



# OBSERVATION REPORT

PB-26-Quetta-III

## QUETTA BY-ELECTION WITNESSES LOW VOTERS' TURNOUT, LOW INCIDENCE OF ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES

The by-election in PB-26 Quetta-III recorded a declining voters' turnout and low incidence of electoral irregularities, replicating the trend witnessed during the by-polls held after General Election (GE)-2018.

Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) deployed 13 trained, non-partisan and duly accredited observers, including two women for observation of by-election in the constituency. The election findings were recorded on comprehensive and standardized checklists and are based on the reports received from 30 (61%) out of 49 polling stations.

The by-polls followed a lackluster campaign by the political parties. As many as 14 political parties and eight independent candidates had contested the GE-2018 from PB-26 Quetta-III. The number of contesting candidates, this time, reduced to 18 with only eight political parties fielding their candidates. Moreover, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Pashtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) withdrew their candidates in support of Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal Pakistan (MMAP) candidate, Wali Muhammad.

During pre-election campaign, the political parties, including Hazara Democratic Party (HDP), Jamait-e-Ulmae Islam (JUI-F), Majlis-e-Wahadat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) and an independent candidate were seen using loud speakers in their party meetings before polls. Moreover, the observers found the party flags of JUI-F, MWM), PML-N, HDP and Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) hoisting at various public places.

The vote-casting process involves several steps, from identifying a voter to inserting the ballot paper into the ballot box. A conservative estimate of the time required to

## CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



### REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 57,675 registered voters in the PB-26 Quetta-III including 35,338 male voters and 22,337 female voters.

### BY-ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
35,338	22,337	57,675

### GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
35,338	22,337	57,675

### CHANGE

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
-	-	-

### POLLING STATIONS (PS)

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) set up 49 polling stations – 28 male, 19 female and two combined for the by-election. Overall, 172 polling booths – 103 male and 69 female – were established.

MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
28	19	2
<b>172</b> POLLING BOOTHS		

complete all these processes suggests that polling staff at one polling booth can accommodate a maximum of 45 voters in an hour. An hourly turnout of more than 45 voters at a polling booth is, therefore, considered to be statistically improbable. FAFEN observation recorded the statistically improbable voting patterns at six (11%) out of 53 polling booths.

ECP had made strict security arrangements for the polls with Frontier Constabulary (FC) and police performing their duties at the polling stations while Pakistan Army was on alert to respond to any untoward incident in the constituency.

### TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



HDP candidate Qadir Ali won the by-election by securing 5,351 (34%) of the polled votes while MMAP candidate Wali Muhammad remained runner-up with 4,409 (28%) votes. According to the Provisional Consolidated Statement of the Result of the Count (Form-47), 341 (2%) votes were excluded from the count.

During GE-2018, HDP's candidate Ahmed Ali Khozad had secured the majority vote in the constituency while MMAP candidate Wali Muhammad had been the runner-up. However, ECP had withheld the notification of the returned candidate after the reports that HDP candidate was Afghan national and later declared the poll in the constituency null and void.

### Voters' Turnout:

PB-26 Quetta-III has 57,675 registered voters including 35,338 male and 22,337 female voters. The voter turnout in the by-election dropped to 26.83% from 32.91% in GE-2018. The male turnout decreased from 33.08% to 26%, while the female turnout from 32.65% to 29%. A total of 15,474 voters – 9,105 male and 6,369 female – exercised their right to vote in the provincial constituency on December 31, 2018.

### Contesting Parties and Candidates:

A total of 18 candidates contested the by-election in PB-26, four less than the number of candidates contesting this seat in GE-2018. For the by-election, eight parties including HDP, JUI-F, MWM, BNP-M, PkMAP, MMAP, Pakistan Tehreek-e Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) fielded their candidates while the remaining 10 candidates were

## CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS

### MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 18 candidates - eight representing political parties including PTI, MWMP, HDP, PPPP, JUI, BNP, PkMAP, MMAP and ten independents - contested the by-poll.



### TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
18	0	18

### POLLING PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICERS	49
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	172
POLLING OFFICERS	172

### ELECTION HISTORY

#### Reason of By-Election

During GE-2018, HDP's candidate Ahmed Ali Khozad had secured the majority vote in the constituency while MMAP candidate Wali Muhammad had been the runner-up. However, ECP had withheld the notification of the returned candidate after the reports that HDP candidate was Afghan national and later declared the poll in the constituency null and void.

#### GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES	VOTER TURNOUT
18,276	705	32.9%

#### BY-ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES	VOTER TURNOUT
15,133	341	26.8%

### MARGIN OF VICTORY

GE 2018	By-Election 2018
1,875	942

### ELECTION OBSERVERS TRAINED

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
11	2	13

independents.

Unlike the General Election 2018 when five women – representing Awami National Party (ANP), Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), National Party (NP) and Balochistan National Party – Awami (BNP-A) – had contested the polls, this time no woman candidate contested the by-election in the constituency.

### Setting Up of Polling Stations:

ECP set up 49 polling stations – 28 male, 19 female and two combined – for 57,675 registered voters of the constituency, averaging 1177 voters per polling station. Although the total number of the polling stations has not changed since GE-2018, the distribution of polling stations among men and women recorded slight variations. Women voters were allocated two more polling stations and men two less polling stations as compared to GE-2018.

