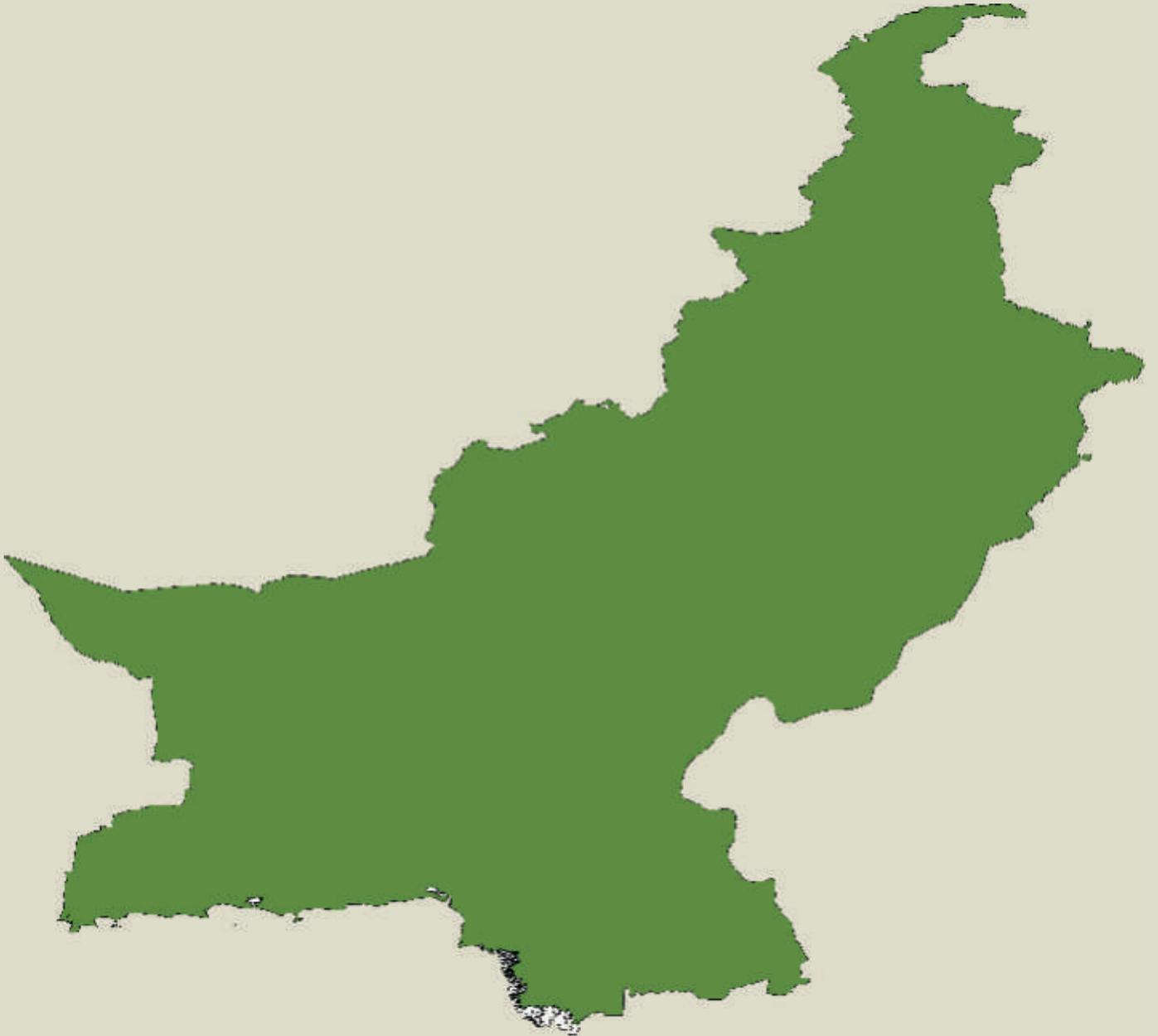


January 2021

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

Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर परिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, January 2021

CONTENTS

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	05
ECONOMIC ISSUES	08
SECURITY SITUATION	11
PROVINCES & REGIONS	
Balochistan	12
GB	13
URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA	
Urdu	19
Electronic	25
STATISTICS	
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES	27

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The PDM situation, Editorial, *Daily Times*, 04 December¹

The government should think twice before dismissing the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) as a spent force because the parties that make up the alliance have just had to rethink some of their positions. *It is only natural for new and sometimes contradictory ideas to emerge as the situation changes, and it is a good not a bad thing in a democratic environment for allies to sort out issues through dialogue and mutual give-and-take.* If anything recent huddles of the PDM have shown that they are maturing with time and even when they are in the crosshairs of the government as well as the so called establishment, their resort to democratic practices in fact indicates that they are always improving their game. *The threat of the march on Islamabad, too, cannot be written off as easily as the government would like. The ruling party could have made life easier for itself and everybody else by showing some flexibility at important stages in this build-up, instead it decided to further increase the temperature, betraying an over-confident mindset; one which firmly believed that the opposition was only bluffing and would not carry out any of its threats. Right now our senior-most politicians are driving the whole nation head first into just such a dark alley. As the government of the day, PTI is expected to take the first steps towards an urgently needed thaw. A sincere offer of dialogue would be a nice start.*

Who's the problem? Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 08 January²

Those who say that the anti-Miltablishment narrative of Nawaz Sharif and his heir Maryam has hurt the cause of the PDM in general and the PMLN in particular are missing the wood for the trees. It's true that Nawaz Sharif has paid the price for demanding constitutional rights from the Miltablishment. *The PDM's success or failure will not depend solely on whether it can pull off a mighty heave-ho movement backed by the Punjabi or Pashtun urban middle classes to oust Imran Khan. Nor will it depend only on swelling numbers in Jalsa's or Long Marches. More likely, it will depend on the nature of the attrition guerilla war against both Imran Khan on the streets and against the Miltablishment in the popular imagination that feeds into continuing political instability and economic uncertainty weakening the rationale of the hybrid regime.* With or without the PPP, the most potent weapon in the PDM's arsenal is to keep the political pot boiling with parliament in a state of constitutional disrepair through threats of resignation and disruption of bye-

¹<https://dailytimes.com.pk/709440/the-pdm-situation/>

²<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/whos-the-problem/>

elections. This would lead to the conclusion that sooner or later, the Militabishment will see Imran Khan and the PTI as part of the problem and not the solution. That's when a way out of this crisis will be found to salvage the eroding sanctity of the state and its organs.

PM's visit to Quetta, Editorial, Dawn, 11 January³

Prime Minister Imran Khan came to condole with them only after the burials took place on Saturday. *The government has, he said, given them written guarantees about their security and promised to address their other demands.* The grieving community could do little but receive him with good grace, and hope that this time the state follows through. However, what transpired since the day the bodies of the Hazara coal miners were *discovered with their throats slit and when Mr Khan visited Quetta cannot be papered over or dismissed as a 'misunderstanding'*. First the prime minister displayed an inexplicable reluctance to go to the provincial capital. *At an event in Islamabad, Mr Khan, in a shocking display of callousness, told the persecuted community not to "blackmail" him. And he went further still, saying that a "band of crooks", referring to the opposition leaders, had "also" been blackmailing him for two-and-a-half years.* Going by the premier's own words, behind these attacks is a group of only about 40 individuals, former Lashkar-e-Jhangvi operatives now allied with the militant Islamic State group. The government must order the security forces to hunt down these violent extremists, who can apparently still strike at will in Balochistan, and bring them to trial.

