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LAHORE, PAKISTAN

In what seems a shocking twist in Pakistan's recent political history, the Police have opened close to 17000 criminal cases against multiple members of the country's outgoing ruling party on the grounds of violating election and voting rules.

With the country preparing to go to polls next week, the Police registered 16,868 cases in the eastern province of Punjab, following which local law enforcement also detained hundreds of members of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in Lahore. The statements of the police, however, are yet to reveal which specific election procedures and by-laws were violated that has resulted in this massive political scandal.

The party's founder, ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif has already been facing a series of criminal accusations and legal challenge on grounds of corruption which resulted in his imprisonment after his return to Pakistan, in an attempt to reboot his former party.

The campaigners who lobbied against the PML-N further raised concerns about the Pakistani military allegedly attempting to interfere in the election process and skew the contest in favour of the ex-cricket legend Imran Khan, who now seeks to contest the elections. Even though the military in Pakistan had ruled the country for half its history, they denied the current allegations of interference. Imran Khan too repeatedly denied all rumours regarding him colluding with the army.

The independent Human Rights Commission in Pakistan highlighted the concern regarding the legitimacy of past elections, recalling the fact how many political parties were not given equal opportunity or freedom while contesting the elections. Pakistani authorities booked cases against some party officials under anti-terrorism laws.

On the other hand, three party officials of the PML-N elucidated how the police constantly threatened multiple party members and leaders and intimidated them during the rally welcoming Sharif back to Pakistan.

While the exact offences under which party members were sued are yet to be publicized, these recent incidents have made it clear that the public opinion in Pakistan is still alive and powerful enough to bring an action against some of the most powerful institutions in the country.

Source: Reuters

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