



Free and Fair Election Network
FAFEN Preliminary By-Election Report
(PP-89 By-Election January 6, 2016)

FAFEN Observes High Incidence of Irregularities in TT Singh By-Election

ISLAMABAD, January 6, 2016: The by-election for the provincial assembly constituency – PP-89 Pir Mahal, Toba Tek Singh-VI – was held in a relatively peaceful environment amidst insufficient availability of critical election material, widespread canvassing around polling stations and high incidence of irregularities and illegalities in voting processes, says preliminary observation report by the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

FAFEN documented a total of 444 instances of irregularities and illegalities at 288 booths of 104 observed polling stations from where the information could be acquired on the Election Day. This amounts to around 4.3 violations of electoral laws, rules and codes of conduct per polling station. This average is higher than the last month's by-election held in NA-154 Lodhran, where around 3.5 violations per polling stations were observed on the Election Day.

Observed irregularities and illegalities included restrictions on observations of the counting process, insufficient availability of critical election material, campaigning and canvassing outside polling stations, widespread presence of security personnel inside polling stations, absence of polling officials from the polling booths, ballot stamping by unauthorized persons on voters' behalf, irregularities in ballot processing and suspicious voting patterns recorded at several polling booths.

The seat had fallen vacant after PML-N's Makhdoom Ali Raza passed away. Raza had emerged victorious in GE-2013 bagging 55,046 votes whereas PPP's Rana Muhammad Shafique had remained the runner-up with 26,641 votes.

A predominantly rural area, PP-89 is spread over nearly 12 Union Councils (UCs) – nine UCs of Tehsil Pir Mahal and three of Tehsil Kamalia. The total number of registered voters in PP-89 increased around seven percent from 156,241 (88,305 male and 67,936 female) voters in GE-2013 to 166,613 (94,791 male and 71,822 female) voters in by-election 2016. However, the number of polling stations established by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) remained almost the same as 2013. A total of 147 polling stations (32 male, 31 female and 84 combined) were established for 2016 by-election as compared to 146 (33 male, 33 female and 80 combined) polling stations set up in 2013. However, the number of polling booths increased from 393 (216 male and 177 female) in GE-2013 to 430 (237 male and 193 female) polling booths established in 2016.

FAFEN deployed a total of 37 trained, non-partisan observers (17 male and 20 female) to observe the election processes at all the polling stations in the constituency. Every observer underwent a training on election laws and procedures. Each observer documented his/her findings on a standardized checklist based on the provisions of the Representation of the People Act 1976, Conduct of Elections Rules 1977 and instructional handbooks provided to the election officials by the ECP. This preliminary report is based on the observation of 104 polling stations from where the information could be acquired on the Election Day. The following are some of the major findings from FAFEN observation:

1. Unavailability of Critical Election Material

Through interviews with presiding officers, FAFEN observers documented issuance of ballot papers lesser than the total registered voters on at least four out of 104 observed polling stations.

P.S. No	Total Registered Voters	Ballot Papers Issued to Polling Stations	Potentially disenfranchised voters
89	1,300	1,100 (11 books)	200
31	1,004	900 (9 books)	104
8	1,182	1,100 (11 books)	82
26	1,250	1,200 (12 books)	50

At 14 percent observed polling stations, the copies of Statement of the Count (Form-XIV) issued by the RO were lesser than the total number of contesting candidates. Similarly, at 20 percent of the polling stations, the number of Ballot Account Forms (Form-XV) issued by the RO was lesser than the number of contesting candidates. At another 14 percent polling stations, four officially marked ECP seals were not available for every ballot box. Polling schemes were also observed to be unavailable with nearly 12 percent of the presiding officers posted at different polling stations.

2. Campaigning and Canvassing around Polling Stations

Candidates and political parties had reportedly established their party camps outside 39 (38%) of the 104 polling stations. Voters were being issued serial number slips at nearly 95% of the polling stations where these camps were established while these serial number slips contained party's or candidate's election symbol at nearly 72% of these polling stations. At one of these party camps, an armed civilian was also reported to be present. Candidates and parties were seen providing transportation to their voters at 24 percent of the observed polling stations. In addition, candidates' campaign material was seen to be displayed inside one polling station.

