**PS-59 Badin: Irregularities, suspicious voting patterns observed in re-poll on 37 polling stations**

ISLAMABAD, March 15, 2016: A limited number of polling stations for re-poll in PS-59 Badin-V could not help keep the irregularities in check, as the incidence of illegalities remained high. FAFEN observers reported a total of 101 irregularities and illegalities from 18 out of 37 polling stations where re-poll was held on Tuesday.

PPPP’s Nawaz Chandio had emerged victorious in the GE-2013, bagging 38,315 votes but PML-N’s Ismail Rahu –the runner-up with 36,966 votes – challenged the election through a petition in election tribunal. The tribunal later ruled in favour of the petitioner and ordered re-poll on 37 polling stations. PPPP challenged the decision in the Supreme Court that upheld the tribunal verdict. Finally, the re-poll was scheduled for March 15, 2016.

FAFEN observers reported from 18 polling stations on the Election Day and observed 101 cases of irregularities and illegalities, averaging around 5.6 violations per polling station. This average is still higher than the average violations per polling stations in the remaining parts of the country, even though this was a re-poll on a limited number of polling stations. Security arrangements were high as 25 of the 37 (68%) polling stations were declared highly sensitive while the remaining 12 (32%) were declared sensitive.

Political parties and candidates continued to establish their election camps inside the prohibited 400-yards circle as such camps were witness around nine polling stations, with serial number slips being issued to the voters from seven such camps. At three of these camps, armed civilians were also seen present, adding to the chances of voter intimidation. Additionally, there were at least 14 polling stations where candidates and political parties were providing transportation for the voters.

Voters’ constitutional right to secret ballot was compromised as other voters on four polling stations were seen accompanying voters behind the secrecy screen while at two polling stations, polling officials themselves were seen accompanying the voters behind the secrecy screen. At one polling station, a polling agent was reportedly going behind the secrecy screen with the voters while at another two polling stations, same act was observed to be done by other unauthorized individuals who were present inside the polling booths.

There were at least three polling stations where census blocks allotted to the polling stations was different from the gazetted polling scheme.

At least 80% of the observed polling stations faced insufficient availability of critical election material as Ballot Account Forms or Form-XV were not available for polling agents of all contesting candidates at 15 observed polling stations. Similarly, at 13 out of 18 observed polling stations, Statement of Count or Form-XIV were not available for polling agents of all contesting candidates.

Of the 18 polling stations from where the reports for Election Day observation could be received, at least four polling booths on three polling stations showed suspicious voting patterns. Based on FAFEN’s vast observation of the elections in Pakistan and also keeping in view the best practices, one voter takes at least one and a half minute to process. This translates into a maximum of 45 votes per hour polled on a polling booth. However, at four booths in three polling stations, significantly higher rate of voting was observed.