

How do polls in Pakistan work?

REUTERS

Pakistan goes to the polls today in a widely watched national election that will lead to the formation of a new government to lead the crisis-ridden South Asian nation for the next five years.

Here are some facts about how the electoral system works in Pakistan:

- Pakistan is a parliamentary democracy and voting will take place for seats in the federal legislature, called the National Assembly, and four provincial, or state, legislatures.
- 128 million Pakistanis out of a population of 241 million are eligible to vote - all those above 18. Polling booths are open from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm (0400 GMT to 1200 GMT) usually but time can be extended in exceptional individual circumstances.
- On election day, voters will cast their ballots for two legislators to represent their constituency - one federally and the other provincially. There are 5,121 candidates contesting for the federal legislature and 12,695 for the provinces.
- The National Assembly consists of 336 seats - 266 are decided through direct voting on polling day, while 70 reserved seats - 60 for women and 10 for non-Muslims - are allotted according to the strength of each party in the house.
- Victorious candidates become members of the National Assembly. Independent candidates have the option to join any party after the elections.
- Once constituted, the National Assembly holds a parliamentary vote to select a leader of the house, who becomes the prime minister.
- A successful candidate must show a simple majority in the house - that is, the support of at least 169 members.
- Once a prime ministerial candidate wins the vote in the National Assembly, they are sworn in as prime minister. The new prime minister picks cabinet ministers, who form the federal government.
- A similar process is followed at the provincial level to pick a chief minister and a provincial government.

PAKISTAN ELECTION 2024



King of comebacks Sharif looks set to be PM again

AGENCIES

Three-time Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif, who has never managed to see out a full term, heads into today's election on the brink of his biggest comeback to date.

The "Lion of Punjab", as he is known to his fanatical supporters, is hotly favoured to lead his Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party to victory and once again take charge of the nuclear-armed nation of 240 million people.

It is a far cry from Pakistan's last elections, in 2018, when less than three weeks before polling he was sentenced to 10 years in jail on graft charges and disqualified from holding public office.

Granted special bail to seek medical treatment in Britain, Sharif chose not to return, pulling the strings from abroad as his brother took charge after Imran Khan was kicked out of office in 2022, reports AFP.

Often draped in a red Gucci scarf, Sharif's political fortunes have risen and fallen on his relationship with Pakistan's powerful military establishment - the country's true kingmakers.

The 74-year-old is one of the nation's wealthiest men, with a fortune earned in the steel business, but is admired by supporters for his approachable "man of the soil" demeanour.

Nawaz first took power in 1990 with the blessing of the establishment, but was forced out three years later by corruption allegations - a theme that has dogged his career.

Between terms in power, he has spent years in jail or in exile - forced and voluntary - only to return to Pakistan each time with renewed zeal.

Sharif's political fortunes have risen and fallen on his relationship with Pakistan's military establishment.

Imran not on ballot, but still on country's mind

AGENCIES

His name may not be on the ballot, but Imran Khan will be on the country's mind as Pakistan votes in an election today that observers say is deeply flawed without his participation.

The former international cricket star has been given three lengthy prison sentences in under a week and been banned from politics for 10 years - officially excluding him from an election it never looked like he would be allowed to contest.

He urged his supporters yesterday to wait outside polling booths after casting their votes, as rival political parties held large rallies to mark the end of the election campaign period.

"Encourage the maximum number of people to vote, wait at the polling station...and then stay peacefully outside the Returning Officer's office until the final results are announced," said Khan via his handle on X, accompanied by an undated photograph depicting him wearing simple black clothing.

The origin of the image, the first of Khan in months, was not clear. Previously Khan's supporters have disseminated his messages, including through AI-generated audio speeches, from notes he has passed on through his lawyers during prison visits. Khan enjoyed popular support when he became PM in 2018, but he fell out with the military establishment that nurtured his rise and was booted from power in April 2022 by a no-confidence vote.

