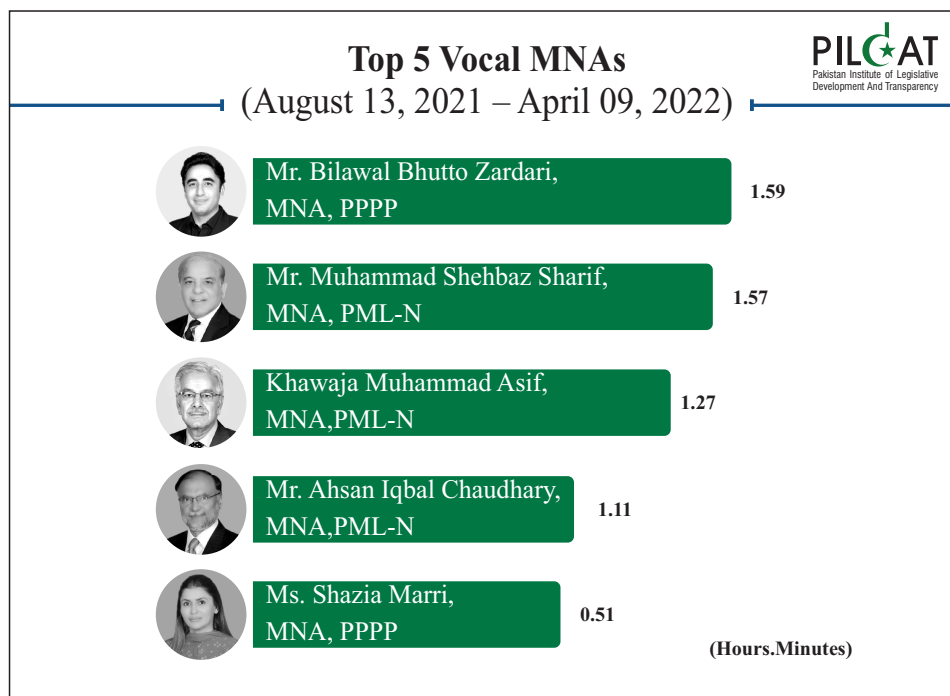
Top 5 Vocal MNAs

During the tenure of PTI government (3 years and 8 months) in the 15th National Assembly, **Mr. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari**, MNA (NA-200 Larkana-I, Sindh, PPPP) was the most vocal MNA with a recorded talk time of 1 hour and 59 minutes. **Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif**, MNA (NA-132 Lahore-X, Punjab, PML-N) and then Leader of the Opposition spoke for 1 hour and 57 minutes, followed by **Khawaja Muhammad Asif**, MNA (NA-73 Sialkot-II, Punjab, PML-N) who spoke for 1 hour and 27 minutes. **Mr. Ahsan Iqbal Chaudhary**, MNA (NA-78 Narowal-II, Punjab, PML-N) spoke for 1 hour and 11 minutes while **Ms. Shazia Marri**, MNA (NA-216 Sanghar-II, Sindh, PPPP) spoke for 51 minutes.

Non-Vocal MNAs

During this period in the House of 342 members, 174 (50.88% MNAs) did not speak for a single minute in the Assembly. Out of these 174 non-vocal MNAs, 149 were male and 25 were women MNAs. 84 of these MNAs (22% of the House) belong to the PTI, 48 MNAs are of the PML-N and 23 are affiliated with the Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP).

