

RULERS OF PAKISTAN



(1947-1958)
Liaqat Ali Khan
First civilian PM



MILITARY RULE (1958-1971)
General Ayub Khan **General Yahya Khan**



(1971-1977)
Zulfikar Ali Bhutto
First civilian president and later PM



MILITARY RULE (1977-1988)
General Zia ul-Haq



(1988-1999)
Benazir Bhutto **Nawaz Sharif**



MILITARY RULE (1999-2008)
General Pervez Musharraf

(2008-2018)
Nawaz Sharif & other civilian PMs

PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTION 2018

Historic polls or a military dud?

AGENCIES

The run up to the Pakistan polls have been overshadowed by terrorist attacks, hundreds of arrests and accusations of widespread interference by the military. They have also seen a massive crackdown on the media and controversy over militant groups' electoral participation.

The Pakistan Army has insisted that it has no direct role to play in today's elections that could either prove historic or turn into a shadow-controlled dud.

But the military's claim seems like mere lip service when considered that the Army will deploy four times more personnel on election duty than it did in the last elections in 2013. And they have wide ranging powers now to decide the fate of polls. This includes the power to hold on-the-spot trials and hand people punishments and fines.

In the past, the military used to either stage a direct coup or use special powers to sack an elected government and then manipulate elections to ensure it wasn't re-elected. Critics say the establishment is resorting to more primitive tactics to recover its edge.

Many experts contend that it will be business as usual whoever wins the election, with the military -- which has ruled the country directly or indirectly for much



A soldier stands guards where electoral workers gather to collect election materials at distribution point, ahead of general election in Peshawar, Pakistan, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

of its 71-year history -- remaining Pakistan's de facto ruler.

Almost all analysts agreed an outright win for either party was unlikely, meaning Pakistan will be left with a coalition government, likely the PPP -- led by the 29-year-old political scion Bilawal Bhutto Zardari -- propping up one of the other parties.

Michael Kugelman, a South Asia expert at the US-based Wilson Center, said that the military remains "very much ensconced" at the upper echelons of power in Pakistan.

"It remains powerful and popular, even amid allegations of election meddling, and the most likely election outcome -- a weak coalition government -- is the military's

best-case scenario," he said.

And the military has been allegedly working in recent years to "mainstream" militant-linked groups into politics.

Religious parties - some new, others established - are fielding more than 1,500 candidates for national and provincial assemblies, compared with a few hundred in 2013.

Analysts say even with the increase in candidates, Islamists are unlikely to win more than a dozen or so seats in parliament. But that might not be the point.

Pakistani author and analyst Ayesha Siddiqi, a longtime critic of the military, believes the army, tired of civilian governments challenging its grip on foreign policy and large chunks of the economy, is seeking to weaken mainstream parties.

Before the polls, representatives of different civil society organisations and main political parties in Pakistan, barring Imran Khan led PTI, condemned the alleged electoral irregularities and 'interference'.

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan has predicted that the general elections will be the dirtiest, most micromanaged and most intensively participated polls in the country's history.

It is now hours left to know what will happen in Pakistan elections. But the indications are clear. And history tends to repeat.



'IMRAN PROMOTING HATE POLITICS'

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chief Imran Khan's former wife Reham Khan has once again hit out at the cricket-turned-politician, accusing him of promoting hate politics in the Pakistan general elections. Referring to Imran Khan as an extremist, Reham said that Pakistan will soon be "labelled as an extremist nation" if the PTI is voted to power. She said "Imran Khan is acting like Army's fangirl". According to Reham, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) president Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has emerged as a "breath of fresh air" in the run up to the Pakistan general elections. She termed Pakistan general elections as a "set up" and added that no matter who is chosen to power, the country will have a "compromised democracy".



NAWAZ SHARIF REFUSES TO GO TO HOSPITAL

Former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif has declined to be shifted to a hospital despite his health condition deteriorating in Adiala jail in Rawalpindi. Pakistan-based Dawn News quoted a jail official on condition of anonymity as saying that the former prime minister wants treatment to be provided to him inside the prison itself. This comes after Pakistan media reported that Nawaz Sharif is in need of urgent medical attention and his kidney is on the verge of collapse. The same was confirmed by a medical board that examined him on Sunday. Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz had alleged that Sharif was being treated as a terrorist and deprived of even basic facilities in the jail. SOURCE: WEBSITES

Can Imran Khan deliver?

CNN ONLINE

Former international cricket star and socialite Imran Khan is confident that a victory in Pakistan's general elections on Wednesday will kick start a revolution for a country bedeviled by corruption and insecurity.

Analysts are divided over whether a win for Khan's would actually be that substantially different to a return to power for its chief rival, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the party of disgraced former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.

