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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 physical 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 for conduction of session via electronic means, it is important to have precautions to prevent spread of COVID19 where it becomes inevitable to hold the session. These protocols have been designed in order to minimize the potential for contracting COVID-19 and subsequently reducing its spread including specific measures needed to protect safety and health of the members and relevant staff

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 cleaning of spaces (meeting rooms, restrooms, hallways) and shared items with disinfectants (door handles/knobs, elevator buttons, stair bannisters, tabletops remotes, light switches) three times daily. Surfaces (e.g. desks and tables) and objects (e.g. telephones, mikes, microphones, papers, pens) need to be wiped with disinfectant regularly
- Place sanitizer at entryways and provide members with disinfecting wipes
- The members of should be informed to maintain at all instances social distancing protocols having at least 6 feet (2 meters) distance from each other



- Availability of surgical/medical masks available to offer anyone who develops respiratory symptoms
- Put sanitizing hand rub dispensers in prominent places. Ensure these dispensers are regularly refilled
- Display posters promoting hand-washing and maintaining good respiratory hygiene (cough etiquette advice)
- Ducts of air-conditioning systems must be properly disinfected and cleaned at all times
- Ensure screening of all members by measuring body temperature at entry points by dedicated person(s) of the parliament
- Ensure that every member entering the parliament is wearing surgical/medical mask. Offer surgical/medical mask in case someone is not wearing

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
- Pre-order 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
- Ensure record of contact details of all organizers, members and visitors at the e.g. mobile number, email and address where they are staying
- Develop and agree a response preparedness plan in case someone at the meeting becomes ill with symptoms of COVID-19 (dry cough, fever, malaise). This plan should include at least:
 - Identify 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
 - Know what to do if a member tests positive for COVID-19 during or just after the meeting
 - Agree and finalize the plan in advance with healthcare provider or health department

During the Session

- Provide information or a briefing on latest updates of COVID-19 situation and the measures that organizers are taking to make this event safe for members
- 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 of them in
- Provide contact details or a health hotline number that members can call for advice
- Display dispensers of alcohol-based hand rub prominently around the venue



- Arrange seats of the members at least one meter apart
- 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 N95 / Surgical/medical mask of that person
 - Make arrangements to send him to assessment health facility

Post Session

- Retain the names and contact details of all members for at least one month. This will help public health authorities trace people who may have been exposed to COVID-19 if one or more members become ill shortly after the event
- If someone at the meeting or event was isolated as a suspected COVID-19 case, the organizer should let all members know this
- They should be advised to monitor themselves for symptoms for 14 days and take their temperature twice a day
- If they develop even a mild cough or low-grade fever (i.e. a temperature of 37.3 C or more) they should stay at home and self-isolate. This means avoiding close contact (1 meter or nearer) with other people, including family members
- They should also telephone their healthcare provider or the local public health department, giving them details of their recent travel and symptoms

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. Saira Kanwal and HSA/ HPSIU/ NIH team to compile these guidelines.

For more information, please contact:

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<http://covid.gov.pk/>

<http://nhsrco.gov.pk/>

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