



# OBSERVATION REPORT

NA-75 Sialkot-IV

## Re-Poll in Daska orderly, generally peaceful and well-managed

ISLAMABAD, April 11, 2021: NA-75 Sialkot-IV (Daska) by-election held on April 10, 2021 witnessed low incidences of electoral violations as procedures were generally transparent and election staff conducted the process with care and mostly in accordance with prescribed regulations.

Political competition was heightened following the decision of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), which was maintained by the Supreme Court also, to have re-poll in the constituency after reported incidents of rigging and irregularities during and after polling in by-election conducted earlier on February 19, 2021.

Despite the third wave of COVID-19 and the controversies emerged in by-election, a large number of voters both male and female came out to exercise their right to vote in re-poll held on April 10, 2021. In this constituency of 494,003 registered voters three political parties and six independent candidates were in the run.

Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) candidate Nosheen Iftikhar won the by-election by securing 110,075 of the polled votes while the runner-up Ali Asjad Malhi, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf candidate got 93,433 votes. According to the Provisional Consolidated Statement of the Result of the Count (Form-47), a total of 1,702 votes were excluded from the count. During the GE-2018, Syed Iftikhar ul Hassan had won this constituency as a PML-N candidate by securing 101,617 polled votes while PTI candidate Ali Asjad Malhi was declared runner-up securing 61,432 votes. The seat had fallen vacant due to the death of Syed Iftikhar ul Hassan.

On Election Day, FAFEN's trained citizen observers reported a total of 193 violations of which 115 were related to presence of party camps outside the polling stations. In 38 instances, the polling staff had established more than one booth in a single room. The other 40 instances of violations pertained to procedural irregularities mainly in voting and counting processes. On average, less than 1.5 violations per polling station were reported during re-poll as compared to 1.6 violations reported in by-election on February 19, 2019. FAFEN deployed a total of 36 non-partisan and duly accredited observers – 27 men and nine women – to observe the polling processes at 133 polling stations including 48 male, 32 female, and

### CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS ...



#### REGISTERED VOTERS

There are 494,003 registered voters in the NA-75 Sialkot-IV including 273,006 male voters and 220,997 female voters.

#### GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
254,085	199,019	453,104

#### BY-ELECTION 2021

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
273,006	220,997	494,003

#### CHANGE IN REGISTERED VOTERS

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
7.4% <sup>+</sup>	11% <sup>+</sup>	9% <sup>+</sup>

#### POLLING STATIONS (PS)

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had set up 360 polling stations – 106 male, 106 female and 148 combined for the by-election. Overall, 984 polling booths – 512 male and 415 female – were established.

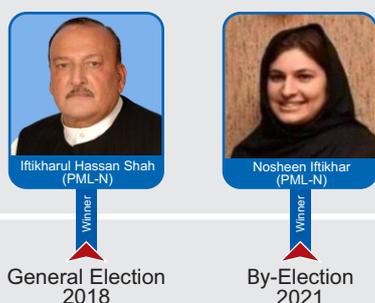
MALE PS	FEMALE PS	COMBINED PS
106	106	148
<b>927</b> POLLING BOOTHS		

53 combined.

The polling process was generally observed to be organized at the observed polling stations. Nearly 71 percent (95) of the observed polling stations had polling booths in separate rooms; however, around 29 percent of the polling stations – 21 male, 11 female, and six combined – housed more than one booth in a single room. The polling agents of contesting candidates were present at all observed polling stations, and all of them except at one polling station were seated at a place where they could easily observe the process.

FAFEN observers also inquired voters of their level of satisfaction with the voting process and most of them showed their satisfaction on voting process. Voters outside 91 percent polling stations – 43 male, 27 female, and 51 combined – expressed their full satisfaction with the process, while the voters outside the remaining polling stations were found to be partially satisfied.

