



OBSERVATION REPORT

NA-133 Lahore-XI

MINOR PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITIES IN LOW TURNOUT NA-133 BY-ELECTION

ISLAMABAD, December 5, 2021: Clouded by the vote-buying controversy, and overshadowed by the disqualification of the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) candidate on technical grounds, the NA-133 (Lahore XI) by-election remained a lackluster duel majorly between the candidates of two opposition parties, registering a turnout of less than 20 percent amid an orderly voting and counting processes.

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of a Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz's (PML-N) member who had won the constituency during the General Election (GE) 2018 defeating the PTI candidate. The constituency registered a marked decrease in the turnout as compared to GE-2018 when it remained at 51.9 percent. The decrease may be attributed to the absence of the PTI's candidate from the by-election.

The by-election came under the spotlight after allegations and counter allegations of vote-buying by candidates of PML-N and Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarians (PPPP), which compelled the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to order an inquiry, though the findings are still pending.

The Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) deployed 30 trained, non-partisan and duly accredited observers (18 men and 12 women) to observe a total of 120 polling stations across the constituency. FAFEN observers observed the process of opening of polling stations as well as voting and counting processes at selected polling stations, and documented their observations on the standardized checklists based on the Elections Act, 2017, Elections Rules, 2017, ECP handbooks for elections officials and relevant notifications and directions of the ECP. This preliminary report is based on the observations received from 79 polling stations.

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



NA-133
Lahore-XI

REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 440,485 registered voters in the NA-133 Lahore-XI including 233,558 male voters and 206,927 female voters.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

| MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 202,760 | 168,916 | 371,676 |

BY-ELECTION 2021

| MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|---------|---------|---------|
| 233,558 | 206,927 | 440,485 |

CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS

| MALE | FEMALE | TOTAL |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 15.2% ⁺ | 22.5% ⁺ | 18.5% ⁺ |

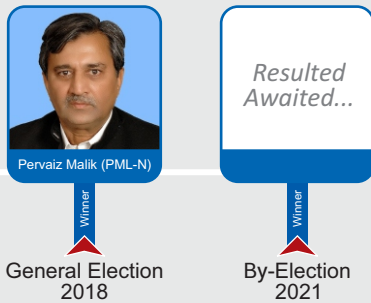
POLLING STATIONS (PS)

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 254 polling stations – 100 male, 100 female and 54 combined for the by-election. Overall, 831 polling booths – 436 male and 395 female – were established.

| MALE PS | FEMALE PS | COMBINED PS |
|-----------------------|-----------|-------------|
| 100 | 100 | 54 |
| 831 POLLING BOOTHS | | |

According to FAFEN observers, the election-day remained largely peaceful and orderly with no major incident affecting the voting and counting processes. As many as 96 percent of 224 voters interviewed by FAFEN observers expressed satisfaction with their voting experiences after casting their ballots. The ones who were not satisfied quoted long distances to polling stations from their homes, and the inadvertent long-wait in voting queues as the reasons for their dissatisfaction.

TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



With the exception of one observer, none of the observers were restricted from observation and were given full access to observe the voting and counting processes inside the polling stations – a marked improvement in the electoral transparency as compared to previous by-elections when reports of restrictions on observers were received. Although a majority of the polling stations were being managed by security officials who were only allowing voters and authorized officials inside the polling stations, FAFEN observers reported unauthorized persons inside at least four polling stations. However, generally, the security officials deployed at the polling stations were observed following the ECP-prescribed code of conduct.

One of the most common illegalities reported by the observers remained campaigning and canvassing by candidates around the polling stations, which has also been a most occurring issue in other elections. FAFEN observers reported campaigning and canvassing outside 94 percent of the observed polling stations. Such campaigning and canvassing around polling stations at times also become a source of election-day violence due to intense competition and may also create an atmosphere of intimidation for voters.

Despite a legal requirement, according to FAFEN observers, the Presiding Officers did not remove campaign materials from inside nine polling stations and outside the walls of 18 polling stations. Similarly, voters were seen with voter parchis from the party camps, which contain their serial number on the electoral rolls. Again, a common illegality that continues to persist during FAFEN's observation of the recent by-elections. At five polling stations, the Presiding Officers did not seek signatures of polling agents on Form-42 (statement regarding inspection of ballot

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 11 candidates including representatives of PML-N, PPPP, TIP, FDF and seven contested as independent in the by-election.



TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

| MEN | WOMEN | TOTAL |
|-----|-------|-------|
| 14 | 0 | 14 |

BY-ELECTION 2021

| MEN | WOMEN | TOTAL |
|-----|-------|-------|
| 9 | 2 | 11 |

POLLING PERSONNEL

| | |
|------------------------------|-----|
| PRESIDING OFFICERS | 254 |
| ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS | 831 |
| POLLING OFFICERS | 831 |

FAFEN OBSERVERS DEPLOYED

| MEN | WOMEN | TOTAL |
|-----|-------|-------|
| 18 | 12 | 30 |

ELECTION HISTORY

REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of PML-N MNA Muhammad Pervaiz Malik.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

| VALID VOTES | VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT | VOTER TURNOUT |
|-------------|-------------------------------|---------------|
| 192,878 | 2,347 | 51.89% |

SENSITIVITY OF PS BY-ELECTION 2021

| HIGHLY SENSITIVE | SENSITIVE | NORMAL |
|------------------|-----------|--------|
| 21 | 199 | 34 |

boxes before start of poll) after showing them empty ballot boxes before the start of polling as required by the law.

In addition, workers of contesting candidates were seen providing transportation to their voters. This is another illegality that the ECP has yet to completely eradicate from the election processes. Such practices, if not controlled, create a disadvantage for candidates belonging to low income groups. Moreover, the cost incurred on voters' transportation on election-day is not declared as an election expense by the candidates as this is not a permissible cost under the code of conduct for contesting candidates and political parties.

Though the ECP had instructed the polling staff to strictly comply with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for containing the spread of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), at 35 percent polling stations, COVID SOPs were not followed. Similarly, at 41 polling stations, the poster containing COVID-19 safety measures was missing.

The ECP had set up 254 polling stations – 100 male, 100 female and 54 combined – in the constituency, comprising 831 polling booths – 436 male and 395 female. Although the law encourages the Returning Officers to assign not more than 1,200 voters to any polling station and not more than 300 per booth, there were 208 polling stations exceeding the legally

encouraged scheme. Most of the Presiding Officers had set-up multiple booths in a single room, which led to overcrowding during voting rush hours. Polling station management along with a higher number of voters assigned to a polling station at times leads to chaos and disorder, which slows down the voting, and may also cause voter suppression as many voters turn away to avoid unnecessary wait or untoward situations. FAFEN observers reported some incidences of disorder at polling stations as well as instances of voters being turned away for not being registered at the polling stations.

As many as 440,485 voters – 233,558 male and 206,927 female – were registered to vote for the by-election, as compared to 371,676 in GE-2018, registering an increase of 68,809 voters, 30,798 male and 38,011 female voters.

Four political parties – PML-N, PPPP, First Democratic Front (FDF) and Tehreek-e-Islahate Pakistan (TIP) – had fielded their candidates for the by-election, while seven candidates ran independently. The Returning Officer had rejected the nomination papers of the PTI's main and covering candidates, a decision later upheld by the Election Tribunal.

NA-133 Lahore-XI consists of areas including Green Town, Township, Chungi Amar Sidhu, Pindi Rajputan, Kacha Jail Road, Kot Lakhpat, Model Town's Q Block flats, Wafaqi Colony and parts of Johar Town.