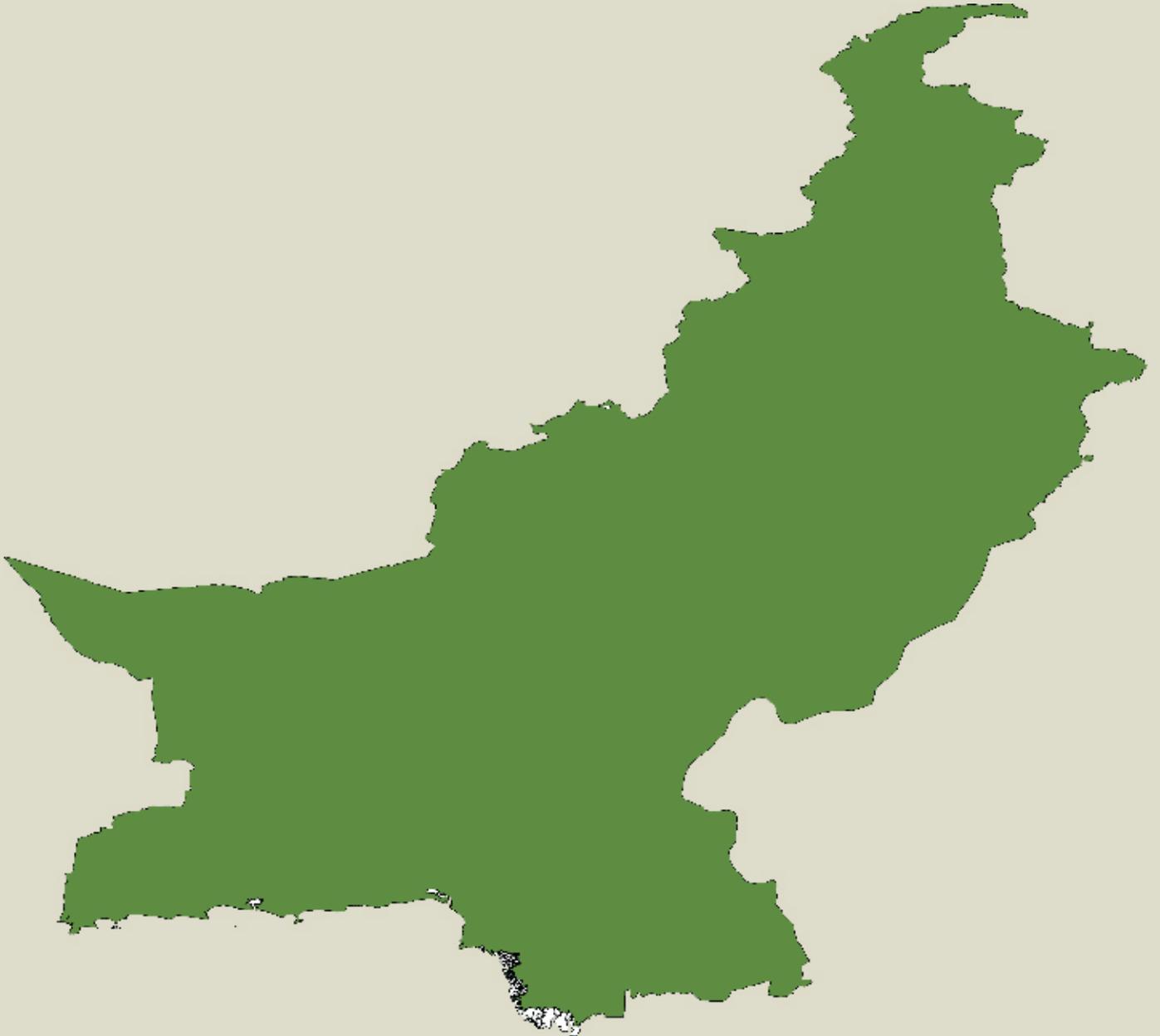


JANUARY 2020

# PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



*Prepared by*  
*Dr. Zainab Akhter*  
*Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir*  
*Dr. Mohammad Eisa*  
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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE  
STUDIES & ANALYSES  
रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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**INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES**

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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, January 2020

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## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

### **NAB Ordinance in Parliament, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 01 January<sup>1</sup>**

*Earlier, both PPP and PML-N governments failed to fix them, and the credit goes to Prime Minister Imran Khan for taking the initiative.* When the government came up with a surprise move on NAB laws last week, it soon generated controversy when it retreated on its earlier draft and within a day reissued a revised ordinance. The new NAB ordinance is business friendly and ends the collision course between NAB and tax related departments. The move to convene sessions of the two houses in haste, however, has not gone well with the opposition. *The government's strategy, if any, to take the opposition by surprise will backfire given opposition's ability to maneuver the debate to their advantage.* Opposition members come up with arguments in their parliamentary speeches, laced with technical as well as political rhetoric, whereas the treasury mostly relies on its old anti-status quo line. The treasury may find it hard to justify the convening of the houses on a day's notice, when law makers from across the country may not be able to arrive on time because of fog. Also, senators will demand an explanation from the government for convening the house when the opposition requisitioned it a day before. The Senate is going to meet after a gap of 124 days, whereas under Article 54 of the Constitution, the president might from time to time summon either house or both houses of parliament. The government must seek guidance of parliament on important issues to have public representatives' voices for greater unity and pro-public legislation.

