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PTI's Mashal Wins Senate Seat in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa

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PESHAWAR – Mashal Azam Yousafzai, an independent candidate backed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), has been elected to the Senate on a women's reserved seat from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa following a by-election held on Thursday. The seat was previously occupied by former PTI senator Dr Sania Nishtar, who resigned earlier this year.

The voting took place in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly and was closely watched as a test of PTI's political standing in the province. According to official results, Yousafzai secured 86 votes, while her main rival, Mehtab Zafar, who was backed by a coalition of

opposition parties, received 53 votes. One additional candidate, Saima Khalid, also running as an independent, received a single vote.

Out of the 145 members of the provincial assembly, 143 participated in the vote. One member each from the government and opposition benches was absent. Three votes were declared invalid after scrutiny. Voting commenced at 11:00 a.m. following a two-hour delay and continued without interruption until 4:00 p.m. Speaker Babar Saleem Swati was the first to cast his vote.

The by-election was preceded by efforts to avoid a contest. Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur reportedly attempted to reach a consensus with Opposition Leader Dr Ibadullah to hold an uncontested election. However, the talks failed, prompting the opposition to put forward Mehtab Zafar as their joint candidate. As a result, other contenders, including Sobia Shahid and Shazia, withdrew from the race.

Yousafzai's victory prompted celebrations among PTI-aligned lawmakers and supporters in the assembly. While she ran as an independent, her campaign received full support from the ruling party, and her success is widely seen as a reflection of PTI's continued influence in the provincial legislature.

The Election Commission of Pakistan oversaw the conduct of the vote, which concluded smoothly without reports of irregularities. This win is expected to bolster PTI's morale and position in the lead-up to future electoral contests.

With the conclusion of the by-election, the women's seat in the Senate representing Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has officially been filled. However, questions remain over whether the divided political landscape in the province will allow for future cooperation among parties in legislative matters.