### TIMELINE OF ELECTIONS



The election materials were observed to be in adequate quantities at all of the observed polling stations except one female polling station. With the exception of two incidents of unauthorized persons going behind the secrecy screens at two polling stations, there were no other incidents that compromised the secrecy of voters. Except one case, the observers did not witness incident of polling staff disallowing any voter from casting their vote.

### 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 116 (87 percent) polling stations. FAFEN observers did not report presence of campaign materials from these stations. On the contrary, they did report the presence of political parties or candidates' camps in the vicinity of 115 out of 133 observed polling stations.

### 2. Conduct of Security Staff

To avoid untoward situations similar to ones reported during by-election, ECP chalked out effective security plan and deployed officers of Pakistan Army and Rangers along with police personnel inside and outside of the polling stations.

The behavior of the security officials was also generally observed to be supportive towards voters. However, at two polling stations, the observer noted unnecessarily harsh behavior of the security personnel towards voters. No major incident of violence was reported as observers witnessed three cases of exchange of hot words among voters and polling staff at as many polling stations.

# CONSTITUENCY HIGHLIGHTS

## MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES

As many as 9 candidates including representatives of PTI, PML-N and TLP and 6 independents contested the by-election.



## TOTAL CONTESTING CANDIDATES

### GENERAL ELECTION 2018

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
11	0	11

### BY-ELECTION 2021

MEN	WOMEN	TOTAL
6	3	9

## POLLING PERSONNEL

PRESIDING OFFICERS	360
ASSISTANT PRESIDING OFFICERS	927
POLLING OFFICERS	927

## ELECTION HISTORY

### REASON OF BY-ELECTION

The seat fell vacant after PML-N MNA Iftikharul Hassan Shah died of a heart attack in August 2020

### GENERAL ELECTION 2018

VALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES	VOTER TURNOUT
246,449	7,312	56%

### BY-ELECTION 2021

VALID VOTES	INVALID VOTES	VOTER TURNOUT
212,361	1,702	43.3%

## ELECTION OBSERVERS TRAINED

MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
27	9	36

## MARGIN OF VICTORY

G-E 2018	By-election 2021
40,185	16,642

### 3. Enforcement of SOPs to contain COVID-19

According to the observers' reports, the security and election staff enforced Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) to contain the outspread of COVID-19 at 68 (51 percent) polling stations. However, weak enforcement on SOPs was witnessed at 46 percent polling stations. Three percent polling stations did not observe any SOP at all.

### 4. Voting Process

FAFEN's observation suggests that the secrecy screens were properly placed in polling booths of 98 percent (131) polling stations to protect the privacy of the voters. Polling booths of two polling stations were such whereas the placement of these screens allowed the persons present inside the booths to see the voters marking their ballot papers.

Authorized polling agents, candidates' representatives who are allowed to witness the polling process and object any irregularity as defined under the law, were seated appropriately at polling booths of 132 polling stations and were able to see the entire polling process firsthand. At one female polling station, the seating arrangement for the polling agents did not enable them to see the polling process at booths clearly. The observers did not report any instance of Assistant Presiding Officers (APOs) skipping the signatures on the backside of the ballot paper before its issuance to the voters.

The observers also reported an incident of polling staff disallowing a voter to cast his vote and sending him back. Moreover, the reports of two instances of unauthorized persons accompanying the voters behind the secrecy screens were also received from two polling stations. An observer also reported an incident of stamping the ballot at a polling booth of a female polling station by someone else on behalf of a voter.

### 5. Counting Process

FAFEN observers were allowed to observe the counting process at 31 out of 33 polling stations. At two stations, the polling or security staff did not allow the observers to observe the counting process. At the observed polling stations, the polling staff was providing copies of Form-45 (Result of the Count) to polling agents and observers at all polling stations. However, the copies of Form-45 were not pasted outside two of the observed polling stations.

