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## Consensus Holds in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Senate Vote, Opposition Secures Key Seats

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The long-delayed Senate election in the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) Assembly concluded on Monday without any major surprises. As anticipated, a mutual understanding between the governing coalition and opposition parties resulted in the uncontested victory of all pre-agreed candidates, reflecting a rare moment of cooperation in Pakistan's often polarized political climate.

Voting took place to fill 11 vacant seats in Pakistan's upper house of parliament representing K-P. Originally scheduled for March 2024, the elections had been delayed due

to a legal dispute over reserved seats. The issue was finally settled last month by the Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCP), clearing the path for the election.

Twenty-five newly sworn-in members, appointed to reserved seats, participated in the voting process. They had taken their oath just a day before, during a ceremony at the Governor's House, after a scheduled assembly session was postponed due to insufficient attendance.

The seat-sharing arrangement was brokered by Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). Under the terms of the deal, opposition parties . including Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F). were allocated five of the 11 seats. Though initially, some PTI-backed independent candidates resisted the agreement, most withdrew their candidacies before the vote. One candidate, Khurram Zeeshan, stayed in the race but failed to secure any votes.

According to unofficial results released by the Provincial Election Commission, PTI candidates dominated the polls. Murad Saeed received the highest number of votes at 26, followed by Faisal Javed with 22. Former Senate Deputy Chairman Mirza Afridi and Pir Noorul Haq Qadri both earned 21 votes each.

On the opposition side, Maulana Attaul Haq Darwesh (JUI-F), Niaz Ahmed (PML-N), and Talha Mahmood (PPP) were all successfully elected. Ahmed, the son of PML-N leader Amir Muqam, garnered 18 votes, while Mahmood followed closely with 17.

For technocrat and women's reserved seats, PTI's Azam Swati and Rubina Naz each secured 89 votes. Opposition candidates Dilawar Khan (JUI-F) and Rubina Khalid (PPP) also won seats, receiving 54 and 52 votes respectively.

The division of seats strictly adhered to the earlier power-sharing agreement: the PTI-led government received four general seats, one technocrat seat, and one women's seat. The opposition parties took three general seats, one technocrat seat, and one women's seat. This proportional allocation was intended to ease political tensions and avoid unnecessary legal or parliamentary hurdles.

Despite minor delays, with polling starting at 11:00 a.m. instead of the scheduled 9:00 a.m., the process remained largely peaceful. Out of 145 eligible lawmakers, 144 cast their votes,

with only one ruling party member abstaining. JUI-F's Malik Adnan cast the first vote, while Chief Minister Gandapur cast the final one. The election commission even extended the voting window by ninety minutes to ensure all members had the opportunity to vote.

Once the results were announced, celebrations erupted among party supporters, reflecting the strategic success of the pre-election consensus. This outcome, while predictable, underscores the ongoing political realignments in Pakistan's evolving democratic framework.