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## Guidelines

# Guidelines for holding National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan sessions in wake of COVID-19 outbreak

### Objective

To provide guidelines for holding in-person session of National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan to assure safe working conditions for members in wake of COVID-19 outbreak

### Rationale

The National Assembly and the Senate of Pakistan shares the task of making and shaping laws and checking and challenging the work of the government. As the current rules of procedures for National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan do not allow the conduct of session via electronic means, it is important to take precautions in order to avoid the spread of COVID-19 where it becomes inevitable to hold the session. These preventive SoPs and protocols will help to minimize the potential for the members of Senate and National assembly along with relevant staff to get infected with SARs-CoV.

### General Preventive Measures at National Assembly and Senate Secretariat

- Ensure cleaning and disinfection of secretariat before and after sessions of all places and corners
- Ensure the cleaning of the spaces (meeting rooms and restrooms) and disinfectant the shared items, objects and surfaces (door handles/knobs, elevator buttons, stair bannisters, tablespots remotes, light switches, telephones, mikes, microphones, papers, pens, desks and tables) three times daily or after every session.
- Place hand sanitizers at entryways and provide members with disinfecting wipes on the tables.
- The members must be informed to ensure the social distancing protocol (i.e. 6 feet -2 meters distance apart)
- Availability of surgical/medical/cloth masks to any participant who develops respiratory symptoms
- Display posters promoting hand-washing and maintaining good respiratory hygiene (cough etiquette advice)



- Ducts of air-conditioning systems must be properly disinfected and cleaned
- Ensure that every member entering the parliament is wearing surgical/medical/cloth mask. If not, the mask should be provided
- Ensure the thermal scanning/temperature check via thermal guns at the entrance of the National Assembly and Senate.

## Safety Measurements during Session

### Pre-Session Preparations

- The seating arrangements should be made as such that the social distancing protocols of at least 6 feet (2 meters) is maintained
- Ensure the sufficient supplies and materials, including tissues and hand sanitizer for all members
- Advise members in advance that if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, they should not attend the session.
- Ensure record of contact details of all organizers, members and visitors e.g. mobile number, email and residential address
- Develop and agree a response preparedness plan in case someone at the meeting/session becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:
  - Designate a room or area where someone who is feeling unwell or has symptoms can be safely isolated
  - Have a plan for how they can be safely transferred from there to a health facility
  - Trained staff and or health care staff must be available to support and provide information if member tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting/session
  - Administrative authorities should liaison/collaborate with healthcare provider or health department in order to make adequate planning.

### During the Session

- Provide information or a briefing on latest updates of COVID-19 situation and measures to make this event safe for members
- Arrange seats of the members at least 6 feet apart
- Ensure that members should practice alternate greetings such as waving from a safe distance
- Encourage regular hand-washing or use of an alcohol rub by all members at the session
- Encourage members to cover their face with the bend of their elbow or a tissue if they cough or sneeze and ensure availability of tissues and closed bins to dispose them.
- Provide contact details or a health hotline number, 1166 that members can call for advice
- Provision of 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizers during session
- Open windows and doors whenever possible to make sure the room is well ventilated
- If anyone starts to feel unwell, follow preparedness plan



- Depending on the situation, place the person in the isolation room
- Ensure availability of mask for infected person
- Make arrangements to send him/her for assessment at a health facility

## Post Session

- Retain the names and contact details of all members for at least one month. This will help public health authorities for contact tracing who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more members become ill shortly after the event/session
- If any participant from the session isolated as a suspected or COVID-19 case, the organizer should facilitate members in identifying the contacts of the case/member of parliament.
- The participants of the session should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 10 days and take their temperature twice a day
- If any participant develops symptoms i.e. mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate (avoiding close contact i.e. less than 6 feet with other people, including family members), inform and contact the designated COVID 19 healthcare provider or the local public health department for further support.
- The infected/suspected participants are required to provide details of the recent travel to the health care authorities.

*Note: The above recommendations are being regularly reviewed by the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination and will be updated based on the international recommendations and best practices.*

*The Ministry acknowledges the contribution of Dr Urooj Aqeel, Dr Saira and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.*

### **For more information, please contact:**

HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH, PM National Health Complex, Islamabad

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