The Elections Act, 2017 advises a limit of 1,200 voters to be assigned to a polling station for smooth functioning of voting process. However, additional voters may be assigned in exceptional circumstances with the reasons to be recorded in writing. The election authorities assigned above 1,200 voters to 23 (47%) polling stations in the Final List of Polling Station

Registered Voters Assigned to Polling Stations	Number of Polling Stations
401 to 600	1
601 to 800	3
801 to 1000	5
1001 to 1200	17
1201 to 1400	14
1401 to 1600	9
<b>Overall</b>	<b>49</b>

Under section 59(8) of the Elections Act, 2017, no changes can be made to the notified Final List of Polling Stations, save in very exceptional circumstances, with the approval of the Election Commission of Pakistan and after giving notice to the contesting candidates. FAFEN observers noted that the six polling stations, to be set up in Government Poultry Farm, Brewery Road were shifted to Government Girls School Hazara Town. Returning Officer of the constituency, however, told FAFEN observer that the shifting was made due to security reasons and after taking the contesting candidates in confidence.

### Campaigning and Canvassing:

The observers noted the presence of the political parties' camps around all (28) of the observed polling stations. ECP's Code of Conduct for Political Parties and Contesting Candidates bars the display of arms or incitement to violence at the camps in the surroundings of polling stations. However, the observers witnessed the presence of armed personnel inside the party camps in the surroundings of three out of 28 polling stations.

Moreover, the Code of Conduct prohibits the candidates or their supporters from providing transport services to the voters on the Election-Day. However, FAFEN observers witnessed the party supporters providing transportation to voters in the surroundings of 21 of the observed polling stations. The observers also reported the presence of campaigning material of candidates or the political parties inside one polling station.

### Voting Process:

The voting process continued uninterrupted in 27 polling stations while the polling staff was seen taking breaks during polling hours at one polling station. FAFEN's observation suggests that the secrecy screens were properly placed to protect the privacy of the voters at 42 (79%) of the observed polling booths, whereas the placement of these screens at the remaining 11 (21%) polling booths allowed the persons present inside the booths to see the voters marking their ballot papers. Moreover, the direction of Close Circuit Television (CCTV) cameras at 11 polling booths compromised the voters' secrecy.

The authorized polling agents as well as the candidates' representatives who are allowed to witness the polling process and object to any irregularity as defined under the law, were seated appropriately at most (45 or 85%) of the polling booths, and they were able to witness the entire polling process. However, the seating arrangement for the polling agents at the remaining eight (15%) polling stations did not enable them to see the polling process clearly. Nine instances at three polling stations were reported where the polling staff did not allow the voters with disabilities to seek assistance from a person of their choice for casting their vote.

FAFEN also noted an incident of a violent clash between supporters of MWM and HDP at a polling station that resulted in the injuries to at least five persons and disrupted the polling process for 10 minutes. The incident prompted the security

forces to remove the quarreling parties from the polling station.

### **Preparation and Transmission of Results:**

FAFEN observers witnessed the counting process at seven polling stations. The Presiding Officers (PrOs) were seen counting the ballot papers twice at all the observed polling stations. Legally, the PrOs may recount the votes on their own motion or on the request of candidates or their agents present during the counting process. None of the polling agents refused to sign the Result of the Count (Form-45). However, the PrOs did not paste the copies of the Form-45 and Ballot Paper Account (Form-46) outside four and five polling stations, respectively.

As many as 19 out of 28 PrOs interviewed on the Election-Day shared that they were provided mobile phones by the ECP to electronically transmit the election results after the completion of counting of votes. Four out of the remaining nine PrOs said they would use their own phones to transmit the result while five PrOs said they would share the result with the Returning Officer manually. Moreover, one of the interviewed PrO expressed dissatisfaction with the training provided by the ECP on the use of Result Transmission System (RTS).

### **Conduct of Security Staff:**

The security personnel were observed to be present outside and inside the observed polling station buildings on the Election-Day. They were also deployed inside 40 out of 53 observed polling booths.

Security personnel present outside polling stations were seen checking voters' National Identity Cards (NICs) as well as voter chits (perchees) on 28 (100%) and 26 (93%) of the polling stations, respectively. ECP's Code of Conduct for the Security Officials for GE-2018 prohibited security officials from barring any voter for not carrying NIC or vote-chit as it is the duty of the polling staff to ascertain the identity of the voter and process his or her credentials.

The security officials were observed allowing the voters to carry their mobile phones inside 11 (39%) polling stations. Moreover, the security officials at eight polling stations restricted the media persons to carry their cameras inside the polling station building.

### **Independent Observation:**

Section 238 of the Elections Act, 2017 permits duly verified and accredited election observers to observe the proceedings including the voting and counting processes. In compliance with the legal provision, FAFEN's trained, non-partisan and accredited observers were allowed to observe the polling process at 24 polling stations without any restrictions while they had to persuade the election staff at four polling stations while at two polling stations, FAFEN observers were barred from exercising their legal right of election observation. Moreover, FAFEN observers were allowed to observe the counting process at seven polling stations.