



Observation Report

By-Election for PS-9 Shikarpur III

December 14, 2025



www.fafen.org

[X_fafen](#) [f_fafen.org](#) [/@fafendigital](#) [fafen.official](#)



FAFEN
FREE & FAIR ELECTION NETWORK

By-Election for PS-9 Shikarpur III: Observation Findings



FAFEN Observation Report

Significant improvements in the enforcement of legal and codal restrictions on the election day campaigning, display of arms and use of loudspeakers characterized the by-election in PS-9 (Shikarpur-III) held on December 14, 2025. Although the polling day remained peaceful and orderly, gaps continued to persist in voter facilitation and transparency of counting processes at the polling stations, indicating at the need for greater investment in staff training and preparations.

A total of 277,792 voters, 14,110 more than the 263,682 voters in GE-2024, were eligible to vote in the by-election. As in most recent by-elections, there was a considerable decline in voter turnout, from 39 percent in the general elections to 32 percent in the by-elections. Voter turnout declined for both men and women. Men's participation dropped from 40 percent in GE-2024 to 31 percent, while women's turnout declined from 38 percent to 33 percent. Consequently, the women's turnout exceeded the men's by two percentage points.

In terms of results, despite the lower voter participation, the winning margin widened sharply as the gap between the winner and the runner-up grew from 38,126 votes in GE-2024 to 63,475 votes in the by-election. The Provisional Consolidated Statement of Results of the Count, Form-47, was completed at approximately 12:01 am, well within the legal deadline of 2:00 am.

This by-election was necessitated due to the death of Mr. Agha Siraj Durrani, a PPPP legislator. Nine candidates, all men, contested the by-election. Of these, six ran as independents and three were backed by political parties. This marks a slight drop from GE-2024, when ten male candidates contested for the seat. For the by-election, one independent candidate failed to meet a legal requirement and withdrew at the last moment. Despite his withdrawal, he received 117 votes in the election.

The ECP has set up 178 polling stations for the by-election. These included 80 combined polling stations and 49 each for men and women. The total number matches the arrangements made for GE-2024. The only change was in the mix, as GE-2024 had 76 combined stations and 51 each for men and women.

Of the 178 polling stations, 139 crossed the legal limit of 1,200 voters per polling station. This means that approximately 78 percent of all polling stations exceeded the voter limit. The average load was 1,560 voters per polling station. These figures show a strong need to increase the number of polling stations or spread voters more evenly so that each polling station remains within the permitted range.

FAFEN deployed seven male election-day observers to observe the voting and counting processes at 27 polling stations across the constituency. No observer was barred, indicating open access. The observers were trained on the Elections Act of 2017 and the codes of conduct of relevant stakeholders to observe the proceedings effectively and independently.

The observers were also provided with standardized checklists to record their observations. At the first polling station, they were tasked with observing the processes preceding the start of polling; at the second and third, they observed the voting processes; and at their fourth polling station, in addition to the voting process, they observed the closing and counting processes. FAFEN observers were not allowed to ask voters about their voting choices

inside or outside polling stations, as it is strictly prohibited under the ECP's Code of Conduct for Observers and Section 178 (b) of the Elections Act 2017.

This report is based on observations received on Election Day from 27 polling stations, including 13 combined and seven each for male and female polling stations, obtained by observers.

■ Campaigning and Canvassing

Campaigning and canvassing around polling stations remained largely under control, showing visible enforcement by the ECP and district administration. No party flags or banners were found around any of the 27 observed polling stations. Minor violations were noted, where party flags or banners were seen on the walls of one (four percent) of the observed polling stations. Similarly, at one (four percent) polling station, observers reported that political parties provided transport to voters. Campaigning and canvassing activities were observed at only two (seven percent) of the observed polling stations where party camps were set up. At these camps, voter serial numbers were shared using both printed and soft copies of electoral rolls, voter slips were distributed, and party flags, badges, and stickers were handed out. Food items were also distributed around the same polling stations. Moreover, no advertisements for candidates were reported at any of the observed polling stations. Overall, full compliance with the legal ban on visible campaigning near the polling stations was observed.

■ Orderly and Timely Opening of Polling Stations

The opening process largely followed the rules. All election staff, including Presiding Officers (PrOs) and security officials, were present at the opening of the polling stations. In addition, empty ballot boxes were inspected and sealed in the presence of election staff and polling agents at all the observed polling stations. Voting preparations were completed on time at most stations, but one station started the process late. No objections were raised by the polling agents during the opening process.