In deliberate contrast to the scandal-dogged Sharif family, Khan has campaigned for a "New Pakistan" on a reformist, anti-corruption ticket, arguing the country is clamoring for a clean, nationalist government and a clean break with the past.

The 65-year-old has battled away allegations of covert support from the military, although his cricket references to "neutral umpires" and a "level playing-field" have become fewer on the campaign trail.

Khan has pledged to break the decades-old two party "status quo" of PML-N and its historical rival, the

Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which is expected to finish in third place.

His campaign has caught the imaginations of young and middle-class Pakistanis. In 2013, he broke through from relative political obscurity, with PTI becoming the country's third biggest party, taking control of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province.



Some see a Khan victory in 2018 as potential watershed moment for Pakistan.

Madiha Afzal, a Brookings Institute fellow, said Khan's emphasis on anti-corruption and improving education and health services differs from the policies of the main two parties, as does his conservatism.

"He is far farther to the right than

both, even the PML-N which was traditionally known as center-right," she said.

"Khan's policy positions -- from his deep opposition to the PML-N and refusal to criticize the military to his strong support for resolving the Kashmir crisis -- align sharply with those of the army," said Kugelman, the Wilson Center analyst, referring to India and Pakistan's long-running dispute over Kashmir.

While Khan may differ from his rivals on paper, some analysts said he may be hampered in any attempt to deliver on his agenda because of the host of weathervane politicians with questionable loyalty he has recruited.

Sharif experienced how tough is to stay in power, and analysts predicted the same fate could await Khan should he succeed in becoming Pakistan's leader.

"Certain traits of his -- his lack of desire to conduct politics as usual, his stubbornness -- will mean that should his relationship with the military sour or cool off, he might falter more quickly than politicians in the past, and more badly," said Madiha. "But once in power, he could also adapt."

POLL OF POLLS

PTI ahead

DAWN ONLINE

A poll conducted by Gallup Pakistan based on data from five separate polls carried out in the months leading up to today's elections forecasts that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) will likely emerge as the largest party on the national level, but that it will be followed closely by the embattled PML-N in terms of vote.

However, the research organisation concluded that the 12 per cent undecided voters may tilt the balance of the election in Punjab, the country's largest province, thus ultimately determining the fate of the next federal government.

A total of 105.95 million voters will head to polls across the country today to elect their representatives to the National Assembly and the four provincial legislatures.

Attempts on to defame judiciary

Says Pakistan chief justice

DAWN ONLINE

Chief Justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar has said attempts are being made to defame the judiciary and any harm caused to the institution can jeopardise the country's stability.

The CJP made these remarks at a book launch in Lahore on Monday just hours after seeking comments from the Islamabad High Court chief justice about the veracity of the allegations levelled by Justice Shaukat Aziz Siddiqui, a senior judge of the IHC, against the "interference by intelligence agencies in judicial matters".

Earlier, CJP Nisar asked IHC Chief Justice Mohammad Anwar Kasi to obtain material/evidence from Justice Siddiqui to substantiate the allegations he had levelled in his speech at the Rawalpindi Bar Association and to comment on the veracity of those charges.

In his speech, Justice Siddiqui had alleged that the IHC chief justice had been approached by officials of intelligence agencies to convey a message that they did not want release of former premier Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz before the general elections. In response, Justice Siddiqui alleged, the IHC chief justice had assured them that the bench would be constituted as per their convenience.

DOKLAM PLATEAU

China, Bhutan seek to end border row

REUTERS, Beijing

China and Bhutan should work together to ensure peace along their border and keep pushing talks on the issue, a senior Chinese diplomat said during a rare visit to the country, following an ugly spat with India last year over the frontier.

China and India almost came to blows last year at the Doklam plateau near the borders of India, its ally Bhutan, and China, in the most serious and prolonged standoff in decades along the disputed Himalayan border.

While China and India subsequently withdrew their troops and have been working hard to mend ties, including with meetings between Chinese President Xi and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the two remain deeply suspicious of each other.

Visiting landlocked Bhutan on a three-day trip ending yesterday, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou said his country highly regarded its traditional friendship with Bhutan and would as before respect Bhutan's independence and sovereignty, according to a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement.

"Both sides should continue to promote border talks, abide by the principles and consensus already reached, and jointly protect peace and tranquillity in the border region to create positive conditions for a final resolution," the statement cited Kong as saying.



A wildfire rages in the town of Rafina, near Athens, Greece. The photo was taken on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Israel shoots down Syrian warplane

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel said it shot down a Syrian warplane that crossed into the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights yesterday, but Damascus said the jet was fired on as it took part in operations against rebels on Syrian territory.

