



FAFEN REPORT

# BY-ELECTION OBSERVATION

--- December 06, 2024 ---



## PP-139 Sheikhpura-IV: FAFEN BY-ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT

Voters of PP-139 Sheikhpura-IV voted to elect their representative for Provincial Assembly of Punjab on Thursday in the second by-election within nine months, which was marked by lower voter turnout and decrease in number of invalid votes as compared to general election and first by-election in the constituency. Observers reported persistent illegal campaigning around polling stations in an otherwise peaceful and orderly election.

Rana Tanvir Hussain of Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) had won this constituency as well as a National Assembly seat during general election 2024 but later vacated the provincial seat. In a by-election held on April 21, 2024, PML-N candidate Rana Afzaal Hussain remained victorious. The latest by-election was necessitated due to the demise of Rana Afzaal Hussain.

Thursday's by-election registered 41 percent turnout, which is lesser than the turnouts in April by-election (44 percent) and GE-2024 (50 percent). Female voter turnout dropped to 34 percent in recent polls as compared to 37 percent in April by-election and 43 percent in GE-2024. The male voters' turnout dropped to 47 percent from 50 percent in April by-election and 56 percent during GE-2024.

In the recent as well as last by-election, two percent of polled votes were invalidated at the polling station level, compared to three percent during GE-2024. In absolute terms, the number of invalid votes slightly increased from 1,326 in the April by-election to 1,385 in the recent by-election.

The winner party's (PML-N) vote share increased from 38 percent in GE-2024 to 56.1 percent in April by-election and 55.7 percent during Thursday's by-election. The runner-up candidate in all three polls was supported by PTI. His vote share declined from 36 percent in GE-2024 and first by-election to 25 percent in recent by-election. For Thursday's by-election, the provisional consolidated statement of the results of the count (FORM-47) was ready around 10:30 pm on the poll day.

FAFEN deployed nine trained observers— five men and four women— to observe the voting and counting processes at 36 out of 124 polling stations established in the constituency. This report is based on the observations received from 34 polling stations including eight male polling stations, six female polling stations and 20 combined polling stations.

FAFEN observer reported persisting illegal campaigning and canvassing around polling stations and isolated instances of procedural omissions and irregularities concerning ballot issuance and voter identification. Around 56 percent of the observed polling stations had party's/candidate's camps in the close vicinity of polling stations. These camps also displaying campaign banners and were distributing voter chits and food to visitors. Party-supported vehicles were seen providing transport to voters outside 18 percent of the observed polling stations. FAFEN observes witnessed minor altercations and scuffles between PTI and PML-N workers at six polling stations.





The polling officers were observed to be checking the National Identity Cards (NIC), marking the thumbs of the eligible voters with indelible ink, obtaining their thumb impressions on electoral rolls and striking off their names on the electoral rolls at almost all the observed polling stations. However, they were observed to be skipping to loudly call out the name of the voters so that the polling agents could know the identity of incoming voters and match it with their copy of electoral rolls at 35 percent of the observed polling booths.

At all of the observed polling stations, the Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) were seen complying with the due process of ballot issuance – documenting the voter NIC number on the counterfoil, taking thumb impression, signing and stamping the counterfoil and back of ballot paper. However, the APOs at 24 percent of the observed polling stations reportedly had marked their signatures and official stamps on back of ballot paper beforehand. Though this practice is not forbidden under the existing legal and regulatory framework, such ballot papers may be prone to misuse. Similarly, at 21 percent of observed polling booths, at least one voter was turned away either because he or she did not have original identity cards (NIC) or his or her vote was not registered at that polling booth or station.

FAFEN interviewed polling staff deputed on observed polling stations. Around 24 percent Polling Officers and 14 percent Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) at observed polling stations reported they did not receive refresher training before being assigned to the election duty and around nine percent Security Officials reported having not received any training before the deployment.

The ballot counting process was observed to be largely transparent and compliant with the legal and regulatory procedures. The presiding officers provided the copies of the Result of the Count (Form-45) to all polling agents present during the counting process. However, the copies of Ballot Paper Account (Form-46) were not provided to the polling agents at 12 percent of the observed polling stations. The PrOs did not provide the copies of Form-45 and Form-46 to the election observers at 12 percent of the observed polling stations.

The FAFEN observers reported that the paths leading to 97 percent polling stations were in good condition and the ramps were available for voters on wheelchairs at 73 percent of the observed polling stations. FAFEN observers documented the presence of voters with disability at 10 percent observed polling stations, elderly voters at 76 percent observed polling stations, and the transgender voters at six percent polling stations. The polling staff and the security officials were observed to be affording a preferential treatment to the persons with disabilities, elderly citizens, transgender and women in most cases.

According to the List of Contesting Candidates (Form-33), a total of eight male candidates were in the run for the constituency. These included candidates of PTI, PML-N and Tehreek-e-Laabbaik Pakistan (TLP), while the remaining five contested independently.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 124 polling stations – 32 male, 30 female and 62 combined – comprising 359 polling booths – 197 male and 162 female – to cater to more than 193,285 registered voters – 105,421 male and 87,864 female voters. The ECP had deployed 966 polling staff including 124 Presiding Officers (PrOs), 359 Assistant Presiding Officer (APOs), 359 Polling Officers (POs), and 124 support staff in the constituency.