

*November 2021*

# PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



*Prepared by*

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR  
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्द्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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CONTENTS

<b>POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS</b> .....	05
<b>ECONOMIC ISSUES</b> .....	10
<b>SECURITY SITUATION</b> .....	12
<b>URDU &amp; ELECTRONIC MEDIA</b>	
Urdu.....	16
Electronic.....	20
<b>STATISTICS</b>	
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES.....	21

## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

### **Why the secrecy?** Editorial, *Dawn*, 02 November<sup>1</sup>

After many days of a protest march from Lahore to Islamabad punctuated with sporadic violence, TLP has extracted an agreement from the PTI government that, for some strange reason, remains hidden from view. It is inexplicable why the government would want to keep the agreement secret, unless of course it realises whatever it has agreed upon is at its own expense. *But there is more at stake here than just the government's credibility. The citizens have a right to know what concessions have been given in their name to an organisation that has severely damaged the writ of the state and in the process has become responsible for the death of a number of policemen.* Every time the TLP has undertaken such a protest march, it has tortured and killed policemen without being held accountable for these crimes. This time too it appears that it will get away with murder literally. *It may not be wrong to assume that the TLP has brought the PTI government to its knees, just as it had done with the previous PML-N government. Prime Minister Imran Khan may want to contemplate how his own government has made a mockery of his resolve not to allow a militant group to challenge the writ of the state.* His cabinet should also feel chastened after witnessing how the TLP has forced ministers to go through a revolving door during various phases of negotiations. The government's mishandling of the crisis has once again brought into sharp focus the wide gap between what this government says and what it ends up doing at the end.

### **Government of U-turns,** Kamran Yousuf, *The Express Tribune*, 08 November<sup>2</sup>

*The PTI government is notorious for taking U-turns. As it feels the public heat for failing to deliver on many of its promises, the frequency of such U-turns is increasing by the day. Last week alone the government took at least three U-turns. This speaks of its lack of decision-making abilities.* In the middle of violent protests by TLP, the prime minister convened the National Security Committee which is the highest forum when it comes to taking decisions on national security and defense matters. The agenda of the meeting was to discuss options on how to tackle the TLP. *The talks between the government and TLP produced a deal, a deal that was kept secret. As part of the agreement, the government released hundreds of TLP members while the Punjab government initiated a move to reverse the decision of proscribing the religious party.* The government also decided not to challenge the decision of release of Saad Rizvi, the party chief. It must be embarrassing for the government to take

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1655449/why-the-secrecy>

<sup>2</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2328330/kamran-yousaf-government-of-u-turns>

a swift turnaround on its tall claims and perhaps that was the reason Prime Minister Imran Khan stopped cabinet members from speaking on the subject. The second U-turn of the week was the decision on allowing India to use Pakistan's airspace for the international flights from Occupied Kashmir.

**Opposition strategy, Editorial, Dawn, 08 November<sup>3</sup>**

The opposition alliance PDM has decided to step up its campaign against the PTI government by announcing a fresh schedule of rallies in major cities this month. The top leadership of the alliance held a virtual meeting on Saturday to discuss all options available to them in view of the unfolding situation highlighted by steep inflation. *Their latest initiative is also fueled by a perception that the PTI government may be on a weaker footing after the dispute with the military leadership over the appointment of the ISI chief.* PPP has also been urging the PML-N to seriously consider the option of an in-house change in Punjab but the latter party remains non-committal. The prime minister has also refused to build a basic working relationship with the opposition in parliament and has adamantly rejected the idea to even sit at the same table with the leader of the opposition, often at the expense of constitutional obligations. *The opposition now realises that the government is weaker today than at any point in the last three years. It also calculates that the average citizen is being crushed under the burden of inflation and would willingly come out on the streets with the PDM.*

**Daska debacle, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 09 November<sup>4</sup>**

*The Election Commission's inquiry report on irregularities in the Daska NA-75 by-poll is a telling tale of connivance and misuse of power. The elections in February this year were marred with allegations of ballot tampering, abduction of officers on duty and excessive police and administration influence.* The probe has confirmed the premise, and categorically states that police and the local administration failed to play their designated role as per law, and were found to be puppets in the hands of their unlawful masters. This charge and finding is too serious to be ignored, and it is incumbent upon the government, as well as the Election Commission, to expose the black sheep involved in fabricating and undermining the dignity of civil service and the essence of adult franchise. *The blatant interference from the district administration spontaneously points a finger at the Punjab government, as well as authorities at the federation. This was not only undemocratic but also*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1656707/opposition-strategy>

<sup>4</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2328476/daska-debacle>

*against the established lawful norms of unbiasedness. The sanctity of the ballot has been encroached upon by this bewildered act.*

**PM's day in court, Editorial, Dawn, 11 November<sup>5</sup>**

*It must have been a very humbling experience for Prime Minister Imran Khan to go to the Supreme Court and get grilled over the government's "inaction" against those responsible for the Army Public School (APS) attack in 2014, which killed 132 innocent children, as well as ongoing talks with TTP, the banned militant outfit that took responsibility for it. Given how the government has been dragging its feet over the matter of addressing the concerns of the parents of the martyred children, especially investigation and legal proceedings against the civil and military security leadership of the country at the time, the court was left with no option but to summon the prime minister himself to do some explaining. And the PM duly obliged, which was good for optics even if it remains to be seen if anything concrete will come out of that particular hearing. The court also didn't seem very convinced with the logic of holding negotiations with the said terrorists when the country boasts the world's sixth largest army and arguably the best intelligence service. There's also a great deal of confusion about which bad guys the state is going to talk to and exactly how it is going to differentiate between soft and hard terrorists.*

