

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The PM and the 'elite', Editorial, Daily Times, 04 May¹

Yet again the prime minister has made his own government's lockdown strategy, to combat the spread of the coronavirus of course; controversial by saying it was imposed by the "elite" without the slightest regard for the common man. Now, it's been a good couple of days since the not-so-enlightening observation yet nobody's any wiser about what the prime minister really meant. *And who really is the "elite" of the country that somehow hijacked his own government and went ahead with the lockdown despite the prime minister's strong objections?* If he means previous governments, since he holds them accountable for practically everything that is wrong with the country, even the response to the coronavirus, then surely he means only the previous Nawaz Sharif government. Surely he couldn't have found much wrong with the dispensations before Nawaz 3.0 *since many of their senior leaders are members of Imran's cabinet as well. And even many of the core PTI followers, those that have been around a very long time and have not been affiliated with too many other parties, have sizeable bank accounts to boast.* All these things considered it behoves Prime Minister Imran Khan to display a little more solid leadership than his usual style of not caring about what he says as long as somebody else, preferably the opposition, gets all the blame.

Lockdown answers, Editorial, Dawn, 05 May²

Pakistan's confirmed coronavirus cases have crossed the 20, 500 mark with over 450 recorded deaths. These figures have been calculated after a total of 212,000 tests, with maximum daily testing at 9,500. At this rate, and with some lockdown restrictions still in place, nearly 10pc of those being tested are confirmed positive and 2pc of them are dying. If restrictions are lifted, these figures will worsen, because unlike traffic accidents, the number of coronavirus cases can expand exponentially. An individual with the virus can infect two to three others, and those infected can in turn transmit it to many more. If we are looking at a confirmed death rate of two out of every 100 right now, a situation in which millions are confirmed as having infections may result in a high number of deaths in a population where diabetes, heart disease and cancer are not uncommon. *Our hospitals are simply not equipped to handle such a high volume of critical cases.* The government is still too far from its goal of 25,000 daily tests and therefore unaware of the true spread of infection.

Whose policy is it anyway? Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 06 May³

¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/606435/the-pm-and-the-elite/>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1554656/lockdown-answers>

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1554941/whose-policy-is-it-anyway>

The leadership's whimsical approach is the biggest impediment in the way of formulating a more rational and holistic strategy that is required to deal with public health and economic challenges simultaneously. In fact, those in charge have never seriously considered the crisis primarily as a public health issue. *By blaming some imaginary force for a policy that has the approval of all stakeholders, the prime minister can only undermine his own authority, for many people will see it as an admission of things slipping out of his control.* It's true that the prime minister has never been convinced about the necessity for a lockdown. But his recent remarks were disturbing. Most worrisome is the fact that a large number of Pakistani expatriates brought back especially from the Gulf countries have been diagnosed with Covid-19. The theory that Pakistan with its large youth population and warmer climate may not be as badly hit as other countries has yet to be substantiated. Trivializing the danger could be disastrous. *Instead of uniting the country to deal with the challenge, the federal government's policy has widened divisions.*

Irresponsibility on part of leaders, Editorial, Daily Times, 08 May⁴

It just beggars belief that the federal and Sindh governments still haven't agreed on the necessity of the lockdown, or lack thereof. From Sindh's point of view especially, the frustration is understandable. They won points down south for taking timely steps, especially going further than other provinces and also closing down mosques even for Ramazan, but they also kept complaining that the attitude of the centre compromised their lockdown to a large extent. *When the prime minister is encouraging people to go out and about, surely a lot of people will do so no matter what Karachi says.* And so, complains Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, their plan of locking down firmly, so the virus doesn't spread, and then opening up slowly was diluted by none other than the ruling party of the country. And since then the two parties have been at loggerheads. It's a shame, really, that the country's leaders put self-interest and even their giant egos ahead of the people's most pressing concerns. PM Khan has been dead against talking to any party of the opposition simply because he knows in his heart, from the looks of things, that everybody in any party other than his is just completely corrupt and it is beneath him to engage with them. *Everything changes, of course, when the same people jump ship and join Imran Khan's party.*

May Day! May Day! Najam Sethi, The Friday Times, 09 May⁵

⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/608404/irresponsibility-on-part-of-leaders/>

*Thus Imran Khan has been making his own counter moves on the chessboard. When there was talk of some sort of “deal” in the offing between the Miltablishment and the Sharif’s for regime change, he put a spoke in the wheel by stopping Maryam Nawaz from joining her father abroad, arresting party stalwarts, and launching corruption cases against Shahbaz Sharif and his sons. When the Sindh Chief Minister, Murad Ali Shah, was earning kudos for following the Miltablishment’s lockdown advice, the PM sent in his hounds to sic him and derail his policies. Now he has made bold to turn his guns on the Chaudhries of Gujarat even though they hold the balance of the PTI government in the Punjab. Why is that? At every stage, the Chaudhries have jockeyed for more power in the Punjab, even flirting with the opposition outside the Assembly and being soft on them inside it. Now the pressure to change CM Buzdar has increased. So Imran Khan has decided to dangle the sword of Damocles on the head of the Chaudhries by digging up a dead case from 2000 so that they should stop conspiring for the coveted position. **This is killing two birds with one stone. He is stopping them in their tracks while sending out a message to his loyal followers that he is also holding the corrupt within his ranks accountable rather than only victimizing the opposition. This is gamesmanship.***