Figure 12: Top 5 Vocal MNAs

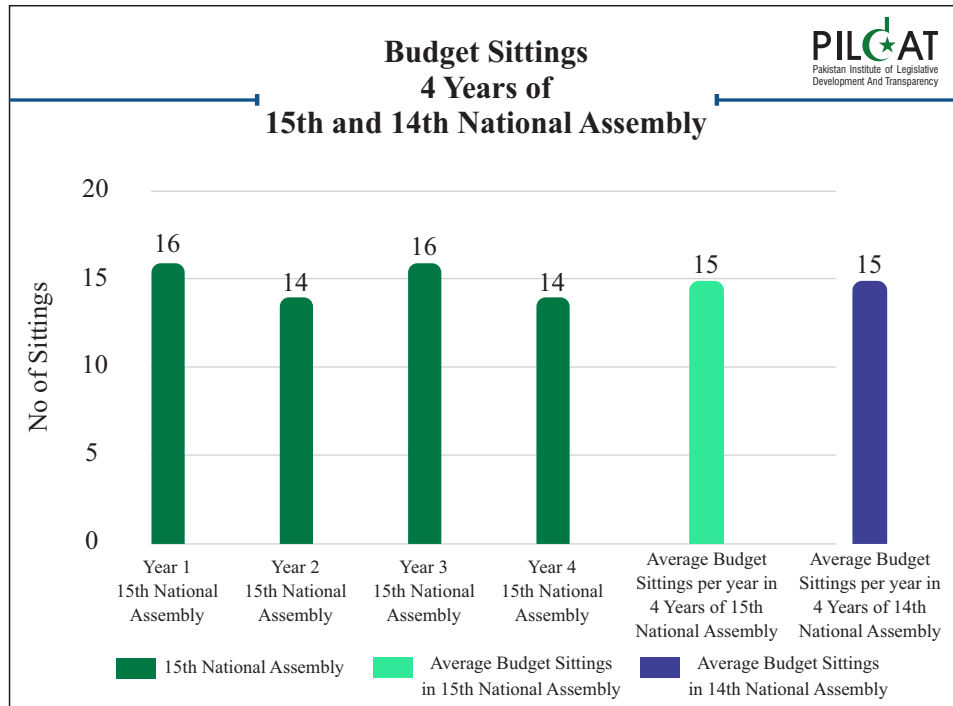


Budget Session

Despite two decades of calls for reform in the Parliamentary budget process to allow meaningful and effective oversight of public representatives on review and passage of annual budget, little change has been made in the Parliamentary Budget Process. As a result, MNAs merely go through the motions of debating the most crucial piece of annual legislation, i.e., Finance Bill and rubber-stamp it through their approval.

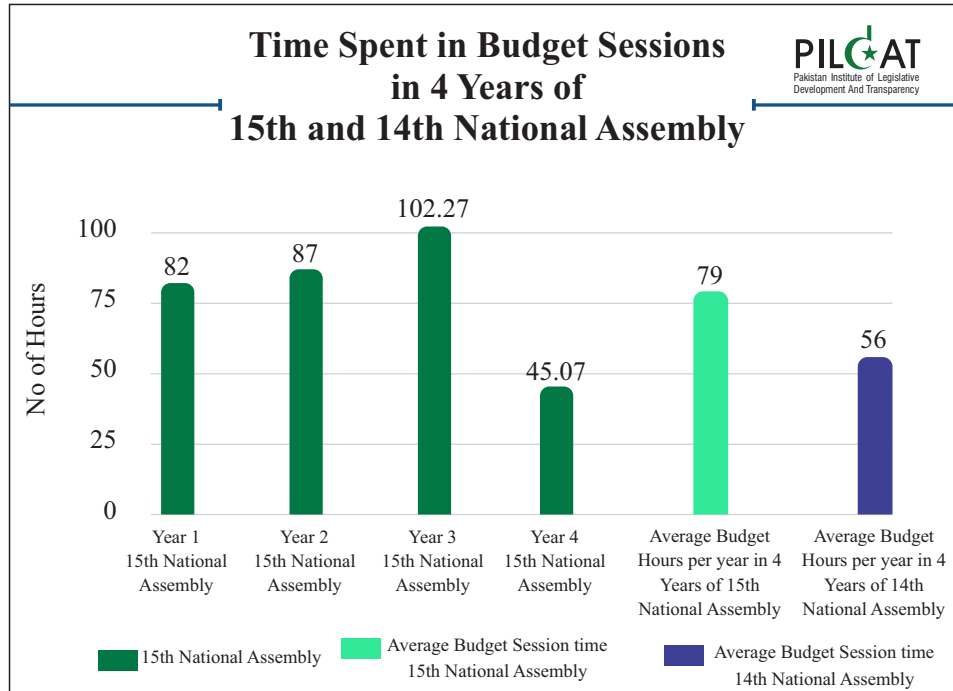
The fourth year of the 15th National Assembly has also seen just 14 days for the annual budget session and the passage of the Finance bill 2022-2023, two days less than what was spent during the third year. These deficient days of the budget session are in keeping with the historic average of budget sessions in the National Assembly of about 15 days.