**Choosing New Envoy to US: Pakistan Needs Innovative, Not Fossilised Diplomacy, Ejaz Haider, The Friday Times, 12 November<sup>6</sup>**

The serving Pakistan ambassador to the United States, Asad Majeed Khan, will be completing his three-year stint in January 2022. *By all reports, he will be replaced by the former President of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sardar Masood Khan. If this news is correct, then there's much wrong with the decision, starting with Masood Khan's acceptance of the post.* For Khan to accept an ambassadorial position not only makes a mockery of the office of AJK president but is akin to an army chief accepting command of a battalion, post-retirement. *At a personal level, Khan should rethink his decision if he has made one to accept the position. But there is another factor that goes beyond Khan's person and which is even more important: i.e., the position of Azad Kashmir in the larger framework of the Kashmir dispute.* Khan, as president, was very vocal about Kashmir and India's oppression, but never brought the conversation home to Azad Kashmir and I say this because just like him, I also belong to

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<sup>5</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/840024/pms-day-in-court/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/choosing-new-envoy-to-us-pakistan-needs-innovative-not-fossilised-diplomacy/>

Azad Kashmir. If he now wants to enjoy a sinecure in DC, he not only demeans the office of the AJK president, but also the cause of Azad Kashmir. That's as far as the issue's AJK dimension is concerned. Let's now get to the government's process to find the suitable candidate to be placed in DC. How should that process look like? As in, what would (or should) be the first question, before a quest for the right candidate begins? To me it would be: what does Pakistan want from the US?

**Testing PTI's strength, Editorial, Dawn, 16 November<sup>7</sup>**

*There is a growing perception that the PTI government is experiencing a bout of instability. In recent weeks, there has been a flurry of quiet activity that suggests unrest within its ranks and anxiety that governance and politics have entered choppy waters.* Latest developments suggest that the coalition allies are unhappy with the performance and attitude of the government and are now not shy of saying as much in public. For its part, the opposition has also started saying publicly that it may attempt a move against the Senate chairman and the Speaker of the National Assembly. This signifies that the opposition is feeling emboldened enough to consider testing its parliamentary strength on the basis of an assessment that the government may not get the support of the establishment like it did on previous occasions when the opposition tried to bring down the Senate chairman. *The opposition appears rejuvenated in its efforts and if the establishment is indeed seen as stepping back from its all-out support for the rulers, then the opposition figures can pile pressure on the government from all sides. It is therefore safe to say that the coming few months are likely to witness an intensification of political activity.*

**Need to probe audio leak, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 24 November<sup>8</sup>**

*The controversy related to a purported audio of a former chief justice of Pakistan is creating media hype. Though the honourable judge has repeatedly denied its content, as well as veracity, the mystery goes on.* In the audio, the former chief justice is blamed for directing a Brother Judge to convict former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, and his daughter Maryam Nawaz, and allegedly goes on to argue that "he has been told to do so". The PML-N, which stands to benefit from the leaks, is up in arms and is playing to the gallery. This episode is directly impacting national politics, and pointing a finger at the superior judiciary. *Unlike many such allegations, this audio leak should not be dumped or ignored with the passage of time. The reason is that it involves the conduct of a very important pillar of the state, and at the same time illustrates how low politics could stoop, if found to be fabricated.* There are many pointers to begin a professional and orderly investigation, and that too at the hands of our

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1658378/testing-ptis-strength>

<sup>8</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330753/need-to-probe-audio-leak>

best sleuths. It is mandatory upon the government to act as a jury to critically probe the audio tape through men of repute. No point is playing the ballgame of counter-allegations on the PML-N for political point-scoring. Let justice be done by exposing the characters behind the ridicule.

**Saudi conditions, Editorial, Dawn, 30 November<sup>9</sup>**

Decades of fiscal profligacy have trapped the country in a situation where it not only has to borrow more money to return old loans, but must also pay for new import bills. The increasing dependence on foreign loans means that the country is surrendering a bit of its sovereignty every time it approaches lenders for more money. When the federal cabinet on Friday approved the unpleasant conditions of a new Saudi loan amounting to \$4.2bn, it had no other choice because of the growing external-sector vulnerabilities. *That the Saudis are charging a slightly higher price than before for their 'assistance' shouldn't bother us too much.* The deal is dependent on the implementation of tough 'prior actions' Islamabad had earlier refused to execute for fear of a political backlash. *This indicates Pakistan's waning ability to muster more debt without significantly compromising on its sovereignty. It also underscores the fact that we are not yet ready to change ourselves.* Pakistan's excessive external indebtedness has deep structural roots; we will not come out of the debt trap unless we decide to revamp the economy, mobilize tax and non-tax revenues to match our expenditure needs, and boost our industrial exports.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