PTI’s annual 18th Amendment debate, Hassan Niazi, *The Express Tribune*, 12 May⁶

*Whenever the PTI faces criticism for its response to national issues, its rank and file appears on television to deliver a stump speech blaming the 18th Amendment. Sometimes, they even start contemplating more drastic changes to our constitutional system, such as the last year’s debate on whether Pakistan should adopt a presidential model of government. **This spell of daydreaming is interrupted by reality reminding members of the PTI that they do not have the numbers to amend the Constitution. Provincial autonomy was something that the PTI celebrated after the 2013 elections when it won Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) but not the federal government.** Now when the tables have turned, they appear to hate it, shocked at the fact that the Constitution puts curbs on their power. But that’s how a federation works. The Centre can’t rule over the provinces like colonies — an issue that was partly to blame for the split of Bangladesh in 1971. The PTI’s frustration with the 18th Amendment comes from its victory in 2018 being less than ideal. Winning the National Assembly by a minuscule margin forced it to contemplate working with the opposition. **And the inability to win Sindh meant that the PPP could trace its own path independent of the federal government.** Critics of the*

⁵ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/may-day-may-day/>

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2219335/6-ptis-annual-18th-amendment-debate/>

18th Amendment should understand that the PTI did not win the Sindh government. As per our Constitution, that means the province has autonomy no matter how much this may frustrate the Centre. *To tear down the 18th Amendment on this basis is ludicrous. It would put individual rule on a higher pedestal than institutional development.*

State of anarchy, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 20 May⁷

The court's observation appears contrary to the WHO's declaration of Covid-19 as a global pandemic. *Pakistan would perhaps be the only country in denial about the pandemic. That raises questions about the measures that are required to deal with this unprecedented public health challenge.* How can the citizens be expected to follow the rules if they are made to believe that there is no contagion threatening their lives? Seemingly encouraged by the Supreme Court order, the clerics are also set to defy the rules and are saying they will open mosques for prayers. *A statement signed by a group of leading clerics said that since nothing was sure about the coronavirus pandemic, Muslims couldn't leave religious rituals out of fear.* Interestingly, the federal government has not only been actively backing the clerics threatening to defy the ban on congregational prayers, but also inciting traders to violate the restrictions imposed by the Sindh government. Now some are calling for imposition of governor's rule in the province. When the country needs unity more than at any other time, the ruling party is doing everything to intensify political polarization in the country. *It is apparent that the federal leadership lacks seriousness and is not able to effectively deal with the existential crisis. It has unnecessarily created a controversy by putting the economy before public health.*

Sugar probe, Editorial, Dawn, 27 May⁸

The government of Prime Minister Imran Khan is being commended for sharing with the public the findings of the FIA-led inquiry commission set up last month to conduct a forensic analysis of nine sugar companies to determine the reasons for an abrupt and steep surge in the domestic price of sugar during the winter. *Even the alleged involvement of some key politicians — or their close relatives — linked to the PTI government and its allies at the centre and in Punjab did not deter Mr. Khan from ordering a more thorough probe and making its conclusions public.* The commission has failed to pin responsibility for letting the industry export sugar and claim substantial subsidy. The official argument is that the ECC allowed the export of 'surplus' sugar and Punjab announced a subsidy on it in the wake of

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1558447/state-of-anarchy>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1559648/sugar-probe>

farmers' protest against the mill owners' refusal to start the crushing season on the appointed date. *It does not hold much water because it is the government's job to implement the law and not crumble under pressure from vested interests. Those who cannot withstand such pressure will only be looked upon as having failed the people.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Debt Relief, Editorial, Dawn, 22 May⁹

Pakistan is on the verge of receiving debt relief under the G20 plan and according to an official announcement the total amount is \$2bn. There is a possibility that this amount will increase if the period of coverage is extended beyond December 2020. At the moment, the relief is being extended to loans from bilateral creditors, accompanied by a call from the G20 to private creditors to also offer "comparable terms". Now that the relief is imminent, it is important to emphasize that it be utilized in a manner consistent with the rationale under which it has been offered. The G20 moved at the behest of the multilateral creditors, the World Bank and the IMF, and all three have made it very clear that the resources they seek to free up are to be utilized for the fight against the coronavirus. One part of this fight is the management of the economic fallout that the pandemic and its attendant mitigation efforts have created. But in significant measure, resources are required for social protection and ramped-up health investments.

SECURITY SITUATION

Is Pakistan considering herd immunity? Fahd Husain, Dawn, 13 May¹⁰

As life returns to semi-normalcy with the easing of lockdown by the government, there is heightened concern that Pakistan may be opening up too soon and too fast and pushing policy inadvertently towards 'herd immunity' against Covid-19. No government in the world has publicly supported the case for herd immunity because of the huge risk to human life it entails. The concept centres around enough people in the population – as many as 70 per

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1558894/debt-relief>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1556710/is-pakistan-considering-herd-immunity>

cent in the case of Covid-19 – getting infected thereby building up their immunity to the virus. With an overwhelming majority having developed such immunity, the rest of the population would be much more secure and the infection would gradually fade away. In Pakistan, too, no official admits that herd immunity has been discussed as a policy option. These officials – *while denying that the actual concept of herd immunity has been discussed in meetings – maintain that immunity will kick in sooner or later and that along with the already relatively low mortality rate will ensure the Covid-19 situation remains under control.* “Everyone will get herd immunity ultimately as the virus runs its course,” says an official.

