

World News Roundup



This photograph taken on Dec 4, 1999, shows deposed Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (right), and his brother Shahbaz Sharif (left), waving at supporters outside the courthouse in Karachi as they make their first public appearance together since the October 12 Military bloodless coup.

Pakistan's Supreme Court on July 28, disqualified Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from public office over long-running corruption allegations, a decision that ousts him from the premiership for the third time. (Inset): Pakistani opposition leader and head of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) party, Imran Khan speaks during a press conference at his residence in Islamabad on Friday, following a Supreme Court verdict against Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. (AFP)

Analysis

'Unlikely to be destabilising'

Does PM Sharif's ouster mean Pakistan 'chaos'?

ISLAMABAD, July 29, (AFP): The ousting of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has left a power vacuum at the top of the nuclear-armed country, yet experts say that in the long run it is unlikely to be destabilising.

Sharif's disqualification Friday by the Supreme Court over corruption allegations denies him the chance of becoming the country's first prime minister to complete a full five-year term.

Yet despite the country's history of military rule, power will likely remain within the hands of a civilian government — and probably that of Sharif's eponymous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Party, analysts say.

"In a country as volatile as Pakistan, there's good reason to be concerned whenever a prime minister is dismissed," said Michael Kugelmann of the DC-based Wilson Centre.



Sharif

"But my sense is that everything will eventually fall into place — a successor will be chosen and the current government will serve out its term."

Pakistan has been roiled by military coups and instability for much of its 70-year history.

But recently there has been a surge of optimism in the militancy-plagued developing country, which has seen a dramatic improvement in security and positive economic growth in recent years.

While the 2013 election that brought Sharif to power for a third time was also a powerful symbol of stability, representing Pakistan's first democratic transition from one elected government to another.

Sharif was disqualified from the prime minister's office but remains the head of the PML-N party which holds a majority in parliament, meaning the next prime minister will likely emerge from its ranks.

Unshaken

Political analyst Hasan Askari said that Pakistan's parliamentary system of government remains unshaken despite the Supreme Court's ousting of a democratically-elected premier.

"Sharif will bring forward some person from the party. Obviously his personality will not carry as much weight (as Sharif) ... But at the moment we can say, the first impact of the judgement has not proved to be destabilising," he said. With Pakistan just a year away from general elections, the question is whether the country's opposition parties can capitalise on Sharif's removal.

Opposition leader Imran Khan has breathlessly pounded his party's anti-graft slogans and called for Sharif's removal as his slow downfall has played out on Pakistan's TV news channels over the last year.

But his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, which governs one of Pakistan's four provinces, has so far failed to turn itself into a national party.

"(It is PTI) that initiated the case against the prime minister (Sharif), therefore they are going to be the major beneficiary in terms of reputation and credibility," said Askari. But, he cautioned, the party would benefit most from early elections, while popular opinion is still on its side — a remote prospect, with the PML-N-dominated National Assembly more likely to push for elections to be held as scheduled in June 2018.



In this Aug 13, 2013 file photo shows Pakistan's Petroleum and Natural Resources Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in Islamabad, Pakistan. Pakistan ruling party says deposed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif names ex-minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as his successor. (AP)

Subcontinent

Qaeda has group in Kashmir: Al-Qaeda said for the first time it is active in the Indian-controlled portion of Kashmir, announcing on a linked propaganda network that a militant from an indigenous rebel group would lead a new outfit of fighters opposing Indian rule in the disputed region.

The announcement was made Thursday by the Global Islamic Media Front, which said Kashmiri militant Zakir Musa will head al-Qaeda-linked Ansar Ghawzat-ul-Hind. He recently left Kashmir's largest indigenous rebel group, Hizbul Mujahideen, and is believed to have been joined by less than a dozen others.

Previously, no global jihadi groups have openly operated in Kashmir, a territory divided between India and Pakistan but claimed by both entirely.

The propaganda network said the new group will "repel the aggression of tyrant Indian invaders, and through jihad, and with the aid of Allah ... we will liberate our homeland Kashmir."

In 2014, al-Qaeda announced the creation of a cell in the Indian subcontinent, but it failed to attract significant support.

Musa issued a series of audio messages in April saying that Kashmir's struggle was for the Islamic cause and had nothing to do with nationalism, which would mark an ideological shift for some militants in Kashmir, where rebels have mainly fought for Indian-controlled portion to become independent or merge with Pakistan.

Separatist leaders, who challenge India's sovereignty over Kashmir, have repeatedly rejected the presence of outside groups, including al-Qaeda, and have accused India of portraying the Kashmiri struggle as extremist.