Figure 13: Comparison of Budget Sitzings in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



Instead of improvement, the 15th National Assembly has seen a sharp decrease (56%) of working hours from 102 hours and 27 minutes to 45 hours and 7 minutes in the total time spent during the budget session during the fourth year. This decrease may be due to the absence of PTI MNAs who resigned from the National Assembly after the success of VoNC against Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan. However, the 4 year average of time spent in budget session during the 15th National Assembly is 79 hours, which is a 41% increase in average time spent in budget session during four years of the 14th National Assembly.

Figure 14: Comparison of Time Spent in Budget Sessions in 4 Years of 15th and 14th National Assembly



Joint Sitzings of the Parliament

During the 4th Parliamentary year of the 15th National Assembly, 4 joint sittings of the Parliament were held on September 13, 2021, November 17, 2021, May 26, 2022 and June 9, 2022.

During these 4 joint sittings, Parliament met for 9 hours and 58 minutes with an average of 2 hours and 30 minutes per sitting. The longest sitting lasted 5 hours and 52 minutes held on November 17, 2021 while the shortest sitting was held for only 58 minutes on September 13, 2021.

Out of 4 joint sittings held, former Prime Minister, Mr. Imran Khan, MNA attended 2 (50%) sittings while Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA attended 3 sittings (75%) out of which he attended 1 (25%) sitting as Prime Minister and 2 (50%) sittings as Leader of the Opposition. The average attendance of MNAs was recorded to be 68.57% (almost 235 MNAs) per sitting. The highest attendance was witnessed in a sitting held on November 17, 2021 while the lowest attendance was observed at 46.49% (159 MNAs) on May 26, 2022.

On average, 19.11% agenda items were left over during the 4 joint sittings.

A total of 36 bills were passed from these 4 joint sittings of the Parliament. Bulk of these laws, 33, were passed in the single joint sitting of the Parliament held on November 17 amidst protest by the opposition benches. Three laws were passed on June 9, 2022 which included the Elections (Amendment) Act, 2022; the National Accountability (Amendment) Act, 2022 and the National Informational Technology Board Act, 2022.

Analysis

Political Atmosphere

Perhaps the most prominent episode reflecting political atmosphere in the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly has been the change of guard through removal of Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan in a vote of no confidence and the subsequent election of Prime Minister Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Before the submission of the motion of no-confidence against Prime Minister Mr. Imran Khan, much of the same political scenario existed in which Prime Minister refused to talk to the opposition parties and key legislation was only possible either through suspension of rules or through joint sittings of the Parliament. In the joint sitting of the Parliament held on November 17, 2021, as many as 33 laws were passed by the Parliament within a span of 5 hours and 52 minutes which works out to approximately 10 minutes devoted to passing each law as terrible scenes of protests by opposition were shown live on TV, copies of the agenda were torn and physical altercation took place between treasury and the opposition.

The fourth year witnessed the first-ever successful Vote of No-Confidence in Pakistan's parliamentary history through which Mr. Imran Khan, MNA (NA-95 Mianwali-I, Punjab, PTI) lost the confidence of the house by 174 votes an hour past midnight on Sunday, April 10. Only two previous Prime Ministers have faced votes of no confidence against them in National Assembly's history after the 1973 constitution came into effect: Ms. Benazir Bhutto in 1989 and Mr. Shaukat Aziz in 2006 and both survived as the votes of no confidence against them were unsuccessful. Mr. Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, MNA (NA-132 Lahore-X, Punjab, PML-N) was elected as Prime Minister on April 11 as Prime Minister by securing 174 votes.