### **PML-N's choice, Editorial, *Dawn*, 14 January<sup>2</sup>**

*The PML-N appears to have taken a strategic decision to abandon the path of confrontation with the establishment and opt for the reconciliation route. There has been no formal announcement in this regard, but actions, and indeed silence, speak louder than words.* The fuzzy remarks of PML-N parliamentarians and the studious silence of the top party leadership were both commandeered in the service of the party's vote in favour of the bill on the extension of the services chiefs. The open and unambiguous support for the bill took everyone — including the party rank and file — by surprise. Since then, the leadership has faced a deluge of criticism from its supporters and derision from its opponents. Did the party miscalculate and make a mistake? This may

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<sup>1</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/530999/nab-ordinance-in-parliament/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1528190/pml-ns-choice>

not necessarily be the case. For instance, a report in this paper, based on conversations with some PML-N leaders, says the strategic shift is a well-considered policy aimed at mending fences with the establishment in order to chart a path back to power. The leadership has reportedly told party colleagues that the shift from resistance to reconciliation will reap rich political dividends for the PML-N and not result in much damage in the long run. *In all cases, Shahbaz Sharif's long-held view seems to have prevailed, and he is the man holding the steering wheel. The PML-N has made its choice. Every choice has consequences that carry risks and rewards.*

### **Boot theatrics, Editorial, Dawn, 16 January<sup>3</sup>**

*Just when political observers thought that PTI maverick Faisal Vawda could not pull another rabbit out of his hat, he pulled out a boot instead. Then he placed it on the table, live on TV. As if this weren't enough, he declared that the PML-N and PPP — whose representatives were sitting next to him in the studio — were licking this boot. The military-style boot stayed put on the table, as did Mr Vawda and the show host in the studio. The opposition guests, however, did not. They walked off the set in disgust. By his theatrics, Mr Vawda embarrassed the guests, the host, his party, politicians in general, the military and ordinary citizens. The only person he did not embarrass, apparently, was himself. It is true that the spirit of cooperation that moved bickering parties in parliament to sign into law the process of extending the tenure of military chiefs has been questioned — and justifiably so. But politicians can at least avail themselves of the momentum and work together on other public-oriented legislation. *The zero-sum attitude displayed by Mr Vawda, if allowed to run amok, will wreck all prospects of democracy's return to normal functioning.**

### **PTM condemns Manzoor Pashteen's arrest, announces countrywide protests, Inamullah Khattak, Dawn, 27 January<sup>4</sup>**

Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement (PTM) leaders and MNAs Mohsin Dawar and Ali Wazir on condemned the arrest of Manzoor Pashteen and said that instead of addressing the group's grievances, the state had resorted to arresting its leader. Dawar was addressing a press conference in Islamabad, hours after Pashteen was arrested from Peshawar's Shaheen Town. He was joined by Wazir, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) Senator Usman Kakar, politician Afrasiab Khattak and PPP's Farhatullah Babar. Dawar said that he had called the police to ask on what grounds Pashteen had been arrested but they did not give any reasons and refused to cooperate. *Terming the arrest as "abduction",*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1528613/boot-theatrics>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1530857/ptm-condemns-manzoor-pashteens-arrest-announces-countrywide-protests>

*Dawar said: "We think that Manzoor Pashteen has been arrested for the speech he delivered in Bannu in which he said he will gather all Pashtun leaders." He urged PTM workers to stay "peaceful like always" and announced that the group will hold protests across the country as well as abroad.*

## **ECONOMIC ISSUES**

### **Wheat flour crisis deepens amid blame game, Amir Wasim, Dawn, 19 January<sup>5</sup>**

Amid an unprecedented price hike, another crisis in the form of wheat flour shortage has hit people across the country while the government and other stakeholders pass on the buck to one another instead of taking the responsibility and finding a remedy. *The crisis, which has been looming for the past several months, became severe only a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan had issued orders to the provincial governments to play an active role in curbing food prices, profiteering and hoarding.* While the flour crisis equally hit all the four provinces and the federal capital, those at the helm of affairs politicized the issue with the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf-led federal and provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa blaming the Pakistan People's Party-ruled Sindh for wheat shortage. However, the Sindh government held the Centre responsible for the wheat crisis and subsequent increase in flour prices.

### **Pleading for revenue, Editorial, Dawn, 22 January<sup>6</sup>**

The prime minister's rhetoric is ineffectual for a variety of reasons. For one, his personal expenses are not really a factor in people's decision to file, or not file, their returns, or get their enterprises registered with the tax authorities. *Those expenses are miniscule, and besides, the prime minister's claim that he has slashed them does not hold up to scrutiny. Broadening the tax base is a policy matter and it is not going to happen via emotional appeals.* Mr Khan tried this approach all through the first months of his coming to power. By now, it should be obvious to him that begging, pleading, cajoling and demanding that people comply with the laws only signal a weakness. What is needed is a schedule of incentives and disincentives that is designed in a way to get people to step forward and get their businesses registered. The government has already accommodated all the traders' demands in an ordinance released in the final days of 2019, and now the time has come for it to demand that the trader community live up to its end of the bargain. What will be the cost of failure on

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1529238/wheat-flour-crisis-deepens-amid-blame-game>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1529778/pleading-for-revenue>

this front? Both the government and the trader community should know this clearly.

