



OBSERVATION REPORT

PS-70 Badin-I

By-Election in PS-70 Badin-I Peaceful and Generally Well-Managed

ISLAMABAD, May 21, 2021: PS-70 Badin-I by-election held on May 20, 2021 witnessed significant decline (18.57 percent) in voter turnout since 2018 general elections (GE) and low incidence of electoral violations, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) in its report on Friday.

As many as 58,545 registered voters – 33,751 (36.8 percent) men and 24,794 (32.9 percent) women – exercised their right to vote during by-election. The by-election recorded a turnout of 35.10 percent of registered voters- dropping from 53.67% percent recorded for the constituency during GE-2018 as hot weather and COVID-19 spread remained a challenge for voters to come out and cast their ballot. The low incidence of procedural violations was observed due to improved election management averaging almost one irregularity per polling station like by-election held on May 5, 2021 in PP-84 (Khushab-III, Punjab). Five political parties fielded their candidates in by-election, while one candidate contested independently. The winning candidate scored 79.29 percent of the polled votes while the runner-up candidate obtained 10.64 percent of the polled votes.

FAFEN's trained citizen observers reported a total of 110 violations of electoral laws, rules, and/or various codes of conduct issued by ECP for the conduct of elections, averaging around one per observed polling station. FAFEN deployed 29 non-partisan and duly accredited observers—24 male and five females—to observe the polling process at 105 polling stations (26 male, 18 female, and 61 combined).

The compliance with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for COVID-19 prevention showed a varied trend across the constituency with only 48 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 35 percent polling stations.

As far as polling station arrangements are concerned, 36 polling stations—10 male, five female and 21 combined—housed more than one booth in a single room making the polling space congested. A total of 77 out of 123 polling stations were allocated more than 1,200 voters. However, the seating arrangements for the candidates'

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 166,809 registered voters in the PS-70 Badin-I including 91,587 male voters and 75,222 female voters.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
77,497	64,184	141,681

BY-ELECTION 2021

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
91,587	75,222	166,809

CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
18.2% ⁺	17.2% ⁺	17.7% ⁺

POLLING STATIONS (PS)

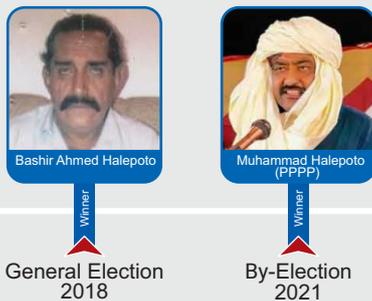
Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 123 polling stations – 28 male, 23 female and 72 combined for the by-election. Overall, 423 polling booths – 229 male and 194 female – were established.

MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
28	23	72
423		
POLLING BOOTHS		

polling agents at all polling stations was seen to be proper and enabling for them to observe the polling process firsthand and raise objections, if any.

The observers found election materials in adequate quantities at 101 of the observed polling stations but scarcity of election material was reported at four polling stations. All due arrangements were made at the polling stations to protect the secrecy of voters except at four polling stations where secrecy screens were placed improperly that allowed people inside polling booth to watch voters marking their choice on ballot paper.

TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



Observers representing the Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) asked voters how satisfied they were with the voting process. Voters outside 97 polling stations—25 male, 15 female, and 57 combined—expressed their complete satisfaction with the voting process. In contrast, voters outside the remaining polling stations said they were partially satisfied. None of the interviewed voters express complete dissatisfaction with the process.

As many as five political parties had fielded their candidates for PS-70 by-election, while one candidate contested independently. A comparison of main contesting parties (PPPP and JUIP) through 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 PPPP from 58.37 percent in GE-2018 to 79.28 percent in by-election 2021 and of JUIP from 3.6 percent to 10.64 percent.

The by-elections were necessitated due to the death of Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarian's MPA Bashir Ahmed Halepoto on March 23 who had won this constituency during the General Elections 2018 by securing 44,385 votes. His nephew Dada Muhammed Halepoto of PPPP won Thursday's by-election by securing 79.29 percent (46,420) 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 97 observed polling stations as FAFEN observers did not witness any campaign materials there. However, it was observed on the walls or inside of eight polling stations. The observers also reported the presence of political parties or candidates' camps in the close vicinity of 37 (35 percent) out of 105 observed polling stations.

2. Conduct of Security/Polling Staff

With police and Rangers personnel deployed at each polling station, no

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 6 candidates including representatives of GDA, PPPP, JUI-F, TLP MWM and one independent are contesting the by-election.



TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
11	2	13

BY-ELECTION 2021

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
6	0	6

POLLING PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICERS	123
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	423
POLLING OFFICERS	423

ELECTION HISTORY

REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of PPPP MPA Bashir Ahmad Halepoto.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
72,436	3,598	53.7%

BY-ELECTION 2021

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
58,545	1,625	35.10%

SENSITIVITY OF PS BY-ELECTION 2021

HIGHLY SENSITIVE	SENSITIVE	NORMAL
12	40	71

MARGIN OF VICTORY

GENERAL ELECTION 2018	BY-ELECTION 2021
21,418	40,189

major incident of violence was reported in the constituency. However, FAFEN observers noted four instances of exchange of harsh words among voters and polling staff in four separate polling stations. The behavior of the security officials was generally observed to be welcoming and supportive towards voters at 103 polling stations while conduct of security officials was reported harsh with voters at two polling stations.

