

PAKISTAN GENERAL ELECTION 2018

'If India takes 1 step, Pakistan will take 2'

Says Imran Khan as he claims victory in Pak polls

NDTV ONLINE

Cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan, whose party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf or PTI has emerged as the single largest party, yesterday indicated that good relations with India, especially one that focuses on trade, is a key part of his agenda.

"I really want to fix our ties, you take one step we will take two," he said in a presidential-style address from Islamabad this evening even before the results of Wednesday's elections were announced.

The 65-year-old former captain of Pakistan cricket team said he was a "little disappointed" the way Indian media has portrayed him "like a Bollywood villain... as though all will be bad if I come to power".

"I have widely travelled in India because of cricket and I want good relations with India," he said in a half-hour



address as the opposition cried foul, accusing his party of winning through blatant rigging and army support.

Elaborating on his foreign policy and his views of relations with India towards the end of his address, Khan said the two countries also need to have a dialogue on Kashmir.

"The biggest dispute between us is about Kashmir. We need to talk about Kashmir... We're still on Square 1. India sees Baluchistan, we see Kashmir... this blame game has to stop. We are ready to take two steps forward

if you take one," he said.

There has been concerns in India about the outcome of the elections in Pakistan. It has been pointed out that a hardline party at the helm will affect the security of the people in Jammu and Kashmir as well as the rest of India in view of Pakistan's tacit support to terror.

Khan, who came to power after what he called 22 years of struggle, pitched for development, stability and improvement of Pakistan's economy. On that front, he underscored the importance of trade ties with India. "The number one priority of any government should be trade ties with India," he said.

The PTI has won 76 of the 272 seats in Pakistan's national assembly and is leading in 43. Khan's closest rival, jailed former PM Nawaz Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz or PML-N has won 43 seats and is leading in 20. A party needs 137 seats for a majority.

Heavyweights trounced

DAWN ONLINE

Many political heavyweights suffered defeat in their strongholds, according to unofficial results of the countrywide polling that concluded at 6pm on Wednesday, with some complaining of rigging and foul play.

The Election Commission of Pakistan failed to release official results till the filing of report citing some technical problems on their end. Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan Babar Yaqoob confirmed early Thursday morning that the results had been delayed due to a technical glitch.

According to the unofficial results shared by the ECP on its website, PPP chief Bilawal Bhutto has secured a victory in Larkana but lost to PTI's Abdul Shakoor Shad in Karachi by 13,245 votes in Lyari and to PTI's Junaid Akbar by over 35,000 votes in Malakand.

Awami National Party (ANP) stalwart Ghulam Ahmed Bilour lost the election to PTI candidate Shaukat Ali who was polled 72,822 votes. Bilour bagged 40,372 votes. "The results indicate that Imran Khan is a favorite leader of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. I am a democratic person and I admit the defeat," said Bilour who recently lost his nephew during an election campaign in a suicide attack.

PML-N leader Tariq Fazl Chaudhry lost

the election to Raja Khurram Shahzad of PTI in NA-52.

PTI Chairman Imran Khan defeated PML-N leader and former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in NA-53, Islamabad.

PTI chief Imran Khan defeated Akram Khan Durrani of MMA in NA-35, Bannu.

PML-N leader Talal Chaudhry lost the race to Nawaz Sher in NA-102, Faisalabad-2.

Former Punjab law minister and PML-N stalwart Rana Sanaullah lost the election to Nisar Ahmed Jatt of PTI in NA-106-Faisalabad 6.



JI chief Sirajul Haq lost the election to Muhammad Bashir Khan in NA-7, Lower Dir-2.

PML-N leader Amir Muqam lost the election to Haider Ali khan of PTI in NA-2, Swat-1.

Former interior minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan lost to PTI's Sarwar Khan in NA-59, Rawalpindi-3 and NA-63, Rawalpindi-7.

ANP leader Asfandiyar Wali lost the elections to Fazl Muhammad Khan of PTI in NA-124, Charsadda 2.

From 'Kaptaan' to Pakistan PM

REUTERS, Islamabad

For Pakistani cricket legend-turned-politician Imran Khan, his party's first place in a national election, putting him on the brink of becoming the country's next prime minister, is the culmination of a battle that started more than two decades ago.

For years, he was dismissed as a political dilettante who could not convert his personal popularity into significant seats in parliament for the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), or Pakistan Movement for Justice, he founded.

But Wednesday's election has dramatically changed that, crossing new boundaries for the country and putting the former sports star on the brink of power. With nearly half the votes counted PTI held a commanding lead, and Khan declared victory in a speech yesterday.

George Weah, one of Africa's greatest footballers who took over as president of Liberia earlier this year, is the only other internationally recognised sports personality to head his country's government.

As prime minister, the 65-year-old Khan will be tested on several fronts, from dealing with an urgent foreign currency shortage to managing a tense relationship with the United States.



