



National Assembly of Pakistan



Summoning, Prorogation,
Quorum & Sitzings

The National Assembly conducts its business under relevant provisions of the Constitution and the 'Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007.' An abridged version of some of the selected Rules, governing the summoning, prorogation, quorum and sittings of the House is given below for introduction at a glance.

Summoning and Prorogation

The President, from time to time, summons either House or both the Houses of Parliament under Article 54(1) of the Constitution. However, on a requisition made by at least one-fourth of the total membership of the Assembly, the Speaker can also, under Article 54(3), summon the National Assembly. Only Speaker can prorogue the House summoned by him. On summoning of the session, in either case, the Secretary causes a notification to be published in the Gazette stating the date, time and place of the meeting. Summoning of the Assembly sessions is also announced over the radio/TV and in the Press. Likewise, a notification with regard to prorogation of the Assembly is also published in the Gazette.

Each session of the National Assembly starts from the date of commencement of its first sitting and concludes when the House is prorogued by the President or the Speaker, as the case may be. The sessions are given consecutive numbers.

Seating

The members, as per rule 8, sit in the Assembly Chamber in such order as the Speaker may determine. Each member is allotted a particular seat number. The Treasury Benches are seated on the right hand side while the Opposition Benches are seated on the left hand side of the Speaker.

Days of Sitting

Under Article 54(2) of the Constitution, it is mandatory for the National Assembly to hold at least three sessions and further to meet for not less than 130 days in each parliamentary year. In addition, more than 120 days should not intervene between the last sitting of the Assembly in one session and the date appointed for its first sitting in the next session.

Quorum

Under rule 5, if at any time during a sitting of the National Assembly, the attention of the chairperson is drawn to the fact that less than one-fourth of the total membership of the Assembly is present, he either suspends the business of the Assembly until at least one-fourth of such membership is present, or causes the bells to be rung for five minutes. But, if no quorum is available even on resumption of the proceedings after suspension, or when the bells stop ringing, he adjourns the sitting for the next working day.

Sittings and Business

At the commencement of each parliamentary year, the Government is required, under rule 46, to provide to the Speaker a calendar of sessions for the ensuing parliamentary year. The Secretary forthwith circulates the calendar amongst the members.

As regards the summoning of sessions, the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister, summons the Assembly to meet, as far as practical, in keeping with the dates mentioned in the calendar. However, the President may, if advised by the Prime Minister, summon the Assembly to meet on a date different from that mentioned in the calendar. The rule, however, does not limit the power of the Speaker to summon a requisitioned session of the Assembly to meet at any time in accordance with the Constitution.

Classes of Business

Rule 50 divides business of the Assembly under two heads viz Government business and Private members' business.

Government business

It includes Government Bills, resolutions, amendments and other motions introduced or initiated by a Minister. A Minister can introduce a Bill, after giving a written notice, accompanied by a copy of the Bill and a Statement of Objects and Reasons, signed by him, to the Secretary. The introduction of the Bill is ordinarily included in the Orders of the Day for a day allotted for Government business.

Private members' business

It includes Bills, resolutions, amendments and other motions introduced or initiated by a member other than a Minister (Private Member). A private member can introduce a Bill, including constitutional amendments, after giving to the Secretary ten clear days written notice of his intention to do so. The notice has to be accompanied by the Bill, together with the Statement of Objects and Reasons, in triplicate, signed by the member. After scrutiny as to whether it conforms to the constitutional and other mandatory requirements, the Bill is listed for introduction and it is set down in the Orders of the Day for a day meant for Private members' business.

Except Tuesday, when private members' business has precedence, Government business is transacted on all other days of the week, as per provisions of rule 51. However, a Government Bill of urgent nature can be introduced on private members' day as a last item of Orders of the Day. In case there is no sitting on Tuesday, private members' business shall have precedence on the next working day. If any Tuesday is allotted by the Speaker for the presentation of the Budget or for any stage of the Budget, then he is required to set apart some other day, in lieu of such Tuesday, for private members' business.

Other Business

The Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament), under Article 144 (1) of the Constitution, can by law regulate any matter not enumerated in either List in the Fourth Schedule if one or more Provincial Assemblies pass resolutions asking the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) to pass an Act for regulating that matter. But such Act can be amended or repeated by the Act of Assembly as of the Province to which it applies.

Article 237 empowers the Parliament to make any law indemnifying any person in the service of the Federal Government or a Provincial Government or any other person, in respect of any act done in connection with the maintenance or restoration of order in any area in Pakistan.

The recommendations of the National Finance Commission (NFC) and the reports of the Council of Islamic Ideology (CII) are also tabled in the National Assembly for discussion. The Assembly may, by resolution, express its opinion or make any observation or recommendations on NFC and CII reports, that is, reports under Article 160(5): rule 176 and Article 230 (4): rule 179 respectively.

Orders of the Day

The National Assembly business is transacted, as per rule 57, in the order in which it appears on the Orders of the Day.

The Secretary prepares the Orders of the Day and makes its copy available for use of every member and any other person entitled under the Constitution to speak or participate in the proceedings. He arranges the Government business in such order as the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs intimates a day before the commencement of the sitting. The relative precedence of private members' Bills is determined by ballot at least five days prior to the day with reference to which the ballot is held.

