



OBSERVATION REPORT

PP-206 Khanewal-IV

Illegal Campaigning and Canvassing Persist in Multi-Party Contest in Khanewal By-Election

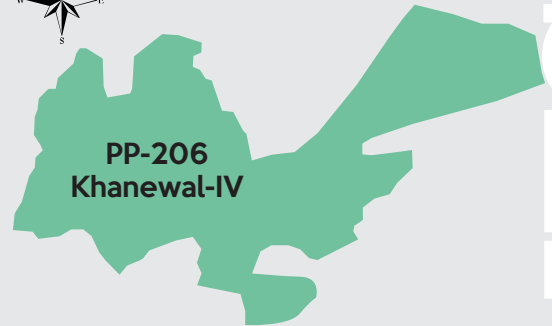
ISLAMABAD, December 16, 2021: Campaigning and canvassing outside polling stations and persistent minor procedural irregularities in PP-206 (Khanewal-IV) by-election reinforced the need for stricter implementation of the election law and procedures, says Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN).

Four political parties – Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), Pakistan Peoples' Party Parliamentarians (PPPP) and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) – had fielded their candidates for the by-election, while seven candidates ran independently. Albeit lower than the 57 percent turnout registered during the General Election (GE) 2018, the turnout in PP-206 (Khanewal-IV) by-election remained impressive in comparison to the less than 19 percent turnout in the recently held NA-133 (Lahore-XI) by-election.

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of a PML-N member who had won the constituency during the GE-2018 defeating the PTI candidate. The by-election came under the spotlight after the selection of candidates by rival parties – the PTI candidate for GE-2018 ran from the PML-N platform for this by-election, while the widow of the deceased PML-N Member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA) received the PTI's ticket. The media also reported a clash between the supporters of PML-N and PPPP on December 15, 2021. The PPPP candidate alleged an attack on his residence by the PML-N workers, and registered a police case. The PMLN, on the other hand, alleged that PPPP was indulged in vote buying.

FAFEN deployed a total of 30 trained, non-partisan and duly accredited observers (21 men and nine women) to observe 120 out of the total 183 polling stations across the constituency. FAFEN observed the opening of polling

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 230,698 registered voters in the PP-206 Khanewal-IV including 125,190 male voters and 105,508 female voters.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
112,766	90,895	203,661

BY-ELECTION 2021

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
125,190	105,508	230,698

CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
11% ⁺	16.1% ⁺	13.3% ⁺

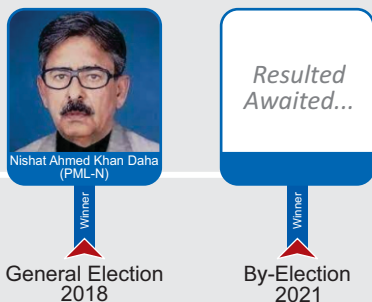
POLLING STATIONS (PS)

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 183 polling stations – 62 male, 60 female and 61 combined for the by-election. Overall, 512 polling booths – 268 male and 244 female – were established.

MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
62	60	61
512		
POLLING BOOTHS		

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, Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) handbooks for elections officials and relevant notifications and directions of the ECP. This preliminary report is based on the observations received from 82 polling stations – 45 percent of total polling stations.

TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



According to FAFEN observers, the election-day remained peaceful with no major incident affecting the voting and counting processes. However, seven FAFEN observers were barred from observing the electoral processes – six from the counting and one from the voting processes. The six observers restricted from the observation of counting processes were stopped by the Presiding Officers, while one was barred by the security officials. At one polling station (PS-70), the Presiding Officer continuously interrupted the observation of an accredited observer.

As part of FAFEN's observation, the observers interviewed three voters outside each observed polling station after they cast their ballots to gauge their satisfaction with the voting process. In PP-206 (Khanewal-IV), all 222 voters interviewed by FAFEN observers expressed their satisfaction with their voting experience.

