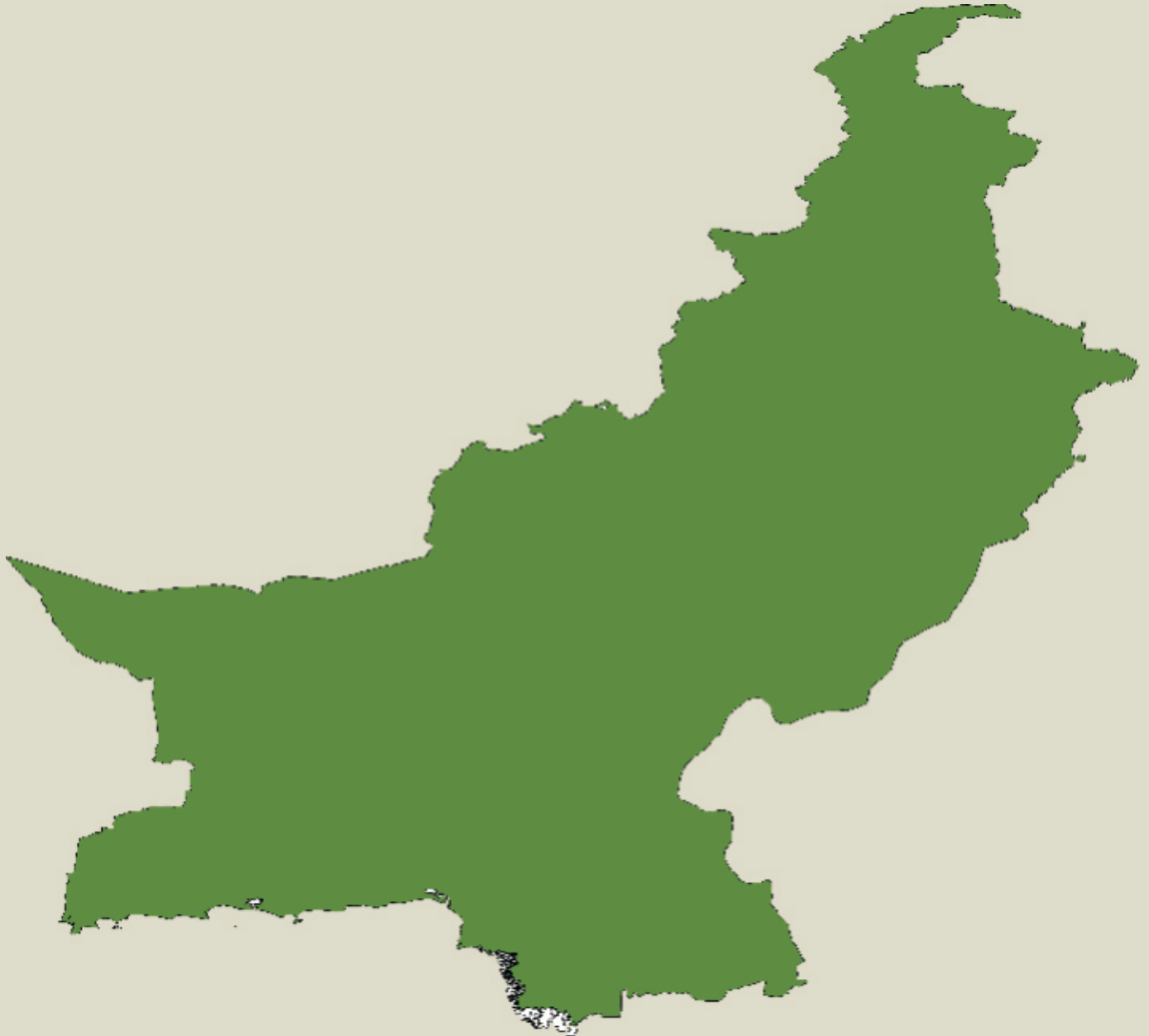


February 2023

# PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

*A Selected Summary of News, Views and Trends  
from Pakistani Media*



*Prepared by*

*Dr. Zainab Akhter*

*Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir*

*Mr. Afroz Khan*

*Dr. Ashok Behuria*



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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1-Development Enclave, Near USI  
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010

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## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

### **Musharraf's legacy**, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 06 February<sup>1</sup>

President General Pervez Musharraf was a man of action and believed in advocating the positive side of Pakistan. That was why his political slogan was 'Pakistan First'. He will long be remembered as a hero and a villain for his role in Kargil's 1999 warfare with India. This was why he was contested closely at home and abroad. *Though he managed to create a political legacy of his own by knitting forces as diverse as the MQM and the MMA of JUI-F, as well as the PMLQ and the dissidents of PPP, he was a half success in the nomenclature of a self-served political icon.* But his first three years of technocratic rule are regarded as the best era of Pakistan. Notwithstanding the credentials of a dictator, he was the first who gave a free media policy and fathered the mushrooming of electronic media in Pakistan. Musharraf was a controversial figure as far as his way of politics was concerned. His biggest slip was acting against the then Chief Justice of Pakistan, which kick-started a storm of protests that ultimately led to his phased-out dismissal from Presidency. *His role in the wake of 9/11 attacks by siding with the US and fighting a long-drawn war is his legacy.* As a passionate advocate of Pakistan's tangles, Pervez Musharraf was a show stopper when it came to defending national interests.

