

## Vote for change

### Urges Malala

PTI, Islamabad

Malala Yousufzai, teenage rights activist who was shot in the head by the Taliban, yesterday appealed to people to exercise their franchise, saying "one vote can change" Pakistan's future.

"It's an honour for me to share some words with my sisters and brothers in my country," Malala said in a letter carried by the Dawn newspaper.

"If we want education, electricity and natural gas in our country, we must take a step," the 15-year-old said.

"Let's vote for our country. We never realised how much powerful our vote is. One vote can change our future," she said.

Pakistan's landmark polls set in motion the first democratic transition of power in the country's 66-year history.

"It's our vote that chooses which politicians will govern our motherland. I request all my sisters and mothers to move forward, go to polling station and vote. It's our right," Malala appealed to the people.

"And one day, a change will come. All girls and boys will be going to schools and there will be peace everywhere," she said.

## ELECTORAL RULE VIOLATION

# PPP seeks Nawaz's disqualification

DAWN ONLINE

The PPP submitted a petition to the chief election commissioner on Friday, demanding disqualification of PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif from contesting election for violating the code of conduct by 'misusing' a photograph of Chief Justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry in an advertisement.

PPP leader Masud Kausar said at a press conference that the party had also requested the chief justice to take suo motu notice of the advertisement which appeared in newspapers on May 9 and 'conspicuously' carried a photograph of the chief justice with Mr Sharif.

The petition filed by PPP Secretary General Latif Khosa said the publication of the advertisement was tantamount to politicising the chief justice, he said. The petition said the publication of the photograph was apparently aimed at creating an impression that the chief justice and the judiciary supported the PML-N.

The PML-N had tried to use the photograph and the name of the chief justice and judiciary in its favour which could not be accepted under any theory and was not conducive to fair, free and transparent elections, the petition said.

The judiciary could neither be made controversial nor associated with any political party, particularly on the eve of elections when campaigning had come to an end, leaving no scope for rebuttal, the petition said.

However, he claimed that the PPP would emerge as the single largest party in May 11 elections and return to power.

# Violence mars Pak polls

AGENCIES

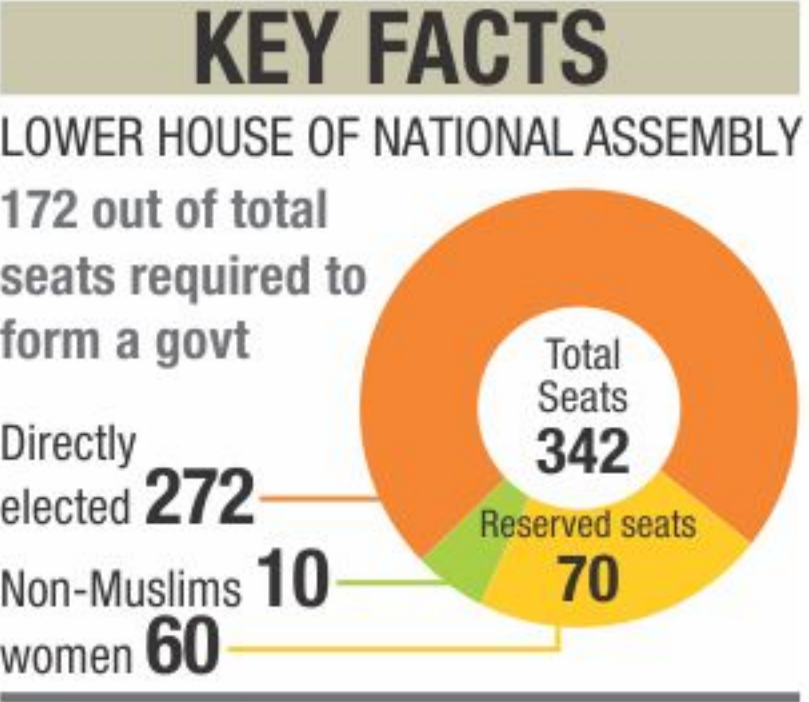
At least 29 people have been killed in bomb attacks and gun battles in Pakistan as millions of voters turned out despite the threats of violence in landmark national and provincial elections.

A bomb attack in the port city of Karachi yesterday morning targeted the office of the Awami National party (ANP), killing 10 people and wounding more than 30, according to Reuters. Local media also reported gunfire in the city, underlining the range of risks faced by the country's 86 million voters.

A roadside bomb in Karachi also killed one person riding in a bus of ANP supporters. In the north-western city of Peshawar a bomb outside a polling station killed one person while two more died when a bomb went off near a police van.

In the south-western province of Baluchistan, gunmen killed two people outside a polling station in the town of Sorab and a shootout between supporters of two candidates in the town of Chaman killed six people, officials said.