**Another bailout package from Saudi Arabia, Kamran Yousaf, The Express Tribune, 01 November<sup>10</sup>**

Prime Minister Imran Khan recently undertook a visit to Saudi Arabia to attend "Middle East Green Initiative (MGI) Summit" at the invitation of Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman. *But to the surprise of many, the Prime Minister returned from Riyadh with yet another financial bailout package. Saudi Arabia immediately deposited \$3 billion in the State Bank of Pakistan to shore up Pakistan's foreign reserves against the backdrop of rising international commodity prices.* Riyadh would also provide \$1.2 billion oil on deferred payment for a year. It is also important to note that while Saudi Arabia announced the financial bailout package, Prime Minister Imran Khan and the Chinese President had a rare telephonic conversation. It is believed that the Prime Minister took the Chinese leader into confidence about the Saudi

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1661100/saudi-conditions>

<sup>10</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2327228/another-bailout-package-from-saudi-arabia>

assistance. *In the past, Saudi assistance was thought to be aimed at persuading Pakistan to stay away from China at the behest of the US. But this time it seems that is not the case.* Therefore, it appears that Saudi Arabia has extended the assistance to Pakistan out of its own strategic compulsions.

**Circular debt challenge, Editorial, Dawn, 01 November<sup>11</sup>**

*There is scepticism around the official strategy to curtail the power sector's circular debt or arrears that it cannot pay to power supply companies.* The Power Division has set itself the tall target of curtailing the debt by about Rs425bn during the ongoing fiscal in spite of an increase of nearly Rs100bn in its stock during the first quarter of the year. Pakistan's power sector is in a serious crisis as signified by the circular debt. *No matter what the government does the hole will keep getting deeper without serious governance reforms in this sector? Multiple upward adjustments in electricity prices for full recovery of costs over the last several years have only complicated matters; every tariff increase forces consumers to use less electricity as their ability and willingness to pay erodes.* Expecting a miracle in the absence of adequate investment in the power distribution network of publicly owned distribution companies to cut system losses, effective measures to check electricity theft and complete recovery of bills from all consumers is foolish.

**Inflation bomb, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 15 November<sup>12</sup>**

*With inflation overwhelming the purchasing power, it is gradually turning into a policy fiasco in macroeconomic terms. The inability of the authorities to keep a check on supply and demand, as well as their lack of will to crack down on hoarding, has made life miserable for the common man.* This phenomenon is further compounded by an increase in the import bill, which has utterly unnerved the economy. It is no surprise that inflation stands at around 9.2 per cent, as the country ironically imports wheat, sugar and pulses. For an agrarian economy, this trend is unacceptable and points out structural lacunas in growth and planning. With prices of essential commodities skyrocketing, intervention on the part of the state is indispensable to stem the social unrest in its primaries. *One of the primary causes of inflation in Pakistan is a combination of monetary and credit growth. Similarly, the imbalance in development and social strata are other supplementaries.* In an earnest attempt to tame the price spiral, the government must directly interact with market forces, especially small businesses and manufacturers, and comprehensively address their grievances to stabilise the price register. *Relying on the so-called prudence of district officers and weird interpretative sermons of ministries is*

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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1655178/circular-debt-challenge>

<sup>12</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2329463/inflation-bomb>

*an anathema. On a political note, this monster inflation is undermining the government's credibility graph.*

**IMF conditions, Editorial, Dawn, 18 November<sup>13</sup>**

*The IMF wants Islamabad to implement prior actions for the reinstatement of the programme. Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin and the government will now be implementing everything they had refused to in April thinking they could pursue their procyclical policies to push economic growth to improve the ruling party's electoral prospects in 2023. With the rupee falling to a record low last week and stocks plunging on delays in the finalisation of the IMF deal, it is imperative for cash-strapped Pakistan to re-enter the programme as early as possible. But the IMF is in no hurry to sign the deal despite the government's increasing electricity prices and the State Bank starting the rollback of its monetary stimulus. The Fund wants the SBP Act amended to free the bank of political influence; it also wants expenditures cut and new taxes imposed before it agrees to the deal. Even the promised Saudi help of \$4.2bn hasn't materialised as yet, with Riyadh probably waiting for the IMF nod like other multilateral donors. **With the current account under severe stress and Pakistan's need for dollars rising by the day, the lender is aware Islamabad cannot pull off its budget or raise money from the global market without it.***

**Monetary correction, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 22 November<sup>14</sup>**

The SBP in a monetary correction raised its benchmark interest rate by 150 basis points to 8.75% in an attempt to stem inflationary trends, and auto-control the speed of growth and current account deficit. *Though such interventions are not new in a regulated economy, what surprised the pundits is the staggering rate and aggressive approach after exhibiting a great amount of conscious control.* It remains to be seen how the dipping rupee adopts a semblance of certainty against the dollar, and to what extent inflation is tamed, which is somewhere over the turf of 9%. Now the eyes are set on the international donor, and with the inflow of new tranche from the IMF as the \$6 billion loan programme resumes, it is widely hoped that the present turmoil will start receding. **But there is always a flip side and taking into account the upheavals going around in the regional context, an amount of extra regulation is required.** This spontaneous surge in the interest rate could lead to supra-inflation, given that our micro-economic management is a disaster. India and China got away with 8 to 11% of growth in yester-decades because of their tightened control, and this is where we lack expertise. The government should keep pace with its incentivized cash funneling programs such as Ehsaas and Kamyab Pakistan.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1658758/imf-conditions>

<sup>14</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330466/monetary-correction>

Subsidising the lower-strata and buoying confidence of the small businesses is the way to go in these tough times.

