

The World

Conviction of Sharif latest chapter in Pakistan's political history

ISLAMABAD, Apr 6: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's sentencing to life in prison on Thursday is the latest chapter in Pakistan's chequered political history, reports AFP.

The past five decades have seen a series of political assassinations, military coups, one prime minister executed, another convicted of graft and now a third jailed for life.

Pakistan's first prime minister, Liaquat Ali Khan, was assassinated in 1951, during the teething years after independence in 1947, and the country has been ruled by the military for almost half of its 53 years.

Field Marshal Mohammad Ayub Khan ousted president Iskander Mirza in 1958 and ruled for a decade. General Yahya Khan took over for three years before holding general elections, and General Mohammad Zia ul-Haq ruled for 11 years, until his death in a mysterious August 1988 plane crash.

A new era of military rule dawned on October 12 of last year with the overthrow of Nawaz Sharif as prime minister by army chief General Pervez Musharraf.

Sharif was sentenced to life in prison by an anti-terrorism court in Karachi on Thursday on charges of terrorism and hijacking after attempting to prevent Musharraf's plane from landing in Pakistan.

But he escaped the fate of another former prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was toppled by Zia in 1977, convicted in a controversial murder conspiracy case and hanged in Rawalpindi on April 4, 1979.

Bhutto's daughter, Benazir Bhutto, who was twice elected and twice dismissed as prime minister after Zia's death, was



Lady police rounding up women activists of Pakistan Muslim League of deposed premier Nawaz Sharif outside an anti-terrorism court which announced a verdict against Sharif yesterday. The court sentenced former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to life imprisonment and ordered the forfeiture of his entire property.

— AFP photo

convicted of corruption charges in April 1999.

Benazir and her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, were sentenced by an anti-graft court to five years in prison and fined 8.6 million dollars in a case the couple described as political victimisation by arch foe Sharif.

The first woman prime

minister of Pakistan was convicted while she was abroad and has chosen to live in London since then to avoid arrest while her spouse has been in jail in Karachi since November 1996. Her appeal is pending with the Pakistan Supreme Court.

Sharif, a 52-year-old industrialist who lurched from crisis to crisis after winning in a

landslide at the polls two years ago, now faces an uphill legal battle.

He can appeal to a high court and then to the Supreme Court.

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