### **The people's demands**, Editorial, *Dawn*, 07 February<sup>2</sup>

As the people of KP are literally on the frontline of the battle against terrorism and violent extremism, they are bravely raising the loudest voices against this resurgent menace. Mass protests were witnessed in several KP areas as people took to the streets to demand an end to terrorism, and the establishment of peace. Demonstrations were held in Mohmand, Lakki Marwat as well as Malakand. *While Pashtun Tahafuz Movement and ANP leaders were present at the Mohmand event, representatives of parties from across the political spectrum attended demonstrations in other parts of KP.* Such large protests were also held as militancy began to rear its ugly head in the region last year, when the ceasefire between the banned TTP and the state started faltering. These protests have gained frequency after last week's brutal Police Lines bombing in Peshawar; in fact, in an unprecedented move, KP policemen in Peshawar and other cities held demonstrations in uniform demanding justice for their fallen colleagues following the atrocity. The common denominator running through all these protests is a call for the state to crack down on terrorism, and guarantee peace. *The people of KP in particular, and the country in*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2399549/musharrafs-legacy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1735775/the-peoples-demands>

*general, need to be reassured by the state that everything possible is being done to reverse the rising tide of violence, and keep them safe. A government-sponsored multiparty conference is due to be held in Islamabad later this week to discuss the challenges facing the nation.*

### **The art of the U-turn, Editorial, *The News*, 14 February<sup>3</sup>**

*Living up to the expected, PTI Chairman Imran Khan has now taken yet another U-turn on his 'US conspiracy behind regime change operation' narrative – an idea that was always seen as rather unlikely by more sober purveyors of the news but which had resonated deeply with PTI supporters.* It seems now the narrative stands changed shifting political compulsions making it perhaps imperative for the PTI to shift the goalpost to a more local centre of blame: the retired COAS. It may escape the notice of more ardent supporters but Imran and the PTI had not named the general in their original narrative. Naysayers can continue to point at the very glaring loopholes and about-turns in the PTI's changing conspiracy narrative but the one thing the party has honed to perfection is the art of repeating something so often that it becomes a near-absolute truth at least for its supporters. Now that the PTI chairman has decided it is time to move on from the anti-US narrative, one may be sure that this is what his supporters will do as well. *However, much of the foreign policy damage has had to be cleaned up by the PDM government. It may be too much to expect an apology for placing Pakistan's foreign policy in such a sensitive position, but one hopes some lessons may be drawn from this.* Unfortunately, it may be that the only lesson that may be sourced is that U-turns work very well for Imran Khan and his party, regardless of what cost they come at.

### **The politics of narratives, Abdul Sattar, *The News*, 15 February<sup>4</sup>**

*As millions of Pakistanis continue to bear the brunt of inflation and poverty, the political elite finds new narratives to fool the hapless people of the country.* Both former Prime Minister Imran Khan and PML-N's leader Maryam Nawaz believe that their political rhetoric can somehow help the 220 million people who are facing the challenges created by not only the policies of global and regional financial institutions but also the country's ruling elite. *Khan seems determined to prove that he can help the country tackle the plethora of crises Pakistan currently faces, and blames politicians and institutions for all the wrongs in the country.* Maryam asserts that everything could be fixed if Khan is put behind bars. Both leaders do not have any welfare programme that might lift more

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1040398-the-art-of-the-u-turn>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1040726-the-politics-of-narratives>

than the 80 million poor people out of poverty. And they do not seem to care about the threat of large-scale starvation; the poor are already facing acute food shortages. Both seem indifferent to the plight of the over 33 million people hit by catastrophic floods in 2022. The two leaders rarely talk about the displaced flood-affected people. With the rising cost of doing business, hundreds or possibly thousands of major and small businesses are likely to suffer creating more unemployment. Such a situation could plunge the country into a Tunisia-like situation where the death of one poor vendor by suicide inflamed the entire country, triggering the Arab Spring across the region and sending powerful rulers packing.

### **Ali Wazir's release, Editorial, Dawn, 16 February<sup>5</sup>**

*A long, condemnable chapter of state persecution may be coming to a close with the release of Ali Wazir on Tuesday after two years-plus behind bars. The South Waziristan MNA and PTM leader had been held in Karachi's Central Jail since December 2020 while being tried in a string of sedition cases after his arrest for a controversial speech at a rally. Mr. Wazir finally won his freedom after a court granted him bail in the remaining case against him. Bail does not mean acquittal of course, and the threat of a trial remains hanging over Mr. Wazir's head but trying him was never the objective. This was a man who had voiced opinions that had enraged the state, and he had to be taught a lesson. The malice that underpinned his continued incarceration was glaringly apparent. Applications for bail were repeatedly turned down, and although he was acquitted of the original charge last November, three other similar cases filed against him in Karachi and one in KP's Miram Shah kept the legislator deprived of his liberty. It did not matter that the constitutional protections guaranteed to Mr Wazir as a citizen of Pakistan including the rights to due process and to security of person were trampled underfoot. Nor did it matter that the people of South Waziristan who had elected Mr. Wazir as their representative were left without a voice in the National Assembly. Shamefully, most of his fellow legislators and sections of the media also lost their voice, willfully so, and remained silent in the face of this gross injustice.*

### **Poll announcement, Editorial, Dawn, 21 February<sup>6</sup>**

*At a time when the country needs stability, President Arif Alvi's decision to unilaterally announce a date for elections in Punjab and KP has once again plunged Pakistan into political chaos. Announcing the move through the president's press office, Dr Alvi*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1737426/ali-wazirs-release>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1738315/poll-announcement>

defended his decision as a “constitutional and statutory duty”, and criticised the ECP and Punjab governor for allegedly shirking their responsibilities. It is unclear how things will now unfold. Constitutional law experts themselves are divided, with some asserting that the president is within his rights to set a date for elections, while others emphasize that this is a matter that only the ECP can decide. Are we facing a fresh constitutional crisis? Will the judges intervene, and will we now be spectators to yet another drawn-out legal drama, with the courts deciding who is right? Acrimony and the perpetual failure of the government and opposition to engage on matters that demand immediate action mean that it is the judiciary or certain other powerful quarters that might take political decisions. *The elected representatives will have only themselves to blame if those outside their domain take advantage of the situation. Sanity must prevail. This paper has time and again advised the government to go for early elections across the country and not just in the two provinces.* The authorities must act wisely to prevent the country from reaching a point of no return.

