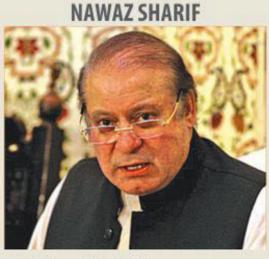


PAKISTAN ELECTION: THE MAIN PLAYERS



NAWAZ SHARIF
The "Lion of Punjab"

- Thrice prime minister but has never completed a term
- Ousted by the Supreme Court in 2017 and banned from politics for life over corruption
- Sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison for corruption on July 6, arrested on his return to the country on July 13
- Analysts say he has returned to fight for his political life, as his **Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)** stumbles in the campaign

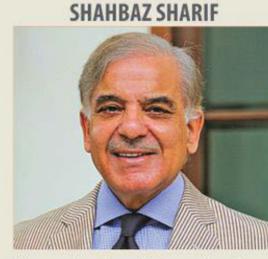
Claims he is being targeted by the military, with which he was once close



IMRAN KHAN
Ex-World Cup cricket hero turned politician

- Main opposition leader who makes no secret of his ambition to become a premier
- Known mainly in the West as a talented sportsman and infamous playboy, he presents a more conservative and devout face to Muslim Pakistan
- Critics consider him unfit for the office, some call him "Taliban Khan" for his repeated calls for talks with violent insurgent groups
- His **Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)** has governed the northwest Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province

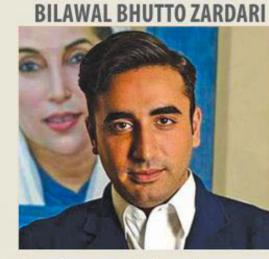
Suspected of having links to the army



SHAHBAZ SHARIF
Younger brother of Nawaz Sharif

- President of the **PML-N** after his elder sibling was ousted, theoretically leads the party into the election
- Has spent more than 10 years as chief minister of Punjab province, which represents over half the country's 207 million population
- His quieter style is being overshadowed by his brother's loud quarrel with military

Reputedly less stubborn and therefore more acceptable to the military than Nawaz



BILAWAL BHUTTO ZARDARI
Son of assassinated premier Benazir Bhutto

- His mother was the first woman to lead a Muslim country. His father, Asif Ali Zardari, previously served as president
- Chairman of his family's **Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)**
- His family once dominated Pakistani politics but PPP is now in decline, even challenged in their stronghold Sindh province

Has little experience in politics but could become kingmaker by joining forces with PML-N or PTI, if either fail to win an outright majority



THE MILITARY
Perceived as the country's strongest institution

- The army has ruled Pakistan for roughly half of its nearly 71-year history
- Widely believed to control foreign and defence policy
- Broadly accused by the media, analysts, activists and politicians of a "silent coup" against PML-N, in favour of Khan's party
- Also accused of reports of alleged kidnappings, threats against media and political activists and censorship ahead of the polls

Denies accusations and says it is taking "no direct role" in the election

SOURCE: AFP

Minorities face daunting test

As Pakistan heads into parliamentary elections tomorrow, the country's minorities are looking for better representation and a voice that will speak up for them.

It's an uphill struggle for Pakistani Christians, Sikhs, Ahmadis and others. The country's complicated electoral system allots minorities and women a small number of "reserved" seats, based on their parties' gains at the polls. But for the rest of the seats — both in the 342-seat National Assembly and the four provincial legislatures — members of minority groups are increasingly choosing to run as independent candidates.

THE CHRISTIANS
Garbage is piled by the roadside and cinderblock homes have flimsy curtains instead of doors in Rimshah, a squatters' settlement on the outskirts of Islamabad. Years ago, scores of Christian families settled here when a mob of Muslim men, enraged over an alleged act of blasphemy by an 11-year-old Christian girl, tried to kill her and drove them out of their homes.

They named the slum Rimshah, for the 11-year-old girl with Down's syndrome who was eventually cleared of charges of tearing up pages of an Islamic religious book.

Michael Rose, an outspoken advocate of the Christian community, campaigns in Rimshah for Asif Shahzada, an independent Christian candidate.

THE SIKHS
Radesh Singh is one of about 200,000 Sikhs living in Pakistan, mostly in the conservative Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province along the border with Afghanistan. The Sikhs are easily identifiable because of their tightly wound and often colorful turbans, and because they share the surname Singh. Singh said attacks by the Taliban and lately also the



Islamic State group have forced thousands to leave the province, including his son. Singh is campaigning as an independent candidate in Peshawar.

THE HINDUS
Hindus make up Pakistan's second-largest minority, with more than 2 million, living mainly in southern Sindh province. Many live as indentured slaves on the estates of some of Pakistan's largest landowners, working on the farms. The Hindus also suffer widespread discrimination because of the decades-old rivalry between Pakistan and neighbouring India, a majority Hindu nation.

Veeru Kohli was born a slave but fled bondage, walking for three days until she found offices of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan to help her. She then returned to the landowner to recover her children and free eight other families. Kohli is now running as an independent candidate.

