



OBSERVATION REPORT

PP-84 KHUSHAB-III

AROUND 53% TURNOUT, LOW INCIDENCE OF ELECTORAL IRREGULARITIES MARK PP-84 BY-ELECTION

ISLAMABAD, May 7, 2021: Despite hot weather and COVID-19 associated challenges, the PP-84 Khushab-III by-election on Wednesday May 5 witnessed improved election management and an encouraging turnout (52.99 percent) with low incidence of procedural violations.

As many as 155,089 registered voters - 86,178 (55.56 percent) men and 68,911 (50.09 percent) women – exercised their right to vote during by-election. The election turnout, though encouraging for a by-election, was lower than 61.7 percent turnout recorded during General Election (GE) 2018.

FAFEN's trained citizen observers reported a total of 83 violations of electoral laws, rules, and/or various codes of conduct issued by ECP for the conduct of elections, averaging less than one violation (0.9) per observed polling station. FAFEN deployed 28 non-partisan and duly accredited observers—13 male and 15 females—to observe the polling process at 88 polling stations (eight male, nine female, and 71 combined).

The compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for COVID-19 prevention showed a varied trend across the constituency with only 49 percent of the observed polling stations strictly enforcing the SOPs. Majority of the observed violations were of ban on campaigning and canvassing in surroundings of the polling stations. FAFEN observers found candidates or contesting parties' camps set up in vicinity of 55 polling stations.

As far as polling station arrangements are concerned, 15 polling stations—four female and 11 combined—housed more than one booth in a single room making the space congested. The seating arrangements for the candidates' polling agents at four polling stations was disabling them to observe the polling process firsthand and raise any objections.

Though the overall voter turnout in the constituency was satisfactory, one polling station was observed with no votes cast at all during first two hours of the polling. Reportedly, the voters boycotted the poll in protest against unavailability of electricity in the polling area.

The observers found election materials in adequate quantities at all of the observed polling stations. All due arrangements were made at

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



PP-84
KHUSHAB-III

REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 292,687 registered voters in the PP-84 Khushab-III including 155,104 male voters and 137,583 female voters.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
143,178	124,680	267,858

BY-ELECTION 2021

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
155,104	137,583	292,687

CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
8.3% ⁺	10.3% ⁺	9.3% ⁺

POLLING STATIONS (PS)

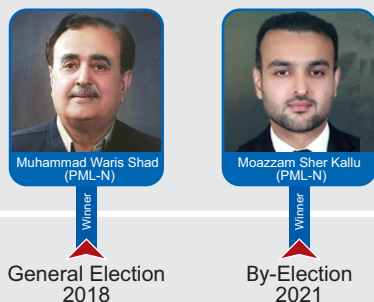
Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 229 polling stations – 27 male, 26 female and 176 combined for the by-election. Overall, 666 polling booths – 344 male and 322 female – were established.

MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
27	26	176
666 POLLING BOOTHS		

the polling stations to protect the secrecy of voters except at one polling station where secrecy screens were placed improperly that allowed people inside polling booth to watch voters marking their choice on ballot paper.

Observers representing the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) asked voters how satisfied they were with the voting process. Voters outside 82 polling stations—eight male, nine female, and 65 combined—expressed their satisfaction. In contrast, voters outside the remaining polling stations said they were partially satisfied.

TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



As many as four political parties had fielded their candidates for PP-84 by-election, while seven candidates contested independently. The winning candidate secured 47 percent (73,081) of the polled votes (155,089), while the runner-up obtained 40.5 percent (62,903) of the polled votes. A comparison of Forms 47 - provisional consolidated statement of results of the count – of GE-2018 and by-election 2021 shows an increase in percentage vote share of PML-N from 40.2 percent in GE-2018 to 47 percent in By-election 2021 and of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) from 36.2 percent in GE-2018 to 40.5 percent in by-election 2021. On the other hand, the vote share of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) decreased from 7.5 percent in GE-2018 to 3.73 percent in by-election 2021 and of Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) from 0.82 percent in GE-2018 to 0.15 in by-election 2021.