NAB’s politics, Editorial, Dawn, 15 May¹¹

The National Accountability Bureau has stepped up its investigations against the PML-N president Shahbaz Sharif and has been summoning him for interrogations on a regular basis. The PML-N has termed these allegations a pack of lies and reiterated its position that NAB is unleashing persecution on opposition members including Shahbaz Sharif at the behest of the government. In the meantime, NAB has once again summoned former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi despite the fact that nothing substantive has been brought out against him in a court of law. Politics, it seems, is heating up in sync with the alarming Covid-19 situation. There is much that does not add up here. *The conduct of NAB has become so controversial that it is very difficult to believe that its actions are not laced with partisan politicking.* This perception is solidified every time opposition leaders are hauled up on flimsy charges while government ministers charged with similar offences are left alone. NAB has done itself no favours by refusing to nullify this negative perception. On the contrary, the bureau has stepped up its activities against those who are opposed to the PTI government. *This is unfortunate because NAB is a taxpayer-funded organisation that is mandated to carry out accountability in a manner that is impartial.* In this respect, NAB has been a spectacular failure. Similarly, the PTI government has done a disservice to the cause of accountability by subordinating it to the political interests of the party leadership.

Terrorism under Covid-19, Muhammad Amir Rana, Dawn, 17 May¹²

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1557233/nabs-politics>

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1557728/terrorism-under-covid-19>

Pakistan has also seen a slight surge in terrorist attacks in the last two months, though it cannot be linked to the pandemic as there is no major shift from the pre-virus trends. *The merged tribal districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and some parts of Balochistan have been hotspots of insecurity and violence for several months now. There have been concerns about the growing presence and activities of militants in parts of the tribal districts, mainly North and South Waziristan.* Most security incidents, including militant attacks, in recent weeks have been reported from areas closer to the Pak-Afghan border, such as Datta Khel. Militants may also be expanding their areas of presence and operation. Reportedly, the TTP and other militants were trying to hit their native towns to reclaim their lost *influence. Outfits like Jamaatul Ahrar could also try to regroup in their towns of origin, including Bajaur and Orakzai.* Questions are also being raised about the possible return of Pakistani Taliban militants sheltering across the border in Afghanistan who may want to relocate to their native towns in the tribal districts.

Waziristan murders, Editorial, Dawn, 20 May¹³

Last week, police received confirmed reports that two girls were murdered in a village bordering North and South Waziristan, purportedly to 'restore' their families' 'honour' after a mobile phone video of them began circulating on social media. For such crimes to be committed today, despite all the shock and horror expressed over previous high-profile cases, and despite all of *Pakistan's legislative achievements and claims to uphold the rule of law, a culture of impunity for crimes against women must obviously remain entrenched in the hearts and minds of many in the far reaches of the land where the law dare not trespass.* Tribal 'custom' is a law unto itself, with the state apparatus abdicating practically all responsibility in pursuing legal action for gender-based crimes, and a public inured to brutality shrugging off or condoning the murder of yet another woman. MNA North Waziristan Mohsin Dawar said of the recent murders, *"Honour killings are an extreme expression of patriarchal violence, and the practice has to be condemned in the strongest terms ... timely justice must be served"*. More leaders must speak out for attitudes to change and justice to prevail.

One thousand and counting, Editorial, Daily Times, 21 May¹⁴

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1558442/waziristan-murders>

¹⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/615585/one-thousand-and-counting-daily-times/>

Pakistan has now surpassed the grim milestone of one thousand deaths from the coronavirus. Government officials are right in claiming that the overall number of deaths here, compared to other countries, has been rather low. But then they should also see other data sets that are coming out, which indicate that Pakistan's daily count of new infections is now among the highest in the world. Let's not forget that all the time we are experimenting with the relaxation, the disease will be spreading and people, unfortunately, will be dying. Both infections and deaths have risen sharply over the last month or so, which shows a very disturbing trajectory. Medical authorities, whose murmurs of discontent about such verdicts have had to be kept within safe confines for obvious reasons, must now prepare for their own worst case scenario. It's one thing for authorities, or the court, to say that one thing didn't work out, despite the best intentions, so another can now be tried. But for doctors the fallout will overwhelm hospitals and deprive a lot of people suffering from other diseases of their services. On another front, it will also mean another shutdown and yet worse financial squeeze. The one thousand mark should provide authorities with a somber moment of reflection about what is really needed.

Fifth-generation war and Asim Bajwa's expertise, Assadullah Ghalib, *Nawai-Waqt*, 05 May¹⁵

Gen (R) Asim Bajwa has resumed the office in information and broadcasting ministry at a time when journalism is in bad condition. Asim Bajwa has established himself as a fighter in the country against fifth-generation war. India has been continuously waging propaganda war against Pakistan. It did it in 1965 and 1971 wars. The propaganda was meant to attack morale of Pakistanis. *Now we have moved beyond fifth-generation war. I call it twenty-twenty generation war. Unfortunately the front is vacant in Pakistan. Thousands of journalists in Pakistan which can be effective in the front are jobless.* Many big media houses are closing down. Asim Bajwa knows the fact that being a nuclear power no one will dare to attack Pakistan. *We need to win mental and psychological battle. What can be the Corona virus pandemic called? Some call it biological warfare. Asim Bahwa needs to tell the people of Pakistan what is this pandemic? Why is every guideline of WHO being followed? Why have borders become irrelevant? It will be duty of Asim Bajwa to give hope to the people.* Inflation is high. People fear it may increase further. *Second target of corona is Islam. The Harmain Sharief, Haj and Umrah, mosques across the world are closed. This fifth generation war has targeted our fundamental belief: Our belief is our strength against enemy.* How will Asim Bajwa restore that belief? He knows

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-05-05/page-4/detail-5>

his stuff well and can succeed. I have lot of hopes from Gen (R) Asim Bajwa and pray for his success!