Emergence of a new bloc, Jai Kumar Dhirani, The Nation, 11 January⁴

A new alliance could be built between three powerful Muslim nations, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, along with two Eastern giants namely China and Russia. The evidence of this bloc is trilateral cooperation in the form of the Istanbul, Tehran and Islamabad (ITI) Train project which is going to be multilateral soon, with the inclusion of China and Russia. *The alliance would be a great disaster for the US policy in the Middle East and Asia, as the countries of the emerging bloc have their own uniqueness. China's economic progress, its veto power in the United Nations and global influence has almost achieved parity with the United States.* Pakistan is a Muslim country with nuclear power but a strong enough military as well. Therefore, Pakistan has a special value in the Muslim world. Pakistan is a regional hub for the economy and defence due to its significant geographical location. China is the centre of Iran and Pakistan is the centre of this tri-power. Turkey, in recent

³<https://www.dawn.com/news/1600891/pms-visit-to-quetta>

⁴<https://nation.com.pk/11-Jan-2021/emergence-of-a-new-bloc>

years, has emerged with a powerful military, economy and a regional economic hub due to its connectivity of Eurasia through the Bosphorus as well as gaining strong hold in the Muslim world, as it looks to be confronting Saudi Arabia for the title of the leadership of Muslim world. Russia, with veto power in the UNSC and a strong military, along with the label of a nuclear weapon state, is gaining utmost influence in almost all corners of the world. Its strength is undeniable. *This alliance would help Pakistan to gain the utmost economic benefits from the emerging eastern giants as well as energy-rich Muslim countries to quench the thirst of its energy and economic needs.*

Ties with Turkey, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 14 January⁵

As regional ties between several countries undergo a sea change, it was refreshing to learn that Pakistan and Turkey are strengthening their longstanding relationship. The recently-signed bilateral economic agreement comes after several visits by Turkish leaders to Pakistan and vice versa. *The economic deal covers 71 items, and although trade volume admittedly remains low about \$800 million the agreement is also expected to significantly increase trade volume.* Under the earlier bilateral strategic framework, Turkish investment in Pakistan is also expected to increase significantly. With over 100 Turkish companies already operating in Pakistan, the recent moves could help further link Pakistan to an economy that is generally on the up. Another “High-level Strategic Council” is on the horizon, reflecting the increasingly close ties between the two longstanding allies. Defence ties are also improving. The close ties may also have another unifying factor albeit an odd one which is the fact that all three countries are involved in longstanding territorial disputes. For Pakistan, it is the Kashmir issue. For Turkey, it is the Northern Cyprus dispute with Greece and Cyprus.

Addressing major national issues, Talat Masood, *The Express Tribune*, 20 January⁶

There is need for serious introspection considering that the sensibilities of the nation have been blunted to an extent that nothing pricks its collective conscience. *The pathetic state of Karachi and that of interior Sindh is one glaring example of the “new normal” for the government as well as the society. The broken roads, state of dirtiness and the chaotic traffic gives an impression of a city where there is no government and every individual sets his own rules.* How have we reached that stage of decadence where people fail to react and lack the will and ability to resist the downfall? Moreover, do

⁵<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279997/ties-with-turkey>

⁶<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2280588/addressing-major-national-issues>

we realize that if the slide continues there are no limits to the depths that we can sink? ... *The PTI and the opposition's constant feuding and quality of discourse in parliament and the media or in public meetings goes far beyond the generally accepted universal standards of conduct.* The PM seems to be more comfortable seeking the support of the military than using the traditional means of consolidating power through parliament and engagement with the opposition. *Perhaps he has not realized the consequences and especially the long-term impact of this mode of governance as it would further weaken the democratic institutions.*

Sordid Saga, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 22 January⁷

Now the PTI has determined to set up a commission of inquiry under a judge to ascertain the truth behind the BROADSHEET affair. *Since the facts are already well established after the release of all the documents related to this episode, followed by undenied stories of conversations between Moussavi and various intermediaries, we can reasonably surmise that the object of this exercise is to somehow put the spotlight on the PTI's opponents.* Imran Khan has already pointed an accusing finger at General Musharraf for giving an NRO to Nawaz Sharif and Co, along with many other targets on the list of 200 originally supplied to BROADSHEET by NAB. *There is also speculation that the ground will be prepared to assign the task of going after the hidden wealth of Nawaz Sharif and Co abroad to Moussavi or someone else.* To be sure, there are a couple of credible international companies which would be happy to undertake such a project. *If we are alarmed by the level of incompetence and corruption of civil-military bureaucrats and lawyers in the BROADSHEET case, get ready for a meltdown when Pakistani assets abroad, including the Roosevelt hotel owned by PIA, are seized and uncashed by Tethyan Copper Company in the RekoDiq case which has been awarded nearly USD7 billion in damages for breach of contract.*

The Biden administration and Af-Pak, Muhammad J Siddiqui, *The Nation*, 29 January⁸

The first act of the Biden administration on the Af-Pak front is a review of the Afghan Reconciliation Agreement. *Pakistan is in a very delicate situation, as it is primarily held responsible for all Taliban related violence in Afghanistan and has been constantly viewed as a destabilizing factor in Afghanistan.* Dealing with Afghanistan in an open and transparent manner is perhaps a

⁷<https://www.thefridaytimes.com/sordid-saga/>

⁸<https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2021/the-biden-administration-and-af-pak>

top priority for Pakistan. *To address the Afghan quagmire, Pakistan must set up comprehensive, long-term bilateral agreements dealing with trade, security, water resources, immigration, and education with Afghanistan.* America's demand for higher commitment from Pakistan for the peace process should be responded with concrete plans that ensure tangible results in a short span of time. *Firstly*, Pakistan should divert US, Chinese and Turkish economic and financial influence on Afghanistan to repair its fractured relationship with the Afghan National Army and NDS on a long-term basis. *Secondly*, given the mobility of Afghan/Pakistani traders and labourers, Pakistan and Afghanistan should come up with a permanent work permit or iqama with biometrics for citizens travelling across their porous borders frequently. *Thirdly*, Pakistan should let Afghan seminaries affiliate their madrassas with Wifaq-ul-Madaris and Tanzeem-ul-Madaris in Pakistan. *The strongest voice against Pakistan in Afghanistan is that of Tajiks. Ignoring Amrullah Saleh, Pakistani government should invite moderates like Salahuddin Rabbani, and Ahmad Wali Massoud to address different think tanks in Pakistan and give them ample airtime to express the need for peace in Afghanistan.* A majority of the Afghan Foreign Service is Tajik, Pakistan should work with them in the UN to jointly vote on key global issues and build up harmony. Afghanistan is Pakistan's fourth largest trading partner, *More than ever, given the political crisis at hand, this is the optimum time for Pakistan to play its constructive role in Afghanistan and lay the foundation of extending CPEC to Central Asia.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Extending CPEC, Umer Khan, Dawn, 06 January⁹

Never in Pakistan's history has a project been peddled to the people as a game changer the way that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has been. The government is enthusiastic about the \$60 billion worth of concrete carpeted highways, energy projects and special economic zones. Early harvest projects worth \$19bn have been completed, and CPEC is now in its second phase, in which most of the projects will be based on a public-private partnership model. For now, the projects in its first phase have failed to usher in the level of prosperity that was promised to the people. Pakistan and China have already invested huge capital on building the road infrastructure for CPEC. According to estimates, \$11bn will be spent on the construction of roads and highways. *However, Pakistan will not be able to accrue maximum economic benefits and ensure the financial sustainability of the infrastructure if it does not link CPEC to other countries in the region. Connecting CPEC to*

⁹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1599988/extending-cpec>

regional countries could be an incremental process, starting with Afghanistan. Despite its challenges, Afghanistan appears to be the most feasible country to extend CPEC. *Another reason for extending CPEC to Afghanistan is to boost the Gwadar port.* Pakistan is struggling to get traction for the port in the international market. The development of the Gwadar port was slower than envisaged by Pakistan.