### 6. Voter Registration and Turnout

The number of voters in the constituency registered an increase of 40,899 (nine percent) since 2018 General Elections. As many as 18,921 male voters, and 21,978 female voters increased in the electoral rolls between GE-2018 and the by-polls. Due to the ECP's women's registration campaign, women's voter registration in the constituency was much higher than men voters.

Nearly 43.33 percent of the registered voters exercised their right to vote on the polling day. The election turnout was lower than the turnout recorded during GE-2018 at 56

percent. No reports of any bar on women voters were received during the polling day.

FAFEN observers noted voters queued outside or inside 63 percent of the observed polling station buildings during the polling day. Both women and men voters were seen visiting polling stations to cast their ballots and the polling process seemed completely organized at more than 98 percent polling stations.

A party-wise analysis suggests slight changes among the vote-share of two major political players in the constituency. PML-N vote share increased from 41.23 percent in GE-2018 to 51.42 percent in the recent by-election, while the share of PTI also increased decreased from 24.92 percent to 43.64 percent. However, the margin of victory reduced from 40,185 votes to 16,642 votes.

### 7. Contesting Parties and Candidates

Nine candidates contested the by-election in NA-75, two less than the number of candidates contesting this seat during GE-2018. As compared to GE-2018 during which five political parties nominated their candidates, only three political parties including Pakistan Muslim Leagues (N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Tehreek-e- Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) fielded their candidates for this by-election, while the remaining six contested the election as independents. Unlike the GE-2018, two women as independent candidates and one from PML-N contested this seat.

### 8. Setting Up of Polling Stations

ECP had set up 360 polling stations – 106 each male and female-, and 148 combined – in this by-election with 927 polling booths ( male 512, female 415) for 494,003 registered voters of the constituency, averaging 1372 voters per polling station. The number of the polling stations set up for this re-poll was one less than the polling stations established in GE-2018.

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.

Out of 360 polling station, forty-seven (47) polling stations were declared as highly sensitive (Category-A) and 176 polling stations as sensitive (Category-B) during re-poll in the constituency.

### 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, non-partisan and accredited observers were allowed to observe the polling process at 133 polling stations without any restrictions. Similarly, FAFEN observers were allowed to observe the counting process at 31 polling stations. However, they were barred from observation at two places.

Findings of this by-election observation were collected by using a standardized robust methodology based on the Elections Act, 2017, Election Rules 2018, respective codes of conduct and Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) handbooks for election officials. For this report, FAFEN analyzed the checklists received from 133 polling stations.

## 10. Brief History

After the post counting controversy in the by-election held on February 19, 2021 in this constituency, the ECP took unprecedented decisions. ECP suspended the officials of district administration due to mismanagement during the by-poll and ordered to hold the re-poll in entire constituency on April 10, 2021. Later, the candidate from PTI opposed the commission's decision on re-poll in entire constituency and filed a petition in Supreme Court. The apex court upheld the decision of the ECP, rejected the petition of PTI's candidate and ordered re-poll in the constituency. The seat had fallen vacant due to the death of Syed Iftikhar Ul Hassan.

It's a constituency of 494,003 registered voters to elect a member for the lower house of the parliament. The re-poll was contested by nine contesting candidates, of these, only three represented political parties and the remaining six were in the run as independent candidates. Syed Iftikhar ul Hassan from PML-N had won the seat by securing 101,617 of the polled votes, while PTI Ali Asjad Malhi was the runner up securing 61,432 votes. The margin of victory in GE-2018 was 40,185 while in this by poll, the margin was 16,642.

## 11. Extent of the Constituency

NA-75 Sialkot-IV is spread over medium-sized cultural city of Tehsil Daska located in Punjab province. It is in the Gujranwala division. The city is located in the Sialkot District, which has four tehsils including it. The city is also the capital of Daska tehsil. It comprises of one town only and the major communities in the constituency include the Jat, Mughal, Rajput, Kashmiri, Ansari and Aryan communities. These groups play a decisive role in the victory or defeat of any candidate in electoral politics.