The violence follows a string of bombings and shootings by the



Taliban, which have marred the runup to the elections and claimed the lives of more than 130 people.

The main issues are the tanking economy, an appalling energy crisis that causes power cuts of up to 20 hours a day, the alliance in the US-led war on Islamist militants, chronic corruption and the dire need for development.

More than 86 million people were eligible to vote at 70,000 polling stations for the 342-member national assembly and four provincial assemblies in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, Sindh and Baluchistan.

It marks the first time that an elected civilian administration has completed a full term and handed

power to another through the ballot box in a country where there have been three military coups and four military rulers.

The front-runner is ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif, head of the centre-right Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), but much of the campaign has been electrified by cricket star Imran Khan with promises of reform and an end to corruption.

Analyst Imtiaz Gul said he believed high turnout was due to Khan galvanising millions of first-time voters, although he cautioned that it may not necessarily translate into seats.

With no reliable polling data, Sharif has been earmarked the most probable winner, but if PTI do well enough to become a formidable opposition, there are concerns that the emergent coalition will be weak and possibly short-lived.

More than 600,000 security personnel deployed to protect the vote and Pakistan sealed its border with Afghanistan and Iran to boost security after pre-election violence killed at least 127 people, according to an AFP tally.



## Sharif confident of victory

AFP, Lahore

Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, the frontrunner in Pakistan's landmark election, cast his ballot yesterday and said he was confident of victory.

"It was my desire and it is my dream which I see today being fulfilled. Parliament completed five years and now people are electing another parliament for the next five years," Sharif told reporters after casting his vote in Lahore.

"My prayer is that the outcome of this election should be good for this country. On whomever Allah bestows victory, I hope he will be able to deliver," said Sharif, a badge depicting his election emblem, a tiger, pinned to his waistcoat.



Internally displaced Pakistanis wait for their turn to cast their votes outside a polling station in Pakistan's largest refugee camp, Jaloza in Peshawar yesterday. 2. Pakistani women lined up with their children on the outskirts of Islamabad to cast their votes, despite the threat of terrorist attacks. 3. Soldiers run to secure a polling station after a bomb blast in Peshawar.



PHOTO: AFP

## Zardari votes by post

DAWN ONLINE

President Asif Ali Zardari has voted by post in Pakistan's landmark general election, a spokesman confirmed on the eve of polls which the Taliban have vowed to attack with suicide bombers.

"Yes he has cast his vote through a postal ballot," presidency spokesman Farhatullah Babar told AFP.

Zardari's two daughters, Aseefa and Bakhtawar, also cast their votes by post, the spokesman said, providing no further information. The precise whereabouts of the family has not



## GENOCIDE TRIAL

# Guatemala court jails ex-leader for 80 yrs

AFP, GUATEMALA CITY

Former Guatemalan dictator Efraim Rios Montt was found guilty of genocide and war crimes Friday in a landmark ruling stemming from massacres of indigenous people in his country's long civil war.

Rios Montt thus became the first Latin American dictator convicted of trying to exterminate an entire group of people, in a brief but particularly gruesome stretch of a war that started in 1960, dragged on for 36 years and left around 200,000 people dead or missing.

The 86-year-old was sentenced to 80 years in prison, although he vowed to appeal. He got 50 years for genocide and 30 years for war crimes.

"The defendant is responsible for masterminding the crime of genocide," Judge Jazmin Barrios said. "The corresponding punishment must be imposed." She said he was also guilty of war crimes.

The court, filled with victims and their relatives, erupted in applause and cheers.

Activists say the verdict was historic because it marked the first time anywhere in the world that a court has found one of its country's citizens guilty of genocide -- a systematic attempt to eliminate an entire group of people for racial, religious, political or other reasons.

Other genocide convictions were handed down by international courts.

## IMPACT ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

# Risks remain for US

AFP, Washington

After years of crisis, Pakistan's election offers a window for the United States to try to reset the relationship but Washington could face hard choices if the next leader allies with Islamists.

Experts believe the fundamental calculus of the United States will remain unchanged whatever the outcome of yesterday's election -- that it needs Islamabad's cooperation to fight militants in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The United States has been careful not to take sides in the election, knowing that its blessing could be the kiss of death in a country where a recent poll put US popularity at a mere 11 percent.

Instead, the United States has confined its public remarks to praise of the election itself.

Nawaz Sharif, seen as the front-runner, has demanded an end to unpopular US drone strikes inside Pakistan and called for negotiations with the Taliban.

But the United States knows Sharif well from his two stints as prime minister in the 1990s and most US experts see him as a pragmatist rather than ideologue.

A third key player in the election, former cricket star Imran Khan, has been more outspoken than Sharif or Zardari in criticism of the United States. But whoever wins will likely need to put together a coalition -- which could prove unwieldy and, in Sharif's case, include figures anathema to Washington.