Good news from IMF? Editorial, Daily Times, 12 January¹⁰

Perhaps it would have been a little more reassuring if the news about the “good news” about the IMF program restarting sometime “soon” had come from somebody from the finance ministry instead of the head of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). *It seems that recent hints in the press about the government finally caving in and accepting all the IMF’s demands were true after all.* And while it is not difficult to understand the government’s position, especially since it now desperately needs the fiscal cushion that the program was designed to provide, there is still the danger of a certain amount of uncertainty gripping not just households but also the production sector. On the other hand, there’s also the fact that there’s only so much any sector would be able to achieve if the program is stopped and the reserves are left at near-empty levels. This has no doubt been one of the harder decisions for the government to take. The prime minister resisted the pressure, even if that meant putting the program on hold for an indefinite period, but now he is running out of options. *That is both good and bad news for the market, since the economy is now increasingly coming under the grip of the second wave of Covid-19 and higher power cost and taxes will hurt it that much more.*

Foreign funding, Editorial, Dawn, 22 January¹¹

As the pressure builds on his party in the foreign funding case, Prime Minister Imran Khan has called for an expanded public scrutiny of funds given to all political parties. Mr Khan made this statement in response to criticism by the opposition parties who have called on the ECP to conclude the case of the foreign funds allegedly received by the PTI. The matter has dragged on for over six years. *While the PPP and PML-N have indicated they would accept Mr Khan’s challenge, the ECP has ruled out the option of a public hearing and has asked that “unnecessary comments” be avoided in this case.* Ironically, his view here is similar to the demands of the opposition parties, who have railed against a targeted witch-hunt at the hands of the PTI and NAB. The PPP and PML-N have repeatedly pointed out that the rules of accountability are different for the ruling party and the opposition. In contrast, Mr Khan has not only claimed the anti-corruption drive is independent, he has also

¹⁰<https://dailytimes.com.pk/712232/good-news-from-imf/>

¹¹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1602845/foreign-funding>

consistently hit out at his rivals in the opposition for evading accountability and disrespecting the judicial process. *For him to call for an expanded inquiry at a time when his party is in the dock will be seen as an attempt to deflect attention from the case. Perhaps it is time he held himself to rigorous standards of accountability, and came out with the facts regarding the PTI's finances so that the foreign funding case can be put to rest.*

K-P owes Rs265b in foreign loans, *The Express Tribune*, 24 January¹²

The Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa government has been engaged in heavy borrowing from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank and other international organization and today its total foreign debt stands at Rs265 billion which is increasing each passing year. K-P province took cumulative loan of Rs164 billion from the international institutions in the financial year of 2019-2020. A loan of Rs144 billion will be secured from the World Bank and out of this Rs72 billion have been sought for the energy sector. For the Rs72 billion the provincial government has signed an agreement. The provincial government took a loan of Rs49.60 billion from the Asian Development Bank for Peshawar BRT project. *The repayment of Rs265 billion loans with interest will be much more challenging task for a province like K-P with scant resources. And this will be a huge burden on the exchequer during the coming fiscal years.*

SECURITY SITUATION

Rule of the mob, Editorial, *Dawn*, 01 January¹³

On Wednesday, a raucous mob descended on the shrine of a Hindu saint in Teri village, on the outskirts of Karak, KP. *What support will the government offer to the beleaguered Hindu community and how will it ensure that such attacks are not repeated?* Only a few months earlier, religious hardliners had obstructed the construction of the Shri Krishna temple in the nation's capital. *It seems like the government's attempts to show religious tolerance are futile when large sections of society are steeped in bigotry and some have not even spared Muslim shrines; our leaders rarely demonstrate the kind of resolve that is needed to eliminate intolerance.* Even if the Shri Paramhans Ji Maharaj'ssamadhi issue is rooted in a land dispute and not religion, as claimed by some it is far too easy for anyone to use faith as a cloak to hide

¹²<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2281140/k-p-owes-rs265b-in-foreign-loans>

¹³<https://www.dawn.com/news/1599017/rule-of-the-mob>

behind, or as a weapon to coerce, harass, and eventually kill off 'weaker' members of society. The previous year has been marked by grief and trial for many, and there have been a number of violent attacks against minorities.

TLP's ambition to enter mainstream nears realization, Kalbe Ali, Dawn, 05 January¹⁴

The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan's (TLP) plans to transform itself from a fringe radical group into a mainstream political party are slowly taking shape under a new leadership and the party has announced the setting up of a formal secretariat. Hafiz Saad Rizvi, the son of Allama Khadim Rizvi and the new leader of TLP, told Dawn on Monday, adding, *"We want to enter mainstream politics, but will not compromise on our original narrative"*. But there is more to the event than a remembrance of the man who stormed onto the country's political landscape armed with emotive narrative and inflammatory rhetoric. *If crowd numbers are a barometer of a political party's popularity, Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) second gathering may be a reflection of its larger ambitions under a new leader.* Amir Rana, Director of Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies, in reference to the growing influence and reach of TLP *states that the rise of such an ideologically-driven organisation could mainstream a mentality that promotes mob justice. He says there is a difference between TLP and other religious parties: "TLP has the narrative and a growing vote bank, now they need to have an organised structure for electoral success, while parties like Jamaat-e-Islami and other Deobandi groups have the structure but have lost the narrative."*

Military's role, Editorial, Dawn, 13 January¹⁵

Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar has said what any individual in his position would have been expected to say. After all, the Constitution clearly defines the functions of the army, namely to *"defend Pakistan against external aggression or threat of war, and, subject to law, act in aid of civil power when called upon to do so"*. The fundamental law of this country also holds that *"The federal government shall have control and command of the armed forces"*. Both the weight of history and prevailing currents alike belie these words. Even a cursory acquaintance with Pakistan's history is enough to convey the extent of the military's role in running the country, sometimes directly through coups that swept aside elected governments. At other times, it was enough to call the shots from behind weak civilian dispensations the

¹⁴<https://www.dawn.com/news/1599758/tlps-ambition-to-enter-mainstream-nears-realisation>

¹⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601200/militarys-role>

'civ-mil imbalance' is a truism, not a figment of the imagination. The chorus alleging military meddling in politics, even daily governance, has risen to a crescendo since then. The fact that several major civilian institutions and bodies are headed by uniformed personnel has further sharpened the perception of a 'hybrid government'.

