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Editorial

PARALLEL COMMONALITIES: THE DUMMY LEADERSHIP OF THE PAKISTAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION & THE MANUFACTURED MANDATE OF PAKISTAN'S CURRENT GOVERNMENT

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Note: AI tools, data banks, information repository and modern apps
used for this manuscript.

Introduction

Senator Dr. Musadik Masood Malik (PML-N; PhD in Health Policy from the University of Illinois, USA) played a pivotal role at the 21st International Pharmacy Conference and Exhibition (IPCE 2024) in Lahore (November 21–24, 2024). He delivered a keynote address titled "Climate-Conscious Pharmaceutical Systems: Health, Environment, and Resource Integration", in which he underscored the essential role of pharmacists in building climate-resilient healthcare, promoting "green pharmacy" practices, and reducing water and carbon footprints in drug manufacturing. Dr. Malik proposed a joint policy framework involving the Ministries of [Climate Change](#), [Water Resources](#), and the [Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan \(DRAP\)](#) to implement Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) in pharmaceutical licensing, foster innovation in sustainable drug formulations, and introduce a fellowship program to train pharmacists in environmental health and sustainability. Following these recommendations, a cross-ministerial task force was launched to develop an Environmental Code of Conduct for industry, and several academic institutions pledged to create climate-health

curricular modules, demonstrating his influential contribution to integrating public health, environmental policy, and pharmaceutical science at the conference.

The Pakistan Pharmacists Association (PPA) claim to be representing pharmacists across Pakistan, serving as the primary professional body for pharmacy practitioners [1]. However, critical analysis reveals that the PPA is largely a government-controlled façade, dominated by a cadre of retired and serving bureaucrats, regulatory officials from the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), and industry stakeholders who prioritize personal and political interests over the welfare of pharmacy professionals and public health [2,3]. This has led to systemic corruption, manipulation of democratic processes, and an erosion of professional autonomy.

In parallel, Pakistan's current ruling coalition—an alliance of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP)—was formed following the 2024 general elections, widely criticized for extensive rigging, suppression of opposition, and pervasive military interference. This “manufactured mandate” undermines democratic legitimacy and reflects entrenched elite interests rather than popular will [4,5].

1. Bureaucratic and Regulatory Control: DRAP and Military Parallels

The PPA's electoral and administrative mechanisms have reportedly been compromised by DRAP officials who exert undue influence over pharmacist registrations, leadership nominations, and regulatory decisions. This bureaucratic dominance effectively subverts the professional governance of pharmacists and aligns the association's policies with commercial and political agendas [6]. Similarly, the 2024 elections witnessed heavy military involvement through caretaker government collusion and administrative manipulation, systematically marginalizing opposition parties such as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and facilitating an engineered political coalition [7,8].

2. Election Rigging and Leadership Hijacking

The PPA continues to face allegations of election manipulation, particularly in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, where branch elections have been delayed or controlled to prevent genuine representation [9]. This echoes the nationwide irregularities observed in the 2024 general elections, where discrepancies in official results and election forms, alongside public admissions by election officials, confirmed the prevalence of rigging and vote tampering [10,11].

3. Academic and Industrial Corruption

Academic actors within pharmacy education have been implicated in fostering credential inflation and lobbying for regulatory control within the PPA, thereby compromising standards of pharmaceutical education and practice [12]. Concurrently, pharmaceutical companies have been accused of financing DRAP officials and PPA factions to maintain market monopolies, manipulate drug pricing, and shield counterfeit drug manufacturers from regulatory action, which severely undermines public safety [13,14].

4. Suppression and Manipulation

Instead of functioning as an independent professional watchdog, the PPA has been co-opted as a political vehicle, silencing whistleblowers and obstructing reforms aimed at enhancing drug safety and pricing transparency [15]. Correspondingly, the current government has enacted laws curtailing judicial independence and restricting electoral oversight, further destabilizing Pakistan's democratic institutions [16].

5. Public Reactions and International Responses

Pharmacy professionals and civil society have actively protested against these corrupt practices, demanding transparency, accountability, and reforms within DRAP and PPA [17]. International bodies such as the United Nations and the European Union have also expressed concern over the legitimacy of the 2024 elections and the need for civilian supremacy and democratic restoration [18].

Conclusion

The Pakistan Pharmacists Association and Pakistan's present government are emblematic of governance systems dominated by entrenched bureaucratic and military interests. These actors suppress democratic processes, prioritize elite agendas, and undermine the development of robust, independent institutions. Addressing these challenges requires comprehensive reforms including independent election oversight, prohibition of conflicts of interest, protection of whistleblowers, and restoration of democratic norms in both the pharmacy sector and the wider political landscape.

Recommendations

- Implement independent third-party oversight for PPA elections under the Election Commission of Pakistan.
- Enforce a minimum 5-year ban on DRAP officials assuming roles within pharmacy professional bodies post-retirement.
- Restore judicial independence and ensure transparent, free, and fair elections.
- Establish legal protections for whistleblowers exposing corruption in pharmacy regulation and political governance.
- Promote pharmacist-led governance and strengthen civil society engagement in policy formulation.

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