**Averting the crisis, Ghulam Murtaza, *The Nation*, 28 February<sup>7</sup>**

Pakistan stands at an unprecedented grinding halt in every dimension a country might have. *The terms and conditions are humiliating and very hard against which the IMF agreed to help us to forward the default to the next episode. Default is still hovering over our heads as six months are not so far off when we have to re-knock the door of IMF. The dollar has been uncapped on the demand of the IMF and 170b taxes have been imposed on the existing taxpayers.* It’s been the tradition of the government to axe the existing handful of tax-payers instead of expanding the tax net. In Pakistan, the single-digit GDP tax ratio is a mockery. In a population of 240 million, only 2.154 million are taxpayers, not even 1 percent of the total population; the genuineness of the declared amount is another big question every one of us knows. *Out of a total of 2.4 million retailers, only 25000 are taxpayers that too in three big cities. The poor governance and irrationalities are countless. Unfortunately, we are still not sensitized about the situation we are going to face after six months.*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.nation.com.pk/28-Feb-2023/averting-the-crisis>

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

### Troubles Continue, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 01 February<sup>8</sup>

Pakistan is now faced with a crisis of dynamic proportions; inflation has accelerated to its highest in decades largely due to supply disruptions, prompting the central bank to raise interest rates to a 24-year high. Foreign reserves have now dropped to backbreaking low levels, at \$4.3 billion, the country only has enough to cover a month's worth of imports. *A \$1 billion loan from the IMF remains stalled until Pakistan makes good on its promises of fiscal consolidation. The government has now resorted to a series of austerity measures that include limitations on imports and a 10 pm curfew, measures which do not address the problems that catalyzed this crisis in the first place.* The country may be able to avoid debt default with IMF help and loans from strategic allies for the time being but it cannot rely on foreign capital inflows forever. An economy that produces too little and spends too much is bound to come crashing down every few years. With each successive economic crisis, things get a little bit worse as the debt bill gets bigger and resources more scarce. The real problem lies with the foundations of our economy itself; an excessive emphasis on hand-outs and desperate borrowing as opposed to widening the tax bracket and generating revenue, the cornerstone of any sustainable economy. If global bodies such as the IMF are willing to step up and modify the framework of debt financing for emerging economies such as ours, it is only fair that we make a concerted effort to improve our macroeconomic policy.

### The flip side, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 10 February<sup>9</sup>

Reports that the government is contemplating to bring a mini-budget and has agreed to the IMF conditionalities of imposing around Rs800 billion in taxes is unnerving. *There isn't much space to opt for such draconian measures and that too at the pretext of passing on the load to the common man in the form of rise in tariffs and levies in the energy sector, when inflation is all time high hovering at 45%.* This sordid tale has lived with us for long even when we were in the IMF programme. The question is: has it made any difference on the lives of the common man, or led to proactive development? The simple reply is 'No.' Thus, what is needed is a new paradigm as the current prism of looking at the economy is myopic. The HRW has made a pertinent point. Society as a whole is in need of special attention to mitigate the disaster inflicted on it in the form of debt-burden and a non-development premised elite-catering budget. Poverty in Pakistan has risen

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<sup>8</sup><https://dailytimes.com.pk/1058005/troubles-continue/>

<sup>9</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2400326/the-flip-side>



rapidly in the last two decades, and with a bulging youth population, sentiments of dissent cannot be kept under the lid for long. Time for advancing economic rights in all sincerity. The Fund should stop behaving as Sherlock Holmes.

**Debt and dictates**, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 February<sup>10</sup>

The subsidiary finance bill laid before a joint sitting of both the houses of parliament is a precipice to disaster. Compelled under the dictates of the International Monetary Fund, the beleaguered coalition government believes that it has no recourse but to tax the masses, and keep on buffering up the revenue. That is neither a viable option, nor is it going to be a feasible one as inflation soars to an all-time high and the rupee defaced under the might of the greenback. *The crucial tax amendment bill primarily a mini-budget aimed at raising at least Rs170 billion was earlier scheduled to be bulldozed as an Ordinance, but its shooting down by the Presidency has landed it in the maneuvered straits of the parliament.* To what extent will it salvage the economic order, even if it is legislated, and revive a stalled loan programme is up for debate. This module of borrow and adjust is untenable. It has neither worked in the past, nor is it going to work now. Of course, this is not our first programme with the IMF, as a last resort lender. We have been with the global lender now for decades. Unless we harness our resources to make up for the budget deficit, and tap the generosity of the diaspora and investors and that too on a sound-footing of legislative economic security we will remain in the quagmire of debt and dictation. *The methodology of taxing the lower and middle strata with money bills will soon become a politically counter-productive exercise. The least we can do is to instantly create a pool of manpower talent in various vocations in demand abroad and ship them out. It will have a telling positivity on coffers. Time to stop, and rethink.*

**IMF's advice**, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 21 February<sup>11</sup>

The IMF lead person has done some plain-talking. Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva took no qualms in saying that the rich in Pakistan should be taxed adequately, and the poor be cushioned from the side-effects of conditionalities from the lender. There can't be two opinions over it. It goes without saying that there is an elite capture in the country, and subsequently all policies are driven in a way that the common man is made to pay for the luxuries of a section of society that feels itself absolved of liabilities and responsibilities. Likewise, whatever taxation comes the way of aristocrats and the well-to-do is audaciously passed on to the consumers on the receiving end. Surely, this paradigm of budgeting is untenable. *While Islamabad irons out a renewed deal with the*