Broadsheet's 'revelations', Dawn, 14 January¹⁶

Certainly, probing white-collar corruption and money laundering is a laudable aim. Done with integrity, it strengthens institutions, improves governance and bolsters the citizens' faith in the justice system. *But when accountability is done selectively, giving some the benefit of the doubt while proceeding full throttle against others on thin evidence, if any at all, it corrodes the system still further.* That unfortunately is the kind of 'accountability' we have been witness to in Pakistan for decades. It is this country's misfortune that, under NAB, accountability has become a handmaiden to political expediency and short-term gains. *Among Broadsheets claims, the least startling are the ones about how NAB dropped investigations into high-profile corruption suspects after deals were struck with them, or took them off its list of 'targets' if those individuals came back into political favour.* Despite this, NAB continues as before, trampling on constitutional rights without any apparent fear of itself being held to account. Whatever the merits of Mr Kaveh Moussavi's claims, and some of them seem scarcely credible, he certainly appears to be a publicity seeker? Otherwise why stir the pot after so long?

Madressah students, Editorial, Dawn, 15 December¹⁷

Getting students of madressahs involved in politics is a bad idea, primarily because seminarians should be concentrating on their studies, while their involvement in politics is bound to radicalize the political discourse. *This is why the prime minister's orders to Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid to prevent students of madressahs from joining the PDM's scheduled march on Islamabad is a good idea. However, it is also true that the move smacks of hypocrisy as when Imran Khan then a fiery member of the opposition was besieging the federal capital in 2014, he himself had a bit of help from religious elements.* It should be noted that in the Pakistani context, where religion and politics are almost inseparable, it would be next to impossible to implement any restriction on seminarians participating in political activities. *For example, religious parties such as the JUI-F, Jamaat-i-Islami and more recently Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan command tremendous street power, and*

¹⁶<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601361/broadsheets-revelations>

¹⁷<https://www.dawn.com/news/1601551/madressah-students>

other 'secular' political forces are at times also keen to tap into this reserve of ready recruits for political events. Ideally, as stated above, madressah students should focus on their education, while political elements should not try and exploit this segment of society to achieve their goals. This applies to parties staging protests now, as well as those who have leveraged these resources in the past.

More ignominy for PIA, Dawn, 18 January¹⁸

As per the interim injunction, PIA is barred from moving the two 777s once they have landed or parked at Kuala Lumpur airport pending the next hearing later this month. The decline of an airline that started out with such promise that was a pioneer in many respects and was instrumental in setting up some of today's most successful airlines, is an unmitigated tragedy. Decades of mismanagement, nepotism and political opportunism were bound to take their toll. Successive governments saw PIA as a means of rewarding the loyalty of supporters and the airline's cadres were packed with undeserving people. For this, the Civil Aviation Authority as the regulator must shoulder a large part of the blame. Perennially deep in the red, PIA has needed to be bailed out by the government on a regular basis. Within the past year, it seems all the chickens have come home to roost. PIA was banned from operating in several parts of the world by various international airline safety boards; and Pakistani pilots employed by foreign carriers were suspended until the provenance of their licences was investigated.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

Balochistan

Hazara miners' slaughter, Editorial, Dawn, 05 January 2021¹⁹

The bitter reality is that the state has long abandoned the Shia Hazaras. In a cynically calculated move, it decided to turn a blind eye to violent extremists' depredations against the community in the province as long as these murderous groups also served to counter the Baloch insurgency that began during Gen Musharraf's regime. As a result, nowhere in Balochistan are the Hazaras safe, except for their barricaded ghettos in Quetta. They have been blown up in suicide bombings and gunned down in the streets, their graveyards filling up with victims, many of them heartbreakingly young. On the cusp of life, these innocents paid the ultimate price for the state's monumental folly. As for the survivors, their livelihoods, educational

¹⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1602133/more-ignominy-for-pia>

¹⁹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1599805/hazara-miners-slaughter>

opportunities, etc have been eviscerated. Those who can have sought asylum overseas. It is well known that the virulently sectarian Lashkar-i-Jhangvi, which has a continued presence in Balochistan, works closely with the transnational terrorist group. Surely, in a province crawling with security and intelligence personnel, violent extremists such as these should not be difficult to track down. They could also be traced through the Ahle Sunnat Wal Jamaat, which also has an overtly anti-Shia agenda.

Hazara Protest, Editorial, Dawn, 07 December²⁰

A Desperately sad sequence of events is playing out yet again in Quetta. In the bitter cold of winter, thousands of Shia Hazaras men, women and children are staging a sit-in on a highway that runs through the city. Amidst them are the coffins of the 11 coalminers from their community who were brutally slain on Sunday in Balochistan's Bolan district. Despite the efforts of the chief minister, several provincial ministers and some federal level government functionaries, the mourners had, refused to bury their dead and call off their protest unless the prime minister came and met them. Anger over the terrible, needless tragedies that have repeatedly befallen the persecuted Hazaras, anger over the sectarian killers who still manage to strike at will in a heavily militarized city such as Quetta and escape detection. And now the anger is spreading among the public, particularly the wider Shia community.

GB

GB govt moves to hold Local Body polls after 13 years, The Express Tribune, 18 January²¹

The Gilgit-Baltistan government has started making preparations for holding local body elections after 13 years. According to Gilgit-Baltistan Finance Minister Javed Hussain Manwa, the local body elections in GB were supposed to be held in 2008 but could not be held so far. *The GB Election Commission, he added, was making arrangements and hopefully the local body elections would be made possible this year. The schedule would be announced after the electoral lists.* Meanwhile talking to media in Gilgit, GB Election Commissioner Abid Raza said that preparations were being made for the local body elections. He hoped that arrangements would be finalized under the guidance of NADRA and Election Commission of Pakistan. *According to the new rules of Gilgit-Baltistan, local body elections would be held on party basis for the first time in which minorities would be represented for the first*

²⁰<https://www.dawn.com/news/1600180/hazara-protest>

²¹<https://nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2021/gb-govt-moves-to-hold-lb-polls-after-13-years>

time. The head of these institutions would be the mayor instead of the chairman.

Diamer people protest denial of jobs in power project, Dawn, 28 January²²

Activists of political parties and local people staged a protest sit-in outside the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) office in Chilas, the district headquarters of Diamer district, on Wednesday against denial of jobs to the local population in Diamer-Bhasha hydropower project. The call for the protest was given by Graduate Alliance Diamer. *Activists of PPP, PML-N and religious and regional organisations gathered outside the Wapda office. The protesters were chanting slogans against Wapda. They demanded granting of rights to the dam-affected people.* The protesters said Diamer residents had sacrificed their homes and land for the dam, and demanded appointment of locals in grade 1 to 16 posts in the dam project. They said priority should also be given to Diamer and Gilgit-Baltistan people in the appointments from grade 17 and above. *The protesters also rejected a recent advertisement issued by Wapda for appointments on over 100 posts in the Diamer-Bhasha dam from grade 6 to 16. They said only candidates from Diamer had the right to get appointed on these posts.*

POK

Protests in AJK, Danish Khan, International The News, 04 January²³

Spiraling food inflation is prevalent across Pakistan but the region of Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) is its biggest causality. In the past few months, the price of wheat in AJK has increased by 30 percent. This has forced people to come out in numbers and record their protest. *Interestingly, the ongoing protests against food inflation in AJK are led by grassroots action committees at the local village and bazaar levels. Action committees are non-hierarchical organizing bodies comprising everyday folks who collectively deliberate and decide their action plans.* This makes them special because it demonstrates that ordinary people are not just aware and conscious but can also self-organize for their collective wellbeing without any big donors or state-patronage. Will this organic grassroots movement force any substantive policy changes in AJK and mainland Pakistan? The jury is out.

