

Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly Elections FAFEN Recommendations for Rule- Based Voting



GILGIT: The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) will observe the Legislative Assembly elections due to be held on November 12, 2009 in 23 constituencies of seven districts of Gilgit-Baltistan.

FAFEN has deployed 23 constituency coordinators in as many constituencies and about 150 Election Day Observers will observe more than 600 of a total of 1022 polling stations to be set up by the Election Commission Gilgit-Baltistan (ECGB) for November 12 election. FAFEN is currently seeking accreditation for its observers. Election to one constituency in Ghizer district, however, has been postponed due to the death of a candidate.

The Chief Election Commissioner Gilgit-Baltistan has already instructed the District Election Commissioners/Deputy Commissioners to facilitate FAFEN observers to the effect. The Chief Secretary has expressed his support for independent observation of the electoral exercise.

FAFEN Recommendations for Rule-Based Voting:

while FAFEN will release its pre-election observation report on November 11, 2009, it makes the following recommendations to ECGB in order to ensure an election that reflects the will of the voters.

The Election Commission Gilgit-Baltistan **MUST**:

1. Instruct all Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Polling Officers and Assistant Polling Officers to strictly enforce the condition of the Computerized National Identity Card for voting in order to ensure that only genuine voters are using their right to adult franchise;
2. Instruct all Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Polling Officers and Assistant Polling Officers to strictly enforce a complete ban on unauthorized persons inside the polling stations;
3. Instruct government and security officials to not enter polling stations unless their assistance is specifically solicited by Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers or Polling officers;
4. Ban announcement of results for constituencies with more than 100 percent voter turnout in any polling station until re-polling at such polling places;

5. Ensure women are not prevented from voting in any polling station, and female polling stations and booths are set up and functioning as specified in Polling Schemes;
6. Issue categorical instructions to all Returning Officers, Assistant Returning Officers, Polling Officers and Assistant Polling Officers to allow independent election observers to monitor the voting and counting;
7. Ensure all candidates get gazetted Polling Schemes as early as possible;
8. Announce the constituency-wise details of the Postal Ballots cast before the polling day and ensure that postal ballots arriving later than the deadline are not counted;
9. Instruct all Polling Officers to clear the area within 100 yards of polling stations of all campaign materials;
10. Instruct all polling and security officers to ensure that no party or candidate is campaigning or making other attempts to influence voters within 400 yards of polling stations;
11. Instruct all Polling Officers to make adequate arrangements to ensure that voters are stamping ballots in complete secrecy;
12. Instruct all Polling Officers to show empty ballot boxes to all polling agents before the start of polling and seal each ballot box in line with ECGB instructions;
13. Instruct all Assistant Polling Officers to apply indelible ink to each voter's thumb in order to minimize the incidence of multiple voting;
14. Instruct all Polling Officers to disallow polling agents from communicating with voters inside polling stations in order to ensure that voters are casting ballot in an atmosphere free of coercion and influence;
15. Instruct all Polling Officers to keep and count challenged ballots separately;
16. Instruct all Returning, Assistant Returning and Polling Officers to follow ECGB rules for counting and consolidation of votes;
17. Instruct all polling officers to display a copy of the Statement of the Count at each polling station as soon as it is finalized and signed by polling agents present.

Election Backgrounder

Election to Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly will be conducted under Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order 2009 promulgated by the federal government in August 2009. Under the new arrangements, people of the Northern Areas will directly elect 24 members in as many electoral constituencies spread over seven districts to form the Legislative Assembly. The Assembly will also have 6 reserved women and 3 reserved technocrat seats to be filled through indirect elections.

According to data provided by ECGB, the number of registered voters in Gilgit-Baltistan is 717,286 as against the estimated population of 1,141,970. Of the registered voters, 46.34 percent are women and 53.66 percent are men. The voter registration in Gilgit-Baltistan was carried out between September 1 and 18, 2009 followed by a week-long Display Period. While people of the age of 18 or above were not required to possess Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) for registration as voters, they must be required to show their CNIC to vote.