### **US on CPEC, Editorial, Dawn, 23 January<sup>7</sup>**

High-level engagements between the US and Pakistan on Tuesday resulted in some interesting outcomes. Meeting Prime Minister Imran Khan in Davos, President Donald Trump, who called Mr Khan his “friend”, said that Pakistan and the US had never been as close as they were now. But though this camaraderie is welcome, speaking in Islamabad, Alice Wells, the State Department’s senior official looking after the South Asia file, delivered yet another critique of CPEC. *Ms Wells made some very serious allegations, claiming that firms blacklisted by the World Bank had got CPEC contracts, adding that Pakistan was walking into a debt trap laid by China.* She also urged the government to be more “transparent” about the flagship scheme, described as a game changer by the state. *The Chinese embassy in Pakistan released a rejoinder to the American official’s criticism. While observing that Beijing would be “more than glad” to see the deepening of Pakistan-US ties, it dismissed the American criticism as “negative propaganda”.* It also pointedly asked what Washington had done for Pakistan. If Mr Trump really wants to take the bilateral relationship to new heights, then let the US offer this country trade, investment and assistance. Moreover, if Washington values Pakistan’s friendship, let it publicly back this country’s stance on India-held Kashmir, FATF and other critical matters.

### **Monetary policy, Editorial, Dawn, 30 January<sup>8</sup>**

There is no doubt that the economy is slowing sharply, investment is plummeting and unemployment coupled with inflation charging ahead. *For the first time this fiscal year, the State Bank has acknowledged that its growth target of 3.5pc “is likely to be revised downward”.* Until November the bank was hopeful that the growth target would be met. So the natural question arises: what has changed between November and January that makes it likely for the growth forecast to be revised downward? So if all this is the case, along with “a healthy increase” in tax revenue collections of 16pc and improved foreign exchange reserves, then why is the growth forecast being downgraded and why has inflation remained higher than expected? *In fact, the latest monetary policy statement gives the impression that the State Bank is trying to whitewash what is a rather dismal economic state of affairs.*

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1530024/us-on-cpec>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1531351/monetary-policy>

## SECURITY SITUATION

### **Iran nuclear deal, Editorial, Dawn, 07 January<sup>9</sup>**

*However, Iran's reaction to the provocation must be mature and keep the interests of its people in mind.* In case of a full-blown war, the Islamic Republic will have to face even greater hardships, something it cannot afford with an already enfeebled economy. Tehran has a right to respond and defend itself, but its actions must be proportionate and keep ground realities in mind. While Iran needs to reconsider its departure from the nuclear deal, the world community must do more to censure Mr Trump's reckless comments. *For example, his brash threat to target "52 Iranian sites [...] important to Iran & the Iranian culture" is beyond the pale. Does the US leader intend to target religious or historical sites in Iran?* If this is the case then — as Human Rights Watch and other observers have noted — it may constitute a war crime. This deeply disturbing notion is a far cry from what Mohammad Khatami, Iran's former president, once advocated in the form of the 'dialogue among civilizations'. Instead of dialogue, warmongers in Washington are preparing a casus belli against Iran based on very shaky foundations. Iran must resist this dangerous provocation and act with prudence.

### **Legislation on COAS's tenure, Editorial, Dawn, 08 December<sup>10</sup>**

*The opposition, which had initially objected to the "undue haste" with which the process was being conducted, meekly surrendered, taking back even the few amendments it had proposed in the bills.* One of them, that the parliamentary committee on national security be assigned a role in the reappointment of the services chiefs and chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff committee, was particularly worth considering. *A more broad-based civilian input in such decisions could have prevented the impression of a prime minister acting on a whim or out of personal compulsions.* With its blunderbuss approach to the question of Gen Bajwa's extension, which the ISPR has more than once asserted he was reluctant to accept, the PTI government dragged the military into a needless controversy. It can now heave a sigh of relief that the matter has resolved itself without a murmur of resistance in parliament. Sadly, the argument that institution-building is the best strategy for a stronger Pakistan has been indefinitely deferred.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1526757/iran-nuclear-deal>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1526974/legislation-on-coass-tenure>

**The passage of Army Act, Editorial, Daily Times, 09 January<sup>11</sup>**

The uninterrupted passage of the Army Act by the National Assembly and the Senate might be a matter of relief for the government as well as the army but a question begs an answer: if the government was to take the route of the parliament, which is a right approach, *why has it filed a judicial review for the Supreme Court's order regarding Army Chief Gen Qamar Bajwa's tenure? It shows the government's legal department is housing some confused minds. What will happen if the petition is dismissed or accepted?* The proceedings, however, negated the spirit of democracy as the house passed the bill in 20 minutes while dissenting voices from the Jamaat-i-Islami, the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-F and two independent legislators were not entertained. The top offices of the armed forces had long been governed by conventions. The bill also settles the appointment, and reappointment, of the COAS and naval and air force chiefs and more importantly the bills empower the prime minister to give extensions to the three services chiefs. The issue has been in talks for long and has seen many notifications, cabinet and defence committee approvals, judicial exercises and 'undue haste' by the treasury. The whole exercise leaves a question mark on the management ability and style of the government.