The by-elections were necessitated due to the death of Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) lawmaker Muhammad Waris Shad who had won this constituency during the General Elections 2018 by securing 66,459 votes. His son Muhammad Moazzam Sher of PML-N won Wednesday's by-election by securing 47 percent (73,081) of the total polled votes.

1. Campaigning and canvassing:

The election code of conduct prohibits campaigning and canvassing in and around polling stations on the Election Day. The code was observed to be effectively enforced inside the observed polling stations as FAFEN observers did not witness any campaign materials there. However, they did report the presence of political parties or candidates' camps in the close vicinity of 55 out of 88 observed polling stations.

2. Conduct of Security Staff

With police and Rangers personnel deployed at each polling station, no major incident of violence was reported in the constituency. However, FAFEN observers noted two instances of exchange of harsh words among voters and polling staff in two separate polling stations. The behavior of the security officials was generally observed to be welcoming and supportive towards voters.

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 11 candidates including representatives of PTI, PPPP, PML-N, TLP and seven independents contested the by-election.



TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
9	0	9

BY-ELECTION 2021

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
11	0	11

POLLING PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICERS	229
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	666
POLLING OFFICERS	666

ELECTION HISTORY

REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of PML-N MPA Muhammad Waris Shad.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
158,647	6,617	61.7%

BY-ELECTION 2021

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
152,297	2,792	52.99%

ELECTION OBSERVERS TRAINED

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
13	15	28

MARGIN OF VICTORY

GENERAL ELECTION 2018	BY-ELECTION 2021
6,440	10,178

3. Enforcement of SOPs to contain COVID-19

According to the observers' reports, the security and election staff at 49 percent (43) of the observed polling stations was strictly enforcing COVID-19 SOPs. However, the staff at 47 percent (41) polling stations was lax at enforcing the SOPs. Meanwhile, staff at three polling stations was observed completely disregarding the COVID-19 SOPs.

4. Voting Process

FAFEN's observation suggests that the voting ran smoothly inside the polling booths without any remarkable violations of the due process. The polling staff was reported had taken appropriate measures to protect voters' secrecy at most (98 percent) of the polling stations. However, one polling stations was reported to have secrecy screens set up in such a way that allowed people in the polling booth to see the voters marking their ballot papers.

Similarly, authorized polling agents, who are allowed to witness the polling process and object any irregularity as defined under the law, were seated appropriately at the observed polling booths of 95 percent polling stations and were able to observe the entire polling process firsthand. The observers reported Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) signing and stamping on the backside of the ballot papers at all polling stations before its issuance to the voters.

The observers did not report any incident of polling staff disallowing voters to cast their vote. Moreover, no instance of unauthorized persons accompanying the voters behind the secrecy screen was received from any polling station.

5. Counting Process

FAFEN observed the counting process at 20 polling stations. The observers reported that polling staff provided the copies of Form-45 (Result of the Count) to all polling agents present during the counting. Similarly, the result form was also pasted outside all observed polling stations. However, the polling staff at two stations refused to provide a copy of Form-45 to FAFEN observers, who are otherwise entitled to receive the copy.

6. Voter Registration and Turnout

There are 292,687 registered voters on the constituency's electoral rolls issued for the by-election. This number shows an increase of 9.3 percent (24,829) since GE-2018 when 267,858 voters were entitled to vote in the constituency. As many as 11,926 male voters and 12,903 female voters were added to the electoral rolls during last 33 months.

Of these registered voters, around 52.99 percent (155,089) exercised their right to vote on the polling day. The male voter turnout was 55.56 percent and female voter turnout was 50.09 percent. Overall, the turnout was 8.7 percent less than GE-2018 turnout i.e. 61.7 percent with 165,264 votes polled.

No reports of any bar on women voters were received during the polling day. However, one of the FAFEN observers reported from a combined polling station that not even a single vote was cast during his stay at the polling station

between 9 am and 10 am. Reportedly, the voters had boycotted the polling in protest against unavailability of electricity in the area.