According to FAFEN observers, one of the most common illegalities remained the 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 85 percent (69 polling stations) of the observed polling stations. Such campaigning and canvassing around polling stations at times also becomes a source of election-day violence due to intense competition and may also create an atmosphere of intimidation for voters.

At 29 percent (23 polling stations) of the observed polling stations, the Presiding Officers had not removed the campaigning materials on their outer walls. Moreover, at four polling stations, observers reported campaign material pasted inside the polling stations' premises. At two polling stations, the observers reported scarcity of the polling materials, which may

CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...

MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 11 candidates including representatives of PML-N, PPPP, PTI, TLP 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	183
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	512
POLLING OFFICERS	512

FAFEN OBSERVERS DEPLOYED

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
21	9	30

ELECTION HISTORY

REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat had fallen vacant after the death of PML-N MPA Nishat Ahmed Khan Daha.

GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	VOTES EXCLUDED FROM THE COUNT	VOTER TURNOUT
116,195	2,110	57.05%

SENSITIVITY OF PS BY-ELECTION 2021

HIGHLY SENSITIVE	23
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have led to delays in the voting processes. The Presiding Officer at one polling station did not also seek signatures of polling agents on Form-42 (statement regarding inspection of ballot boxes before start of poll) after showing them empty ballot boxes before the start of polling as required by the law. Similarly, at two polling stations, the Presiding Officers did not show the empty ballot boxes to the polling agents.

At two polling stations, the observers reported that voters were not allowed to vote despite possessing the original National Identity Cards (NICs). Similarly, at two polling stations, the Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) were observed to have not been stamping the back of the ballot papers while issuing them to the voters. The APOs were also observed to not sign the back of the ballot papers at five polling stations. Such ballot papers are excluded from the count at the time of counting at the polling station, and later rejected by the Returning Officers during the consolidation of results' proceedings.

At one polling station, unauthorized persons were observed to be present inside the polling booth. With the exception of an observation from one polling station, the security officials were observed to be treating voters in a courteous manner, and performing their duties in accordance with the ECP code of conduct.

Though the ECP had instructed the polling staff to comply with the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for containing the spread of the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), at 43 percent (32 polling stations) of the observed polling stations, the COVID SOPs were not duly followed or ensured by the election officials. Similarly, at 41 percent (32 polling stations), the poster exhibiting COVID-19 safety protocols to apprise voters of the SOPs was missing.

Overall, the ECP had set-up 183 polling stations – 62 male, 60 female and 61 combined – in the constituency, comprising 512 polling booths – 268 male and 244 females. The Elections Act, 2017 encourages the Returning Officers to assign not more than 1,200 voters to any polling station, and not more than 300 per booth. However, as many as 97 polling stations exceeded the legally encouraged scheme including 39 male, 20 female and 38 combined polling stations.

Despite clear instructions by the ECP, the Presiding Officers at 28 polling stations had set-up multiple booths in a single room. Such practices lead to overcrowding during voting rush hours, especially during high-turnout elections. In addition, the mismanagement of polling stations 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.

As many as 230,698 voters – 125,190 men and 105,508 women – were registered to vote for the by-election, as compared to 203,661 in GE-2018, registering an increase of 27,037 voters – 12,424 men and 14,613 women voters.

The PP-206 (Khanewal-IV) consists of areas including Christian Colony, Green Town, Railway Colony, Basti Haqnawaz (Old Khanewal), Hakeemabad, Azeem Town, Islam Park, Khokarabad, Raheem Town, Shadab Town, Basti Abbas Nagar, Jaswant Nagar, Faisal Town, Afzal Town, Kahnewal Kohna, Shamkot, Jamesabad, Mahni Sial, Kot Molchand, Veer Garh, Nanak Pur, Hayatpur, Solgi, Zakhira Khanewal, Mohallah Bilal/Tariqabad, Marzipura, Kot Alla Singh, Mehngi Wali Pulli, Makkah Town, Faisal Town, Kot Muhammad Hussain, Madina Town, Khurram Pura and other suburbs.