**Blasphemy laws need reforming not toughening, Nasir Saeed, Daily Times, 10 January<sup>12</sup>**

*Recently the Punjab Assembly unanimously passed a resolution asking the government to improve existing laws or make new ones to punish blasphemers more sternly. The resolution also calls for a central screening system, like that used in Saudi Arabia, to intercept blasphemous content on social media.* It seems they would prefer a surveillance state to the chance that someone could type something that might cause offence. The resolution suggests that the current blasphemy laws aren't being enforced properly. Some people, they claim, are committing blasphemy under the guise of freedom of expression. According to the resolution, blasphemous content is available online, while blasphemous books are being brought into the country. They seem unconcerned with the major problem with the laws as they stand. That the laws are being used as a tool for persecution and oppression, especially against the religious minorities. *That they can be used as an excuse to intimidate and threaten religious minorities and justify violent attacks and arson on their homes and places of prayer.* Though Pakistani politicians have completely

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<sup>11</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/535604/the-passage-of-army-act/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/536167/blasphemy-laws-need-reforming-not-toughening/>

failed to bring the issue of the misuse of the blasphemy laws to parliament, international human rights organisations seem more concerned and regularly raise their voices against the abusive implementation of this law.

**Quetta bleeds again, Editorial, Daily Times, 12 January<sup>13</sup>**

*Quetta bled for the second time in a week when a suicide bomber targeted a mosque in Satellite Town, leaving 15 people dead, including a deputy superintendent of police (DSP), and 19 others wounded.* Three days ago, a Frontier Corps (FC) vehicle came under a targeted attack in a busy market of the city. These back-to-back attacks have been claimed by Hizbul Ahrar and its coalition in terror Islamic State. The mosque is the part of the adjacent seminary in Ghousabad which is patronised by prominent cleric Sheikh Hakimullah. The law enforcement agencies have yet to ascertain the motives behind the attack. If the pattern is analysed, the Satellite Town mosque bombing can be linked to the Kuchlaq mosque explosion in September. Kuchlak gained notoriety when clerics associated with the Afghan Taliban came under attack within days. Of them, one deceased was later identified as Afghan Taliban Chief Haibatullah Akhundzada's brother, an Afghan citizen. The Kuchlak area has also seen attacks on FC personnel. *The attacks seem to be the outcome of internal fighting of militants' ranks in Afghanistan. The clerics falling prey to bombings have been associated with militants in one way or another. It is time for law enforcement agencies to do whatever is needed flush out these terrorists once and for all.*

**US intervention in FATF matters, Editorial, Daily Times, 20 January<sup>14</sup>**

As the crucial meeting on Pakistan's future about the Financial Action Task Force is drawing closer, the government seeks Washington's intervention to get it off the grey list of the forum which observes global money laundering and terror financing. *Under the prevailing circumstances, US intervention can rescue Pakistan from any future FATF fury. In the world of no free lunches, as the Pakistan Peoples' Party suggested, Pakistan should attach its role in the ongoing US-Taliban dialogue with the matter.* Pakistan has done a great deal of help to the US by bringing the reluctant Taliban to the negotiating table. Moreover, it is the time to remind US officials of their president's word that they would like to see Pakistan off the FATF gray list. Other than diplomatic help, the government should keep pursuing its fight against money laundering and terror financing, which are mostly about banned groups and proscribed persons. Pakistan has taken several measures, sharing them with FATF officials time to time. *Mostly, the world body is concerned about the nature of actions taken against seminaries affiliated with banned organisations or proscribed*

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<sup>13</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/537492/quetta-bleeds-again-daily-times/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/542591/us-intervention-in-fatf-matters/>

*persons. Though the government has initiated lawsuits against banned outfits and proscribed people, litigation is moving at a snail's pace because of poor prosecution.* The government must take decisive steps against banned outfits not to satisfy the world body but for its own interest.

## URDU MEDIA

### **JUI-F mulls to re-start its march, Report, Ummat, 02 January<sup>15</sup>**

December has passed. But there has been no change in regard to the setup which was promised to the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-(F). *Ummat* tried to contact some JUI-F leaders. *They said everything was going fine until the issue of extension to the army chief came up. They said that though the process has been delayed but we are in touch. If the promises are not kept, the JUI-F may march again towards Islamabad.* JUI-F has been giving clear signals that there would be change in the Government setup according to which there a temporary setup for three months and new elections in March 2020. *According to the sources from JUI-F, it was decided that either there would be within change in which Prime Minister Imran Khan would be sent packing. There were two ways. One, a new Prime Minister would be appointed with new setup and then in March new elections. Second was the current government would have been sent packing and new temporary government would have been formed that would have supervised the new elections.* It was decided that army would not stay inside the polling booths. Leaders of the JUI-F said that though December has passed but the party is not disappointed. They believe that the promises would be kept. *They can wait only till March. They said that they can resume protests in March. The presence of the opposition parties, like PML-N and PPP was nominal in the last protest, the leaders said. They would be invited again, if required. A source from the JUI-F said that Maulana Fazl-ur Rahman had asked the facilitators that change in the extension law should be brought in by the new national assembly.* JUI-F considers any amendment introduced by the current national assembly controversial.