²²<https://www.dawn.com/news/1604035/diamer-people-protest-denial-of-jobs-in-power-project>

²³https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/768839-protests-in-ajk?_ga=2.70142935.616812123.1609658854-564372486.1592807652

Terrorism in Balochistan, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 04 January²⁴

Balochistan was hit by terrorists yet again. *Mine workers were kidnapped and killed by terrorists in Mach on Sunday and killing 11 people.* Given the abysmal conditions of the mines in Mach, hundreds of miners die every year. Now they are at the target of terrorists as well. *If the security measures were taken, these miners could have been saved. Who should be blamed for the lapse? The owners of the mines or the provincial government? Would the condemning statements from the government and its officials address the problem of terrorism (in the country)? The enemy who is involved in the bloodshed in Balochistan is known to everyone. The intentions of the enemy are not hidden either. This is a well-established reality that India is behind in every act of terrorism in Pakistan.* The ways or the targets may differ but the sole purpose of these terror attacks is to create hurdles in the progress/development of Pakistan, create fear in Pakistani society and weaken the defence. *India does not miss any chance to incur damage on Pakistan. Pakistan defence institutions have produced undisputable proofs of India's involvement in supporting terrorists in Pakistan. A dossier was submitted to the UN Secretary General in the last month in this regard. However, the UN has not taken any step on this matter as of now.* This was the second major attack by terrorists. Earlier, on 26 December seven FC soldiers were killed in a terror attack. *Given the recent trend in terror attacks, it is likely that the enemy would hit again. The security agencies need to be alert. Pakistan needs to have effective and efficient policy in place to meet such threats.* Despite all the efforts made so far, more needs to be done to protect peace and stability in Balochistan. Preventive measures can avoid such attacks in future. Given the geography of Balochistan, it is easy for India backed terrorists to hide in some far places. Such weaknesses where the security forces are unable to reach and discover such places need to be addressed. The unsafe border with Afghanistan can create problems for KP and Balochistan. Ongoing fencing on the border would decrease such threats. The security on Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran border needs to be enhanced as well.

Hazras protest against the Mach killings, Report, Ummat, 05 January²⁵

The Hazara community in Quetta continued its protest on Monday. *They have displayed the dead bodies of the people killed in Mach at the protest*

²⁴https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-01-04&edition=LHR&id=5464029_75973035

²⁵<https://www.ummat.net/2021/01/05/news.php?p=story1.gif>

site. They say until their demands are met, they would not bury the dead. 11 Hazaras miners were killed on Saturday in Mach by terrorists. Daesh later claimed the attack. *The protest was started by Majlis-e-Wahdatul Muslimeen. It was joined by the families of the killed people. Later, many Hazaras, including old, young, women and children joined the protest. The government did not show any seriousness towards the protest at the beginning. The situation was worsened by the absence of Chief Minister Jamal Khan in Balochistan. Mr Jamal should have returned back from Dubai when the report was prepared.* The protesters said that after such a tragedy in the province, the chief minister should have returned back immediately. After seeing the situation getting out of control, some provincial ministers reached the protest site. *The protestors refused to talk to provincial ministers and have asked Prime Minister Imran Khan should himself assure the protestors that their demands would be met.* *The dharna is led by a 14 member committee which is headed by the leader of Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) Syed Muhammad Agha Raza. Agha Raza has alleged that just a few days before the attack a security check post was removed from the area.* The protestors demand immediate arrest of the killers, resignation from the provincial government and a judicial inquiry in the tragedy. Sources from the security circle have said that to increase terror attacks in Pakistan, India has united different terror groups. Daesh does not have any presence in Balochistan. But with the union of banned Baloch terror groups and TTP has increased the possibility of collective attacks. The attack carried out with the support of India was meant to fuel sectarianism in the country.

Pak-China air exercise, Lt Col (R) Ghulam Gilani Khan, *Daily Pakistan*, 06 January²⁶

Pakistan China air exercises, conducted every year since 2011, were concluded successfully in December. This year they were called the “Shaheen-IX”. Unlike China where the air force is part of the army and is called PLAAF, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is a separate and autonomous service. During the Shaheen-VII, 2019, India attacked Balakot. In response to India’s attack, PAF brought down two Indian fighter jets on 27 February and arrested an Indian pilot Abhinandan. *This was a shock for Indian military power. To clean its image from that debacle, India expedited the process of buying 36 Rafael jets from France. Rafael were supposed to be delivered by 2023 but the Balakot debacle forced India to expedite the delivery process.* India was of the view that Rafael was better than Pakistan’s JF-17, F-16 and Mirage fighter jets. When the first Rafael fighter landed in Ambala, Indian media went gaga as if it got the whole air force of France. *Later, Rafael jets were taken to Ladakh in October 2019. It was implied that China remained the main adversary of*

²⁶<https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2021-01-06/page-9/detail-7>

India. However, the "Shaheen-IX" air exercise between PAF and PLAAF was a message to India that do not be cocky, it would not be easy to fight the joint forces of China and Pakistan. The main purpose of the "Shaheen-IX" was to answer Rafael. One Chinese commentator has compared J-10C's technical capability, its size, aerodynamic facility, aviation, weapon system, combat capability and called it a rival to France's Rafael. He also said that J-11B is much better than India SU-30 fighter plans.

Politics and army, Editorial, Jang, 13 January²⁷

The accusations thrown at the army for its meddling in the country's politics were rejected by DG ISPR on Tuesday in his meeting with the media. *The statement should clear all doubts in the minds of the people. Though in the past such accusations have been made as well, but this time the alliance of the opposition parties, PDM used it for a political stand.* In the Malakand rally (11 January 2021) the head of PDM Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the country was under unannounced martial law and therefore to send the Imran Khan led government packing, the opposition would march towards the army headquarters in Rawalpindi. *The army is indispensable for the country. But it had to clear its stand that it was neutral. DG ISPR said that there is no point for the opposition's march towards the GHQ.* He said that the army neither wants to interfere in politics nor should it be dragged into it. *The army is anxious because of the recent statements (from the opposition) but its morale remains strong,* Maj Gen Babar Iftikhar added. He said that the army comes under the government and the latter would answer the allegations. He made it clear that the army was not in contact with anybody through the backdoor. *It is a fact that in the past some power-hungry people have used the army for achieving power. But they were supported by undemocratic politicians. The people in Pakistan want democracy in the country. They prefer democratic parties.* Former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi has also said that the opposition does not want to bring down the government with the help of the army. *But he pointed out that the army leadership needs to keep the army and intelligence away from politics. Given the crisis in the country, there is a need for a national dialogue to clear all doubts and confusions.*