The no-confidence motion which was submitted against Prime Minister Imran Khan on March 8 by the nine-party opposition alliance of PDM and PPP was 'dismissed' on April 3 by Deputy Speaker Mr. Qasim Suri (NA-265 Quetta-II, Balochistan, PTI) through a ruling terming the no-confidence motion to be against Article 5 of the Constitution. Following the dismissal of the resolution, Prime Minister advised the President to dissolve the 15th National Assembly. The ruling of the

Deputy Speaker, however was set aside by the order of the Supreme Court on April 7, 2022 which also ordered that Prime Minister's advice to the President to dissolve the Assembly was contrary to the Constitution and of no legal effect.

On Saturday, April 16, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, MNA (NA-58 Rawalpindi-II, Punjab, PPP) was elected, uncontested as Speaker of the National Assembly. On April 21, 2022, Mr. Zahid Akram Durrani, MNA (NA-35 Bannu, KP, MMAP) was declared to have been elected as Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly.

Since assuming charge, the coalition government has laid 12 government bills in the National Assembly though it has managed to facilitate the passage of only 4 Acts, two of which were passed through a joint sitting of the Parliament held on June 09, 2022.

Alleged Corruption

Just a day before the success of the VoNC, minutes before midnight on April 9, Speaker National Assembly Mr. Asad Qaiser (NA-18 Swabi-I, KP, PTI) resigned from his post, saying he could not take part in a foreign conspiracy to oust Prime Minister.

It is certainly not the first time that an outgoing Speaker has been alleged to have made appointments and promotions in the Assembly secretariat. However, contrary to the slogan of justice and accountability espoused by the PTI, media reports have later alleged that during his stint as Speaker, Mr. Asad Qaiser recruited more than 200 employees in the National Assembly secretariat against the rules and regulations including his close relations.¹

Legislation

In its 4th year, the National Assembly passed 55 bills though 59 laws were enacted as Acts of the Parliament during the fourth Parliamentary Year of August 12, 2021 to August 11, 2022. 54 of these Acts were passed during the tenure of the outgoing PTI government while five (5) laws have been passed under the coalition government's tenure which include:

1. The [Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation \(Amendment\) Act, 2022](#)
2. The [Elections \(Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act](#)

1. Asif Basheer Chaudhry, "[Appointments, promotions in NA Secretariat against rules.](#)" The News online, April 24, 2022. Accessed August 16, 2022. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/952927-appointments-promotions-in-na-secretariat-against-rules>.

3. [No. X of 2022](#)
[The National Accountability \(Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act No. XI of 2022\)](#)
4. The National Information Technology Board Act, 2022]
5. [The Finance Act, 2022 \(Act No. XIII of 2022\)](#)

Severe criticism has been made against the Parliament and successive governments for introducing and facilitating the passage of legislation at the behest of international financial institutions, such as the IMF, the World Bank and the FATF. It can be argued that some of the reform measures proposed through such legislation might be useful for Pakistan. However, the key criticism remains that why is it not political parties elected to power or Pakistan's own national institutions that propose home-grown and organic and indigenous solutions through legislation or reforms instead of waiting for international interventions. While it is intellectually lazy and points to lack of preparedness on the part of parties to offer solutions, it is equally outrageous that legislation to meet conditionalities of international institutions are not even tabled as such by being transparent with the public on the rationale behind them.

Of the 54 laws passed under the PTI's tenure during the parliamentary year, at least 4 acts relating to Higher Education Commission, Muslim Family Laws, State Bank of Pakistan and the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority were amended twice and the [Islamabad Capital Territory Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Act, 2021 \(XLIX of 2021\)](#) was amended thrice.

Amendments in the Elections Act

Perhaps the most prominent changes were made in the Elections Act, 2017 twice during the year.