PROVINCES & REGIONS

GB

Caretaker Govt in Gilgit Baltistan: Unprecedented Challenges amidst COVID 19, Sheraz Abdullah, *Pamir Times*, 28 May¹⁶

The present Government of Gilgit Baltistan (GB) will complete its five years term on June 24th, 2020 and the next general elections for the Gilgit Baltistan Assembly will fall due within prescribed time thereafter depending on the situations in GB. In the absence of clarity for the rules of game for upcoming elections, once again Supreme Court of Pakistan (SCOP) intervened at the request of Federal Government and ordered to conduct the elections. *On April 30, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court in Islamabad, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed, had allowed the government to organize general elections in GB, and to set up a caretaker government there before that.* The decision primarily focused on very important historical and constitutional issues involving the status, authority and powers of GB including the judiciary and the rights available to its people. *What was needed after that judgment back then was that all the political parties join the hands together and show their political willingness to let GB grow constitutionally.* Preventive measures and a nationwide dialogue including the representatives from GB and other state-owned institutions would have been held immediately to help implementing the recommendations emerging as a result of these dialogues. *The political leadership at GB and Federal Government failed to take necessary actions to implement a constitutionally understood framework and remained idle for almost five months till the time SCOP intervened once again at the request of the Federal Government.* The absence of Laws, Rules and Regulations to conduct elections and to put in place a caretaker set up to ensure that such elections are held under a neutral and impartial *Government providing a level playing field to all parties and candidates participating in the elections*

¹⁶<https://pamirtimes.net/2020/05/19/caretaker-govt-in-gilgit-baltistan-unprecedented-challenges-amidst-covid-19/>

would cause a constitutional vacuum which will create legal and constitutional complications.

URDU MEDIA

Why cannot 18th Amendment be changed? Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 01 May¹⁷

On the proposal by the Government that the 18th Amendment needs to be revisited, opposition has reacted strongly. Leader of JUI-F Maluna Fazl-ur Rehman has started to reach out to other parties and unite them against any such move by the Government. *The Moulana said that any change in the amendment will not be accepted.* The 18th Amendment was passed during PPP's regime in 2010. It divided authorities between the provinces and federal government. It gave the departments of health and education to provincial governments to run. Though the PML-N had also supported the amendment at that time but it expressed reservations during its rule at the centre. Even PPP has expressed its concerns on the appointments of Chief Election Commissioner and NAB chairman. PTI expressed its reservations about the amendment as soon as it came to power. *Indeed, the amendment it is not infallible. It is right of the parliament to amend the constitution according to democratic principles.* Information and broadcasting federal minister Shibli Faraz said that the amendment is not a God's word that cannot be touched. *PPP and ANP are opposing any tinkering with the amendment because they benefited the most from it (PPP aur ANP ki janab se es tarmeem mei rad-u-badal ki mehaz es liye mukhalifat ki ja rahi hai ki es tarmeem se sub se zayda enhein hi fayada phooncha).* *PML-N does not seem to be agreeing with PPP and other parties on the matter. Since any change in the amendment will require two/third majority, PTI can reach out to PML-N for support to see the change in the amendment through.* If the amendment is meeting the demands of the situation, it needs to change according to the constitution.

Reasons for failure of 18th Amendment, Muzamil Suherwardy, *Roznama Express*, 04 May¹⁸

¹⁷ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-05-01/page-4/detail-9>

Debates on 18th Amendment are gaining momentum in the country. But it cannot be changed at will. Any change in the law requires two/third majority in the NA. ***PTI Government does not even enjoy simple majority. If PML-N joins hands with PTI, then the amendment can be changed.*** PPP takes credit for 18th Amendment. But it could not deliver. Though it takes its share from NFC but PPP has not done anything on provincial finance commission. If PPP would have set a strong district level administration, had distributed funds fairly and set up provincial finance commission, no one would have raised question on the amendment. ANP was in power in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa when 18th Amendment was brought in but the party failed to deliver. In Balochistan also regional parties did nothing to implement 18th Amendment. In Punjab, then ruling party PML-N made a dummy municipal system in with no actual authority. ***Provincial governments are ready to drain resources from the center but would not give them to local administrations.*** These political parties want democracy in the country: They do not like democracy within the parties. ***Authoritarian forces in the country are unhappy with the amendment as they want a powerful center. They want control on resources. PTI itself says in a lighter vein that the establishment is part of the power in the center. Apparently it is civilian government but the remote is in the hands of the establishment.*** (yaqeenun mulik mei aameryut ki khawhaan quwatein es atharwein tarmeem se khush nhi hain. Kamzoor wifaaq per qabza kar ke enhoo ne kya kar na hai. Wasayil tu sub soboon ke pass hain. Tahreek-i-Insaf khud kehte huye muskarti hain ki es establishment es ke saath shreek-e-iqtidaar hai.) However, as long as the center is weak even remote will not be effective. By not implementing the amendment on the ground and not setting up municipality system, political parties have paved way for change in the amendment. Without local administration and municipality system 18th Amendment is ineffective. Both authoritarian forces and democratic forces do not want complete democracy. That is why both fail.

