

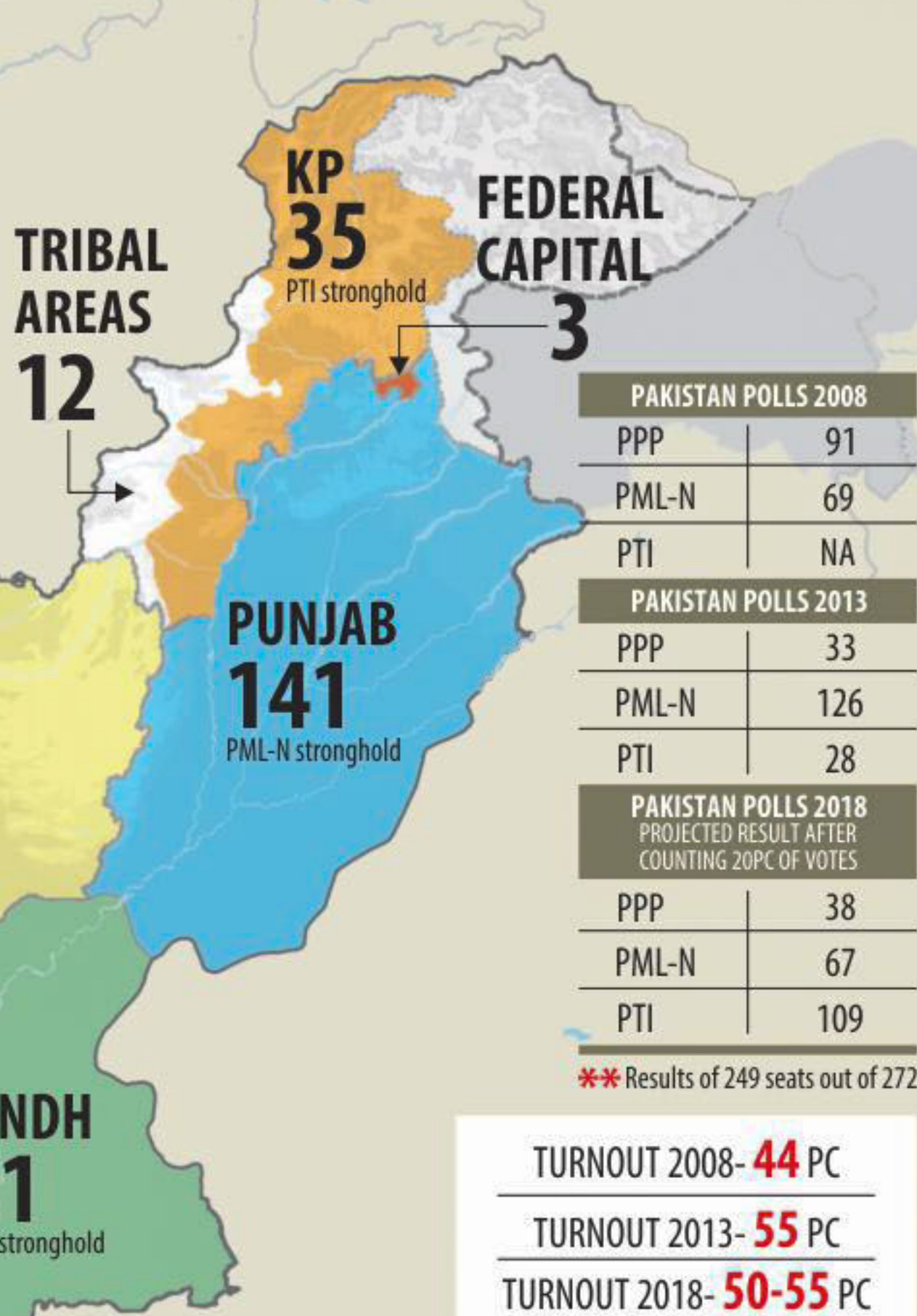
PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTION 2018



Total seats in parliament **342**
Contestable seats **272**
Seats reserved for women **60**
Seats reserved for minorities **10**

Seats according to provinces
Population **207** million
Registered voter **105.96** million
of which **46** million are
aged **18-35**