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<sup>10</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2401560/debt-and-dictates>

<sup>11</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2402231/imfs-advice>

*Fund to seek a tranche of \$1.2 billion, and has already vetted a mini-budget of new taxes to the tune of Rs170 billion, Georgieva's advice must fall on its ears. Allocating subsidies for those who really need it is indispensable. Likewise, off and on raising the tariff in the energy and petroleum sectors has proven to be counter-productive. Let's tax a wider section of the rich who are aloof, and bring the informal economy into the tax net. From land wielders to progressive industrialists and real estate, none are appropriately taxed. Some holy cows should go the abattoir's way!*

**Pakistan's Economy Won't 'Stabilise' Unless Ruling Elites Give up Privileges Editorial, *The Friday Times*, 22 February<sup>12</sup>**

*Pakistan's economic crisis poses a great challenge for a coalition government struggling to keep the country afloat. The country's foreign exchange reserves lurk around \$3 billion, barely enough to finance 18 days of imports. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is expected to sign off on yet another bailout package for Pakistan. This may provide temporary reprieve for the dollar starved economy, but with external debt piling up fast, and payment obligations of \$20 billion to be made by December 2023, it seems that even the IMF tranche would not substantially assuage concerns over Pakistan's balance of payments. The Parliament has approved a bill levying taxes and excise duties to meet the IMF condition of mobilizing an additional Rs 170 billion of additional tax revenues. The bulk of this revenue will come through the applicable sales tax rate, a type of an indirect tax, which has been increased from 17% to 18%. Concurrently, the government has also implemented a price hike in petroleum products, to contain the flow of runaway circular debt in the energy sector. The antidotes to the current crises are well known: improving and expanding the tax system, mobilization of domestic and foreign investment which has been trapped below 15% of GDP, and fixing the energy sector that is a major source of the ballooning circular debt. *Pakistan will have to focus on privatizing loss-making public sector enterprises that accumulated losses of more than Rs. 1 trillion each year. The time has also come to open up the subject of rationalizing the defence expenditure. Undertaking reforms and cutting down such wasteful expenditures requires a national policy agenda that has the buy-in of all political stakeholders, including the military.* Big political players – the ruling PDM alliance and former PM Imran Khan – are desperate to incarcerate and politically eliminate each other. As the 1990s remind us, such intense political conflict does not lead to stability vital for a policy consensus.*

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<sup>12</sup><https://www.thefridaytimes.com/2023/02/21/pakistan-economy-wont-stabilize-unless-the-elites-give-up-their-privileges/>

## SECURITY SITUATION

**Exterminate terrorism**, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 06 February<sup>13</sup>

*The peoples' rising firewall against terrorism is a welcome development. Rallies across K-P against the surge in terrorism and the call for exterminating the non-state actors' nexus is now the pulse of the nation. It is a good omen that the people are taking a stand and making themselves felt on the streets.* This negates the impression that people are sympathetic to calls for jihad and are aware of their rights. It also categorically conveys the message that people are skeptical to cross-border interference in Pakistan and do not support militarisation. The mass pouring out of people in multiple regions of K-P, and elsewhere, is a sign of civil society's conscious decision to nip the terror in the bud. The K-P province in particular, and the country in general, has witnessed several terrorist incidents. *The Peshawar mosque bombing on January 30 was an indication that terror groups are amassing themselves and want to bleed the nation once again. The rallies are calling for a proactive and offensive strategy, wherein the armed forces in collaboration with civil authorities were successful in flushing out the terror elements.* But that episode of success seems to be half-lived, as there are sleeping cells and splinter elements all around the country, and the same are in need of being ruthlessly crushed.

**Terrorism: need for an exit strategy**, Dr. Moonis Ahmar, *The Express Tribune*, 08 February<sup>14</sup>

*Terrorism is a double-edged sword, which targets not only innocent people but also destabilizes a society. Although the recent suicide attack at a mosque in Peshawar's red zone was not of the same scale as the terrorist attack at Army Public School (APS) in 2014, it was still a horrific incident.* Countless lives could have been saved had there been a plausible and effective exit strategy from the menace of terrorism in Pakistan. After every terrorist incident, the state responds with pledges and action plans, APEX committee meetings and All-Parties' Conference but fails to rein in those groups who are responsible for plunging Pakistan into violence and terrorism. Efforts such as the National Action Plan or the creation of the National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) Pakistan have failed to yield any results. We must learn the lessons from previous acts of terrorism and prevent security lapses and show zero tolerance towards those who justify the use of violence. Had the state of Pakistan not given space to groups and political parties using Islam for political purposes, the country would have been safe from terrorism. *Finally, an exit strategy from terrorism requires a holistic and multidimensional approach. Law enforcement agencies, judiciary, and political parties*

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<sup>13</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2399550/exterminate-terrorism-1>

<sup>14</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2399908/terrorism-need-for-an-exit-strategy>

*must adopt professional counter-terrorism strategies. But how can there be a paradigm shift in counter-terrorism when incompetence, corruption and lack of accountability remain a stark reality in state institutions? When the system of prosecution is weak and terrorists are not awarded harsh and timely punishment by courts? In this situation, how can one expect the elimination of terrorism from the country?*

**Taliban-TTP nexus, Editorial, Dawn, 17 February<sup>15</sup>**

Where Pakistan's security is concerned, there were warnings all along that the Afghan Taliban would do little to rein in the TTP, and these findings only confirm those fears. While Pakistan's options may be limited, it needs to firmly let the Taliban rulers know that hosting and supporting a group visibly hostile to this country will have far-reaching implications. For one, Pakistan should stop defending Kabul's rulers at international fora unless they clean up their act. *Moreover, while times may indeed be tough, the state needs to make it clear that the TTP and other terrorists trying to harm Pakistan will be dealt with severely on the battlefield. Also, Pakistan should coordinate with regional states to communicate to Kabul that terrorists cannot find a safe haven on Afghan soil.* Russia, China, Iran and the Central Asian states are all wary of terrorist groups finding refuge in Afghanistan, and Pakistan needs to use regional platforms to let the Taliban know that either they can neutralise the terrorists, or face further isolation.