**The IMF pinch, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 23 November<sup>15</sup>**

*Pakistan's economy seems to be in an uncharted territory. Its prolonged disagreement with the International Monetary Fund is toiling.* Of late, reports that an interim staff-level deal is struck has apparently come with more stringent conditionalities. The \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility, whose sixth review has been in limbo since April, is unlikely to be realised unless measures are taken to curb inflation and enable exchange rate flexibility as per the donor's dictum. *In other words, it means a mini-budget of sorts, as well as revival of the benchmarks in terms of tax collection, tariff barriers and subsidies. What impact it will have on hard-pressed masses is anybody's guess.* But the fact is that the government decision to go into an IMF programme hasn't served any purpose and has rather dented its credibility. In simple arithmetic, revenues must surpass expenditures. It means more taxes and rollback on subsidies. The government has already withdrawn several tax exemptions announced in the budget and raised energy tariff, apart from pegging the petroleum products to international index. *Current account deficit has swelled to \$5.08 billion in the first four months of the current fiscal year due to a surge in imports. This has diminished the purchasing power and led to fears of stagnation.* The rushing through of amendments empowering the central bank are other exigency steps that the government had undertaken to keep its word with the IMF. All this crisscross is for bagging a mere \$1 billion or so to stay afloat.

**Pakistan's debt, liabilities cross Rs50tr, Shahbaz Rana, *The Express Tribune*, 25 November<sup>16</sup>**

For the first time ever, Pakistan's total debt and liabilities have crossed Rs50.5 trillion, an addition of Rs20.7 trillion under the current government alone, revealed the official figures released on Wednesday. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) released the debt figures till September 2021, a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan described the increasing debt as a "national security issue". *Figures showed that the total debt and public debt situation deteriorated during the tenure of current Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government.* Pakistan's total debt and liabilities jumped to the record Rs50.5 trillion at the end of September 2021, an addition of Rs20.7 trillion in the past 39 months. There was an increase of nearly 70% in total debt of the country. Like its predecessor, the PTI government too is running on foreign and domestic loans and has failed to

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<sup>15</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330595/the-imf-pinch>

<sup>16</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2330983/pakistans-debt-liabilities-cross-rs50tr>

enhance revenues to such levels where its debt burden can be reduced. The situation is no different when it comes to the public debt, which is the direct responsibility of the federal government. *The government has added Rs16.5 trillion to the public debt during its tenure, which was equal to 165% of the debt the previous Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government acquired in five years. The public debt increased to Rs41.5 trillion by September this year, an addition of Rs16.5 trillion during PTI's tenure.* Total public debt increased 66% from July 2018 to September 2021, showed the official bulletin.

**Cabinet approves \$4.2b Saudi loan package, *The Express Tribune*, 28 November<sup>17</sup>**

The federal cabinet on Saturday approved two loan agreements worth \$4.2 billion reached with Saudi Arabia, including the \$3 billion cash deposit that the kingdom has extended for a period of one year but can withdraw it anytime by giving a three-day notice. *Pakistan will pay 4% interest on the cash deposit and 3.8% on the oil on deferred payment facility, according to the terms agreed between both countries. Unlike in the past, this time there is also no option for rollover of the Saudi loan and the country will have to return it at once after one year.* “The cabinet has approved the \$3 billion cash deposit agreement and \$1.2 billion oil on deferred facility agreement through the circulation of summaries,” Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry confirmed to *The Express Tribune*. The minister said that the Saudi package will also help stabilise the rupee-dollar parity. *The finance ministry sources said that the \$3 billion cash facility has been secured at an interest rate of 4%. The rate is by one-fourth times higher than the previous similar facility that Pakistan had obtained at a 3.2% interest rate.* A delay in timely interest payment would be deemed as default on the agreement. The failure by Pakistan to comply with any provision of the cash deposit agreement will lead to default. Also, Pakistan’s failure to service the public external debt of over \$100 million will be deemed as default, said the sources.

## **SECURITY SITUATION**

**Crimes against journalists, Editorial, *Dawn*, 01 November<sup>18</sup>**

*The Pakistani journalists are threatened, intimidated and killed with no consequences for the perpetrators is a shameful indictment of our democracy.* Ahead of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, the Committee to Protect Journalists published a report that ranks Pakistan as ninth out of 12 countries where journalists have been killed and the

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<sup>17</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2331463/cabinet-approves-42b-saudi-loan-package>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1655179/crimes-against-journalists>

perpetrators are still at large. A list compiled by the Pakistan Press Foundation of murders, attacks and arrests of journalists in 2021 alone, too, is chilling. *Meanwhile more than 75 journalists have been killed in the line of duty over two decades; barring a couple, all cases remain unsolved.* Both these documents capture the dangerous and stifling environment in which journalists work at great personal risk. They also indicate that press censorship, control and intimidation are worsening. The PTI government whose members and wings have themselves been criticised for stifling free debate and participating in online trends against journalists appears to have no interest in getting answers. But it is critical that they be identified, prosecuted and brought to justice. Who is behind these disappearances and attacks? *The ruling party stops at no opportunity to criticise journalists, question their motives or patriotism and even link them to India. The prime minister himself often either ignores questions about disappearances and attacks or claims that Pakistan's media is as free as ever. This is nothing short of delusional.*