He then waged a risky campaign of defiance against the military, but when his supporters trashed an army commander's HQ last May after his first arrest, it was the final straw.

Imran urged his supporters to wait outside polling booths after casting their votes.

SECURITY ISSUE

Pak gov hints at shutting down internet

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's caretaker Interior Minister Gohar Ejaz on Tuesday hinted at the possible suspension of the internet service in case of security issues in any area on the election day today while Amnesty International called for uninterrupted internet access across the country during the polling process. The minister said the government would consider suspending the internet service on February 8 only if it receives a request from a district or province in view of the security situation. Ejaz claimed that the caretaker government had so far not made any decision to suspend the internet service on polling day. "Before taking any such decision for a specific area, the government would look into the nature of the threat as it is necessary to block the online communication of terrorists," he added.

'Why single us out?'

Ahmadi minority boycotts polls, again

AGENCIES

Amir Mahmood remembers a meeting between his Ahmadi community and top officials of Pakistan's government last September. He can't forget how the community, for long a victim of persecution in the country, saw a decline in attacks on its graves and shrines in the days after that meeting. But that respite did not last. As the world's fifth-most populous nation voting today, its half-million-strong Ahmadi community will boycott the election, after a spike in attacks on its members, institutions and even burial sites in the weeks leading up to the vote. For many Ahmadis, like Mahmood, the brief decline in attacks following the September meeting was proof of what could happen - if the country's leaders wanted it. "What the decline in attacks told us that if the state wishes, it can easily control the violence against us but unfortunately, the impression we get is that either some government is not clear-minded about its action, or is unwilling to help," he said. It is a sentiment driven by decades of entrenched discrimination, including in the electoral system. And it has led the community to boycott the elections, reports Al Jazeera online.

RED SEA CRISIS

Yemen rebels launch fresh ship attacks

AFP, Dubai

Yemen's Houthi rebels launched six missiles toward two merchant ships later on Tuesday, reportedly causing light damage to one of the vessels, the US military said.

The launches came three days after US and UK forces launched a wave of air raids against the Iran-backed Houthis - their third round of joint military action in response to the rebels' persistent attacks on shipping.

"Iranian-backed Houthi militants fired six anti-ship ballistic missiles (ASBM) from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen toward the Southern

Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden", US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

Three of the missiles were aimed at the MV Star Nasia, a Marshall Islands-flagged bulk carrier that is Greek owned and operated, the military command said.

"MV Star Nasia reported an explosion near the ship causing minor damage but no injuries", while a second missile later landed nearby and a third was shot down by a US destroyer, CENTCOM said.

The other three missiles were apparently aimed at the MV Morning Tide, a Barbados-flagged, UK-owned cargo ship, but they

exploded in the Red Sea without causing damage.

The Houthis had earlier said they struck US and British ships in two Red Sea attacks - the latest among dozens of incidents that have disrupted global shipping.

The Iran-backed rebels, who control much of the war-torn country, have been harassing shipping in a campaign they say is in solidarity with Palestinians in the Israel-Hamas war.

Houthi spokesman Yahya Saree said the first attack on Tuesday "targeted the American ship Star Nasia, while the other targeted the British ship Morning Tide".

Exiting the stage much too soon

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"Merchant of Venice", "Banapangshul" and more.

His debut on the silver screen was in 1994, through the film "Aakhri Hamla".

Though he first appeared on television in Gias Uddin Selim's "Shopno Jatra", he gained immense recognition for his portrayal of Ghora Mojid in Humayun Ahmed's Eid drama "Poka".

Rubel's breakthrough, however, came with the television series "Pret", based on Muhammed Zafar Iqbal's novel, directed by late Ahir Alam.

He continued work in television under esteemed directors, including Mostafa Sarwar Farooqui, and had also been a part of Humayun Ahmed's Liberation War-themed film "Shyamol Chhaya", among many more.