**Kabul visit, Editorial, Dawn, 24 February<sup>16</sup>**

One of the major reasons behind the recent spate of TTP violence is that besides having fighters and facilitators within Pakistan, the terrorist group has a comfortable refuge in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan. In fact, as per recent reports, the regime in Kabul is unwilling to end its support for the TTP, with the banned group's violent anti-Pakistan posture finding backers within the Afghan public as well as the Taliban elite. Yet efforts are being made by Pakistan to change this situation; a high-powered delegation visited Kabul on Wednesday to press home the point to the Taliban leadership. *The delegation, which included the defence minister and the ISI chief, has apparently convinced the Taliban's upper echelon to act against the banned TTP. Officials told this paper that the Pakistani side communicated this desire in unambiguous terms.* According to a Foreign Office handout, both sides agreed to "effectively address the threat of terrorism", including the TTP and IS-K threat. Pakistan needs to keep up the pressure and remind the Taliban of the commitments recently made in Kabul. The fact is that counterterrorism efforts in Pakistan will have only limited impact if the TTP or other terrorists are able to freely move back and forth between this country and Afghanistan.

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1737581/taliban-ttp-nexus>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1738859/kabul-visit>

### **The endless wisdom of terror and riot, Imtiaz Alam, Jang, 05 February<sup>17</sup>**

*The suicide bomb attack at the Peshawar police lines in which more than 100 were killed has signaled that religious terrorism has once again raised its head in Pakistan. What would be worse for the security state of a country based on Islamic ideology? The devastation caused by the jihadi strategy that has been going on for forty years appears. Even after the massacre of Army Public School children in 2014, their killers could be brought back to wreak havoc again: the National Action Plan (NAP) was framed to with consensus but only three people, former premier Imran Khan, Gen. Qamar Bajwa and Lt. Gen. Faiz Hameed stopped the plan and resumed talks with the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Can anyone interrogate these people? Even those who brought the hybrid system cannot be questioned. So what if the All Parties Conference and Parliament will do it? How can the powerful circles who played the trumpets on the Afghan Taliban's return to Kabul forget that the TTP would adopt the same successful strategy in Pakistan after the success of the Afghan Taliban? Those who raised their voice for peace were simultaneously subjected to state repression and terrorists' bullets were arrested. One of their members, National Assembly Ali Wazir, is still incarcerated, despite being released on bail in several cases. The NAP needs to be reviewed. Also, it is necessary to review all the negative consequences of forty years of Jihadi state policy and its ideological and social implications. It should also be evaluated why the NAP and the institutions formed under it, including NECTA and Intelligence Directorate, could not work. The extent to which Pakistan has been ideologically Talibanized is terrifying. The real question is to determine whether Pakistan is a religious state or a national state.*

### **Privatization of national assets: National interests should be the priority, Editorial, Nawabi-Waqt, 08 February<sup>18</sup>**

*Talks between Pakistani officials with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) review mission have entered a decisive phase, in which policy measures will be set to meet the deficit target with taxation, privatization, and improvement of the power sector. The talks will continue till February 9. The IMF has demanded the privatization of two power plants and steel mills in the power sector. According to the demand, Haveli Bahadur Shah and Balloki power plants should be privatized by June. The IMF will decide on the plan to privatize the power plants. Apart from this, it is also proposed to increase excise duty on air travel, drinks and cigarettes. In the negotiations, the IMF has also demanded to*

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<sup>17</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/361977%22>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.nawabiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2023-02-08/page-5>

*increase in the general sales tax from 17 to 18 percent. On the other hand, regarding the economic situation of Pakistan, the leading British journal "Financial Times" has written in a report that Pakistan is on the verge of collapse. Nuclear power and its creditors are taking drastic measures to avoid default.* The country's currency has fallen badly. At the end of last month, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves dropped to just \$3.7 billion. As a result of the financial problems and difficulties that Pakistan is currently facing and the challenges facing the national economy, every coming day is causing problems. The International Monetary Fund is also imposing stricter conditions before the payment of the last instalment of the loan. Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif himself had to admit this. Now this institution has proposed to privatize Pakistan's national assets. In the past, many companies have been sold at throwaway prices and now there is a demand for the privatization of steel mills and two power plants. After which there may be a demand for the privatization of other assets. This situation is worrisome. The government will have to put the national interest first before taking any step despite all the pressure in this regard so that there is no harm or harm to the country's security.