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<sup>15</sup> <http://ummat.net/2020/01/02/news.php?p=story1.gif>

### **PML-N's new change, Aizaz Syed, Jang, 06 January<sup>16</sup>**

On 7 December 2019 a closed door meeting of PML-N took place in London under Nawaz Sharif leadership. *The presenters in the meeting were asked to take oath on the Quran that they would not divulge any information of the meeting. Nawaz Sharif announced that the party would support the extension given to the current army chief.* After the meeting, two important incidents happened in Pakistan: One, on 17 December a special court gave death sentence to former president Gen. (R) Pervez Musharraf. On 27 December the Supreme Court pointed out a flaw in the extension order of the army chief and asked the Government to change the law dealing with the matter. *No one from the PML-N committed on these matters. Ahsan Iqbal spoke and soon he was to be nabbed by the NAB.* No one in Pakistan knew what transpired in the meeting. One federal minister said on 2 January that the bill regarding the extension was unanimously passed. *It was a surprise because the PML-N has never supported giving army extension, including to Mirza Aslam Beg, or Pervez Kiyani or even to Gen. Raheel Sharif. The party strongly fought for the civilian authority in the country. Some say that Nawaz and Shahbaz differ on the matter or Maryam Nawaz is different and she is going to resign. None of these is true.* Question is if Nawaz and the PML- had to do this, why would it take up fight against the army and loose leaders like Choudhury Nisar? This proves that everything is fair in politics!

### **What wrong have they said? Editorial, Ummat, 09 January<sup>17</sup>**

Real problem for Pakistan is not India or America. *It is the system of the country. Whoever the establishment wants to be in power, it makes him/her to rise. Whomever it did not like, it knocks them off.* People who are united today, would separate tomorrow. Every group in Pakistan is dynastic. If the institutions operate in their concerned areas, the country will do much better. The country needs to come out of parochial issues like linguistic nationalism and needs to unite on the name of Islam. *If the community is not provided basic facilities, the country will split into many. Every person of the country is indebted and this is all because of the previous rulers. A recent report of State Bank of Pakistan is a warning in that regard. According to the report, the abysmal economic situation will continue and unemployment will grow further in coming years.* Inflation will grow while the income of people will be stagnant. Over 80 million of Pakistan live below the poverty line and unemployed are 3.4 million. A country where the helpless does not get justice, gets destroyed. *Apart from gas and oil, Balochistan is full of gold and coal*

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<sup>16</sup> [https://e.jang.com.pk/01-05-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=09\\_005.png](https://e.jang.com.pk/01-05-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=09_005.png)

<sup>17</sup> <http://ummat.net/2020/01/09/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

*mines. Still the people of Balochistan are poor. Why?* The Prime Minister and the Chief Justice will express their concerns about it but will do nothing to change the situation. Despite being in power for many years, PML-N and PPP did nothing. They served only to themselves. Government is the problem. If it is corrected, many things will fall into place.

### **One more blast in Quetta, Editorial, Jang, 09 January<sup>18</sup>**

Despite the fact that terror attacks have come down significantly in Balochistan, sporadic attacks remain a concern. *Terrorists carried out a blast in Mekangi Road on Tuesday evening at a crowded place which was targeted at FC vehicle standing there.* Two people were killed and 14 injured including three FC members. *Hizbul Ahrar branch of the TTP has claimed the responsibility. There is no secret in this that India supports terrorism in Balochistan. India is supported by local separatists groups.* According to a recent report of the Institute of Peace Studies, overall percentage of terror attacks in Pakistan has come down by 30 percent. But militants are still active. *Though the government and the army is trying to control the situation and motivate the locals that extremism is no solution but the underdevelopment and poverty in the region are causes of disenchantment in the youth.* The need of the hour is that the Baloch's need to be taken in confidence and new development measures need to be introduced in the region.

### **Not in war, participation in peace, Editorial, Jang, 10 January<sup>19</sup>**

Given the gravity of the crisis in West Asia, Pakistan's decision to try to facilitate peace process is a welcome policy. *Prime Minister Khan has asked Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Army Chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa to visit other countries and establish contacts with their governments and the armies. So far measures taken by Imran Khan imply that he does not want Pakistan to get involved in the unfolding crisis in West Asia.* While repeating that 'war serves no country's interests', Imran has offered that Pakistan is ready to play role for restoring peace. In this regard recent meetings of Chinese and Iranian ambassadors with Army Chief at the GHQ and then American Secretary of Defence Mark T. Esper's call to Gen. Bajwa imply that the matter is serious. Gen. Bajwa has asked for de-escalation. Given the recent statements from the two countries it seems that they are adamant on their positions. But they also give hope that both the countries want de-escalation. *Immediately after carrying out the missile attack, Javad Zarif said that Iran does not want war. On the other hand, Trump's denouncing the Iranian attacks as minimal also show that he wants to limit his policy to imposing sanctions on*

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<sup>18</sup> [https://e.jang.com.pk/01-09-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=07\\_003.png](https://e.jang.com.pk/01-09-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=07_003.png)

<sup>19</sup> [https://e.jang.com.pk/01-10-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=06\\_001.png](https://e.jang.com.pk/01-10-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=06_001.png)

*Iran.* Imran Khan has made Pakistan's position clear: We do not want Afghanistan-kind-of-situation around us.