Khan will also have to battle allegations that he has been helped by Pakistan's powerful military both during the campaign and in the vote count - rival parties have said soldiers at voting centres threw out their observers when counting began.

Khan has denied the accusations.

An Oxford graduate, he campaigned hard on a populist promises of a prosperous Pakistan that breaks away from its persistent legacy of corruption.

Khan began his cricket career in 1971 as a fast bowler known for his pace and aggressive tactics. By the time he retired more than 20 years later, he was regarded as one of the world's best ever all-rounders.

A glamorous fixture of London's high society in his younger days, he was captain of Pakistan's team of talented but wayward stars and - with a reputation as a stern taskmaster - led them to win cricket's World Cup for the first time in 1992.

He is still known as "Kaptaan" (captain) in Pakistan.

After his retirement, Khan raised funds to open a cancer hospital in the memory of his mother in his native Lahore in 1994.

He has mostly shed the playboy image and made public shows of devotion to Islam, building a large political following in northern Pakistan, especially with the conservative Pashtun population.

Khan started the PTI in 1996, but until 2013 it briefly held only one seat in parliament.

His party became the country's third-largest in the National Assembly in the previous election, benefiting in part from a groundswell of support, especially from young, urban voters fed up with the country's corruption.

Khan has been critical of the United States' policy in the region and vocally opposed drone strikes on Pakistani territory. Khan opposes the United States' open-ended presence in Afghanistan.

"I do think he will be publicly more adversarial.. (But) he is certainly capable of being more pragmatic, that just hasn't served his purposes in campaigning and branding himself," said a

former senior US official, who has met Khan several times.

The official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Khan's stance on the United States would likely be moderated by Pakistan's powerful military, which is seeking a more stable relationship with America.

Khan will also have to urgently resolve a currency crisis that threatens Pakistan's fast-growing economy, which expanded by 5.8 percent in the past year but will most likely need its second bailout from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since 2013.

He has said his future government will launched an anti-corruption campaign and poverty reduction program modelled on China, Pakistan's traditional ally that has financed billions of dollars of infrastructure projects.

At the same time, he has promised to build an "Islamic welfare state", create 10 million jobs and build 5 million homes for the poor.

Asked how he would fund such social spending, he vowed to double Pakistan's woefully low tax collection rates - the country has one of the world's lowest tax-to-GDP ratios - by cracking down on wealthy tax dodgers.

Religious parties fail to make their presence felt

AGENCIES

Despite the alleged backing from military, hardline religious parties and groupings failed to make their presence felt in the July 25 general election in Pakistan.

Both emerging religious entities, the Khadim Rizviled Tehreek Labbail Pakistan (TLP) and Kashmir-Jihad fame Hafiz Saeed's political front Mill Muslim League (MML) could neither field candidates to all 14 National and 30 Punjab Assembly seats in the provincial metropolises.

Muttahida Majlis Amal (MMA), the five-party religious alliance that ruled Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan during 2002-07, also could not cover all the constituencies.

MMA managed to mobilize voters from certain pockets in NA-135 (Lahore-XIII), NA-125 (Lahore-III) and NA-132 (Lahore-X) but could not make any visible dent in the right vote of the PML-N.

Most of the TLP and MML presence was seen in the form of banners and flexes, as their polling camps and polling agents were seldom found in and around the polling stations.

The MML, which could field only four candidates for 14 NA seats from Lahore, reflected even poor picture as the few camps it had set up were found empty throughout the day. It seemed voters mostly neglected the welfare work claims by the charity networks affiliated with it.

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

The proliferation of religious parties appears to be a fulfilment of a proposal made by Pakistan's military to "mainstream" armed Islamists and other extremists into politics, though the parties and the army deny any links.



SHEHBAZ MEETS JAILED NAWAZ

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shehbaz Sharif has met his brother, Nawaz Sharif, former party leader and a three-time prime minister in jail.

The meeting at Rawalpindi's Adiala jail lasted for 30 minutes, local media Dawn News reported. PML-N has rejected the result of the polls citing 'blatant rigging'

IMRAN KHAN GETS SPECIAL PROTOCOL

DAWN ONLINE

Police officers have replaced Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chief Imran Khan's private security guards outside his residence in Bani Gala.

Imran Khan has not officially been declared prime minister. His party is widely considered to be the winner of the Wednesday's election.



FEMALE MP ELECTED RECORD 5 TIMES

DAWN ONLINE

Former Pakistan National Assembly speaker Dr Fehmida Mirza has become the first woman in the country to have been elected for a fifth consecutive time

from the same general seat. Unofficial results show the GDA leader won NA-230 Badin by a narrow margin by bagging 96,875 votes against her rival from PPP, Haji Rasool Bux Chandio, who secured 96,015 votes.

Jemima, celebrities pay tribute to Imran's political journey

AGENCIES

Former cricket players, athletes and celebrity musicians have congratulated PTI's Khan for his performance at the country's general elections on social media.