#### **Difficulties in elections, Editorial, Jang, 10 February<sup>19</sup>**

*The holding of provincial elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has become an inevitable constitutional requirement. The President has also urged the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in his letter to immediately announce the date of the said elections.* However, many difficulties exist and to find a solution for the same the guidance of the Supreme Court may be needed. *Until and unless its thinking and behavior are fully compatible with democratic values, Pakistan would find itself surrounded by difficulties.* The issue of holding by-elections in 93 constituencies of the National Assembly was a hot issue till Wednesday morning. After the suspension of the Election Commission's order to de-notify 43 NA members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Pakistan (PTI) by Justice Shahid Karim of Lahore High Court, the way for these MNAs to return to the National Assembly has been paved. *The difficulty regarding holding the provincial elections of the Punjab and KP assemblies and the by-elections of 43 seats of the NA seats rose when the Ministry of Defense, Ministry of Finance and the Judiciary excused themselves for lack of security personnel and money required for the elections.* The Ministry of Defense says that the army is engaged in internal security, and cannot give personnel for election duty. The Ministry of Finance says that given the economic crisis, the demand for additional supplementary grants is not possible. The registrar of the Lahore High Court told the Election Commission in a letter that more than thirteen lakh

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<sup>19</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/366175%22>

cases are pending in Punjab. Providing judicial officers will increase the pendency of cases. The situation is difficult. It becomes more difficult on the occasions of municipal and other elections. *When elections are held in democratic countries, there are both permanent and temporary arrangements for them with complete planning. From where will the manpower be provided, what will be the arrangements for staff training, what will be the security arrangements, etc. all is planned in advance.*

### **Mini budget, Editorial, Jang, 16 February<sup>20</sup>**

By the time these lines would be read, it is hoped that the Supplementary Finance Bill 2023 (also called the Mini Budget) would have come into effect after the approval of the Parliament. That would clear the way for the issuance of the tranche of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which is important for the country's economy. *The decision to convene the meeting of the two houses of the parliament on the evening of 15 February was taken after the meeting of Federal Finance Minister Ishaq Dar with President Arif Alvi. The meeting was held in order to implement the financial measures according to the instructions of the IMF.* The president had refused on 15 February to immediately issue the financial ordinance made on IMF terms. The president had suggested to the finance minister that it would be appropriate to take the parliament into confidence on the issue of generating new taxes of PKR170 billion. After the President's alleged refusal, the Federal Cabinet meeting held under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved the Supplementary Finance Bill 2023 which was to be discussed in both houses of the parliament on 16 February. According to the observers, efforts were made to initiate financial measures by February 15 and the government had planned to introduce "tax measures" and "non-tax measures" to raise PKR170 billion. *People would be waiting for the holding of the meeting of the parliament. The hopes of the people are tied to the ambitions expressed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his address to the federal cabinet meeting on 15 February. The premier said in his address that simplicity and frugality on a large scale at the government level are being adopted. He said that Pakistan could be able to overcome economic difficulties by staying within its sources of income.* It should be expected that the prime minister's efforts will be fruitful. After its release the IMF tranche will be fully utilized for the improvement and stability of the country's economy.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/371476>

### **When will Pakistan make its budget by itself? Editorial, Jang, 17 February<sup>21</sup>**

*Given the developments regarding the mini-budget or supplementary finance bill on February 15, the question is being asked: when would Pakistan design its budget by itself? It has been a practice of decades that once the yearly balance sheet comes out in May or June, in a few days after that the prices of petrol, electricity or gas are increased. For the last 75 years Islamabad has time and again visited the International Monetary Fund (IMF). All this means is that there is a need for some reforms in the way the country is being run. On the evening of February 15, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar while presenting the supplementary finance bill in both houses of Parliament, suggested that a national commission should be formed to examine the causes of economic decline in the country during the last four years (During Imran Khan's premiership). He reiterated that all political parties should work together to develop a national economic agenda that would continue despite changes in governments. On both proposals all parties in and outside the government should pay serious attention. It would be better if the review of the commission is of a general nature. For decades it has been said that the reason for many decisions and putting the burden on the people was due to the conditions of the IMF and austerity measures. But there have been no serious long-term measures to curb fundamentals such as cabinet size and unproductive government spending. On the contrary news about valuable items reaching the homes of influential people and beyond to the market at nominal prices from the treasury of gifts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also came to light.*

### **Dasu Dam- a big success! Editorial, Jang, 21 February<sup>22</sup>**

*The shortage of electricity and the high cost of electricity have been one of the main causes of Pakistan's economic crisis. This makes industrial and agricultural production more expensive, making it difficult to compete globally. The cheapest way to generate electricity is hydroelectricity. For this dams are constructed on the rivers. At the moment, work is going on three major projects, Diamer Bhasha Dam, Mohmand Dam and Dasu Hydropower Project. The Dasu Hydropower Project is under construction in cooperation with China in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). It is the largest national project of electricity generation. After completing it, 4320 MW of electricity would be generated. The project was supposed to be completed in the year 2023-24, but due to land acquisition hurdles, the Corona epidemic and the attack on the bus carrying Chinese officials to the project site, the work was delayed and now its completion is scheduled for 2026. Spokesman*

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<sup>21</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/372101>

<sup>22</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/375559%22>



*WAPDA shared good news that the Dasu Power Project has crossed an important milestone by being able to divert water from the Indus River. Spokesperson of WAPDA said, after the completion of the temporary dam, the construction of the main dam would begin.* The second project to the diversion tunnel would be completed by mid-April and the Indus River will pass through both the diversions. According to WAPDA, the first phase of the project will start generating electricity in 2026. The current government and all relevant authorities and institutions are to be congratulated for achieving this important success despite the difficult conditions and difficult challenges faced by the country.

