



## Free and Fair Election Network

### FAFEN Daily Factsheet: Sitting No. 3: Session No. 42 of the National Assembly

## Low interest in budget session

ISLAMABAD, June 6, 2012: The fourth sitting of the National Assembly's budget session was marked by low attendance. Only 35 legislators were present at the start of the sitting while 158 were there when it was adjourned.

Starting 36 minutes late, the Lower House met for two and 37 minutes. The Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue along with the parliamentary leaders of the PML, PMLF, MMAP, ANP, and PPPS did not attend the sitting.

Six legislators – two from PPPP and one each from PML, MQM and PMLF – spoke on the Annual Budget Statement for 112 minutes (71% of sitting time).

PMLN legislators entered the House during the last two minutes of the proceedings, and assembled in front of the Chair to register their protest against the budget. This prompted the adjournment of the sitting.

The Quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the sitting. It was pointed out twice by a PMLN legislator. On two occasions the Chair had to suspend the sitting twice for 22 minutes and 5 minutes.

The following are some key observations of the parliamentary business:

### **Members' participation in House proceedings**

- ⇒ The National Assembly met for two hours and 37 minutes.
- ⇒ The sitting started at 1136 hours against the scheduled starting time of 1100 hours. The House proceedings started late by 36 minutes.
- ⇒ The Deputy Speaker chaired the sitting. The Speaker did not attend the sitting.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition did not attend the sitting.
- ⇒ The Parliamentary leaders of MQM, BNPA and ANP were present while the leaders of PML, PMLF, MMAP, ANP, and PPPS were absent.
- ⇒ The Chief Whips of the PPPP, PML, MQM, MMAP and PMLF were present.
- ⇒ A total of 35 (10%) legislators were present at the start and 158 (46%) at the end of the sitting.
- ⇒ The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue did not attend the sitting.
- ⇒ Eight Minority Members were present.
- ⇒ Three Members applied for leave to be absent.

### **Representation and Responsiveness**

- ⇒ There was no other agenda on the Orders of the Day.



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### Output

- ⇒ The Finance Bill 2012 was presented in the House on June 1, 2012.
- ⇒ Six legislators – two from PPPP and one each from PML, MQM and PMLF – spoke on the Annual Budget Statement for 112 minutes (71% of sitting time).

### Order and institutionalization

- ⇒ No Points of Order were raised during the sitting.
- ⇒ There was no Adjournment Motion on the Orders of the Day.
- ⇒ PMLN legislators entered the House during the last two minutes of the proceedings, and assembled in front of the Chair to register their protest against the budget. This prompted the adjournment of the sitting

### Transparency

- ⇒ Orders of the Day was available to legislators, observers and others.
- ⇒ Information on Members' attendance was unavailable to observers and the public.
- ⇒ Copies of the budget speech were available to the legislators.
- ⇒ The Quorum was visibly lacking at various stages of the sitting. It was pointed out twice by a PMLN Member. On both the occasions the Chair had to suspend the sitting for 22 minutes and five minutes.

*The Daily Factsheet is based on direct observation of the Senate proceedings conducted by Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), a member organization of FAFEN*