## Bengalis deprived of voting rights

DUNYANNEWS TV ONLINE

The current Bengali population in Pakistan numbers around 20 lac but they have never been recognised as Pakistanis and are devoid of their basic right to vote.

Under the Pakistan Citizenship Act of 1951, any person living in Pakistan before December 16, 1971 had the right to register themselves as a citizen.

However, the contradiction arises over the fact that those who shifted to Karachi after December 1971, even though they have now been living in Pakistan for 42 years, are still considered foreigners.

# Poll results will change nothing for minorities

THE HINDU ONLINE

Naya (new) Pakistan is the new buzzword in the country. It is the campaign slogan of Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, and it speaks to those who are seeking not only a new leadership but also new Pakistan.

Even if voters overcome security and local custom challenges to come out and vote, there is no evidence yet that a Pakistan under a different leadership can bring about the sort of renewal that is required for the task of nation-building. Nowhere is this more evident than in the attitude of political parties to the religious minorities. There are 2.9 million non-Muslims in Pakistan. Of this, the biggest number is of Hindus (approx 1.4 million), followed by Christians (1.2 million), and then others which include Ahmedis, Zoroastrian, Bahai, Sikh, Buddhist and even a handful of Jews.

Hundreds of Shias killed in Pakistan in the last few years and the violence escalated in the last few months. The Christian community is not happy either. In the past five years, there was a noticeable increase in the number of attacks on Christians using the

blasphemy law. A similar situation seems to prevail in Sindh where Hindus feel increasingly insecure and abandoned like everyone else by what was once Bhutto's party.

After many such incidents of violence targeting them and their mosques, the Ahmedis, for instance, are feeling more ostracised and threatened than before by the growing latent-radicalism in the country. The community was declared non-Muslim by the Bhutto government in 1974.

Earlier in the campaign, Imran Khan, who spoke about changing Pakistan from his hospital bed after his fall this week, issued a formal press statement contradicting the video footage about the party's plan to revisit the law declaring Ahmedis non-Muslims. The video clip had gone viral on social media and the ensuing controversy forced Imran Khan to make the statement that he believed in the finality of Prophet Muhammad. But shockingly, he went on to add that no one from his party had sought Ahmedis votes. More than anything else, that declaration raises worrying questions about a national party's agenda.

# Pak women defy clerics, custom

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Of all the women running in Pakistan's general election tomorrow, few revel in their assault on the traditionally male sport of politics more than Musarrat Shaheen, a former film star once famous for her exuberant dance routines.

The retired sex symbol, known for her pulpy Pashtun films of the 1980s that are still risqué by today's standards, has chosen to pick a fight with one of the country's most high-profile, ultra-religious conservatives.

"If I had money I would contest every constituency where he is standing," she said of Fazlur Rehman, head of a faction of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), one of the country's leading Islamist parties.

Rehman, a white-bearded mullah, or cleric, famous for helping to install the hard-line Taliban regime in Afghanistan in the 1990s, has returned the favour on the campaign trail -- dismissing the "vulgar actress" once affectionately known to her fans as the "Beautiful Atom Bomb".



the most determined women are taking part.

Election authorities say there has been an increase in women candidates this year. But social traditions and threats from the Taliban still hold back female candidates and voters.

Few women that stand in regular constituencies are likely to win, least of

all Shaheen. Those that do sit in the next parliament will more likely have been selected for one of the 70 seats reserved for women, which critics say are handed out to female members of well-connected political families.

There are several other examples of women like Shaheen standing despite overwhelming odds against them.

But human rights groups say there is still a very long way to go, even in a country that has twice been led by a female prime minister. Some 10 million women are simply unregistered to vote, largely because they have not been granted identity cards.

Threats from the Taliban, who have announced their intention to launch suicide attacks on polling days, could also deter families from taking their women to vote. On the eve of this year's election

In theory, anyone found guilty of preventing a woman from voting could face three years in jail, but parties are said to have simply escaped the rules with secret deals not to paper.

## Pakistan expels NY Times bureau chief

AFP, NEW YORK

The New York Times said Friday its Islamabad bureau chief was ordered to leave Pakistan for unspecified "undesirable activities" in the country.

The order means Walsh, 39, must exit Pakistan on the night of the elections.

Walsh has lived and worked in Pakistan for nine years, most of the time for The Guardian newspaper of Britain. He was hired by the Times in January 2012.

The journalist has written about the country's political strife, insurgency and sometimes tense relations with the

## Outgoing PM loses seat

AFP, ISLAMABAD

Former prime minister Raja Pervez Ashraf from the outgoing Pakistan People's Party suffered a crushing defeat in his home constituency yesterday, state TV said.

PML-N candidate secured 82,623 votes to Raja Pervez Ashraf's 27,094 votes in constituency NA-51 in the garrison city