**Pak delegation in Kabul, Editorial, *Jang*, 24 February<sup>23</sup>**

*Defense Minister Khawaja Asif led a high level Pakistani delegation paid an important visit to Afghanistan on 22 February. The delegation discussed the growing threat of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Daesh Khorasan, counter-terrorism, and border security cooperation in the region in particular with the senior leadership of the Afghan Interim Government.* In the discussion trade, regional ties and promotion of economic cooperation were also emphasized. The delegation included, apart from the Minister of Defence, DG ISI Lt. Gen. Nadeem Anjum, and Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed. *The delegation gave a clear message to Afghan Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar Akhund and other senior leaders that the banned TTP present in Afghanistan should be reined in. The Afghan Taliban pledged cooperation with Pakistan over the concerns about the presence of TTP on Afghan soil.* The TTP carried out 28 attacks in its latest spree of attacks in Pakistan. The delegation presented evidence that these attacks were planned and directed by the TTP leadership based in Afghanistan. The visit was paid to Kabul in the wake of the attack on the police headquarters in Karachi. Earlier, about 100 people were killed in a suicide blast in a mosque in Peshawar. There is some tension between Pakistan and Afghanistan on the Torkham border these days. The Afghan authorities have closed the main border crossing with Pakistan. Afghan Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Baradar urged that political and security concerns should not impact economic affairs. However, Pakistan has linked this proposal to alleviating the concerns of TTP's presence in Afghanistan.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/378475>

## ELECTRONIC MEDIA

**Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Will Pakistan give it back to the TTP & how?** *Geo News*, 31 January<sup>24</sup>

A day after 100 people perished in Peshawar, lawmakers at the federal legislature regretted the decision to enter into dialogue with militants and resettle them in the country during the previous PTI regime, calling it a “faulty” move which was “never endorsed” by parliament. *Meanwhile, the bombing resonated in Senate as well where lawmakers urged the need to revisit the counter-terrorism and Afghan policies. PPP leader Raza Rabbani demanded a new consensus as he called out the former government for its plan to rehabilitate the banned TTP.* The senator regretted that “good Taliban” had been allowed to cross into Pakistan along with arms. Hamid Mir pointed out that the current government is facing criticism from within the party itself. In this episode Hamid Mir asked how should Pakistan answer back the TTP after Peshawar attack, land or air bombings. **Guests:** Musadiq Malik-PML-N, Mosharraf Zaidi-Journalist/Analysts & Shoiab Shaheen-head Islamabad high court bar. **Musadiq Malik** pointed out that the PTI trying to play all the tricks in the book and trying hard for an early elections. The moment Imran Khan left government he made bad decisions to add to the economic crisis of the country. The problem is that the PTI is trying to find fault in all the policies of the government. **Mosharraf Zaidi** pointed out that the Sharif’s of London have miscalculated badly, but the costs of the miscalculation and the disas-Dar being unleashed on the economy are not going to be borne by them. *Nor will the costs be borne by the PPP, their partners in the perplexing, disappointing, and historically inept coalition that governs Pakistan today. In a different country, with a different military and political elite, one could look forward to a new era of politics, featuring the lessons learned over the last six years.* Sadly, the grip of a calcified and entrenched military, bureaucratic, and political elite is far too strong in Pakistan. Despite the disaster of Dar as finance minister for the fourth time, little will change here other than names. *The attacks on mosque in Peshawar should be blamed on Establishment, intelligence and government who are responsible for assessing threats and avert such incidents.* **Shoiab Shaheen** underlined that the IMF can help Pakistan from the default but it cannot save the economy of the country. How will you run a country with three billion dollar? This government is trying its best to take the country towards disaster. It is not right to say if there is no election in ninety days in Punjab and KP, article 6 should be applied. But the point is that the ECP has not given any date for election as yet.

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iPQIv9cmYeQ>

**On The Front with Kamran Shahid, Imran Khan calls on volunteers to register for 'Jail Bharo Tehreek'? *Dunya News*, 07 February<sup>25</sup>**

The country does not seem to be marching towards early elections any time soon as was hoped by PTI. It looks like the pressure tactics of Imran Khan and PTI are not working and instead the government is putting pressure on the PTI by arresting its members and also contemplating to arrest Imran Khan soon in the disguise of cases. *Apparently running out of options to press the PML-N led government to hold elections in the two provinces Punjab and KP Imran Khan has announced a Jail Bharo Tehreek (court arrest drive), and has appealed its workers to register for the movement.* Imran Khan also underlined that this will be a peaceful movement and announce a date soon, but the analyst asked *will this jail bharo Tehreek take Imran Khan himself towards jail or he be able to cash his popularity and result in early elections?* **Guests:** Musadiq Malik-PML-N; Ali Mohammad Khan-PTI; Hafeezullah Ali Niyazi-analyst. *Musadiq Malik* when asked how will the PML-N counter the jail bharo movement of Imran Khan, Malik replied *that jail baro ka jawab jail se he hoga*, the time the PTI announce the movement we will ready all the jails and accommodate all the PTI workers and leaders, we have enough space. If they want to truly want to start the movement why the PTI is now asking to conduct *elections in Punjab in 90 days*, why are they using pressure tactics again. It is the role of the election commission to announce dates for elections in Punjab and everything should take place according to the constitution. *Ali Mohammad Khan* pointed out that Imran Khan has always struggled according to law and again we are bringing the new movement within the law, only public will decide if Imran Khan is right or wrong. He underlined that according to constitution there is nothing like federal and provincial elections should not take place at one time. *Voluntary arrest* is under constitution and our leadership will go first to present themselves for arrest peacefully, we will not break any laws. *Hafeezullah Ali Niyazi* pointed out the way the PTI tried to stop their members from been arrested till now speaks volumes and now they are talking about voluntary arrests. He said that Imran Khan has no idea about the nitty gritty of the constitution, for example where it is written that politicians should ask for help from establishment to come in power, Imran Khan has done this. They have till now done two long marches, dissolved assemblies in two provinces and now jail bharo Tehreek. *These will not result in any fresh elections despite give reasons for the government to push away elections due to law and order situation that will created by the jail bharo movement. This will not be peaceful at all and develop internal security crisis.*

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsrKcKhvfpQ>

**On The Front with Kamran Shahid, Imran Khan finally reports to the court amid gathering of his supporters? *Dunya News*, 20 February<sup>26</sup>**

