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## Establishment ‘must step back’ to ensure transparent elections: Imran Khan

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Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) incarcerated and beleaguered founding chairperson Imran Khan emphasised the urgent need for the establishment to step back to ensure transparent elections in the country. “If we want to save the country, the establishment must step back to move towards transparent elections,” the former premier asserted during an informal talk with media in the Rawalpindi’s Adiala jail today. The PTI supremo highlighted the drastic increase in national debt, stating that in 2021, it was Rs2.8 trillion, but within four years, it had surged to Rs8 to Rs9 trillion. He criticised the current government for failing the nation, saying, “The current government has destroyed Pakistan’s hope; no one trusts this government anymore.” Imran pointed out the severe economic burdens on the common people, noting, “The poor who used to have a 2,000 rupees bill now face a 10,000 rupees bill.” In a previous media talk, Imran emphasised that the IMF cannot

solve the country's issues, asserting that the solution lies in fair and transparent elections. He expressed concern that Pakistan, which once led until 1990, is now being surpassed by other nations. He blamed the elite for stashing their wealth abroad and accused the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) of "historic" rigging in the February 8 general elections. "Everyone knows the ECP conducted fraudulent elections," he accused. Referring to the judiciary, Imran mentioned that the CJP Isa is sending his party to the ECP for justice, despite knowing the commission's credibility issues. Imran also questioned why their petitions on human rights and the February 8 case are not being heard in the Supreme Court of Pakistan. He criticized the trial of civilians in military courts, questioning, "In which democracy do civilians get tried in military courts?" Addressing media suppression, he claimed there are plans to curb the media. "Congress is saying that fraudulent elections took place in Pakistan," he added. In response to a journalist's question about the establishment's role, Imran said, "The establishment is running the country; the SIFC is running the country." When asked about a former cabinet member testifying against him, Imran brushed it off, saying, "I'll talk about it later; he hasn't said anything significant." On the topic of his hunger strike announcement, Imran confirmed, "I will definitely go on a hunger strike; I am waiting for some decisions." On July 4, Imran expressed his lack of confidence in the Chief Justice of Pakistan, Justice Qazi Faez Isa, and declared his intention to go on a hunger strike in jail. Imran

highlighted objections raised by his legal team regarding the judge's repeated presence, indicating a growing belief within his camp that justice may not be impartially served under these circumstances. The PTI founder referenced a recent decision by Justice Gulzar's five-member bench, which supported his team's stance that CJ should not preside over their cases. Additionally, he noted the administrative dynamics within the jail, mentioning the involvement of senior military officials in day-to-day operations. Referring to the incident where a scheduled meeting with his team was unexpectedly cancelled, Imran expressed disappointment over the missed opportunity to resolve internal disputes had the meeting proceeded as planned.