TOTAL CANDIDATES **11673**
POLLING STATIONS **85000**



Top, Imran Khan, chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), speaks to members of media after casting his vote at a polling station during the general election in Islamabad, Pakistan yesterday. Shehbaz Sharif, leader of Pakistan Muslim League -Nawaz (PML-N), casts his ballot at a polling station in Lahore. PHOTO: REUTERS

ARMY PAID Rs9b FOR POLLS SECURITY

Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Secretary Babar Yaqoob Fateh Mohammad yesterday said the largest expense with regards to the 2018 general elections was incurred on the training of polling officials, which includes training of troops. Speaking to reporters after the end of polling time, Yaqoob disclosed that the finance ministry has paid Rs9 billion to the Pakistan Army to provide security during the elections across the country. The 2018 elections are expected to cost the federal kitty more than three times the cost of the last two elections put together, with a major part of it likely flowing to the armed forces for the deployment of troops, Dawn reported earlier this week. The 2008 general elections cost Rs1.84bn out of the federal budget. It surged to Rs4.73bn for the 2013 elections, showing an increase of almost 157 percent. The Pakistan Army was paid Rs758 million in the 2013 elections compared to Rs120m in 2008. Another major increase in the expenditure was caused by the use of imported watermarked ballot papers for the first time.

ECP TAKES NOTICE OF MEDIA TALK

The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) yesterday took notice of politicians' media talk and warned them of strict action. According to details, the notice has been taken against PTI Chief Imran Khan, PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif, PML-N leader Khawaja Asif and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari over their media talk after casting their votes. ECP says that the media talk of election candidates is a violation of code of conduct. It has imposed a ban on politicians' live media talk. Notices have also been issued to media houses for airing the media talk of politicians. ECP has directed all the channels to refrain from such violation of action will be taken against them. ECP has also taken notice of Imran Khan stamping the vote in front of everyone. SOURCE: DAWN, THE NATION

'DELIBERATE' SLOWING DOWN OF VOTE Main parties cry foul

AGENCIES
The Pakistan Election Commission yesterday rejected requests to extend the polling time after political parties accused authorities of deliberately delaying voting.
The PPP, PML-N, ANP and the Awami Muslim League, among other parties, had requested that the election commission consider extending the polling time due to widespread reports of the sluggish polling process.
Halfway during polling, PML-N sent a letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, seeking an extension in time by one hour.
Citing "large-scale nationwide complaints", the letter added that only "3-4 people" are being allowed to enter the polling station at one time, slowing down the process. "This is not only causing inconvenience to voters ... but may also end up depriving people from their right of vote."
The central media coordinator for PML-N Muhammad Mendi said authorities were deliberately slowing down polling "everywhere in Pakistan, but mostly in the Lahore".
PPP, PTI and Awami Muslim League (AML)

Chief Sheikh Rashid also requested the ECP to extend the polling time.
Voters around the country have generally been complaining that the process to cast the vote is slow, taking each person around four to five minutes in the voting booth.
Gul Zaid Chaudhary, a voter in Taxila, Punjab, said the delay was down to slow processing by polling staff. "I waited in line almost 40-45 minutes, and behind me a long line was waiting," he said.
In Lahore, at a technical college, voters were not being allowed to enter in the polling station altogether. An official said they were letting people in one by one but female voters present outside the polling station said that no one had been let in for half an hour.
Candidates are also complaining, with one of the PTI's strongest female candidates, Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan, alleging that the polling process was deliberately delayed in Sialkot.
The ECP, after deliberations, rejected the requests for an extension of one hour. In a press release, the ECP said that all those who were present at polling stations before 6:00pm would be allowed to cast their votes.