Pressure on PML-N for unconditional support on 18th Amendment, Report, Ummat, 05 May¹⁹

Government has made the 18th Amendment as its main target. ***PML-N is being brought under pressure for unconditional support to change some clauses in the amendment on provincial autonomy*** (Subai khud mukhtari se mutaliq es ayeeni tarmeem ki ba'az shaqoon mei tabdeli ki liye noon-legue per belamashroot taawoon ka sakht dabao hai). It is said that Shehbaz Sharif is facing arrest

¹⁸https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1107406488&Issue=NP_ISB&Date=20200504

¹⁹ <http://ummat.net/2020/05/05/news.php?p=story2.gif>

threats because of that strategy. *According to a source, though PML-N is ready to cooperate in changing the amendment but it demands give and take formula. It wants that some change should be made in NAB also. That will give some relief to Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz.* The source said that apart from PML-N and PPP, PTI also agrees on the need to change the NAB ordinance. They had agreed to bring in the change but it got delayed. The debates on the 18th Amendment have brought the issue back. However, Imran Khan and some of his close members do not support change in the NAB ordinance. They think it will help Nawaz Sharif and his daughter. Clause 15 is at debate in which anyone was declared ineligible after sentenced punishment by court. *However some members within PTI also want change in the clause as they are also under NAB's wrath.* According to the source, if the back channel talks between the government and PML-N fail, Shahbaz may be arrested by the Eid.

Neither fish nor flesh, nor good red herring, Editorial, Ummat, 15 May²⁰

Because of the confusion and discord between the federal and provincial governments on lockdown and policy to deal with Corona virus pandemic, many people, small businessmen, labours have become jobless and are starving. Many factories are closed. The relaxation in the lockdown before Eid has created more troubles. Prime Minister Imran Khan was right on not imposing complete lockdown in the country. *Many people in Pakistan live on daily earnings. They would go out for selling and buying if lockdown is eased, disregarding social distancing. This increases chances for spread of corona virus.* If normal work was allowed under strict law and ensuring all safety measures that would have helped in curbing spread of the virus. Instead allowing of markets to open for few hours for four days in a week has generated lot of rush. Police is unable to control the crowd. At many places clashes took place between police and people. *If shops were allowed to open in phases for 24 hours, that would have helped in controlling the rush. It would have also helped to manage the Eid rush. In contrast there are reports police is using opportunity to take money. Many politicians are asking for huge amounts for opening shops and businesses.* Eid is an occasion to greet and distribute freely among friends and needy. But because of the inefficient government policies there are all possibilities of confrontations. The people who sit at the top do not realize that how can people earn when transport continues to remain suspended. If the government really wants to help people it needs to shun its neither flesh nor fish policy.

How can we accept Israel? Prof Abu Zehra Sajidi, Ummat, 18 May²¹

²⁰ <http://ummat.net/2020/05/15/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

²¹ <http://ummat.net/2020/05/18/news.php?p=idr2.gif>

Founding father of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Jinnah had criticized Israel after it was implanted in West Asia with the help of America and Britain. *The criticism was not for the sake of it: It had an ideology behind it. Jinnah knew that the state of Israel would displace the indigenous people and would subject them to violence.* In his brief stint as Governor General of Pakistan, Jinnah focused more on Israel than any other foreign policy issue. *He said that “Israel is a usurper state and Pakistan will never accept it” (Israel ek ga’asib riyasat hai aur Pakistan ese kabhi bhi tasleem nhi kare ga).* Only two states emerged on the name of particular ideologies: Israel and Pakistan. Pakistan was created for the Muslims of the sub-continent where they could practice their faith freely. Israel was created as a usurper state by expelling Palestinians for Jews across the world. *Israel considers only Pakistan as a threat to it. That is why it called our nuclear bomb “the Islamic Bomb”. It established good relations with our arch enemy India and supports it on every anti-Pakistan policy (esi sabub Israel hi ne Pakistan ke nuclear bom ko Islami bom karar diya aur humare a’zli dushman Bharat ke saath intahayi kareebi talooqat qayim kar ke har mehaaz per Paksitan mukhalif sazishoo ke hawale se pushit panahi karta raha).* Some sections think that along with bringing down three Indian fighter jets in February last year, an Israeli jet was also brought down and the pilot was arrested. *Israel thinks Pakistan is a threat to it, as pointed by Avigdor Lieberman, former foreign minister of Israel. He said in an interview to a Russian paper that though Iran remains a threat to Israel but currently the issues in Pakistan and Afghanistan are more important. He said that Afghanistan and Pakistan are not threat only to Israel but to whole world.* People of Pakistan also support Palestinians. Following the history and feelings of the people, governments in Pakistan have never established relations with Israel. The policy will be continued and the “usurper state” will never be accepted.

