

Sharif election ban appeal rejected

by UPI

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan -- The Pakistan election commission has refused to review the ban on former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif from running in the Jan. 8 elections. Lawyers for Sharif had asked the chief election commissioner to reject a returning officer's decision last month that disallowed Nawaz from contesting the elections, The Daily Times said. The original rejection of Sharif's nomination papers was based on past criminal convictions which the candidate called trumped up. The Daily Times, quoting sources, said the election commission ruled Sharif's review appeal should have been submitted to relevant tribunals for which the deadline had passed. The rejection of Sharif's nomination removes the biggest challenge to President Pervez Musharraf in the January elections. Musharraf came to power in 1999 after overthrowing Sharif in a bloodless coup. Sharif was later exiled to Saudi Arabia from where he recently returned to run as leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-N party. The other main contestant is Benazir Bhutto, another former prime minister who heads the Pakistan People's Party. Musharraf ended his six-week-old emergency rule last Saturday and restored the constitution. He has, however, refused to reinstate the judges he dismissed when he imposed the emergency. Sharif had been campaigning for their reinstatement.

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