²⁷https://jang.com.pk/news/871307?_ga=2.198578278.873045356.1610517793-835994399.1598849708

Pakistan needs to learn from Qatar, Editorial, Ummat, 14 January²⁸

A successful foreign policy and political stability are two important aspects for a state to deal with any challenge. *Policy makers in Islamabad should know that in international politics, the idea of "friendship" is meant only to cover mutually beneficial bilateral relations. In reality, every state has to fight its own battle. Such a successful foreign policy was recently demonstrated by Qatar.* Qatar is a small state and was put under sanctions by the GCC countries. But the way Qatar dealt with the challenge is commendable. The thirteen points that the Saudi led alliance wanted Qatar to act on, including reducing ties with Iran and banning Al-Jazeera were rejected by Doha. Why could Qatar successfully deal with the sanctions and siege? *It is the successful foreign policy of Qatar for the last three and half years that has made it possible to come out of the crisis. Negative statements against Saudi Arabia were not allowed. To counter the ban, the International Court was used. Also, despite the sanctions, Qatar did not cut its business with the US. If such consistent foreign policy is practiced by Pakistan, Islamabad would not only become leader of the "Islamic world" but also a respectable member of the international community.* But Pakistan needs to learn its lesson.

Mother of the NROs- PTI's foreign funding? Saleem Safi, Jang, 20 January²⁹

The trend of NRO in Pakistan was started by Gen Pervez Musharraf after he failed to crush PPP and PML-N. *After realizing that he would not be able to continue his rule with the support of PML-Q and MQM, he reached out to the same parties that he wanted to finish off.* PPP and MQM benefitted from the deal between Benazir Bhutto and Pervez Musharraf. It also paved the way for Nawaz Sharif to return to Pakistan from exile. *Off late, NRO has become a phrase which means that it is used by the powerful forces have to save a guilty/corrupt or a party, ignore their crimes and let them continue in politics. In today's time, Prime Minister Imran Khan and spokespersons are obsessed with NRO. They claim that the opposition seeks an NRO from Imran Khan. But it unlikely for the opposition to be so foolish to seek NRO from a person who neither has the capability nor the authority give it.* Imran Khan's position is like Shaukat Aziz and Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. They both had serious issues with giving NROs as they became irrelevant. *If there is someone who is scared of NROs it is Imran Khan. But his propaganda is appreciating due to which he has put the opposition at the back foot.* Imran Khan has been saved from every single act that he has committed like

²⁸<https://www.ummat.net/2021/01/14/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

²⁹https://jang.com.pk/news/874443?_ga=2.249833861.264556838.1611125972-835994399.1598849708

burning electricity bills, allowing PTI workers to beat up police, attacking PTV and the parliament. So, he has got an NRO. *The arresting of his opponents was part of the NRO given to him. Being conferred with the label of the truthful and honest by Justice Saqib Nisar and also ending cases against Zulfi Bukhari were a part of the NRO. No cases or judgment about the BRT and the one billion tree scandals is also a part of NRO.* Despite the fact that there is enough evidence to execute the judgment but it is not being taken. The election commission cannot give a judgment in support of Imran because then it would be taken to the court and the latter would decide on the merit.

6 months delay in American troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, Arif Anjum, Ummat, 28 January³⁰

After the new US administration's announcement that Washington would reconsider the Doha agreement, Washington and Afghanistan have started new communications (about the situation). *During this, an agenda for delaying the US troop's withdrawal for six months has come forth. Meanwhile, Ghani administration has become active to make it sure that the Doha agreement with the Taliban. However, many sections in the US do not trust Ashraf Ghani.* President Biden's decision to continue with Zalmay Khalilzad meant that the former wanted to continue the current approach. *A big development in Afghanistan happened when the new national security advisor of the US, Jacob Sullivan while talking to his counterpart in Afghanistan HamdullahMohib on Friday (22 January) said that the US would revisit the Doha Agreement.* It would see what relations the Taliban have with Al Qaida and other terrorist groups. Have the Taliban acted on the agreement or not? He further said that President Ghani and NATO would be taken into account during this. *After the statement, there was a clear change in the Kabul administration. HamdullahMohib refused to release the remaining Taliban prisoners, as promised in the agreement.* The representative of the Ghani administration in Doha Nader Nadery said that the Taliban was not serious about the talks. In a recent report of the US finance department, it has been said that Al Qaida was present in Afghanistan and it was stronger than in the past the Taliban has rejected the report. The report and the statement by the US NSA have worried the sections who want peace in Afghanistan. *According to a source, there are chances of a big terror attack from NDS and R&AW. Then the Taliban would be blamed for the attack to sabotage the Doha agreement.* However, many sections in the US want withdrawal from Afghanistan. According to a source, a six months delay in

³⁰<https://www.ummat.net/2021/01/28/news.php?p=story7.gif>

the withdrawal is under consideration. Meanwhile, the ongoing talks between the Taliban and the Kabul administration would be watched and encouraged. Even if there is no progress, the withdrawal would take place after six months, the source added.

Pakistan's role in reshaping the global situation, Ikram Sehgal, Ausaf, 29 January³¹

CPEC has made Pakistan the hub of the region. After expanding to Central Asia and Afghanistan, CPEC will revive the historic Silk Road, with Pakistan as the central point. Gwadar and the Iranian port of Chabahar together connect the route to the Middle East and the Near East, and its features are beginning to emerge. But many difficult steps remain to be taken until this dream becomes a reality. *Peace in Afghanistan is mandatory for Eurasia. Luckily the Pakistani government and army are working for peace in Afghanistan learning from the past.* The enmity of the Arab countries with Iran is a major obstacle in the way of turning the Eurasian concept into reality. *These religious differences are rooted in a power struggle, which the United States and Israel have taken full advantage of by following the old principle of divide and rule.* Falling oil prices and the growing search for environmentally friendly fuels endanger the leadership of the Arab world, as their leadership role depends on oil and the wealth it generates. In addition, the monarchy in the Arab countries did not allow political and economic reforms to flourish there. *Pakistan needs to balance its foreign policy in this situation because of its religious and economic ties with the Arab world.* It is also important to keep in mind the relationship with the emerging powers as a result of the weakening economic power of oil. Iran is our neighbor and the historical roots of our relationship with it are very deep. *Effective completion of the CPEC is not possible without Iran's cooperation. Only peace in Chabahar and Afghanistan will make this project complete and effective.* Due to BRI, the competition between global leadership and even regional powers is weakening and a multipolar world is emerging. *Despite Pakistan's central role, the fulfillment of the Eurasian concept requires India to refrain from its covert and open intrigue.* India's ambitions and stubbornness have taken the trade of the landlocked eastern and western regions hostage. The partnership of different forces in world power and the Eurasian journey can no longer be stopped. Pakistan is an integral part of the BRI. If India changes its mindset and joins the CPEC, the economic growth of the entire region will accelerate many times.