At last the PTI chief Imran Khan reported to the Lahore high court on Monday 20 February 2023 after making the high court wait for hours and set multiple deadlines for him to report physically. Once the PTI chief reached the court premises, a number of his supporters had gathered around him. *The PTI posted for his supporters on social media to report to Lahore high. The Lahore High Court (LHC) granted PTI chief Imran Khan protective bail until March 3 in a case related to PTI protestors' alleged rioting and clashes with Islamabad police in October in the aftermath of his disqualification by the Election Commission of Pakistan in the Toshakhana reference.* His plea for bail in another case which was also registered in Islamabad and pertained to protests outside the office of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was disposed of after the ex-premier withdrew his petition. Another big development the host underlined is the announcement of provincial elections by President Arif Alvi on the dictation of Imran Khan and by doing so he has broken all the legal and constitutional rules and laws. He did not prove to be the unbiased above the party affiliation (PTI) President. *Guests:* Justice retired Saliq Hashmi; Ali Mohammad Khan-PTI & Arshad Bhatti-Senior Analyst. *Saliq Hashmi* when asked if it is the mandate of the President to announce the date of provincial elections he replied according to the section 57 it is mentioned that the President shall announce the date of election in consultation with the election commission of Pakistan (ECP). *The ECP can change or alter the dates accordingly any time and it is the duty of the ECP to conduct the elections. The President cannot decide a date for the elections and the way Arif Alvi has announced the date it is done in a way as if he has power, which he has not.* The ECP can ignore his call for elections. If it is mentioned that the elections should take place within 90 days of dissolution of the legislative assemblies, then the ECP must do it. Otherwise the political parties can go to court against the ECP. It looks like there are different rules for Imran Khan and common men in Pakistan, the way Imran Khan is playing hide and seek with court is just not uncalled for. *Ali Mohammad Khan* pointed out that despite all the threats and weak security protocol Imran Khan went to the court. He underlined it is the win of rule of law. *Imran Khan has not left the country but fighting his case within the system and his supporters have proven the love for Imran Khan by reporting at the court along with him.* He said that Nawaz Sharif should also come and report to the courts and fight his case within the country. *Arshad Bhatti* pointed out that it is true that President cannot announce the date of elections but what are the ECP and governors of Punjab and KP doing? It is there

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDPXu7jXpI>

responsibility to announce date and conduct the elections. If they are not able to perform their duties then they should leave their seats. This country is just for the powerful and the common people can hardly survive here as all the rules are for them and not for the powerful. Also how can there be a terrorism case against an ex PM? This is just revenge politics.

### **Talk Shock, Imran Khan is likely to come to Islamabad? Why he is under threat? 26 February<sup>27</sup>**

The journalists Umar Cheema and Azaz Syed talked about Imran Khan's appearance before the Islamabad Banking Court and why the court dates of 28 February and 3 March 2023 are significant for his future political career. They also talk about the government's attempts to acquire evidence to arrest Imran Khan and advance the legal charges against him, as well as the reasons why they were unsuccessful in arresting him. Imran Khan had been summoned to appear before a banking court in Islamabad on February 28 in relation to a case concerning banned funding under the Foreign Exchange Act. Khan was accused by the Federal Investigation Agency of receiving suspicious bank accounts under the provisions of the Foreign Exchange Act. The FIA opened probe against Imran Khan after the Election Commission of Pakistan ruled that his party had in fact received money illegally from other countries. The court's decision today is significant for Khan since the investigation agency claimed that he was exploiting his earlier bail order and was not cooperating with it about investigations. Cheema pointed out that this might result in the court case taking longer, and Khan would continue to wage legal fights in court while his adversaries would continue buying time. Given that Khan's adversaries are putting up legal and court proceedings to have him ruled ineligible, today's court ruling will determine Khan's future political prospects. On 3 March, Khan will appear in court again. This court case is related to his alleged concealment of the existence of his illegitimate daughter, Tyrian White. *Imran Khan is charged with purposefully omitting to declare his daughter Tyrian White in the appropriate columns of his nomination papers and affidavit. Khan claimed that the petition asking for his disqualification from contesting elections for allegedly 'concealing' his supposed daughter in his nomination papers is untenable on legal grounds; it should therefore be dismissed.* The petition was not maintainable as per Khan because he was no longer a member of the National Assembly. Syed stated that Imran Khan's legal team has poor sources and that the matter may result in his disqualification. Additionally, he claimed that Imran Khan's adversaries wanted to keep him embroiled in legal disputes because the Tyrian White issue is serious and he

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F01GfNer93A>

might be barred from standing for office for the ensuing five years. In response to Ayaz's inquiry on the likelihood of Imran Khan's arrest, Cheema added that government has decided against doing so. The government believes that Khan already has a number of difficulties that he is litigating in various courts, therefore they want to keep Khan involved in legal disputes. Second, Khan's critics think he will continue to make errors that may lead to his incarceration, but the government does not want to put him in jail because doing so might increase his popularity. The government believe that Khan will unavoidably be detained for good reason as a result of his mistakes and legal run-ins. Khan's future political career according to both the analysts will be significantly impacted by the results of these two lawsuits. They also discussed the potential and real risks to Khan's life, particularly those posed by the religious groups.

## BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

*(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)*

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
<b>Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</b>				
Lakki Marwat <sup>28</sup>	08/02/2023	12 TTP terrorists killed	12	00
<b>Balochistan</b>				
Quetta <sup>29</sup>	16/02/2023	At least one killed in Jaffer Express blast	01	08

<sup>28</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2400041/12-ttp-terrorists-killed>

<sup>29</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2401506/at-least-one-killed-in-jaffer-express-blast>