They couldn't defy husbands

AFP, Mohri Pur
Pakistani women who had pledged to defy men in their village by voting for the first time ultimately did not exercise their democratic right in yesterday's election, citing intimidation by their husbands.
Male elders banned females from voting in Mohri Pur, some 60 kilometres (35 miles) from the central Pakistan city of Multan, around 1947 and the women have obeyed ever since.
This year many had vowed to cast a ballot following changes to Pakistan's election laws and amid shifting attitudes towards women in parts of the deeply patriarchal South Asian country.
Some 3,200 women were listed on the electoral register in Mohri Pur -- but not one voted, according to election officials and an AFP journalist at the village's sole polling station.
"We have threats from our husbands that they will divorce us if we cast our vote," 25-year-old Tanya Bibi told AFP as she walked past the polling station, without going in.
Around 8,000 men were registered to vote in the village. Large queues of them -- each clutching identity cards -- formed at the polling station, located in a school.
"We are here to cast our ballots, but our women didn't



Mohri Pur's women were not as lucky as others who voted for the first time yesterday.

cast their votes because it is our old tradition which we have been preserving," Muhammad Shamsher told AFP.
Even Qasir Abbas, a lawyer who campaigned for the women's vote, said in the end he did not bring his wife to the polling station, explaining: "I was afraid ... the villagers might boycott my family."
Bismillah Iram, from a local NGO, said announcements were made from the village mosque warning that women should not come to the polling station.
Elders in Mohri Pur, which is located in Punjab province, banned women from voting decades ago, claiming that visiting a public polling booth would "dishonour" them.
In 2015, one woman, Fouzia Talib, became the only one in the village to vote in local elections. She was ostracised.
Hopes were raised this time after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) declared that at least 10 percent of voters in each constituency must be women, otherwise its results will be voided.
Nearly 20 million new voters were registered in the rapidly growing country of some 207 million people, including 9.13 million women, the commission said.

NEWSIN brief

British PM May takes control of Brexit talks

AFP, London
Prime Minister Theresa May announced Tuesday she will take personal control of Brexit negotiations with the EU, as time runs out to get a deal before Britain leaves the bloc in March. Overall responsibility for the talks is being moved to the Cabinet Office, the ministry which supports May and where her main Brexit advisor, civil servant Olly Robbins, is based. The ministry led by Brexit Secretary Dominic Raab, ostensibly the public face of the negotiations, will instead focus on domestic preparations for Brexit, including the risk of reaching no deal.

IS claims deadly Toronto attack

AFP, Beirut
The Islamic State group yesterday claimed responsibility for a weekend shooting that killed two people in Canada's Toronto. Faisal Hussain, 29, killed a 18-year-old woman and a 10-year-old girl in the shooting rampage on a Toronto street on Sunday evening, Canadian police said. He was found dead near the scene of the shooting after an exchange of gunfire with police.

Arrests skyrocketed in Xinjiang in 2017

AFP, Beijing
Arrests skyrocketed by more than 730 percent last year in China's far-western Xinjiang as the government ramped up a security crackdown in the traditionally Muslim region, activists said yesterday. The ruling Communist Party has justified increasingly tight policing of Xinjiang by saying it faces a threat from Islamic extremism and separatism.



Villagers evacuate after the Xepian-Xe Nam Noy hydropower dam collapsed in Attapeu province, Laos yesterday.

LAOS DAM COLLAPSE

26 bodies found, 131 missing: PM

AFP, Attapeu
The Laotian Prime Minister said yesterday 131 people are still missing two days after a dam collapse swamped several villages in the country's south, killing at least 26 people.
In a rare televised press conference by the leader of the secretive communist country, Thongloun Sisoulith gave the most specific figure so far for the number unaccounted for. Earlier official reports spoke of hundreds missing in Attapeu province.
"One hundred and thirty one people have been reported missing," he said, adding all of them were Lao nationals.
Survivors have questioned why they got little warning of the deluge, which inundated several villages across a vast area with several meters of flood water.
Two South Korean contractors said they had reported damage a day before parts of the Xe-Namnoy dam gave way Monday and unleashed a wall of water.
Thai consular official Chana Miencharoen, at the scene of the relief effort told AFP that by late afternoon yesterday 26 bodies had been recovered.
"Seventeen others are injured and in hospital," he said, adding roof-level floodwater was hampering rescue efforts in a remote area of the poor and landlocked Southeast Asian country.