³¹<https://dailyausaf.com/urdu-columns/news-202101-85767.html>

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, New wave of Terrorism in Balochistan, Geo News, 04 January³²

The Hazara's are on a protest in Quetta after the killing of the 11 Hazara labourers in Mach. They have refused to talk to the provisional government and interior Federal minister Sheikh Rashid has flown to Quetta to talk to the protesting Hazara's. The protest is organised by Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen Pakistan (MWM), a Shia political organization. *It is been argued that the security system in Balochistan is getting worst even after the posting of Frontier Corps (FC) that is supposedly stationed in the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, to maintain law and order.* The protestors blame that the FC check-post was removed just few days before from the spot of the murder of the labourers. The Geo correspondent **Suleman Sharif** from Quetta informed that the protestors will not move until their issues are resolved and are demanding the formation of a judicial commission. He pointed out that the FC has turned into an irreverent crop when it comes to the security of the minority communities in Balochistan. **He also informed that the presence of ISIS has in the region has been flagged many times in the past but the provisional government did not take note and also they are not ready to arrest the people are killing Hazaras and spreading terrorism.** *Nadeem Afzal Chand* of the PTI pointed out that it is due the failure of the Balochistan government to provide security to the Hazara that they do not want to talk to the provisional government. He argued that the murderers should be arrested, the federal government should listen to the grieving Hazara women, children and men and a national action plan should be formed. *Maulana Fazl Rehman's use of the word sharia Jihad (Islamia jihad) against the government shows its frustration and an attempt to give it a religious color.* Who is trying to take the country towards instability? Obviously some outside hand is involved. **Mia Javid latif**, PML-N pointed out that the federal government is waking up to the incident now but they should have traveled to Quetta on the first day and organise a press conference there. *The Hazara's are Pakistani's and they have a right to security just like any other ordinary citizen.* Hamid Mir reminded that the PDM leaders said that the PTI government will pack bags and go home in January 2021, he asked what happened. *Mia Javid argued that we have succeeded in changing the narrative of the people against the government.*

³²<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8u8B9I-FY2s>

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, Hazara's refused to call off the protest,ARYNews, 06 January³³

The protesting Hazara's in Quetta has refused to call off the protest until PM Imran Khan's visit Quetta and give assurance for their safety. *The host Kashif Abbasi pointed out that so far neither the PM nor any representative of the PDM have visited Quetta and all the politics is taking place on twitter with attack and counter attacks (war of words).The host asked what the position of the government & opposition is. Guests: Ali Zaidi, PTI; Senior Analysts, Meher Bhukhari, Irshad Bhatti & Salim Bhukhari. Ali Zaidi pointed out that he is still in Quetta and that the demands of the protestors are basic, except two, three demands. When asked what the two are, three demands that are not reasonable, Zaidi pointed out that one is their demand that the provisional government of Balochistan should be dissolved, second is the removal of the Inspector General of Frontier Corps (IGFC).He underlined that the IGFC is working satisfactory and that he is a very experienced man. He pointed out that the Hazara community is suffering from a long time and the scene in the protest is disturbing. About the Syed Bhukhari clip that has gone viral, he underlined that the full video should be released and the video is used out of context. Meher Bhukhari pointed out that Imran Khan has a great talent to connect everything to NRO and this Hazara incident can also be connected to it somehow by government. This government has woken up late and the interior ministry reached the protest on the third day. According to ground reports, the problem is that 7 among the 11 killed in Mach are Afghan nationals and their families will need identity proofs to get compensation. Afghan embassy has already written letter for the return of the seven bodies of the Afghan nationals. Irshad Bhatti questioned what happened to the PM's Ehsaas programme to sympathize with the poor, why is he not showing his feelings to the Hazara's of Quetta protesting in this chilled cold. He argued that if the government is doing optics then there can be no bigger optics for the time being then the Hazara's protesting with the bodies of their loved ones and refusing to bury them until PM's visit.PM is busy in attacking the opposition and calling meetings to counter attacks by PDM. Even PDM is questionable, they are doing Jalsa's but have no time to visit Quetta. Salim Bhukhari argued that the government is not coming out with any statement on the attack because the Daesh has claimed responsibility and the issue is that Pakistan have so far refused to accept the presence of ISIS. They should owe it and say threat is genuine, they are Pakistani people and not from India or Nepal. Some institutions are trying its best to make it sectarian issue.*

³³<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5OV96FjY0As>

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Army rejects allegation of meddling in political affairs, says willoffer PDM *chai-pani* if they come to Pindi! Geo News, 11 January³⁴

DG ISPR Babar Iftikhar in a press conference on 11th January answered two important questions raised by media, **first** related to Imran Khan's statement that *PDM is pressurizing the establishment to bring down the PTI government, if not COAS should be removed. Second*, about Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman's statement about a possible long march to Pindi. When asked about the PDM's demand THE DG completely denied *about any backchannels talks with the PDM and underlined there is no such thing, we want to stay out of it and are out of it for good.* About the Pindi March he pointed out that there is no need for such a march and if they want to come we will take care of them and serve water and tea. Hamid Mir in this latest episode asked, if there is any hidden message to the PDM in the answers of the DG ISPR? **Guests:** Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Senior leader PML-N & Asad Umar, Pakistan Minister of Finance. **Shahid Khaqan Abbasi pointed out that Imran Khan should watch this interview of DG ISPR to get some clarity that there is no communication or any sort of pressure from the opposition on the establishment.** About the criticism of the army in the PDM Jalsa's he pointed out that some protests speeches are broadcasted some or not, it should all be shown to the people, we are not questioning the army but the fact that election 2018 was fraud and asking who is responsible for it. *The DG ISPR has openly stated that they do not want to meddle in politics and it should be implemented.* When asked about rumours of meeting Nawaz Sharif in London as he is currently in London, he informed that it is not possible for him to meet because of the SOP's but he wanted to meet. Also added now there is no message to be delivered from his side. He informed that his name was in ECL list but the government gave him one time exemption to fly out of the country due to family health emergency. **Asad Umar** I want to appeal to the media that it should play a positive role in spreading the message about containing the corona virus. The economy in 2020 has gone down due to the lockdown, 35% finances have gone down, more than two crore jobs have gone but now they are steadily been employed. *If the virus will be controlled then economy will go up otherwise it is difficult. Inflation is a challenge and will be a challenge in 2021, food inflation has to be controlled and the government is trying to bring down the percentage and trying to keep it at balance.*

³⁴<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBMfhFsgJN0>

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, Battle of words between Government & Opposition over 'broadsheet expose' continue, ARYNews, 13 January³⁵