Under instructions of ECP, the Sindh police deployed more than 1,600 police officials including 200 female officials for polling stations' security on Election-day. In addition to the police, ECP also deployed Sindh Rangers outside 12 highly sensitive and 40 sensitive polling stations. The Sindh police mapped all polling stations using google maps to effectively monitor security at polling stations in the constituency. A control room was established at Matli Police Station to monitor the security situation in the constituency and prevent any unforeseen incident on the Election-day. A complaint center was also set up at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Islamabad for receiving any complaints by voters, candidates, and their election or polling agents regarding any electoral irregularities.

According to reports sent by FAFEN observers, the behavior of the security officials was generally observed to be supportive towards voters. However, at two polling stations, the observers noted unnecessarily harsh behavior of the security personnel towards voters. No major incident of violence was reported except four incidents of exchange of harsh words among voters at as many polling stations including one each male and combined and two female polling stations.

3. Enforcement of COVID-19 SOPs

According to the observers' reports, the security and election staff at 48 percent (50) of the observed polling stations was strictly enforcing COVID-19 SOPs. However, the staff at 45 percent (47) polling stations was lax at enforcing the SOPs. Meanwhile, staff at seven polling stations was observed completely disregarding the COVID-19 SOPs.

4. Voting Process

FAFEN observation suggests that the voting ran smoothly inside the polling booths without any remarkable violations of the due process. The polling staff had taken appropriate measures to protect voters' secrecy at most (95 percent) of the polling stations. However, four 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. The election material was in adequate quantities at 101 of the observed polling stations but scarcity of election material was reported at four polling stations.

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 all 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 observed polling stations. The polling process seemed completely organized at 98 percent (93) polling stations while the remaining polling stations had minor issues of voter management.

5. Counting Process

FAFEN observed the counting process at 24 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. However, the result form was not pasted outside four observed polling stations. The polling staff at two stations refused to provide a copy of Form-45 to FAFEN observers, who were otherwise entitled to receive the copy. The ECP had also directed all Presiding Officers to share a scanned copy of Form-45 with Returning Officer by using WhatsApp through their smartphones in presence of polling agents of the contesting candidates.

6. Voter Registration and Turnout

There were 166,809 registered voters on the constituency's electoral rolls issued for the by-election. This number showed an increase of 18 percent (or 25,128) since GE-2018 when 141,681 voters were entitled to vote in the constituency. As many as 14,090 male voters and 11,038 female voters were added to the electoral rolls during last 34 months.

Of these registered voters, around 35.10 percent (58,545) exercised their right to vote on the polling day. The male voter turnout was 36.85 percent and female voter turnout was 32.9 percent. Overall, the turnout was a sharp decline as compared to 2018 turnout i.e. 53.67 percent with 76,034 votes polled.

No reports of any bar on women voters were received during the polling day. FAFEN observers noted voters queued outside or inside 63 percent (66) of the observed polling stations' buildings during the polling day. Both male and female voters were seen visiting polling stations to cast their votes.

7. Contesting Parties and Candidates

The candidates representing five political parties including PPPP, JUIP, TLP, MWM, GDA, and an independent candidate contested the by-election in PS-70 Badin-I. It was an all-men contest.

During GE-2018, a total of 13 candidates had contested in this constituency. Six political parties including PPPP, GDA, PSP, MMAP, PML-N and Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek had nominated their candidates, while the remaining seven contesting candidates were independents.

A comparison between Form-47 of recent by-election and

GE-2018 shows an increase in vote share of winning party PPPP from 58.37 percent in 2018 to 79.29 percent in 2021. Similarly, the vote share of runner-up party JUIP also increased from 3.60 percent to 10.64 percent.

8. Setting Up of Polling Stations

ECP set up 123 polling stations – 28 male, 23 female, and 72 combined – comprising 423 polling booths including 229 male, 194 females for 166,809 registered voters of the constituency, averaging 1,356 voters per polling station.

The Elections Act, 2017 highlights 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. Still, 77 polling stations of the constituency were allocated more than 1,200 voters.

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 105 polling stations without any restrictions. However, the polling staff at one polling station barred FAFEN observer from entering the polling station.

10. Electoral History

Mr Bashir Halepoto had been member of the Sindh Assembly from May 2013 to May 2018 and he was re-elected in General Elections 2018. For by-election, the PPPP awarded ticket to his nephew Muhammed Halepoto who won the constituency. Despite the ongoing third wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ECP fulfilled legal requirements and announced by-election on March 30, 2021 in the said constituency. Another threat to by-election was Cyclone Tauktae which was about to hit coastal districts of Sindh province, but the cyclone turned away from the coastal belt of the country.

11. Extent of the Constituency

The PS-70 Badin-I (Matli) is predominantly a rural constituency and bordering with Tando Muhammad Khan, Tando Allah Yar, Mirpurkhas and Badin districts.