**TLP Enters the Fray, Editorial, *The Daily Times*, 23 November<sup>19</sup>**

*The government's secret deal with TLP (Tehreek e Labbaik Pakistan) is out in the open now. With its status as a legitimate political party restored, a far cry from the 'terrorist outfit' label slapped on it by the government just half a year ago, its workers and also its chief now released from jail, the party is taking the next logical step of preparing for the next election.* As such Saad Rizvi's appeal to his followers to prepare to vote in the next election has effectively stood the electoral system in Punjab on its head. Everybody knows that it has a formidable vote bank in the province, arguably the most important province in the federation. And given the experience of a coalition government in the present cycle, it's already very clear to see that they will command very heavy influence in the next election. It's widely expected to out-perform parties like PPP and PML-Q in the province, which could even raise it to the position of kingmaker when the next government is being put in place. *Seeing how the latter has been able to arm-twist the government although it has only a handful of seats, the dynamics of future voting patterns and government composition could well play out of TLP's book.* That should make all parties pull their socks up in a hurry, considering that TLP's religious appeal can very easily make up for all the time that it has lost. There has, however, been a rather visible split at the cabinet-level over this matter.

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<sup>19</sup> <https://dailytimes.com.pk/844800/tlp-enters-the-fray/>

### **Crisis and the government's role, Editorial, *Ummat*, 01 November<sup>20</sup>**

A crisis that continued for ten days came to an end. After a long dialogue between religious scholars and government delegation, an agreement has been reached between the TLP and the government. *As per the latest agreement, TLP has withdrawn one of its demands that is the expulsion of the French president.* TLP will avoid long marches in the future and mainstream itself as a political party. The government will release its member except those who face serious charges, they will have to take relief from the court only. The government will not initiate any action against participants of protests. Mufti Muneebur Rahman as a guarantee on behalf of TLP played a pivotal role. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Asad Qaisar, and Ali Mohammad Khan signed an agreement from the government side. Every patriot Pakistani's heart was filled with joys with this news. For a week or so life came to standstill for inhabitants of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. It has been a history of rulers that they defend every protest while in opposition. But term the same protest as an act of treason when they assume power. This crisis may have been solved earlier. In fact, some of the ministers simmered with their unmeasured statements. *Finally, the issue got solved with the help of Ulema. The people of the largest province would not have suffered for ten days if the government had consulted religious scholars from day one. It is expected that ministers will control their tongue to save the matter to be sabotaged.*

### **Talks with TTP, Editorial, *Jang*, 07 November<sup>21</sup>**

When Prime Minister Imran Khan had said in an interview to a Turkish TV channel that his government was secretly talking to banned TTP, it was a sudden and unexpected revelation. The statement had started a new debate in Pakistan and the decision to talk to the TTP was criticized. The Prime Minister had not taken the country in confidence for talking to the banned terror outfit nor had he discussed the matter in the parliament. *In the latest development in the talks it is being reported that the government has decided to release the arrested members of TTP on the condition that the outfit would declare a ceasefire.* The details of the deal between the two are not yet public. But the talks had started in February 2021 in which the Taliban were playing an active role. According to *The News*, the government has agreed to release 102 prisoners in the first phase. They were to be released on November 1 but could

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.ummat.net/2021/11/01/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

<sup>21</sup> [https://jang.com.pk/news/1008090?\\_ga=2.152124287.795077761.1636348561-835994399.1598849708](https://jang.com.pk/news/1008090?_ga=2.152124287.795077761.1636348561-835994399.1598849708)

not due to some technical reasons. During the peace talks so far, the two sides have more or less agreed on most of the points and the future. *Every peace-loving citizen is hopeful that the talks between the terror outfit and the government will reach some mutually acceptable conclusion.* The question is when talks can be held with TTP, other such militant outfits should get such a chance as well.

### **Brutality of 'tabdeli sarkar' at peak, Muhammad Qaisar Chauhan, Ummat, 08 November<sup>22</sup>**

Brutality of the PTI led government has reached its peak. *The government announced yet another hike in the petrol prices and then brazenly said that the people were ready to buy petrol. Wow! What a change (wah re tabdeli!).* The price of petrol has been increased by PKR 8.3 and now the price is PKR 145.82 p/l. While the price of diesel has been increased by PKR 8.14 and the price now is PKR 142.62 p/l. Similarly the price of kerosene has been increased by PKR 6.27 and the price now stands at PKR 110.26 p/l. Transport fare has also been increased along with the prices of sugar, flour and other items. *At a time when the coronavirus pandemic has already rendered many jobless, the increase in the prices has increased the troubles for common people. During the PTI rule the inflation has reached unprecedented.* The increasing inflation on the one hand is creating unemployment in the county. *The people brought from other countries decide the fate of the local people without having any idea what the ground reality is and the elected ones have no option but to follow the orders. In the corridors of power in Islamabad it is being whispered that some people in the government are linked to some serious conspiracies who are prime facie working according to some foreign agenda and are on a mission to destabilize Pakistan.* The governor of State Bank Pakistan (SBP) was an employee of the IMF in Egypt. After destroying the economy of Egypt he was appointed in Pakistan and destroyed the country's economy. The 'tabdeli' government has hamstrung the country. Every single aspect, municipalities, accountability, and justice have been made to disappear. Inflation, unemployment, poverty and law and order issues have only troubled the common man more.