Kashif Abbasi pointed out that both the government and opposition is busy attacking and blaming each other after this expose, the PM has blamed the PML-N and Nawaz Sharif for looting the money of the country and stashing it in foreign banks, on the other hand the PML-N denied any involvement. Linking it to Panama case, PM pointed out after Panama, the broadsheet case has once again exposed the corruption of rich bureaucrats of Pakistan. He asked why there is so much political point scoring on the broadsheet case? **Guests:** Saleem Bukhari (Journalist Analyst), Irshad Bhatti (Journalist Columnist), Farrukh Habib, PTI & Mian Javed Latif, PMLN. **Saleem Bukhari** pointed out that just like the Panama case, the battle of words between the government and opposition will continue for a long time on the latest broadsheet revelations. *He underlined that there should be an inquiry about the allegations of Bribery by Nawaz Sharif that the broadsheet LLC owner Kaveh Moussavi exposed in the press conference, however he also talked about NAB and how it asked the company to inquire about long list of people.* Why nobody is talking about it? Also the point that Shahzad Akbar the PTI leader's negotiation with his company, all these should be discussed in the open. **Irshad Bhatti** pointed out that Nawaz Sharif has been exposed again just like Panama and the owner of the Broadsheet LLC is saying Nawaz Sharif is a liar and that not only in London, Sharif has properties all over the World. If Nawaz Sharif is right, so this is the right time to prove himself not guilty. *Nawaz Sharif has been three times PM of Pakistan and that is why Panama and now broadsheet case will be discussed for long time.* **Farrukh Habib** pointed out that the new thing in this broadsheet case is that the list of lies of Nawaz Sharif has increased. Money laundering was done by Nawaz Sharif and he and his family was the beneficiary. PM is trying that the wrong decisions of the past governments should not be the reason for tax and price inflations. PML-N has many front mans and in this broadsheet case too they will try to pass the buck on someone. **Mian Javed Latif** argued that although the broadsheet has named many others but the government will target the PML-N just like in the Panama case there were almost four hundred names but only Nawaz Sharif was targeted viciously. *He pointed out that the foreign funding case against Imran Khan is pending since six years, can the government reveal its status.* Can we blindly trust someone from UK blaming any Pakistani? Why there is so much discussion in Pakistan over this issue? PM can't hide behind the broadsheet case to save his selected government.

³⁵<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zSqMYxItTJE>

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Will Joe Biden see Pakistan from Afghanistan lens? *Geo News*, 20 January³⁶

Hamid Mir pointed out that Pakistan has already *conferred the highest civilian award Hilal-e-Pakistan to Joe Biden* and asked how the change in guard from Donald Trump to Joe Biden will impact the Pakistan-US relations, the Kashmir issue and the ongoing Afghanistan peace process. **Guests:** Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, Fawad Chaudary, PTI & Sherry Rehman, PPP. **Mushahid Hussain Syed** pointed out that the New US Administration under President Biden presents Pakistan an opportunity to promote Pakistani interests, *especially after having earned goodwill on positive role for peace in Afghanistan*. He argued that *it is important to expose Modi's Intolerant India for its massive Human Rights abuses in Occupied Kashmir*. He added that Joe Biden has been to Pakistan and knows the country and its politics well. He underlined that US wants end of war in Afghanistan because it has lost the war already but it will retain security and intelligence in Afghanistan in order to keep an eye on Pakistan, Iran and China. It is good news for Pakistan that Joe Biden and VP Kamala Harris have both in the criticised India for mishandling the Kashmir issue. He informed that the senate has within the last two months passed two important resolutions one for Asiya Andrabi and her colleagues who are in Tihar jail and another for Yassin Malik, who is behind the bars since 25 years. Both of them are part of the peaceful resistance in Kashmir and has talked against the Modi government. *There will be a special Senate meeting on 27 January 2021 that will be attended by the Foreign Minister to highlight the Kashmir issue and form strategy to tackle the issue in the future*. US cannot fully criticise CPEC but will use India to damage China and CPEC. They have formed a copycat of BRI called **International Finance Development Cooperation (IDFC)** with 2 Arab but have not used it so far. **Fawad Chaudary** argued that personal relationships between leaders are fine but policies of countries depend on the interests of the countries, the US-Pakistan relations too will depend on mutual interest of the two countries. *He pointed out that Imran Khan has worked and revived the foreign policy of Pakistan*. The team appointed by Joe Biden for human rights have a better record than the previous one under Trump. Basically the problem of Pakistan in India is the human rights violation in Kashmir, our hope is that the new administration will show some sensitivity on this issue. **Sherry Rehman** pointed out that Pakistan can play a significant role in the Afghanistan peace process and has to make sure Pakistan is not blamed for the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan as and when it happens. *US has already announced military training programmes for Pakistan*, which

³⁶https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hT_n1nDH6mw

is a good sign but there would not be a radical change of US towards Pakistan. *Pakistan will get small favours but overall US will try to maintain the institutional policy and in the pivot of Asia, India will remain significant in containing China.*

Sethi Sey Sawal, A divided PDM: is the movement on the verge of breakdown? Najam Sethi Official, 27 January³⁷

The PDM movement is facing some serious challenges with the main opposition parties PPP and PML-N taking individual stands. The PPP has underlined that the best way to challenge and end the PTI government is through a vote of no confidence in the national assembly and not through the street power. While at the same time Maryam Nawaz has informed that there will be a long march as well as resignations from assemblies. The JUI-F chief Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman has already threatened to pull out as the head of PDM due to the solo flights taken by the PPP and PML-N. **In this episode the host Tamkinet Karim asked Najam Sethi, is the PDM on the verge of breakdown? What is its future? Najam Sethi** pointed out that at this point due to the divided voices among the stakeholders of the PDM, the movement looks weak. The media in Pakistan as well as the independent journalists are pointing out that the momentum which was supposed to be created from the PDM protests has not been seen so far. He pointed out that the real issue is why *Asif Ali Zardari and Bilawal changed their stand abruptly and started talking about vote of no confidence as a solution opposed to the protests and Jalsa's.* Sethi underlined that Imran Khan Government has shifted the focus of investigation to the broadsheet and with this has also indicated to open files of late Benazir Bhutto. So now the focus of the PTI has shifted from Nawaz Sharif to the Bhutto family and therefore the PPP is feeling the heat, due to this they have softened the approach and talked about no confidence motion. He pointed out that Zardari and PPP has much to lose if the PTI government stays for its full term, PML-N and JUI-F has not much to lose in the current scenario. *Although the government is trying to split the PDM but they all will have to come together again forcibly because they have no option.* He noted that even if Zardari stays or not it will not impact the PDM because PPP has not contributed much to the movement, but if Maryam or Maulana leaves the PDM it will be detrimental for the movement. He pointed out that gossips in the power corridor are rip that *the establishment want to bring Bilawal Bhutto to run the national government* (Maryam cannot be an option). Bilawal will be happy as he will get the government as well as be able to keep Sindh intact. But PML-N and JUI-F are not so happy with this, so it cannot materialize. In the end any change will be through Parliament because

³⁷<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i8VW2dsCJ84>

Imran Khan will not leave himself. On 04 February PDM will organise a grand gathering in which the long march will be discussed and there will not be any major announcement. *He pointed out that unless there will be resignations by oppositions from assemblies there will not be any issues for the government. Then will be a real crisis.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
South Waziristan ³⁸	18/01/2020	Security forces kill two terrorists in South Waziristan: ISPR	02	00
Peshawar ³⁹	24/01/2021	Senior Afghan Taliban commander shot dead near Peshawar.	01	00
Balochistan				
Bolan ⁴⁰	04/01/2021	11 coal miners shot dead in Balochistan	11	00
Turbat ⁴¹	10/01/2021	Grenade attack leaves five injured in Balochistan's Turbat	00	05

³⁸<https://nation.com.pk/18-Jan-2021/security-forces-kill-two-terrorists-in-south-waziristan-ispr>

³⁹<https://dailytimes.com.pk/716767/senior-afghan-taliban-commander-shot-dead-near-peshawar/>

⁴⁰<https://dailytimes.com.pk/709679/11-coal-miners-shot-dead-in-balochistan/>

⁴¹<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2279402/grenade-attack-leaves-five-injured-in-balochistans-turbat>