Other popular works include "Chandrakotha", "Chironjeeb Mujib", "Deshantor", "Priyo Satyajit", "Guerrilla", and "Meghla Akash".

His latest film, which turned out to be his last, "Peyarar Shubash" is scheduled for release on February 9.

During its premiere yesterday, Nasiruddin Yousuff Bachchu, National Award-winning filmmaker and a founding member of Dhaka Theatre, called for a moment of silence to mourn the loss.

"This was supposed to be a joyous event and Rubel was meant to be here with us. We were in a fix about whether to go on with it. However, director Atique believed it will be a way to showcase Rubel's dedication and a way to show respect to the actor."

While the audience experienced shock and sorrow at the news, Jaya Ahsan, a cast member of Peyarar Shubash, said, "I still can't believe Rubel bhai is no more. I don't think I can accept his death news until I see him for myself. I believe an artiste is immortalised through their work... He will forever be remembered through his performances."

Actor Tariq Anam Khan said, "Ahmed Rubel was undeniably a gifted artiste whose resonant voice and versatile acting satisfied audiences for decades... His sudden passing has left me utterly heartbroken."

Meanwhile, Nasiruddin Yousuff, on behalf of Dhaka Theatre, issued a statement on his Facebook, saying, "Dhaka Theatre is deeply saddened by his [Rubel's] sudden departure. His body will be kept at Shilpakala Academy premises tomorrow morning from 10:30am to 12:30pm to pay final respects. He will then be laid to rest in Gazipur at his family graveyard after a namaz-e-janazah."

Indian state passes common civil code

REUTERS, New Delhi

Lawmakers in a small Indian state ruled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) yesterday approved landmark legislation to unify personal laws across religions, a move opposed by many minority Muslims.

Approval by the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand makes it the first in the country since independence from Britain in 1947 to implement a Uniform Civil Code, a contentious decades-old BJP promise, months before national elections.

Currently, India's Hindus, Muslims, Christians and other minority groups follow their own personal laws or an optional secular code for marriage, divorce, adoption and inheritance.

The move by Uttarakhand banning polygamy and other Muslim practices is expected to pave way for other BJP ruled states to follow suit despite opposition from leaders of Muslim community. "The Uniform Civil Code will give the right to equality to everyone without any discrimination...We must make history by clearing it," said the CM Pushkar Singh Dhumi.

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'হয়ার এন্ড ট্রেইন' প্রোগ্রামের আওতায় প্রশিক্ষণ প্রস্তাব আহবান

তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগের আওতায় বাংলাদেশ কম্পিউটার কাউন্সিল (বিসিসি) কর্তৃক বাস্তবায়নাধীন Enhancing Digital Government and Economy (EDGE) প্রকল্পের আওতায় তথ্য প্রযুক্তির বিকাশমান খাত যেমন- আইওটি (IOT), বিগডেটা, আর্টিফিশিয়াল ইন্টেলিজেন্স (AI), ব্লকচেইন, ডেটা অ্যানালাইসিস, মেডিক্যাল ফ্রাইব, অগমেটেড রিয়েলিটি (AR), ভার্চুয়াল রিয়েলিটি (VR), মেশিন লার্নিং, ডিপ লার্নিং, ক্লাউড কম্পিউটিং, ক্লাউড আর্কিটেকচার, ডেরি লার্জ স্কেল ইন্ট্রিশন (VLSI), সাইবার সিকিউরিটি, ডিএফএক্স, ফিনটেক, সফটওয়্যার ডেভেলপমেন্ট প্রভৃতি বিষয়সহ ডিজিটাল প্রযুক্তির অন্যান্য খাতে স্থায়ী কর্মসংস্থান সৃষ্টির লক্ষ্যে বিভিন্ন আইটি-আইটিইএস প্রতিষ্ঠানের কাছ থেকে কমপক্ষে ২০ জনের স্থায়ী কর্মসংস্থানান্তর প্রশিক্ষণের প্রস্তাব আহবান করা হচ্ছে। এক্ষেত্রে, এক বা একাধিক প্রতিষ্ঠান সমন্বিতভাবে আবেদন করতে পারবে।