3. Polling Station Security

Security officials were reportedly not present outside one observed polling station whereas observers from 101 polling stations reported security officials' presence inside the polling station with or without Presiding Officer's prior permission.

4. Absence of Polling Staff

At nearly five percent of the observed polling stations, assistant presiding officer was not present in at least one of the booths while at two percent polling stations, polling officer was reportedly missing from at least one of the booths during the official time.

5. Ballot stamping by Unauthorized Persons on Voters' Behalf

Of the 288 booths from which the information was received, polling agents or other unauthorized persons were seen stamping the ballot on voters' behalf at nearly two percent of the booths. Similarly, polling officials were seen stamping the ballot papers on voters' behalf at three percent polling booths.

6. Irregularities in Ballot Processing

At nearly seven percent of the observed polling booths, Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) were not taking voters' thumb impression on the counterfoil while issuing ballots. At a same number of polling booths, APOs were seen not stamping or signing the counterfoil or the back of the ballot papers.

7. Women Voting

Female polling staff was not available on four of the 122 observed female polling booths while unauthorized men were seen loitering inside seven female polling booths. Absence of female polling staff at female polling booths and presence of unauthorized men inside female polling booths can potentially undermine female voting in an environment of gender segregation.

8. Absence of Polling Agents

At 53 (18%) of the 288 observed polling booths, polling agents of at least one major party or candidate were not found to be present in polling stations when FAFEN observers visited polling stations.

9. Suspicious Voting Pattern

There were 21 polling booths at 17 polling stations where FAFEN observers recorded suspicious voting patterns. If the polling is most efficient and each voter is taking approximately a minute and 30 seconds for processing (checking of name, checking of CNIC, filling voter information on counterfoil, issuance of ballot paper, going behind secrecy screen, stamping a ballot and returning of stamp to the assistant presiding officer), there can be approximately 45 votes that can be cast in an hour at a booth. However, the rate of voting was higher than possible at 21 booths of 17 polling stations listed below.

PS No.	Polling Station Name	Type of Polling Station	Average Votes polled per hour at the Booth			
			Booth 1	Booth 2	Booth 3	Booth 4
10	Govt. High School No. 2 Primary Portion Wooden Market Pir Mahal Near Telephone Exchange (Female) (P).	Female	182	5	6	5
26	Govt. Boys Elementary School. 717/GB. (Male) (P).	Male	70	60	2	
30	Govt. Girls Elementary School. 722/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	47	74	8	18
42	Govt. Boys Elementary School. 744/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	32	118	73	
82	Govt. Boys Elementary School. 669/GB. (Male) (P).	Male	10	25	50	35
88	Govt. Girls Elementary School. 675/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	45	36	36	23
106	Govt. Boys Primary School. 759/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	11	9	52	34

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113	Govt. Girls Elementary School. Mouza Shah Pur.(Female) (P).	Female	60	-	-	-
144	Govt. Boys Primary School. Mouza Pindi. (P) (Combined)	Combined	57	48		
147	Govt. Boys Primary School. .765/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	53	33	-	
33	Govt. Girls Elementary School. 719/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	76	-	-	
43	Govt. Boys primary School. Mouza Shahabal Shah. (P) (Combined)	Combined	80	42		
46	Govt. Boys primary School. Mehram Kathia. (P) (Combined)	Combined	59	8		
103	Govt. Boys High School. 685/GB. (P). (Combined)	Combined	21	50	9	12
115	Union Council Office. 760/GB. (T) (Combined)	Combined	130	33		
116	Govt. Boys primary School. 760/GB. (P) (Combined)	Combined	60	35		
139	Govt. Girls Elementary School. 763/GB. (Male) (P).	Male	49	20		