[The Elections \(Second Amendment\) \(Act No. LV of 2021\)](#) was enacted on December 2, 2021 after its passage from the joint sitting of Parliament on November 17, 2021 though it took further 16 days to receive presidential assent to become an act of parliament. The amendment was passed with a narrow margin of just 18 votes. The law made changes in only two sections, 94 and 103. In Section 94, the revised law stipulated that the ECP, with technical assistance of NADRA or any other Authority or Agency, shall enable overseas Pakistanis to exercise their right to vote during general elections. The amendment in Section 103

relating to Electronic Voting Machine authorised the ECP to procure and use EVMs in general elections in Pakistan.

The amendment was seen as an improvement from the bill that was passed by the National Assembly on June 10, 2021 as it subjected the procurement and use of EVMs to 'secrecy and security.' That the law chose not to commit the ECP to next general election and only used the words of general elections in Pakistan in both amendments also improved the flexibility of the law and enhanced the discretion of the ECP.

However, on June 9 again through a joint sitting of the Parliament, amendments were again passed through [The Elections \(Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act No. X of 2022\)](#). The Act omitted the insertion made through the Elections (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 which had mandated that seat of a returned candidate shall become vacant if oath is not taken within 60 days from the date of first sitting of a legislature or within 40 days after the commencement of the Elections (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, which was published in official gazette on September 3, 2021. The Act also amended section 94 regarding facilitation of right of overseas Pakistanis from their countries of residence and reverted almost to the language of the Elections Act, 2017 authorizing the Election Commission to conduct pilot projects for voting by Overseas Pakistanis in bye-elections to ascertain the technical efficacy, secrecy, security and financial feasibility of such voting and to share results with the Government who will lay the report before Parliament. It also amended Section 103 regarding the use of electronic voting machines and reverted the wording of the text almost to the Elections Act, 2017 which had mandated the ECP to conduct pilot projects for utilization of electronic voting machines and biometric verification system in bye-elections in addition to the existing manual procedures for voter verification, casting and counting of votes to assess the technical efficacy, secrecy, security and financial feasibility of the EVMs and biometric verification system and report to the Government who will lay findings to the Parliament.

Amendments in the NAB Law

The National Accountability Act was first amended during the fourth parliamentary year as [The National Accountability \(Amendment\) Act, 2021 \(Act No. XX of 2021\)](#). The key amendment related to the Prosecutor

General (Accountability) to hold the position for three years with the eligibility to be re-appointed for the similar term.

Substantive changes in the NAB law were later passed in a joint sitting of the Parliament held on June 09, 2022. In addition to providing exemptions to certain holders of public office, a mechanism for establishment of accountability courts and judges and their removal in order to curb delays in the trial procedure, recording of evidence through electronic audio-video devices and video-link and trial courts given the power to grant bail, the revised law reduced the 4-year term of NAB chair, set the prosecutor general's term to three years and stated that upon completion of the non-extendable term of 3 years of the chair of NAB, deputy chair will continue in office until the appointment of the new chair. The revised act has removed regulatory bodies out of NAB's domain amending that "all pending inquiries, investigations, trials or proceedings under this ordinance, relating to persons or transactions ... shall stand transferred to the concerned authorities, departments and courts under the respective laws." The law has also set a three-year term for the judges of the accountability courts and has made it binding upon the courts to decide a case within one year. The Act was passed with retrospective effect and states that it "shall be deemed to have taken effect on and from the commencement of the National Accountability Ordinance 1999."

Changes in the State Bank Law

On January 28, major amendments were passed in the State Bank of Pakistan law through the [State Bank of Pakistan \(Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act No. VI of 2022\)](#). As the opposition parties protested against the bill terming it to compromise Pakistan's sovereignty by giving absolute authority to the SBP to take key economic decisions independently, the passage of the bill by the PTI was seen to fulfil a key condition set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the release of the bailout package to Pakistan. The law has declared price stability as key objective of the SBP and gave it freedom to determine and implement monetary and exchange rate policy by removing the role of Ministry of Finance from Bank's functions. It also freed the bank of any responsibility to extend any direct credit to the government or guarantee any obligation of the government or public entities. The law places a

complete restriction on the government's borrowing from the central bank and the government can borrow at a market rate from commercial banks, which will benefit private banks.