### **Trends and possibilities of Opposition's protests, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 10 November<sup>23</sup>**

Generally inflation, unemployment and the economic situation of a country boost the opposition's morale and it starts furthering its agenda to benefit from the situation. If the members of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) are gathering momentum to give tough to the government on these issues it is not

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ummat.net/2021/11/08/news.php?p=idr2.gif>

<sup>23</sup> [https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-11-10&edition=LHR&id=5839457\\_37362964](https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2021-11-10&edition=LHR&id=5839457_37362964)

surprising. *Question is, is it possible? One year back it might have been when the PML-N and PPP, the two main opposition groups, could have given some tough time to the government. But they lost trust with each other after the Senate elections. That is why the possibility of collective protests and movement seems.* But at the same time that it cannot be ruled out as anything is possible in politics. The situation, the inflation, unemployment and the economic conditions, is providing an apt environment for the opposition to use these issues to corner the government. *Political parties also have interest with decisions taken by the government, like the issue of introducing electronic voting machines. The problematic election in Daska constituency in February 2021 has raised the issue that will the introduction of EVMs solve the problem?*

### **The joint session of the parliament, Editorial, Jang, 11 November<sup>24</sup>**

It seems that the government and the opposition will come prepared for the joint session of the parliament. *It seems both the benches will see record presence. It should always be like this. Sessions of the both houses should be held time and again and serious issues debated in them.* A parliament session is convened to discuss and consult the opposition on some important matters in which the government faces some difficulty. Such sessions are also convened to pass some bills or ordinances which the government thinks would be opposed by the opposition. Since the government enjoys a majority in both houses, it remains confident that by voting it can pass such bills or ordinances. Generally, it is expected in a democracy that despite having a majority it will listen and flash out the opposition as well. Such practices bring forth various perspectives and reduce chances of a mistake. *It is expected that from the joint session of Pakistan's parliament, despite differences between the government and the opposition, the two will reach some mutually acceptable conclusion.* ... Though the signs for holding a joint session of the parliament were given for some time now, finally the call came on Tuesday. The session is meant to discuss election and legal reforms, the issue of electronic voting machines, apart from other affairs and the vase of Kulbhushan Jadhav. The opposition has decided to oppose 30 bills likely presented in the session.

### **Govt. under pressure from the opposition and allies, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 15 November<sup>25</sup>**

The alliance of opposition, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) has increased its anti-government activities. Meetings between its top leaders are

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<sup>24</sup>[https://jang.com.pk/news/1009907?\\_ga=2.237062016.1669209982.1636610414-835994399.1598849708](https://jang.com.pk/news/1009907?_ga=2.237062016.1669209982.1636610414-835994399.1598849708)

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2021-11-15/page-4/detail-10>

going on. *They are framing a strategy to be adopted against the government. The members of the movement are going to raise the issues of inflation, the condition of the economy, and the sufferings of the people and target the government for the same.* First meeting for the same was held on Saturday in Karachi. Next rally is planned on 17 November in Quetta and then the next on 20 November in Peshawar. *PML-Q and MQM have come in open to express their grievances. They have claimed that the government neither consults these parties for making decisions nor are they taken in confidence. In Sindh, an ally party of the federal government, Pakistan Muslim League (F) has withdrawn its support to the government.* Because of the pressure from the opposition and some ally partners, *the government is facing too many issues and is in a difficult situation. Not only is it worried about its decreasing popularity because of inflation, foreign debts, unemployment and others; it is also concerned about grievances of the ally partners and the opposition's tactics.* To meet and address these challenges, the PTI led government needs to come up with a proper strategy. For addressing the grievances of the ally partners, the government needs to take them in confidence. It also needs to provide some relief from inflation to the people.

**Allegations of former CJ of GB on Pakistan, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 16 November<sup>26</sup>**

*The allegations of an ex-chief justice of the Gilgit Baltistan Appellate Court, Rana Shamim on a former Chief Justice of Pakistan, Saqib Nisar that he had said that "Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz must remain in jail until the general elections of 2018 are over.* On assurances from the other side, he became calm. This has opened a legal and political Pandora box in the politics of Pakistan. The statement of the former judge was recorded in a notarized affidavit in London. According to the judge, these talks took place in the presence of him along with his wife. The former chief Justice of Pakistan has denied all allegations. If the statements of the former judge are analyzed, some doubts do cast their shadow on them. *For example, why are these secrets brought to light after three and half years? Also, when the only witness is the judge's late wife, what credibility do they enjoy? Also, the means the former judge has used to lessen the burden on conscience is not the right one.* All these issues raise more doubts. *Strong national institutions are a reflection of a strong state. Therefore, any such measure that would weaken the institution and create uncertainty among the people cannot be ignored.*

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<sup>26</sup> <https://dunya.com.pk/index.php/editorial/2021-11-16/6735>

### **National interest and IMF conditions, Editorial, Ummat, 24 November<sup>27</sup>**

For the last two months, the government gave a sign that it would not accept new conditions set by the IMF. *Finally it has surrendered to the conditions of the IMF.* The government has agreed to burden the poor people of the country with further PKR 600 to 700 billion. With a new increase in the interest, further PKR 400 billion is incurred on the nation. *The government has also agreed to give the State Bank autonomy, making it operate outside the control of the government. The bank officials would require no permission from the government to visit other countries, thus, international financial institutions will easily further strengthen their grip on the Pakistan's economy through these.* From the briefing of the finance minister and the minister for energy, it appeared that the government is from some other planet, not of Pakistan. Otherwise they would have at least known the reality. The PTI led government has entered in its fourth year and in all these years it has done nothing apart from agreeing to the IMF conditions. *It seems that instead of getting its mandate from the people of Pakistan, as if the IMF has given the government the mandate and that is why is working for it.* That is why it serves the IMF so well. While speaking at the press conference, Shaukat Tarin said that he had to agree to the conditions because his predecessors had already accepted them. *The way Hafeez Sheikh and Reza Rabbani had accepted the IMF conditions and the way the governor of the State Bank was asking for authority like a viceroy made it clear that people coming from the IMF only work for the latter's interests.*