**Quetta faces new wave of terrorism, Editorial, *Jang*, 12 January<sup>20</sup>**

We are only in few weeks of the New Year and two blasts in Balochistan. It is a matter of concern. *It shows that enemies are planning to increase activities in the province. The blast in Ishaqabad in which a mosque was targeted killed 15 people and injured 19. Daesh has claimed the attack. Reports circulated on social media that some Taliban leaders were also present in the mosque and were killed is not true.* The blast was targeted at DSP Amanullah who was known for his counter terrorist operations. His son was targeted few days ago also. It is surprising that when Amanullah was at the target of terrorists, why was not enough security provided to him? Fair and fast investigation needs to be carried out so that the guilty will be nabbed soon. *Chief Minister of Balochistan and the army chief have condemned the attack saying that true Muslims will never attack on the people offering prayers.* It is good news that the area has been cordoned off and search operation is going on. In the context of the recent attacks, counter terrorism strategy needs to be revisited and reframed.

## ELECTRONIC MEDIA

**Sethi Say Sawal, Report Card 2019, 02 January<sup>21</sup>**

In this episode of Sethi say Sawal, the host Tamkinet Karim asks Najam Sethi to review *the failures and successes of the Imran Khan government in 2019 in terms of economy, politics, security and foreign policy.*

*Economy:* According to Najam Sethi, the Imran Khan government mostly failed to review the economy. The increase in the price of essential commodities has deeply impacted the common people. Initially, PTI said they will not take any loans from the IMF but later ended up taking loans not only from IMF but other friendly countries like Saudi Arabia and China. This was the worst year for Pakistan in 10-20 years, inflation has increased by 15% and Rupees is down by almost 40%. The only scoring point is the increase in the tax collection but a tax on consumption affects the common people directly. The question is as they claim to collect 4, 000 Arab where have they spend that kind of money? This money is spent on paying the loans. Najam Sethi underlines that within eighteen months PTI government has taken so much loan that was not taken

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<sup>20</sup> [https://e.jang.com.pk/01-12-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=09\\_001.png](https://e.jang.com.pk/01-12-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=09_001.png)

<sup>21</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dVK9J\\_ZAOE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6dVK9J_ZAOE)

by the PML-N government in five years. The economy is basically down with no growth and factories closed. Even in the Benazir income support programme, PTI reduced 2 lakh beneficiaries. Najam Sethi gives Imran Khan Government one out of five marks in the economy. **Politics:** There is not much development in the field of politics too. The PTI government spent its whole energy in targeting the opposition especially on cases of corruption, the opposition, on the other hand, did not cooperate with the government on many issues. The parliament for most of its time was not functional and therefore the government passed ordinances knowing opposition will not cooperate and with a hope to convert it into an act of parliament later. Imran Khan has not changed his attitude towards parliament and he does not feel the need for parliament. There is no parliamentary committee yet and there is a deadlock in the formation of the election commission committee. Once the alliance parties in the government decide to separate from the PTI, the government is bound to fall. Till now their allies have kept asking for some more time for the Imran government but now they too are understanding that this government is doing nothing. In accountability also Imran government failed though they created a political instability but has not been able to bring back any money via NAB. Even the opposition failed instead they also struck deals with the government for their self-interest.

**Foreign Policy: The most important relations with Pakistan are of the US, the Middle East, India and Afghanistan.**

**US:** With the US the relations are better than before as the US is feeling the need of Pakistan more than ever to solve the Afghanistan problem. Pakistan has been able to convince the US that they can help them talk to the Taliban and also provide them with an honorable exit from Afghanistan. The real credit of foreign policy success goes to the ISI, which is, of course, a department of the government. If America does not get what they want from Pakistan, they can take U-turn any time in the future. Even the issue of FATF and blacklisting of Pakistan has been handled properly by the government (in reality establishment).

**India:** The two developments, Pulwama and scrapping of article 370 from Jammu and Kashmir has been handled wisely by Pakistan. Imran Khan went to the international platforms to lobby for the people of Kashmir. Although his speech was emotional on the subject it was direct from the heart, which helped the message to reach a larger audience. The opening of Kartarpur corridor is also a diplomatic success for the Imran Khan government, though the real credit goes to the establishment.

**Middle-east:** Pakistan trying to lobby with Malaysia and Turkey is a wrong step by the Imran Khan government. At one side Saudi Arabia is its traditional Allie and gives loans, on the other hand, Pakistan tires to warm up with Turkey and Iran with which Saudi does not have good relations. Saudi has given Pakistan first preference always and it cannot afford to corner it and support

Malaysia in forming a new Islamic block on the terms of OIC. Saudi has a great influence in the Muslim world through OIC and Pakistan supporting Malaysia for the Kuala Lumpur Summit can strain the Pakistan Saudi relations.