FAFEN observers noted voters queued outside or inside 61 percent (54) of the observed polling stations' buildings during the polling day. Both male and female voters were seen visiting polling stations to cast their ballots. The polling process seemed completely organized at 95 percent (84) polling stations while the remaining polling stations had minor issues of voter management.

7. Contesting Parties and Candidates

Eleven male candidates including seven independents contested the by-election in PP-84 Khushab-III. Four political parties including PML-N, PPP, PTI and TLP fielded their candidates for this by-election.

During GE-2018, nine male candidates contested in this constituency. Five political parties including PPP, PTI, PML-N, MMAP and TLP had nominated their candidates while the remaining four contesting candidates were independents.

A comparison of by-election Form 47 with GE-2018 Form 47 shows an increase in percentage of vote share of two political parties including PML-N (40.2 percent in GE-2018 to 47 percent in By-election 2021) and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf – PTI (36.2 percent in GE-2018 to 40.5 percent in by-election 2021) and decrease in vote share of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan – TLP (7.5 percent in GE-2018 to 3.73 percent in by-election 2021) and Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarians – PPP (0.82 percent in GE-2018 to 0.15 in by-election 2021).

8. Setting Up of Polling Stations

ECP had set up 229 polling stations – 27 male, 26 female, and 176 combined – comprising 666 polling booths (344 male, 322 female) for 292,687 registered voters of the constituency, averaging 1,278 voters per polling station.

The Elections Act, 2017 suggests a limit of 1,200 voters to be assigned to a polling station and 300 to a polling booth for smooth voting process. However, additional voters may be assigned in exceptional circumstances with the reasons to be recorded in writing. In PP-84, 125 (55 percent) out of 229 polling stations were assigned more than 1200 voters.

Moreover, 14 polling stations were declared as highly sensitive and 43 polling stations as sensitive from a security point of view for the by-election.

9. Independent Observation:

Section 238 of the Elections Act, 2017 permits duly verified and accredited elections observers to observe the proceedings including the voting and counting process. In compliance with legal provision, FAFEN's trained, nonpartisan and accredited observers were allowed to observe the polling process at 88 polling stations without any restrictions. Similarly, FAFEN observers were allowed to observe the counting process at 20 polling stations.

Findings of this by-election observation were collected by

using a standardized robust methodology based on the Elections Act, 2017, Election Rules 2018, respective codes of conduct and Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) handbooks for election officials. For this report, FAFEN analyzed the checklists received from 88 polling stations.

10. Election Administration

ECP deployed contingents of Pakistan Rangers outside the polling stations in the constituency to ensure smooth voting process on the polling day.

To get the real time information from the field, a special control room was established in the office of the Returning Officer which functioned from the commencement of the polling process till the preliminary results were compiled. Returning Officer, Deputy Commissioner, Police and Rangers officials monitored the situation from control room and also conducted field visits.

A complaint cell was also established at office of the provincial election commissioner Punjab. According to an official, only one complaint was received on polling day from this constituency where supporters of two major candidates came face to face. Earlier, ECP also deployed teams to monitor the election campaign in the constituency.

The presiding officers were instructed to keep the location of their mobiles `turn on' during the poll day and forward the picture of Form-45 to the Returning Officer through WhatsApp in the presence of polling agents. The provisional result of the bye-election was announced on time due to effective management of election related affairs.

11. Brief History

The provincial assembly seat for PP-84 had fallen vacant due to demise of PML-N MPA Malik Muhammad Waris Shad who was elected during GE-2018. For by-election, the PML-N awarded ticket to his son Barrister Muhammad Moazzam Sher. The tough competition was witnessed among candidates of two mainstream political parties including PTI and PML-N.

12. Extent of the Constituency

The PP-84 Khushab-III includes Noor Pur Thal Tehsil and area of Municipal Committee Mitha Tiwana. It also covers the Qanungo Halqas of Khushab Tehsil including Giro, Mitha Tiwana, Chak No. 22-MB Qanungo Halqa of Quaiabad Tehsil excluding Okhli Mohla Patwar Circle of Khushab District.