Sr. No.	Constituency	No. of Polling Stations	Estimated Population 2009	Male Voters	Female Voters	Total Voters
1.	GBLA-1 (Gilgit-1)	56	56641	28322	20252	48574
2.	GBLA-2 (Gilgit-2)	82	64573	37628	24125	61753
3.	GBLA-3 (Gilgit-3)	66	69395	20679	18731	39410
4.	GBLA-4 (Gilgit-4)	30	29603	10945	10259	21204
5.	GBLA-5 (Gilgit-5)	20	37821	7198	6466	13664
6.	GBLA-6 (Gilgit-6)	47	61229	17417	16519	33936
7.	GBLA-7 (Skardu-1)	28	35310	16029	11804	27833
8.	GBLA-8 (Skardu-2)	47	54021	20918	17639	38557
9.	GBLA-9 (Skardu-3)	54	46859	12578	11510	24088
10.	GBLA-10 (Skardu-4)	43	46054	11719	11875	23594
11.	GBLA-11 (Skardu-5)	43	43229	12310	10927	23237
12.	GBLA-12 (Skardu-6)	60	56426	16858	15694	32552
13.	GBLA-13 (Astora-1)	45	45674	13902	13718	27620
14.	GBLA-14 (Astora-2)	36	48358	13846	13124	26970
15.	GBLA-15 (Diamer-1)	39	40680	16728	22521	39249
16.	GBLA-16 (Diamer-2)	26	54751	23848	12670	36518
17.	GBLA-17 (Diamer-3)	17	46125	14578	11786	26364
18.	GBLA-18 (Diamer-4)	11	31541	9916	7672	17588
19.	GBLA-19 (Ghizer-1)	40	47760	14313	13349	27662
20.	GBLA-20 (Ghizer-2)	43	60332	17236	15355	32591
21.	GBLA-21 (Ghizer-3)	45	49644	12982	11955	24937
22.	GBLA-22 (Ghanche-1)	53	42295	13272	13011	26283
23.	GBLA-23 (Ghanche-2)	48	42134	12798	12420	25218

24.	GBLA-24 (Ghanche-3)	43	31515	8889	8995	17884
	Total	1022	1141970	384909	332377	717286

Out the 1022 polling stations, the ECGB has declared 272 polling stations either sensitive or very sensitive, making up for 26.61 percent of a total of 1022 polling stations. The following is the district-wise details of such polling stations:

Sr. No.	District	Very Sensitive Polling Stations	Sensitive Polling Stations	Total
1.	Gilgit	11	70	81
2.	Skardu	40	37	77
3.	Astore	5	7	12
4.	Diامر	45	18	63
5.	Ghizer	9	9	18
6.	Ghanche	9	12	21
	Total	119	153	272

As many as 264 candidates^[1], 99 fielded by political parties and 165 independents, are contesting for 24 Legislative Assembly - 22 candidates are contesting for Gilgit-1, 18 for Gilgit-2, 13 for Gilgit-3, 15 for Gilgit-4, 19 for Gilgit-5, 16 for Gilgit-5, 6 for Skardu-1, 5 for Skardu-2, 3 for Skardu-3, 9 for Skardu-4, 7 for Skardu-5, 2 for Skardu-6, 14 for Astore-1, 23 for Astore-2, 11 for Diامر-1, 13 for Diامر-2, 7 for Diامر-3, 6 for Diامر-4, 21 for Ghizer-1, 14 for Ghizer-2, 4 for Ghanche-1, 4 for Ghanche-2 and 4 for Ghanche-3.

As many as 10 political parties have fielded their candidates for the November 12 election. The following is the party-wise, constituency-wise details of candidates:

SR. NO. POLITICAL PARTY NO. OF CANDIDATES

1.	PPP	23
2.	MQM	20
3.	PML-N	15
4.	PML-Q	14
5.	GBDA	10
6.	JUI	6



7.	BNF	4
8.	ANP	3
9.	JI	2
10.	PTI	2
TOTAL		99

About FAFEN: The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN), a coalition of thirty leading Pakistani civil society organizations, was established in 2006 to observe election processes, educate voters, and advocate for electoral and democratic reform.