Ghani-Abdullah truce a welcome development, Editorial, Jang, 19 May²²

The truce between Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah may bring an end to political uncertainty in Afghanistan. The political crisis had emerged after Abdullah had cried foul about the September 2019 national elections. *The truce between Ghani and Abdullah has raised possibility of peace in the country. For intra-Afghan dialogue to happen it was necessary that these two rivals should have come together.* According to the agreement, Ghani will remain the President but the cabinet will comprise of people nominated by the both. *Ghani has worked with Abdullah on similar working relationship in his last tenure as the president. The only difference is that the last agreement was mediated by the US but the current one is facilitated by Afghan political leaders.* Immediately after the truce, Abdullah wrote on tweeter that we need to work as one nation and resolve the issues (*ab humein ba’heseeyut qum ek saath kaam karna aur masaa’l ka kabil-e-amil hal talaash karna*

²²https://jang.com.pk/news/772836?_ga=2.215158807.1439910392.1589780230-1172285561.1585539487

hai). FO of Pakistan, US foreign minister and representative of NATO have welcomed the development. It is hoped that now the intra-Afghan dialogue will be followed. May God help the two leaders to live up to the expectations of the Afghan people!

Fighting corona with faith and strategy, Editorial, Ummat, 27 May²³

After similar warning by the advisor on health to Prime Minister Imran Khan, information minister of Sindh Nasir Hussain has also said that if the number of COVID 19 sees an increase after Eid, complete lockdown may be re-imposed. The number of COVID 19 cases is continuously increasing in Pakistan. *The pandemic is also creating psychological and economic distress. This can lead to crisis in future. But instead of addressing the problem, politicians in Pakistan are busy in mudslinging. More dangerous is the conflict between the government and the religious sections (siasī ekhtilaf se bhi zayada khatarnaakh who intishaar hai jo hokumat aur deni halqoo ke mutazaad rawayoo ki wajah se pyada huwa hai).* Most of the population is illiterate. Due to the tussle between the government and the religious elite, it is not clear to the public whether the virus is a pandemic or a conspiracy. *Also the government allowed some sections to hold their public gatherings but stopped the majority community from offering nimaz in mosques. This has emboldened the sections who say that the government is operating under the influence of foreign forces.* Instead of opening market for limited hours, normal opening would have reduced the rush and also allowed police to control the crowd. It is hoped that the prime minister will advise his ministers and chief ministers of the provinces to fight the pandemic diligently rather than making people to panic.

China-US Cold War and Pakistan, Editorial, Jang, 28 May²⁴

Many analysts would have spotted centuries old views of Ibn Khaldun in the speech of EU foreign Minister Josep Borrell which he have gave to German diplomats the other day. Ibn Khaldun had said that any state, even the strongest has life span of 120 years. *Mr Borrel said that all signs are signaling China replacing US in the world affairs.* Therefore, EU will have to design a strong China policy. These words of Mr Borrel need to be seen in the context of corona virus pandemic, world economic crisis and political instability across the world and the change because of these factors. One

²³ <http://ummat.net/2020/05/27/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

²⁴ https://jang.com.pk/news/775841?_ga=2.98281624.604507992.1590469484-1172285561.158553948

such change is the reservations expressed by the EU against US' mudslinging at the WHO meeting. *The recriminations between the US and China are emerging as new cold war. Countries those have good relations with both the US and China need to walk carefully.* China is neighbour of Pakistan and partner in CPEC. It has stood by Pakistan in tough times. Beijing has helped Islamabad in fighting Corona virus pandemic as well. On the other hand, America has helped Pakistan right from the beginning. America and Pakistan are together making strong efforts to bring peace in Afghanistan. Pakistan has already paid price for taking sides during the Cold War. *At the moment, it can neither afford to ignore China because of its increasing technology and poverty reduction policy nor can it overlook the economic resources and technology of the US.* Apart from any challenges, security threats to Pakistani state are immediate concerns. Unless and until New Delhi agrees to address pending issues through dialogue, national security will remain priority. *At the time when New Delhi is trying to wage war with Pakistan, creating problems with Nepal and China and other neighbouring countries, all peace loving nations of the world should unite and support the weak and voiceless people of the world and stand for their rights.* They need to take decisions to ensure their survival, welfare and to deal with the challenges emerging because of the corona virus pandemic.

Social distancing in mosques but absent in markets, Editorial, Daily Pakistan, 29 May²⁵

Saudi Arabia has decided to lift ban on offering nimaz in mosques except in Mecca. Riyadh has issued guidelines to be followed: there will be no eating, distance will be maintained, etc. *The guidelines issued by Riyadh are almost same that Pakistan had issued. Most of the prayerers followed the guidelines strictly. Some mosques were having sanitizer bottles and worshippers used to wash their hands while going and*

²⁵ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-05-29/page-9/detail-3>

leaving mosques. In some places guidelines were not followed. It was failure of administration of these mosques. *While in markets all guidelines were thrown into dustbin. Because of that there is re-thinking going on about the relaxation that was given in lockdown before the Eid.* Women were seen shopping while carrying their young kids with them. They did not retrain from using henna. The rush seen in markets made mockery of the lockdown in the country. People were riding vehicles and motor bikes without any hesitation. *Unlike in other countries, in Pakistan nobody cares about lockdown and guidelines. People are visiting each other's houses freely.* Because of violating social distancing the number of COVID 19 cases has reached over 60,000. Islamabad is seeing highest number of cases despite being 100 percent literate city. This implies that citizens need to follow all guidelines strictly and do not endanger others' lives.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Sethi Sey Sawal, Q& A: Lockdown for the Elites?, Najam Sethi Official, 02 May²⁶

Q: *What does the PM Imran Khan means when he recently said that "Lockdown is for the elites" of the country?*