ME not doing enough for Palestinians

Says Nikki Haley
AFP, United Nations
US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on Tuesday criticized Middle Eastern countries for not doing enough to help Palestinians and move the peace process forward, saying that they need to "step up."
"It is time for the regional states in particular to step up and really help the Palestinian people, instead of just making speeches thousands of miles away," Haley said at a monthly meeting of the UN Security Council on the Middle East.
Haley highlighted American assistance to the Palestinians, saying that Washington provided \$300 million in bilateral aid last year, and "over six billion -- with a B -- dollars in bilateral assistance to Palestinians" since 1993.



"Last year, Iran's contribution to UNRWA was zero. Algeria's contribution to UNRWA was zero. Tunisia's contribution to UNRWA was zero," Haley said.
Saudi Arabia has over the past two decades provided "\$6 billion to the Palestinians in humanitarian assistance, development aid and relief," its ambassador, Abdullah Al-Mouallimi, responded.
Olof Skoog of Sweden, the current president of the Security Council, let his frustration with US policy show, saying: "Everyone is waiting for a credible peace plan."

IS blasts, raids kill 215

REUTERS, Beirut
Islamic State militants killed more than 200 people in a coordinated assault on a government-held area of southwestern Syria yesterday, local officials and a war monitor said, in the group's deadliest attack in the country for years.
Jihadist fighters stormed several villages and staged suicide blasts in the provincial capital Sweida, near one of the few remote pockets still held by Islamic State after it was driven from most of its territory last year.
The head of the Sweida provincial health authority told the pro-Damascus Sham FM that 215 people were killed and 180 injured in the attack, as well as 75 Islamic State fighters.
The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights war monitor said the attackers had killed more than 200 people including many civilians. Islamic State said in an earlier statement that it had killed more than 100 people in the attacks.
The jihadists launched simultaneous attacks on several villages northeast of Sweida city, where they clashed with government forces, state media and the Observatory said.
In the city itself, at least two attackers blew themselves up, one near a marketplace and the second in another district, state television said. State news agency SANA said two other militants were killed before they could detonate their bombs.
The Observatory said jihadists seized hostages from the villages they had attacked.
Photographs distributed on social media, which Reuters could not independently verify but which the Observatory said were genuine, purported to show the bodies of Islamic State fighters hanged from street signs by angry residents.
Sweida Governor Amer al-Eshi said authorities also arrested another attacker. "The city of Sweida is secure and calm now," he told state-run Ikhbariyah TV.
Islamic State lost nearly all the territory it once held in Syria last year in separate offensives by the Russian-backed army and a US-backed militia alliance.

SYRIA WAR Attacks hit several areas of gov't-held southern province of Sweida

Greece wildfires toll rises to 81

REUTERS, Athens
The number of dead from a fire which ripped through a Greek coastal town reached at least 81 yesterday as frantic relatives tried to track down people missing from the inferno and officials began the grim task of identifying bodies.
Hundreds of people were trapped in the eastern resort of Mati on Monday night as flames whipped around them. Many jumped into the sea to survive but others died from suffocation.
The Greek anti-terrorist service was probing suggestions that the blaze - one of several throughout the Attica region - was started deliberately, a security source said. Arson is often thought to be behind some fires in a crude attempt to clear forest land for building.

3 killed as Israel strikes Gaza

AFP, Gaza City
Three Palestinians were killed in Israeli strikes in the Gaza Strip yesterday, the enclave's health ministry announced, as Israel's army said it was hitting Hamas after its soldiers came under fire.
The flare-up comes five days after a United Nations-brokered ceasefire helped halt an earlier surge in violence.
The three were killed in strikes east of Gaza City, a health ministry statement said, without giving their identities.
The Israeli army said it carried out artillery strikes against seven military targets belonging to Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas.
"A short while ago, terrorists fired at (Israeli) soldiers in the southern Gaza Strip," an army statement said, without mentioning any injuries to the troops.
"In response... artillery targeted seven military posts in Gaza belonging to the Hamas terrorist organisation."
There was no immediate comment from Hamas about the identities of the dead.
The shooting was the second such incident reported by the Israelis along the fractious border in days.
On Friday an Israeli soldier was shot dead, sparking a fierce wave of bombing that ratcheted up fears of another war. That violence was ended late Friday by a UN-brokered ceasefire.
Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008.