Senior Indian police officer S.P. Vaid said troops will continue to fight militants irrespective of their affiliations.

"Anyone who picks up gun to fight against the state is a terrorist to us. Their party affiliation hardly matters to us," Vaid

Pakistan

Ex-PM names brother successor, Abbasi interim premier

Sharif's ousting divides Pakistan

ISLAMABAD, July 29, (AFP): Pakistan's ousted prime minister Nawaz Sharif named his brother Shahbaz, the chief minister of Punjab province, as his successor and nominated ex-oil minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi as an interim premier in a defiant speech Saturday.

The announcement charts a way forward for Pakistan after the Supreme Court deposed Sharif Friday following an investigation into corruption allegations against him and his family.

The ruling brought to an unceremonious end his historic third term in power and briefly plunged the country into political uncertainty.

"I support Shahbaz Sharif after me but he will take time to contest elections so for the time being I nominate Shahid Khaqan Abbasi," Sharif said in a televised speech to his party.

The younger Sharif — who has so far been unscathed by the corruption allegations engulfing his brother's family — holds only a provincial seat, so must be elected to the national assembly before becoming the new prime minister.

Earlier Saturday the Election Commission of Pakistan confirmed fresh elections would be held in Nawaz Sharif's former constituency, in the family's power base of Punjab province, in a process which could take up to 45 days.

Considered more intelligent but less charismatic than his older brother, Shahbaz Sharif has controlled Punjab — Pakistan's most populous and prosperous province — for much of the last decade, presiding over a series of big ticket infrastructure projects.

Abbasi is set to be rubber-stamped as placeholder in a parliamentary vote, with Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) commanding a majority in the 342-seat house. There was no immediate confirmation of when the vote would take place.

An electrical engineer and the busi-

Fall of Pakistan's PM Sharif new consequence of Panama Papers

PANAMA CITY, July 29, (AFP): The disqualification on Friday of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from public office over long-running corruption allegations is the latest twist in the so-called Panama Papers scandal.

What are the Panama papers? A trove of 11.5 million digital records from the Panamanian law firm Mossack Fonseca that revealed how many of the world's wealthy used offshore companies to stash assets.

Perpetrators range from simple businessmen to a head of state, via banks and sports stars.

The data were leaked to a German newspaper, Sueddeutsche Zeitung, which shared them with the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ), and reports appeared in major media from April 3, 2016.

Among those cited are former British Prime Minister David Cameron, Argentina's football star Lionel Messi, Argentina's President Mauricio Macri, Spanish film director Pedro Almodovar and Hong Kong's film star Jackie Chan — but also more than 140 politicians and public officials.

What was the impact? In the immediate aftermath, Ice-

land's prime minister Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson was forced to resign after the leak showed his family sheltered assets offshore.

The Pakistani Supreme Court, disqualifying Sharif from office, also asked the national anti-corruption bureau to launch a further probe into the allegations against him, which stem from the Panama Papers linking the premier's family to lucrative offshore businesses.

Many of the officials named in the Panama Papers have put forward legitimate reasons to explain their offshore presence and say they have not acted illegally.

In theory everyone has the right to create an offshore company, as long as they declare the profits.

However they are often denounced for being shady and in affairs of corruption they can be used to hide gains that they want to hide from the taxman.

In the year since the scandal erupted at least 150 inquiries or investigations have been launched in more than 70 countries, with authorities examining many cases for possible tax evasion or money laundering, according to the Center for Public Integrity, a US nonprofit group that until February hosted the now-independent ICIJ.

warned the country was "descending into chaos".

"I have no regrets ... I will continue to fight for my vision of Pakistan," he said.

The Supreme Court said in its judgement Friday that it was disqualifying Sharif for failing to disclose his monthly salary of 10,000 dirhams (\$2,700) from a company owned by his son in the United Arab Emirates.

Sharif did not withdraw the salary, court documents show, but the five-member bench ruled his failure to disclose its existence meant he was not "honest" — a requirement for Pakistani politicians under the country's Constitution.

said.

However, he said police would closely monitor the impact of Thursday's announcement on militancy.

Musa was a close aide of **Burhan Wani**, a charismatic Kashmiri rebel leader whose killing last year triggered open defiance against Indian rule.

Wani's death and the resulting public fu (AP)



Musa



Wani

Bomb in Pakistan kills 4: A Pakistan government official says a roadside bomb has struck a vehicle carrying villagers in a southwestern border town near Iran, killing four people and wounding five others.

Regional government administrator Jabbar Baluch says Saturday's incident took place in the remote town of Panjgur in Baluchistan province. Baluch says it is unclear who planted the bomb and officers were still investigating. (AP)