### **The debt riddle, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 26 November<sup>28</sup>**

*Pakistan has a serious debt problem, and it is getting worse with each passing year. The \$100 billion or so foreign debt is pinching, and so is the circular budget deficit, which is again on the surge as currency depreciates and imports surpass exports.* Having agreed that there is no magic wand to address this issue, until and unless the government hits a jackpot of recovering stolen money and assets stashed abroad, it has placed a requisition to borrow on the floor of the house. While the National Assembly holds the purse of the nation, it is seized with a debate to authorize Rs26.3 trillion, which roughly accounts for three times of the volume of the federal budget. This borrowing will obviously have an adverse impact on the health of the economy, and underlines the necessity of redrafting our priorities in an earnest attempt to get rid of the vicious circle of debt accumulation. *Somewhere beneath this debt-servicing trauma lies a political resolve as well. Prime Minister Imran Khan had pledged*

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.ummat.net/2021/11/24/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

<sup>28</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2331095/the-debt-riddle>

*to reduce the total debt and liabilities to Rs20 trillion from his inherited Rs30 trillion. But stagflation has played havoc and the same has risen to Rs50.5 trillion, according to latest SBP figures.*

**\$3 billion and oil agreement signed with Saudi Arabia**, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 29 November<sup>29</sup>

The federal government has approved the \$3 billion and oil package provided by Saudi Arabia to Pakistan. After getting clearance from the finance ministry and Attorney General, the summary has been sent to Prime Minister Imran Khan. *The \$3 billion amount will be submitted to the State Bank of Pakistan at a 4 percent interest rate for one year period. The Saudi government will also give \$1-2 billion to Pakistan for buying oil.* The talks on these matters were going on for some time. The deal was inked on the Prime Minister's visit to Saudi Arabia in the last month. *Saudi Arabia is a Muslim country and has brotherly ties with Pakistan. The two enjoy exemplary friendship. Whenever Pakistan has faced a crisis, Saudi Arabia has come to its rescue, whether at times of floods or war.* Saudi Arabia was the country that helped the current region when it took over and inherited a severe economic crisis with an empty treasury. Today as well, Pakistan is going through a severe crisis. *The government is bowing down to the international financial institutions like the IMF to get money for running the country. On the other hand, to increase revenue collection, prices of gas, oil, essential commodities and electricity are rising, burdening the common man. Given the fact that the opposition had planned to protest against the inflation, the package from Saudi Arabia will give some relief to the government.*

## **ELECTRONIC MEDIA**

**Secret deal between PTI government & TLP?** The Najam Sethi Show, 24 *The News*, 02 November<sup>30</sup>

After two weeks of street protests, the government after taking a hardline stand initially against the proscribed Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan TLP gave into the demands of the TLP. However the terms and conditions on which the new agreement has reached between the TLP and government has been kept as a secret and both sides refused to divulge the details of said agreement. *The deal was finalized with the help of religious leaders headed by Mufti Muneebur who informed that the details would be made public at an "appropriate time".* In

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<sup>29</sup> <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2021-11-29/page-4/detail-10>

<sup>30</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ENIFX006wVc>

this episode Najam Sethi made an attempt to decode the deal and answered why the TLP will be stronger in the future? **Q: Why the deal and terms of the agreement is kept secret? What is in for the TLP? A:** When a government falls weak and gives in to the demands of a banned organisation, then the terms and conditions of the deal has to be kept as a secret, as a face saver. On the other hand when a confident government deals with such organizations, there is no need to keep anything from the public and press. *The issue of French Ambassador and what deal they have done with TLP on the issue has to be kept secret because foreign relations are involved.* Sethi pointed out that someday the deal will be broken and most probably government will not keep its promises, the terms of the deal will out in the open. It has to be noted that the TLP workers are not completely off the street, the Ulema involved has said that we will see how the government fulfil its promise in 08-10 days. **Q: Why the government changed its hardline stand and made a deal with TLP? A:** PM Imran Khan loudly announced that it will go to any extend to keep safe the writ of the country and that on the issue both the army and government are on same page. Key federal Ministers also said that it will take the issue to the Supreme Court. There was a meeting of the joint chiefs including COAS which was a part of the signaling to deter the TLP. *By giving into the demands of the TLP, the PTI government has made the TLP more powerful and in future they can use their street power to negotiate and expand any of its religious or political agendas.* The TLP is winning all the rounds but in the process the double policy of Imran Khan has been exposed, on one hand he talks about Riyasat-e- Medina but on the other hand his government makes a deal with banned religious groups that spread violence on the street. By introducing the one nation one curriculum which is supposed to mainstream Madrassas *the PTI government has on the other hand has Islamized the whole education system.*