আইটি-আইটিইএস প্রতিষ্ঠানের যোগ্যতা: নিম্নলিখিত ৩টি যোগ্যতার মধ্যে কমপক্ষে ১টি যাচাইযোগ্য যোগ্যতা থাকতে হবে-

- বিগত দুই ক্যালেন্ডার/আর্থিক বছরের রপ্তানি আয় ন্যূনতম USD ৫০,০০০; অথবা
- একক মালিকানা প্রতিষ্ঠানের ক্ষেত্রে নিয়মিত বেতনভুক্ত জনবলের সংখ্যা ন্যূনতম ৫০ জন। তবে যৌথভাবে আবেদনকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানগুলোর মধ্যে প্রত্যেকটি প্রতিষ্ঠানে নিয়মিত বেতনভুক্ত জনবলের সংখ্যা ন্যূনতম ১৫ জন থাকতে হবে; অথবা
- সরকারি/বেদেশিক কোম্পানি বা সংস্থা/পাবলিক লিমিটেড কোম্পানি/উন্নয়ন অংশীদার/বহুজাতিক কোম্পানি/বৃহৎ এনজিও/টেলিকম/আর্থিক প্রতিষ্ঠান হতে কমপক্ষে ৫০,০০,০০০ টাকার আইসিটি-সম্পর্কিত একটি Work Order (কার্যাদেশ) থাকতে হবে।

ক) প্রস্তাবে প্রতিষ্ঠানের যে সকল তথ্যাদি প্রেরণ করতে হবে তা নিম্নরূপ-

- ১। প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম, ঠিকানা ও মালিকানা তথ্য;
- ২। প্রতিষ্ঠানের ব্যবসায়িক কার্যক্রম সংক্রান্ত বিস্তারিত বিবরণ;
- ৩। প্রতিষ্ঠানের মানবসম্পদ, রাজস্ব, দেশ-বিদেশে বিনিয়োগ ও প্রবৃদ্ধি পরিকল্পনা;
- ৪। TIN, BIN ও ট্রেড লাইসেন্স এর অনুলিপি;
- ৫। কোন বিষয়ে এবং কতজন নতুন জনবল নিয়োগ করা হবে তার সর্বাধিক বর্ণনা;
- ৬। উপরের যোগ্যতাসমূহের যে কোনো একটি যোগ্যতার স্বপক্ষে যাচাইযোগ্য প্রমাণক;
- ৭। অ্যাসোসিয়েশনের সদস্যপদ (যদি থাকে)।

খ) আগ্রহী প্রতিষ্ঠানকে আগামী ২২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২৪ তারিখের মধ্যে <https://edge.gov.bd> লিংক ব্যবহার করে অনলাইনে আবেদন করতে হবে।

গ) প্রস্তাব যাচাই-বাহাই শেষে শুধুমাত্র নির্বাচিত প্রতিষ্ঠানসমূহের সাথে চুক্তি স্বাক্ষর করা হবে।

ঘ) প্রশিক্ষণের আংশিক খরচ EDGE প্রকল্প হতে বহন করা হবে।

ঙ) কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনো কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোনো প্রস্তাব গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল করতে পারেন।

চ) এ বিষয়ক কোনো তথ্যের প্রয়োজনে hireandtrain@iit.du.ac.bd ই-মেইলে অথবা ০১৯৭৬৭০৭১৮ নম্বরে যোগাযোগ করা যেতে পারে।

উল্লেখ্য যে, বিভিন্ন বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/সেন্টার/ইনস্টিটিউট কর্তৃক এ বিজ্ঞাপন প্রকাশিত হবে। সেক্ষেত্রে একাধিক আবেদন করলে সকল আবেদন বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।

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