"This is the result of 22 years of conviction, relentless efforts, determination and not giving up!" said former fast-bowler and national cricket team player Shoaib Akhtar.

"Well done to the new PM of Pakistan @ImranKhanPTI all the best," said boxer Amir Khan.

Pakistani former cricketer Wasim Akram yesterday visited the would be PM.

Shahid Afridi, another cricketer, congratulated the former cricketer-turned-politician.

"Congrat PTI and @ImranKhanPTI on a truly historic victory! The 22 yr old struggle has finally paid off & deservedly. Pakistanis have a lot of expectations from u I really

hope u lead from the front! I request all opposing parties& media to accept the result and help rebuild," he tweeted.

His ex-wife Jemima Goldsmith paid tribute to his years of political struggle on Twitter. Congratulating Imran for becoming PM, she says that his challenge now is to remember why he entered politics in the first place.

"22 years later, after humiliations, hurdles and sacrifices, my sons' father is Pakistan's next PM. It's an incredible lesson in tenacity, belief & refusal to accept defeat. The challenge now is to remember why he entered politics in the 1st place. Congratulations @ImranKhanPTI," said Goldsmith, who was married to Khan between 1995 and 2004.

Goldsmith and Khan have maintained cordial relations despite their divorce. The couple have two sons. Khan has been married twice after divorcing Goldsmith.



(L to R) India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, China's President Xi Jinping, South Africa's President Cyril Ramaphosa, Russia's President Vladimir Putin and Brazil's President Michel Temer pose for a group picture during the 10th BRICS summit yesterday at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. PHOTO: REUTERS

EU mission terms polls satisfactory

DAWN ONLINE

The chief observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission to Pakistan, Michael Gahler, has said that apart from a few incidents of terrorism, the overall situation of the general election was satisfactory.

"Our observers visited as many as 300 polling stations in 87 constituencies and I have personally visited four polling stations. Though we will release our preliminary report on Friday and a detailed report will be released later after assessing the overall situation, there is improvement as compared to the previous election held in 2013," he said while talking to reporters on Wednesday.

He said that as many as 50 recommendations were given by the mission after the 2013 elections, out of which 36 were implemented or included in the electoral law.

Gahler said the army was deployed under a code of conduct and it was strictly following it.

Earlier, while visiting Islamabad Model College for Girls F-6/2, Gahler said that as many as 60 EU observers were working across the country, apart from Balochistan and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata).

Pak transgender community says faced pushback at polls

REUTERS, Mumbai/london

Pakistan's transgender community faced pushback at the country's general election on Wednesday as five transgender candidates failed to win office and transgender observers and voters were blocked from polling stations, campaigners said.

The transgender community had hoped the July 25 ballot would be a step towards greater acceptance after 13 transgender candidates filed papers to run in the election and the Election Commission hired transgender observers for the first time.

While Pakistan is deeply conservative and homosexuality is illegal, the country has approved laws giving transgender people better rights than in many other nations including issuing its first passport with a transgender category last year.

However transgender turnout remained low at Wednesday's poll and observers faced difficult work environments which the All Pakistan Transgender Election Network blamed on the Election Commission's "failure to understand the unique obstacles".

The Election Commission of Pakistan did not respond to a request for comment.

Transgender observer Farzana Riaz said she and about 25 other colleagues hired to make sure polling station staff treated disabled and women voters with care were not allowed inside polling stations despite having official identification.

"We, as observers, were given identity cards by the election commission, but we were still not allowed inside," Riaz told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Riaz said no transgender people were allowed to vote in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - one of Pakistan's four provinces where there was a spate of transgender attacks in 2016 - because their identity cards did not match the gender they presented as.

The transgender community was counted in the national census for the first time last year, recording 10,418 in a population of about 207 million although many said this was too low. Charity Trans Action Pakistan estimates there are at least half a million transgender people in the country.

Cambodian activist wins Magsaysay

AFP, Manila

A Cambodian who has devoted his life to documenting the killing of almost two million of his countrymen in the 1970s was yesterday named among the winners of this year's Magsaysay Awards, widely regarded as Asia's version of the Nobel prize.

Youk Chhang, 57, was given the award for his role as head for more than two decades of the Documentation Center of Cambodia, an institute that investigates atrocities committed under the Khmer Rouge.

The Khmer Rouge was a murderous, ultra-Maoist organisation that killed one quarter of Cambodia's population from 1975 to 1979.

Youk's organisation aims to help victims of the brutal regime come to terms with their ordeal while ensuring that future generations do not forget the events.

Youk, who experienced torture and saw the death of many family members at the hands of the Khmer Rouge, said he undertook the work for his mother, who also suffered extensively during the genocide.

"I want her to be a free woman, not to carry all the tragedy in her heart and in her life," he was quoted as saying.

The Manila-based Ramon Magsaysay Award, named after a Filipino president killed in a plane crash, was established in 1957 to honour people and groups tackling development problems.