■ Managing of Polling Process

Overall, all 27 observed polling stations reported a well-managed and well-organized polling process. The observers reported no incidents of violence or harassment. According to the ECP's handbook for PrOs, seating arrangements must be ensured for the elderly, sick, or persons with disabilities. However, gaps remained in voter facilitation as of the 27 polling stations observed; four (15 percent) did not have seating arrangements for elderly voters, sick individuals, or persons with disabilities.

Interviews with PrOs from the 27 observed polling stations pointed to a largely orderly and well-managed polling environment. A shortage of election material was reported by only five (19 percent) of the PrOs, while the majority, 22 (81 percent) faced no such issues. Most PrOs, 23 (85 percent) of the 27 observed polling stations, reported receiving training from the ECP. Upon asking about the training, PrOs shared that nine received one-day training, four received two-day training, and 10 did not specify the duration, suggesting a lack of standardization in training.

In terms of communication and coordination, the Returning Officer's (RO) contact details were generally provided to polling officials. Mobile numbers of ROs were available in 22 of the 27 polling stations, while contact numbers for RO staff and RO offices were available in only two polling stations, indicating limited communication.

The observers asked PrOs whether they had received any instructions to deal with situations in which there was zero or extremely low female turnout. Of the 20 responses, eight PrOs stated that no steps were to be taken when women did not come to vote, while one PrO mentioned seeking support from polling agents, and another referred to involving security personnel and making announcements at mosques. The observation data show that there is an absence of standardized instructions or effective mechanisms for PrOs training.

■ Observation of Polling Booths

A total of 84 polling booths were observed, including 43 male and 41 female booths. All the required polling staff were present at all the observed booths. The presence of security officials outside the polling stations was observed at all locations. No other security forces were observed outside the polling stations. The observers reported that seals were placed on ballot boxes in 82 of the observed booths (98 percent), while this was not observed in two polling booths.

The observation of one polling booth showed that almost all polling procedures were largely followed, with 100 percent compliance in checking original national identity cards (NICs), marking voters' thumbs with ink, and signing ballots. There were gaps observed in APO protocols, with 20 (74 percent) and 22 (81 percent) of the observed 27 polling booths reporting prior signing or stamping, suggesting potential risks to ballot integrity. Gaps were also noted in voter privacy, as secrecy screens were installed in 66 booths (79 percent), but were missing in 17 booths (20 percent), posing a potential risk to vote secrecy.

However, transparency measures, such as the visibility of processes to polling agents was lower, at 17 (63 percent), while these were not observed at nine (33 percent) polling booths. A notable concern is that at eight (30 percent) polling booths, voters were sent back without casting their vote, mainly due to a lack of original NICs.

On the accessibility front, security staff gave preferential treatment to elderly voters, pregnant women, women with children, and voters with disabilities in all observed cases, showing strong adherence to inclusion measures.

The Polling Officers (POs) and Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) at 25 (93 percent) and 23 (85 percent), respectively, received training on election-day responsibilities, ensuring that polling staff were prepared to conduct the election.

■ Closing and Counting Process

The closing and counting processes were observed at six polling stations by as many observers. The counting process adhered to procedural transparency, although there were some gaps in the documentation. All security personnel, candidates or polling agents, and observers were present in every observed case, ensuring that the process was transparent. The counting process was visible and audible to both the candidates/agents and the observers. From five of the six observed polling stations, 77 ballots were declared invalid or excluded from the count. These ballots likely lacked required stamps, had unclear markings, or showed selections for more than one candidate, leading to their rejection during counting.

However, there were gaps in the provision and posting of the result forms. Copies of Form-45 (Result of the Count) were provided to candidates/agents and observers in five (83 percent) of the polling stations where counting was observed, but the form was posted outside only three (50 percent) polling stations. Form-46 (Ballot Paper Account) copies were provided to the observers at only four (67 percent) polling stations and were posted outside only two (33 percent) polling stations. PrOs asked polling agents to sign these forms at only one polling station (17 percent).

Of the six polling stations where counting was observed, in one polling station, the PrOs counted the ballot papers once, in four, the votes were counted twice, and in one polling station, the votes were counted more than twice. Overall, the polling agents of the PPPP and JUIP candidates were satisfied with the counting process, and they signed Form-45.



www.fafen.org

 [@_fafen](https://twitter.com/_fafen)  [/fafen.org](https://www.facebook.com/fafen.org)  [/@fafendigital](https://www.youtube.com/@fafendigital)  [fafen.official](https://www.instagram.com/fafen.official)