Changes in the Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Law

Yet another law was amended in keeping with meeting the IMF conditionalities on June 9, 2022: [The Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation \(Amendment\) Act, 2022](#).

The bill seeks to achieve key objectives, including limiting the stock of government guarantees to 10 per cent of GDP; publication of medium term national macro-fiscal framework and institutionalise debt management functions in a single office reporting to the Finance Secretary. The statement of aims and objectives of the law state that the amendment would strengthen the Debt Office with the mandate and resources for effective planning and execution of debt management functions of the government.

Changes to the OGRA law

Key amendments were passed in the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority law through the passage of the [Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority \(Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act No. VII of 2022\)](#) and the [Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority \(Second Amendment\) Act, 2022 \(Act No. VIII of 2022\)](#) on February 17, 2022 though both the laws were termed by the opposition parties to be passed to fulfil more of IMF conditionalities. The laws have made the gas price as per revenue requirements of SNGPL and SSGCL and have authorized OGRA to determine rates without public hearing. The opposition parties maintained that before their passage, the laws required approval by Council of Common Interests (CCI).

Role of Committees

Committees carry out a key function of oversight of 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 36 ministries-related

standing committees, each dealing with a federal ministry and its related bodies. During the year these committees convened a total of 160 meetings with an average of around 4 meetings per committee during the year. Apparently, the Standing Committee on Law and Justice held the highest number of meetings, 12, during the year; the second highest, 9, number of meetings were held by the Standing Committee on Finance and Revenue followed by 8 meetings by the Standing Committee on Cabinet Secretariat and Water Resources.

During the past four years, 36 standing committees convened 806 meetings with 159 in the first year; 197 in the second, 233 in the third year and 160 in the fourth year thus registering a decline of 31% in the 4th Parliamentary year. With 75 meetings, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs has held most meetings in 4 parliamentary years. The Standing Committee on Law and Justice met 67 times in 4 years, followed by the Standing Committee on Interior that has held 42 meetings.

In terms of presentations of reports, however, the Standing Committee on Law and Justice presented most reports, 18 in the fourth parliamentary year. However, the committee had to seek the house to condone delay in the presentation of all its reports during the year. The Standing Committee on Interior presented 10 reports to the house during the 4th parliamentary year and it also sought the house to condone delay in presentation of all its reports.

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. The committee held 66 meetings during the 4th parliamentary year. The Public Accounts Committee, which was earlier chaired by Rana Tanveer Hussain, MNA, is now chaired by Mr. Noor Alam Khan, MNA who was elected unopposed on May 23, 2022.

The Parliamentary Committee on National Security held 5 meetings during the 4th parliamentary year. These meetings were reportedly held on November 8, 2021, December 6, 2021, March 31, June 22 and July 5, 2022. This parliamentary committee became functional on

April 26, 2019, with the election of Honourable former Speaker, Mr. Asad Qaiser, MNA as its Chairman. It had held only one meeting in the first two years. No other meeting of the committee was held during the third 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. Now, the current Speaker, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, MNA, chairs this committee.

An analysis of the reports of the Standing Committees during the fourth parliamentary year shows that of the 55 bills passed by the National Assembly in fourth year, 43 or 78% bills were referred to the Standing Committees while 12 or 22% of the bills were not scrutinized by the relevant committees before their passage.

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.

Reports Laid in the Assembly

It is a Constitutional requirement that each year, the President in relation to the affairs of the Federation is to lay before each House of a report on the observance and implementation of the Principles of Policy. Other constitutional bodies required to lay their Reports to Parliament include the Council of Common Interests (CCI), National Economic Council (NEC), National Finance Commission (NFC) and its implementation, Auditor General and Council of Islamic Ideology (CII). Rule 180 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly requires that after the laying of each report, the Speaker is to fix a day for discussion. Other than the reports by the NFC, Presidential report on the observance and implementation of the Principles of Policy and Report of the CII, all other reports would stand referred to concerned Standing Committee.