The incident added new fuel to weeks of tensions over the Golan, a strategic plateau between the two old enemies and where Israel has been on high alert as Syrian government forces close in to regain rebel-held ground.

For the second time in as many days, Israeli sirens sounded on the Golan and witnesses saw the contrails of two missiles flying skyward. The military said it fired Patriot interceptor missiles at a Syrian Sukhoi jet.

Greece wildfires kill 74

187 injured; PM declares three days of nat'l mourning

REUTERS, Mati

Wildfires sweeping through a Greek resort town have killed at least 74 people including families with children found clapsed in a last embrace as they tried to flee the flames.

The inferno was by far Greece's worst since fires devastated the southern Peloponnese peninsula in August 2007, killing dozens. Officials said it broke out in Mati, east of Athens, late on Monday afternoon and was broadly contained by yesterday afternoon though still burning in some areas, with the risk of reigniting in scrubland parched by Greece's searing summer heat.

At least 187 people were injured, among those 23 children.

"Greece is going through an unspeakable tragedy," Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said as he appeared on television to declare three days of national mourning.

Emergency crews found the bodies of 26 victims, some of them youngsters, lying close together near the top of a cliff overlooking a beach. They had ended up there after apparently searching for an escape route.

"Instinctively, seeing the end nearing,

they embraced," Nikos Economopoulos, head of Greece's Red Cross, told Skai TV.

Many hours after the blaze broke out, the strong smell of charred buildings and trees lingered in the air in parts of Mati yesterday. White smoke rose from smouldering fires.

Residents, their faces blackened by smoke, wandered the streets, some searching for their burned-out cars, others for their pets. The eerie silence was punctured by fire-fighting helicopters and the chatter of rescue crews.

A Reuters photographer saw at least four dead people on a narrow road clogged with cars heading to a beach.

Many in the area were unable to escape the fast pace of the blaze even though they were a few metres from the Aegean Sea or in their homes, the fire service said.

"We went into the sea because the flames were chasing us all the way to the water. It burned our backs and we dove into the water," said Kostas Laganos, a survivor.

He compared the ordeal to the destruction of the city of Pompeii, where thousands were incinerated by the volcano of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD: "I said my God, we must run to save ourselves and nothing else."

NEWSIN brief

Israel partially opens Gaza crossing

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel will partially reopen its only goods crossing with the blockaded Gaza Strip yesterday, a minister said, after closing it July 9 over border tensions and kites carrying firebombs to burn Israeli farmland. The statement noted that the number firebombs into Israeli territory had been reduced but not totally eliminated.

Japan heatwave toll hits 80 in one week

REUTERS, Tokyo

An "unprecedented" heatwave in Japan has killed at least 65 people in one week, government officials said yesterday. The weather agency warned that much of the country will continue baking in temperatures of 35 degrees or higher until early August.

207 environmental activists killed last yr

AFP, Paris

More than 200 environmental activists were murdered last year as government-sponsored killings linked to lucrative projects by vast agriculture multinationals soared, a global rights watchdog warned yesterday. Global Witness said it had found evidence that government actors were responsible for 53 of the deaths.

Rockets hurt 3 in Kabul

AFP, Kabul

At least three people were wounded after five rockets were fired into Kabul yesterday, police said. The rocket attacks came two days after a suicide bomber blew himself up near Kabul international airport, killing at least 23 people.

'Be cautious!'

Zarif dismisses Trump's warnings as US-Iran war of words continue

REUTERS, Washington

Iran on Monday dismissed an angry warning from US President Donald Trump that Tehran risked dire consequences "the like of which few throughout history have suffered before" if it made threats against the United States.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif hit back at Trump's warning, which the US leader delivered written in capital letters in a late-night tweet.

"COLOR US UNIMPRESSED: The world heard even harsher bluster a few months ago. And Iranians have heard them - albeit more civilized ones - for 40 yrs. We've been around for millennia & seen fall of empires, and our own, which lasted more than the life of some countries," Zarif wrote on Twitter.

"BE CAUTIOUS!" he wrote in capital letters, echoing exact words from Trump.

Iran has been under increasing US pressure and possible sanctions since Trump's decision in May to withdraw the United States from a

2015 agreement between world powers and Iran over its disputed nuclear program.

Bitter foes since Iran's 1979 revolution, Washington and Tehran have cranked up talk of war in recent days.

The Trump administration has launched an offensive of speeches and online communications meant to foment unrest and help pressure Iran to end its nuclear program.

Despite heightened rhetoric, both sides have reasons to want to avoid starting a conflict. Trump's words appeared to be in response to President Hassan Rouhani saying that hostile policies toward Tehran could lead to "the mother of all wars."

In his tweet directed at Rouhani, Trump wrote: "Never, ever threaten 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!"