**Afghanistan:** Afghanistan is a work in progress for Pakistan. It is appreciable that Pakistan has changed its foreign policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Earlier it was thought that Afghanistan is a country in Pakistan's backyard and they can plant any puppet government. Now they are not meddling with the affairs of the government of Afghanistan which is a good strategy. Overall Najam Sethi gives a decent three out of five for foreign policy of the Imran Khan government in 2019. A national consensus on critical issues at home between government, opposition and Miltablishment would help avert many looming pitfalls for economy and society. *But this logic has so far been lost on the PTI government. Indeed, pundits are not hopeful that any abiding lessons have been learnt and will be applied.*

**Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Pakistan's stand on the Iran-US Tension, Geo News, 6th January<sup>22</sup>**

In this episode the host and the guests discuss the consequences of the killing of General Qasim Solemeni on Pakistan and its stand on the issue. The main points are, *first* Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi in his speech in the assembly made it clear that Pakistan does not favour any unilateral attacks and said that use of force is not the solution at hand between Iran and US. He underlined that Pakistani soil will not be used against any state and neither will it be a part of this regional conflict. Imran Khan also took the same position and underlined we are in favour of working for peace and not be a party to the conflict. *Second*, the host asks the guest on the show, Kamran Bukhari, how will Iran answer American attack? *He answers that Iran has very limited options right now, because if it attacks American interest in the Middle East, it knows that US will retaliate in a much larger scale.* If Iran use missiles, the US will combat with a larger attack. Iran is in a strategic dilemma at this stage. *Third*, Bashir Mushid Hussain Syed underlines that the conflict between Iran and US will have a direct impact on Pakistan. Already we have seen large scale protests in Pakistan, especially in Karachi. It will be a tight rope walk for Pakistan. But he feels that Pakistan should take a more active diplomacy and speak against the use of drones by US in Iraq. *Pakistan need to remember that the US used drones to attack non state actors in Pakistan. Although the*

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yS5vzHEU8ZU>

*bottom line stand of not be a party of the conflict is fine, but it needs to take a proactive stand on the issue.*

**Sethi Sey Sawal, Extension Issue Resolved? Najam Sethi Official, 07 January<sup>23</sup>**

**Q: The extension bill for navy, air force and army was passed in the assembly. What was the hurry to pass this bill? Will it be challenged?**

**A:** This will was brought in the assembly and passed too because behind the scene there was lots of pressure from the establishment. *That is the reason that both PML-N and PPP did not talk about any amendment in the assembly.* After this it will be brought in the senate and the PTI is expecting it will be passed there too. Although the PPP is expected to question why the extension is needed, the government too will give them time for the record but the PPP and PML-N will not press it too much.

**Q: What is new in the bill?**

**A:** The PTI government believes that this new bill will satisfy all the conditions asked by the Supreme Court but the question remains if it really will do so. The noteworthy points in this bill are: army chief will be appointed for three years by PM and he will advise the President and he shall obey the order. Which means that the president has no choice but to abide by the order. Second is that in case of appointment, re-appointment and extension it is underlined that President may look into it and here he is given some powers. The terms of re-appointment is fixed for three years, extension one year or two. *President can ask in this case why the extension. In case of President joint staff it is underlined that the President may appoint.* It means that if there is different government, and the President will remain for five years (of the same party), then he may or may not appoint a Joint chief of a new party in power.

**Naya Pakistan with Shahzad Iqbal, What is going on in PML-N? Geo News, 12th January<sup>24</sup>**

A new controversy over the support for the services bill 2020 has erupt within the PML-N party. Some leaders are arguing the PML-N supported the bill on the behest of the supreme leader, Nawaz Sharif while some others argue that due process and directions by Nawaz Sharif in London were not followed while deciding to support the bill. Some important points are, first, a group of PML-N senior leaders met Nawaz Sharif in London and briefed him about the Supreme Court order regarding the extension of General Qamar Bajwa. The supreme leaders advised the group to first consult with the opposition and then decide if to support the bill in the parliament. *Second*, on this episode, Mia

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JBX0XxRISXw>

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IL9eOJWPqVA>

Javid Latif of the PML-N talks about how Nawaz Sharif was not consulted the second time while taking a final call to support the bill in the parliament by senior leaders of the party. *Third*, he reveals that Nawaz Sharif also wrote a letter to the PML-N to take a wise decision but it was sidelined. No effort was made to consult him later regarding the bill. He argues that even Maryam Nawaz is silent and she was also not taken on board and she is bonded not to speak due to his father's health. *Fourth*, this raises questions on whether Nawaz Sharif is loosening his grip over the PML-N party. Mia Javid Latif argues that the extension decision is of the PM, PML-N should have debated and come out with a policy why to support the bill. In short, due procedure should have been followed.

**Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, PTI attacks PML-N, Geo News, 14 January<sup>25</sup>**  
2020The PTI government softened its stance on the opposition and strategically got the army bill passed with their support in both the lower and upper house. Now suddenly the PTI has started targeting the PML-N. In this episode the host discuss the changed attitude of the PTI and the reasons for it. Below are the main points, *First*, the PTI government has started asking questions about Nawaz Sharif's health and have given a 48 hour ultimatum to submit fresh reports on his health failing which they will start investigation. *Second*, it all started when a picture of Nawaz Sharif dining with Shehbaz Sharif and other PML-N leaders in London went viral. It was largely circulated by PTI leaders and workers criticising that Nawaz Sharif is not in London for treatment, he looks fit and fine. *Third*, Maryam Nawaz's name has been again put in the ECL list with regard to the Chaudary Sugar Mill case. The Punjab government has asked Nawaz Sharif's personal doctor to submit the last report otherwise Punjab government will take steps to investigate and the home ministry will decide the case for Nawaz Sharif to be brought back to Pakistan. *Fourth*, the host on this show asks the guest, senior leader, PML-N Rana Sana Ullah what has happened. Why the PTI has suddenly started attacking the PML-N? To which the guest replies that the PTI government should be ashamed of all the vile comments and attacks. He argues that PTI thought that the opposition will not support the army bill and then they can score points with the establishment on this, but when we supported the services bill their propaganda failed. That is why now they are making us look like the villain.

**Capital Talk, PTI Minister uses boot to mock the Opposition on TV, Geo News, 15 January<sup>26</sup>**

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d6ihfdQ6Hf4>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7t92xghKD50>

PTI Minister Faisal Vawda uses army boot to mock opposition on live TV programme on Tuesday evening to heap scorn on the main opposition parties PML-N and PPP for voting in favour of the recently-passed Army Act in parliament. On this episode, Hamid Mir talks about the incident with Faisal Vawda who is the guest on the show. *The main points are, First*, Faisal Vawda justified the incident and argues that the opposition has taken a U-turn and supported the bill and the shoes represents the oppositions changing stance on the army (meaning opposition has supported the bill to impress the army). *Second*, on this Hamid Mir asks what the problem is if the opposition supports this bill, as Imran Khan also uses to criticise the establishment and he took U-turns too. On this the Minister says that there is lots of difference between what Imran said and what Nawaz Sharif said and did. He then tries to prepare a charge-sheet of Nawaz Sharif trying to say that Nawaz so too soft on India and asks why there was no word from PML-N on Kulbhushan Yadav arrest. *Third*, the Minister then blames the opposition for always saying that the PTI and army are a team of selected and sector. Hamid Mir explains that by bringing the shoes on live show he has shown disrespect to article 19 of the constitution and broke PEMRA conduct of conduct. *Fourth*, the minister says that it was an individual act and I take full responsible for it. He said that Prime Minister was not happy with the boot thing. On this Hamid Mir says that you should say sorry to the people, but the minister disagrees and says till now I had no idea about these rule. *Fifth*, Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) has banned the broadcast of anchorperson Kashif Abbasi's programme 'Off the Record' on ARY News for 60 days following Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) minister Faisal Vawda's outlandish stunt on the show.

*Sethi Sey Sawal, Hints of Change in Punjab, KPK & Balochistan, Najam Sethi Official, 27 January<sup>27</sup>*

*Q: Hints of change in Punjab, KPK and Balochistan are felt and Imran Khan is claiming that some section is conspiring against him? Who are they and will Imran Khan give in to the pressure?*

*A: Imran Khan has said that if Buzdar is removed from Punjab, the next CM will not be able to stick to the chair even twenty days. In my view, Imran Khan is doing all these himself. In real sense Punjab is run from Islamabad and not by Buzdar, he is not capable of running Punjab which is the road to power in Pakistan. In true according to Najam Sethi Imran Khan does not want some powerful CM to run Punjab, do governance and make money, he want to control it form Islamabad. Also PM is very superstitious, someone has told him that if Buzdar goes out of power it will adversely affect him and he will lose*

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3MpdLBkO0o4>

power too. That is why he has kept Buzdar in Punjab despite of all the criticism. There is definitely an internal power struggle in Punjab, KPK and Balochistan but nothing big will happen or change until big boss (establishment) or boss (PM) give green signal.

**Q: What is your reaction to transparency international's 2019 report which says that corruption has gone up in the year 2019 in Pakistan?**

**A:** It is an irony that PTI government rejected the report because when it was not in power Imran Khan use to present these reports as claims that the government is corrupt. They are not happy that opposition is suing these reports against the government. At the other hand the transparency international Pakistan chapter came out with a report which was not so different from its parent organisation but the government welcomed it. The additional lines in their report was that the Pakistan chapter does not have a role to play in the parent organisations report and that only 1 or 2% change in the graph of corruption. According to Najam Sethi the chapter has zero credibility and that they are biased and are fed with planted stories.

## BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

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

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
<b>Sindh</b>				
Quetta <sup>28</sup>	13/01/2020	Blast inside Quetta mosque claims 15 lives, injures 19	15	19
Quetta <sup>29</sup>	29/01/2020	Nine martyred in gun-and-suicide attack on DIG office in Loralai	09	00

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1527503>

<sup>29</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1899305/1-least-five-injured-loralai-terrorist-attack/>

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