A: When the PM is saying, elites, is he talking about the business community or traders but if so then the business community is protesting against the lockdown as they want to open their business. So the point that elites want lockdown disproves here. The truth is that like the traders and business people he too was not in favour of the lockdown. If he wanted the PM could have applied complete lockdown in the beginning as the three provinces where PTI ruled, and Sindh was ready to go for complete lockdown. *But the issue was that the so called elites of the country did not wanted a complete lockdown and therefore PM who always side with the elites went with their wishes, thus creating a confusion against the word lockdown in the country.* Now the PM is playing politics and trying to show as if he is on the sides of the poor and public of the country and that the lockdown is a policy of and for the elites. He is trying to create an illusion of class struggle on the other hand the truth is that he is the biggest elitist siding with the elites. He is backing his whole theory of no lockdown on the poor and needy, but the question is what have you done for the poor in real? *PM changed the name of Benazir Income Support Programme to Ehsaas, took U-turns and did nothing for the poor in reality.* The truth is that all the efforts towards lockdown in the country was done by the directions of the establishment, PM was not on board and is doing politics in the name of corona tiger force, it is visible in Sindh. *Now there is no lockdown in the country, according a report 85%*

²⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EbBAyyAI298>

SOPs are not followed in the country and there is no social distancing. The religious and business elites ordered that they want to open for business and therefore PM obeyed and opened everything. But the number is already peaking. There are fewer tests, no kits, the original kits are costly and people can't afford. If there is no testing, how will we know and even if people die how will we know how he died. There is no reporting's due to cultural reasons.

Q: Will PTI temper with the 18 Amendment?

A: The PTI has proposed that they want to open the 18 amendment and discuss on various aspects of it. On the other hand the opposition, excluding the PPP has said they are ready to discuss but if the PTI is thinking to roll back the 18 amendment or do major changes then they are not on board and will strongly protest. Sindh government has already said they are not at all ready to talk about it with government as they will be the most affected. *The actual problem is that the establishment/army is not happy with the major money being transferred to the provinces. The army believes that not enough money from the budget is saved for them when it is divided between federal and state, therefore they are eyeing budget for the army to be taken or diverted from the province fund.* The defence already takes 40% of the money in the name of national security and now they want additional money meant for the province and therefore they want to change this aspect of 18 amendments where the money goes to the provinces. *The provinces are already protesting that the army should not be given too much money as they also need money for development, health and education. The PTI will support the army in this issue and the PML-N will also not resist too much due to political pressures. The PPP will resist.*

11th Hour with Waseem Badami, Interview of Ehsan Iqbal, Secretary General, PML-N, ARYNews, 05 May²⁷

Q: The Railway Minister, Sheikh Rashid indicated in a press conference that the opposition is in touch with the government about making changes in the 18 amendment and NAB provisions. What is PML-N's take on this?

A: Sheikh Rashid is the master in spreading disinformation and this has yet again come out of the rumour mills of the PTI government in Islamabad. PML-N is of the firm view that there is no connection between the NAB ordinance and 18 amendment, and that the 18th amendment was passed after the consensus of all the parties. If the government decides to roll it back now, it will have a negative impact. *The point is that had we been talking to the government through any channel, our leaders would*

²⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bis1NmZV37Q>

not be behind bars still and NAB would not be sending summons to Shehbaz Sharif amid the pandemic. Therefore I want to make it clear that after God we are only in touch with the public. The PM has said that the NAB has again handed over a list of opposition leaders, it means that the government will arrest opposition leaders who speak against the government but we are not scared even if he arrests all, Imran Khan is not capable of running the country.

Q: Are you in favour of any change in the NAB ordinance?

A: We are in favour of meaningful change in the NAB ordinance. NAB was created by Pervez Musharraf in accordance to a political agenda and it needs changes. But the problem is that the PTI is using it as tool to suppress the opposition and save the PTI leaders from the wrath of NAB, Sugar and wheat mafia are still roaming free and are not arrested under NAB even though the witness is out there. The PML-N has already entered a bill in the senate asking for meaningful change in the NAB. For example we have asked for 14 day remand in case of an arrest. *It has to be noted that people arrested in charge of terrorism are remanded for 14 days under NAB on the other hand all others arrested on bogus references are remanded for more than 14 days, sometimes a month which makes no sense.*

Q: What has Shehbaz Sharif done as a party head after returning from London?

A: Shehbaz Sharif mobilized the leaders on fighting the pandemic after coming back from London. We have donated protective kits to all the provinces. But the government has disagreed to sit with the opposition and it's there to see how PM is doing politics with Sindh. *It has to be noted that Shibli Faraz lashed out at the opposition for criticizing the government and said the opposition was only doing politics instead of helping the government in hours of need.* He said if the National Accountability Bureau called Shahbaz Sharif in any case, it had nothing to do with the government. "If NAB summons Shahbaz Sharif he must go because NAB is a law enforcement institution," he added.