THE SHIAS
Though Muslim, Pakistan's Shias have suffered enormous losses, with hundreds slaughtered at the hands of radical Sunni Muslims who consider Shias heretics. However, unlike other minorities, Shias in Pakistan are not allocated any special seats in parliament and can run either as

COC VIOLATION

IHC sets aside Khan's appeal against ECP

The Islamabad High Court (IHC) yesterday set aside an appeal filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan against the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) ban on party heads and lawmakers to canvass in constituencies after the by-elections schedule are announced.

In 2015, the ECP had barred the president, prime minister, chief ministers, state ministers, governors and advisers from visiting a constituency or delivering speeches there, once the by-election schedules are announced. Later on, MNAs and MPs were also added to the list. In 2017, Khan challenged the ECP's notice in the IHC, arguing that electioneering during by-polls is his right guaranteed by Article 16 of Constitution.

The most expensive elections

12 DAYS, 4 ATTACKS

JULY 10, PESHAWAR
ANP's PK-78 candidate Haroon Bilour killed, 34 others injured in blast targeting corner meeting.

JULY 13, MASTUNG
BAP's PB-35 candidate Nawabzada Siraj Raisani and 128 other people were killed when bombers targeted a corner meeting.

JULY 22, DERA ISMAIL KHAN
PTI's PK-99 candidate Ikramullah Gandapur was killed in a suicide attack.

JULY 22, BANNU
JUI-F's Akram Khan Durrani escaped a second attack in less than 10 days.

The general elections are expected to cost the federal kitty more than three times the cost of the last two elections put together. A major part of it is likely to flow to the armed forces for the deployment of troops.

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) is anticipating that over Rs21 billion will be spent on the process, which includes more than Rs10.5b on the usual polling exercise, such as training, printing, remunerations, transportation and related expenses. The funds to be paid to the armed forces are anticipated to be in the same range even though final estimates will become clear after July 25 based on actual bills.

The 2008 general elections cost Rs1.84b out of the federal budget. It surged to Rs4.73b for the 2013 general elections, showing an increase of almost 157 percent. The Pakistan Army was paid Rs758 million in the 2013 elections compared to Rs120m in 2008.

All these expenditures do not include expenses made by the civil administration at the provincial level, including police expenses.

ECP Secretary Babar Yaqoob Fateh Mohammad told Dawn that the major increase in expenditure was caused by imported watermarked ballot papers. Secondly, the remuneration for the polling staff has been increased from Rs3,000 (for the presiding officer in 2013) to Rs8,000 this year.

On top of that, the ECP decided to provide female presiding officers with the assistance of a peon to carry election material on the polling day, which will have an additional cost. Subsequently, male presiding officers also demanded that similar assistance be extended to them.

Officially responding to a question, the spokesman for the ECP, Chaudhry Nadeem Qasim, said it was difficult at this stage to quantify the election cost because polling activities were spread over a period of almost a year and involve two federal budgets.

In the first year (2017-18), preparatory works were set in motion for elections, including major procurements like non-sensitive materials, imported watermark paper, stationery items, printing of envelopes, electoral documents and training of election officials.

During the current fiscal year, allocations have been made for election allowances and honoraria, transportation of material and arrangements for the actual polling on Election Day. The honorarium for presiding officers has been increased from Rs3,000 to Rs8,000 this year while the same for polling officers has gone up from Rs3,000 to Rs6,000.

Jailed Sharif denied personal doctor: party

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is suffering from high blood pressure but has been refused permission to see his personal doctor, his party said yesterday.

Sharif was convicted in his absence overseas on corruption charges and arrested upon his return to Pakistan earlier this month, ahead of elections tomorrow.

Members of his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) have said the powerful military is trying to influence the vote against his party.

The former premier is widely believed to have returned to face a 10-year prison sentence to rally his embattled party ahead of a close contest with its main rival — the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, led by cricket star-turned-politician Imran Khan.

NEWS IN brief

Modi to gift 200 cows to Rwandan village

Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on a five-day three-three-nation tour of the African continent yesterday, with his first stop being Rwanda, a first prime ministerial visit to a country with a population less than Delhi's. Ahead of the visit, the external affairs ministry said "Africa has been a top priority of India's foreign policy." "The visit to Rwanda, Uganda and South Africa will further strengthen our relations with the African continent," the ministry noted.

Israel army kills Palestinian teen

Israeli soldiers shot dead a Palestinian teenager during a raid in the occupied West Bank overnight, the Palestinian health ministry said yesterday. Arkan Mizher, 15, was shot in the chest during clashes in Dheishheh refugee camp in Bethlehem, in the southern West Bank, the ministry said. His funeral was due to take place later yesterday.

Kabul suicide attack death toll rises to 23

The death toll from a suicide attack near Kabul international airport has risen to 23, the health ministry said yesterday, with an AFP driver among the dead. At least 107 others were wounded in Sunday's powerful explosion, which happened as scores of people were leaving the airport after welcoming home Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum from exile.



Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike splashes water on the ground during a water sprinkling event called Uchimizuy which is meant to cool down the area, in Tokyo yesterday. Japanese officials issued new warnings as a deadly heatwave blankets the country, producing record high temperatures in Tokyo.

'Never, ever threaten' US

Trump hits back at Iranian President's war talk; Israeli PM praises US leader's 'tough stand'

US President Donald Trump told Iran it risked consequences "the like of which few throughout history have suffered before" if the Islamic Republic made more threats against the United States.

His words, spelled out in capital letters in a late night Twitter message, came hours after Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told Trump that hostile policies toward Tehran could lead to "the mother of all wars."

The heightened rhetoric follows the Trump administration's launch of an offensive of speeches and online communications meant to foment unrest and pressure Iran to end its nuclear program and its support of militant groups, according to US officials.

Iran has faced increased US pressure and possible sanctions since Trump's decision to withdraw the United States from a 2015 international agreement over Iran's nuclear program, reported Reuters.

In his message directed at Rouhani, Trump wrote: "Never, ever threaten the United States again or you will suffer consequences the likes of which few throughout history have ever suffered before. We are no longer a country that will stand for your demented words of violence & death. Be cautious!"

Earlier on Sunday, Rouhani had told a gathering of Iranian diplomats: "Mr Trump, don't play with the lion's tail, this would only lead to regret." "America should know that peace with Iran is the mother of all wars," said Rouhani, quoted by the state news agency IRNA.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday praised President Donald Trump's "tough stand" against Iran after the US leader issued a stark warning to the Islamic republic, reported AFP.



Israel fires at Syrian missiles on Golan

Israel yesterday said its air defences fired at rockets that approached its territory from neighbouring Syria, where regime troops are advancing on opposition forces close to the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights.

"Syrian rockets were identified as having been launched as part of the internal fighting in Syria," an Israeli army statement said in English.

The statement said two of Israel's newly deployed David's Sling interceptors were launched "in response to the threat to Israeli territory," but added the Syrian rockets fell inside Syria.

It did not say if the interceptors hit the rockets.

David's Sling, developed with United States backing, was introduced into service in April 2017 to fill the gap between the longer-range Arrow missile defence system and the shorter-range Iron Dome interceptor.

Israeli media said yesterday was the first time it was fired operationally.

Israel seized 1,200 square kilometres (460 square miles) of the Golan from Syria in the 1967 Six Day war, in a move never recognised internationally.

Israel has been on high alert since June 19, when Syrian government forces launched a Russia-backed offensive to retake Quneitra and Daraa and provinces, adjacent respectively to the Israeli-held section of the Golan and to Jordan.

Mahathir vows to repeal controversial security law

Malaysia will repeal a tough security law used to detain government critics without charge under the former government, Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday, with activists hailing the "bold" vow.

It was the latest pledge by the country's new reformist leaders to roll back repressive legislation introduced by scandal-hit ex-premier Najib Razak, whose long-serving government was toppled at elections in May.

Leading pro-democracy activists were among those arrested using the Security Offences (Special Measures) Act, or SOSMA, introduced in 2012 purportedly to combat security threats from extremists.

It allows for suspects to be detained without charge for 28 days and can incur a lengthy prison sentence.

In a speech late Sunday, Mahathir said Najib had used repressive laws to do "whatever he liked" and vowed to abolish SOSMA.

"The people will now be protected under laws that are fair and any offences will be brought before and decided by the court," he was quoted as saying by the New Straits Times newspaper.

Eric Paulsen, legal director of Southeast Asia-focused rights group Fortify Rights, hailed the announcement as a "timely and bold move".

"We demand that no one should be detained without trial or be a victim of arbitrary arrest," he said.

One of the most high-profile figures detained under SOSMA was Maria Chin Abdullah, the former leader of reform group "Bersih" which staged huge rallies against Najib's government.

She was arrested in 2016, when still the head of Bersih, on the eve of a demonstration and kept in solitary confinement for 10 days. She is now an MP with the ruling alliance.



TORONTO SHOOTING RAMPAGE

Gunman kills two, injures 12 others

A 29-year-old gunman opened fire on pedestrians in a bustling Toronto neighborhood, killing two and wounding a dozen others, police in Canada's largest city said yesterday, adding the suspect was found dead in an alley after an exchange of gunfire with police.

A video clip posted by Canadian media appeared to show a dark-clad man walking on the sidewalk in Toronto's Greektown neighborhood Sunday night and then turning to aim and fire a handgun.

"At approximately 10 pm on July 22, 2018, a man walking along Danforth Avenue fired shots at groups of people several times. Several people were struck. Two civilians were fatally injured," the Ontario Special Investigations Unit said.

The unit, which investigates police-involved shootings, said officers located the man on a cross street "and an exchange of gunfire took place."

"The man fled the area and was located deceased on Danforth Avenue," it said.

Toronto police chief Mark Saunders had said earlier that one of the victims was a young woman, and that a young girl was in critical condition. It put the number of wounded at 13.