Following 11 reports were laid in the Assembly during the fourth parliamentary year though it is unclear whether discussion was held on each report as required by rules and whether concerned committees discussed and reviewed these reports:

1. Annual Report 2021 of the Election Commission of Pakistan
2. Annual Report on the Implementation of the Right of Access to information Act 2017; Progress and Challenges for the Period of 01-12-2020 to 31-12-2021
3. Report of 2nd Biannual Monitoring on the implementation of 7th NFC Award (January-June, 2021)
4. Annual Reports of the Council of Islamic Ideology for the period from 2012-2018, and the Report on "Islamic Law of Inheritance"
5. Statement of contingent liabilities of the Federal Government for the current fiscal year
6. Annual Reports of the Federal Public Service Commission for the year 2018 and 19
7. Report of 1st Biannual Monitoring on the Implementation of 7th NFC Award (July-December, 2020)
8. Annual Report of the Board of Directors of State Bank of Pakistan on the state of Pakistan's Economy for the year 2020-21
9. Report of the Auditor General of Pakistan relating to the Accounts of Federation for Audit Year, 2020-21
10. Annual report of Universal Service and Research and Development Fund of the Federal Government for the year 2019-20
11. Annual report of the National Economic Council for the financial year 2019-20

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.

The fourth year of the National Assembly began by address of the President of Pakistan, Dr. Arif Alvi to the joint session of Parliament on September 13, 2021. The opposition members came in front of Speaker's dais, displayed banners, chanted slogans and staged a walkout and boycotted the session.

In his address, the President highlighted the achievements of the PTI government over the past three years including economy, industrial growth, human and social development, information technology, foreign policy and defence, fighting terrorism and highlighting the issue of Kashmir, among others. He advised opposition to concede PTI government achievements. It will be interesting to monitor the contents of the President's address at the start of the 5th Parliamentary year as the PTI government has been replaced by the PML-N-led government while the President belongs to the PTI.

Rule 60 to 64 of the National Assembly Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business mandate that discussion on the address of the President would be held through the Speaker allotting a day or number of days for the purpose. Rules also define that the scope of discussion would remain the issues referred to in the President's Address. There would also be a motion of thanks moved in the Assembly for the address. However, for the second consecutive year, a discussion on the President's address has not been possible though the subject remained on the agenda for many sittings. According to rules, an authenticated copy of the Address of the President was laid in the House alongside moving motion of thanks on September 29, 2021. However, the motion of thanks was only passed by the Assembly on April 18, 2022 for the address of the President on September 13, 2021.

How much do the National Assembly proceedings cost tax payers?

In its 4 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, PKR 5,409 million in the third year and PKR 5,581 million in the fourth 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 and now in the fourth year this budget allocation has increased to PKR 16.32 million.

A look at how much it costs the citizens to fund a working day of the National Assembly provides

another window of analysing the performance of the Assembly. During the fourth year of the 15th National Assembly, a working day cost PKR 64.15 million. A work day cost PKR 68.47 million during 3rd year, PKR 51.74 million in the second and PKR 43.28 million in the first year of the 15th National Assembly.

Another way to understand what it costs taxpayers to fund an actual work hour of the National Assembly is to know that during the fourth year the per working hour costs comes to PKR 31.35 million which is higher than the third year when 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 fourth year has increased by 26% over the cost per work hour computed during the third year. This increase has occurred due to the increase of budget allocation and decrease in the reduction of number of hours during the fourth year. While the cost per working hour during the third year was increased by 84% over the cost per work hour computed during the second year.



Islamabad Office: P. O. Box 278, F-8, Postal Code: 44220, Islamabad, Pakistan
Lahore Office: P. O. Box 11098, L.C.C.H.S, Postal Code: 54792, Lahore, Pakistan
E-mail: info@pildat.org | Website: www.pildat.org