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, Does PTI has a Strategy to open lockdown? ARYNews, 13 May²⁸

The host begins the discussion by underlining that the Pakistani's are on the street and market places and are not following the SOPs laid down by the government before easing the lockdown restrictions. *Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting* agrees that this will not work and if the people continue to crowd the markets and roads without following the

²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GrT2grlOjME>

SOPs then the government might go towards the strategy of reinforcing the lockdown as it was laid down by the PM. He argues that we have eased the lockdown for the poor people and cannot afford lockdown for a long period. There is a limit for the government to provide food and money to the people and the only option was to open the country for business. The opposition is playing pity politics, they said call parliament session to discuss issues and when the PTI did call a session there leaders like Shahbaz Sharif were not present in the session. *Khurram Dastgir of the PML-N* argues that from the start the PM said we are not ready to implement complete lockdown and that provinces are free to take their own decisions but when provinces like Sindh took the decision for complete lockdown, it started critiquing their actions. *According to me there should have been a strict lockdown from the start but there was no strategy of the government to contain the virus and still there is none, he adds. We really need to ask the PM and its team on what metric the lockdown was imposed and then removed? Chaudhary Manzoor of the PPP* underlines that the public follows their leader and in this case when its PM was not serious about lockdown from the beginning then why the people will take things seriously. *Government is saying Alhamdulillah less deaths as compared to other countries then how many deaths they want?* People who do not wear masks should be fined just like people without helmets and *most importantly the PM who is also the countries health minister should attend the parliament meetings and come out with a health policy statement.*

Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, Will NAB Arrest Shahbaz Sharif after Eid? *ARYNews, 26 May²⁹*

Kashif Abbasi underlines that NAB is not placed to expose and mudsling people, its main job is to get criminals convicted, file references through proper channel. Arshad Bhatti on this show predicts that Shahbaz Sharif will be arrested by NAB after Eid. Fahad Hussain another analyst underlines that the arrest of Shahbaz Sharif is political and if such arrest happen, the political motive behind it is still not clear. *He adds that NAB has a different approach to the ruling party and a very aggressive approach to the opposition and until and unless it has a uniform policy for all, the effectiveness of the NAB remains questionable.* Imran Khan, another guest analyst on the show claims that he has studied the Shahbaz Sharif case in details and arrest is for sure, until and unless someone chips in to help him out of the arrest. He adds that I have talked to the NAB, and they informed that now Shahbaz Sharif has disowned the property of his wife. Meher Bokhari another analyst on the show informs that Shahbaz Sharif's wife has been looking to sale her property in UK since eight months on a very low price that means something is wrong but not everything is admissible in the court of law.

²⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X1ZifzN3viE>

On The Front with Kamran Shahid, PM Imran Khan: Report Card, *Dunya News*, 28 May³⁰

Since from the time Pakistan has come into being, politicians and governments have always been blamed for Sugar related frauds and corruption. In Pakistan which ever leader government has become popular has always faced insults. For example Nawaz Sharif's popularity took him behind bars and now in foreign country. So, there is a need to debate on the popularity of Imran Khan, his work in the 22 months in government and what will be his future? (*Pakistan mai jo popular kiyadat hai vo exile, phansi, goli ya jelo mai gayi hai*, meaning the popular leaders in Pakistan has either went to exile, faced bullets, or behind jails). **Rauf Klasara, Media Analyst:** I agree to your intro that in Pakistan the popular leaders have met with the worst fate and as you did not go into details of why and how, I would also not go in details. The leaders when they sit on their political chairs feel empowered and assume they are not answerable to any one and that the work of the public is just to vote. These popular leaders have not respected the institutions in place, not even judiciary and therefore their ends are scary. Second is media, these leaders

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnDpSVnul1I>

after crushing the judiciary try to suppress media and assume that it's their enemy. The Imran Khan government has now started this new narrative now, who is media to decide how government should function? In the sugar commission report many of the leaders of the PTI government has been named but no action has been taken against them, neither there are resignations from the posts. Imran Khan has hidden the cases against Jahangir Tareen due to conflict of interest. *Sana Baucha, Analyst:* PM Imran Khan has made the right enemies and he has got the right friends in the right places. He quickly understood that media is no ones friend and therefore instead of extending hands of friendship to media, he started to manage it. But all said and done the PTI government is there to stay for the whole five year term because right now there is no alternative. *Arshad Bhatti, Analyst:* The government has not fulfilled nay promises it made, they showed dreams but nothing has been fulfilled. He has completely changed his stance, he use to talk against electable and now his team his full of electable. Once he is use to say Pakistan should not take lone from IMF and now as PM he is doing the exact opposite. There is lots of difference between the Imran Khan and the PM Imran Khan. He uses to *say media ko Salaam*, and now PM Imran Khan is saying media is corrupt. *Nazir Logari* argues that this government has not delivered anything and has brought the economy down. Unemployment is the highest under PTI government, he promised 1 crore jobs. This current popular PM came with so many promises but delivered nothing.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Punjab				
Kurram ³¹	06/05/2020	One injured in explosion at Imambargah in Lower Kurram.	00	01
Rawalpindi ³²	09/05/2020	Major among six soldiers martyred in Buleda blast.	08	00
Bahawalpur ³³	18/05/2020	Four IS terrorists killed in Bahawalpur: CTD	04	01

³¹<https://dailytimes.com.pk/608140/one-injured-in-explosion-at-imambargah-in-lower-kurram/>

³² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1555706/major-among-six-soldiers-martyred-in-buleda-blast>

³³ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/614096/four-is-terrorists-killed-in-bahawalpur-ctd/>

KPK (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)				
Peshawar ³⁴	11/05/2020	At least five injured in Peshawar IED explosion.	05	00
Balochistan				
Mach ³⁵	19/05/2020	7 soldiers martyred in two spate terror attacks in Balochistan: ISPR.	07	01

³⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2218880/1-least-five-injured-peshawar-explosion/>

³⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1558240/7-soldiers-martyred-in-two-separate-terror-attacks-in-balochistan-ispr>