### **PTI's appeasement policy towards TLP & TTP? Faisla Aap Ka with Asma Shirazi, Aaj News, 09 November<sup>31</sup>**

The host informed that an important meeting of the national security committee took place in the Parliament house after a long time in which the army chief and DG ISI took part along with the political parties. She informed that *the PM however decided to skip such an important parliamentary meeting and asked if the PM can talk to TLP and TTP why can't he come in the parliament to talk with elected representatives?* **Guests:** Khurram Dastagir-PML-N; Maula Bakhsh Chandio- PPP & Waseem Akhter- Muttahida Quami Movement (P). *Khurram Dastagir* argued that the PM has always skipped important parliamentary meetings in the past and this time also he choose to skip this important meeting on national security. *He is running away from his*

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<sup>31</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BI4fvND8u1w>

*responsibilities when the reality is that he as PM should be leading and guiding these meetings, but unfortunately the PM's chair is always empty.* The point is that if he can talk to TLP and TTP why not with the parliamentarians. The opposition however did its part and raised questions about the secret deal with TLP and the basis on which PM has announced talks with TTP. The PTI government is using an appeasement policy with these so called terrorist organisations and are making an effort to mainstream them to cut the opposition parties. *Maula Bakhsh Chandio* pointed out that just like the good Taliban bad Taliban policy, the PTI is playing the good terrorist bad terrorist policy currently. *On one hand the PTI leaders were quick to point that the TLP was funded by India but then they were quick to make a secret deal with the TLP and in matter of seconds also removed their named from banned organisations list.* The question is why the PTI government in such a hurry to talk to TLP and TTP? Imran Khan is walking on a dangerous road by forgiving the violent actions of the TTP that killed so many innocent people in Pakistan. The fact is that the establishment intervene and resolve issues while the PM is absent from important meetings in the Parliament. *Waseem Akhter* informed that the MQM (P) is the largest collation partner of the PTI but it is kept in the dark about the deals the government is making. He argued that till the government do not take every partner on board there cannot be any solution to the issues. *The MQM (P) is not given a level playing field by the government, if it can forgive and forget what the TLP and TTP did in the past, why not release the stop the cases against the MQM (P) workers.* He asked if removing the name of the TLP from banned list will remove the bloodshed and killing of the police persons.

**Former Chief Justice Saqib Nisar's alleged audio, what's the matter? Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARYNews, 23 November<sup>32</sup>**

The host pointed out that the audio leak of Justice Saqib Nisar has opened a Pandora's Box of the involvement of judiciary in politics. Some are arguing it has exposed the effort by PTI and establishment to keep the Sharif family away from elections in 2018, while others argue that it is an attack on the whole judiciary and an attempt to malign its image. Kashif Abbasi asked his guests which argument is more relevant and what should have been the course of action? *Guests:* Rauf Klasra, Waseem Badami & Arshad Sharif-Analysts. *Rauf Klasra* pointed out that more than an effort to keep the Sharif's away from elections, it is an attack on the judiciary. Some have alleged that the audio is fake and the PML-N can be behind the leak. Late Asma Jahangir was in the good books of Nawaz family and she use to fight their cases, she was a human rights lawyer. The evidences should be presented in a court of law but the problem is that they do not want to take clean chits from court and is a delaying

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<sup>32</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSDHonf61YI>

tactic. The Sharif's want to prove that the PTI government has stamped fake cases and that they were fighting for democratic process in Pakistan, they are trying to sell this narrative to the people. *Arshad Sharif* Nawaz Sharif always wanted to influence the judiciary but the establishment has not given support in the past. Show case notice have been issued to the journalists related to the audio leak case. The question is that the cases behind the Sharif family has been struck in the air, they are asking is Maryam Nawaz involved technically in the case or not. The Sharif are proving that there has been political victimization, the truth is that they do not want to give money trail. *Waseem Badami* pointed out this is a political audio and has implications in politics, therefore there should be an investigation. Why the journalists have to sign a non-disclosure? It is a high profile case. If there is any legality issue then the government should file a case in the court against the leak. The government will not take actions on the audio but the judiciary should intervene and take note of the issue.

**Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, Season of Audio & Video leaks in Pakistan? ARYNews, 25 November<sup>33</sup>**

Another day, another bombshell revelation implicating the judiciary. For the umpteenth time in the last three years, senior members of the judiciary find themselves on the stand in the court of public opinion at least. This time, the evidence is in the form of an *audio clip*, in which former chief justice of Pakistan Mian Saqib Nisar can purportedly be heard saying that PML-N leaders Nawaz Sharif and his daughter Maryam Nawaz were being convicted and jailed on the instructions of "institutions" to pave the way for Imran Khan to come into power. Nisar was quick to term the clip "fabricated". He has not, however, approached the courts for redressal. *Guests: Arshad Sharif, Rauf Klasra & Arif Hameed Bhatti-Analysts. Arshad Sharif* pointed out that the accountability of the audio leaks has to be proved first, if the five member bench is formed by the judiciary then it will have to be investigated. There is a deep fake technology which can be used in these days. A policy of blackmailing has started in the politics of Pakistan. "Red Chili paper project" is the name of the folder which contains details of all these audio leaks. Government keeps on making committees to investigate these cases but till now nothing has happened. For example the Sugar scam. *Rauf Klasra* pointed out that the video's that are personal should not be released in the public but in a way it is good that the powerful people should be reminded of the mistakes they have done in the past. The irregularities of the politicians should be brought in the light. The audio clip of Maryam Nawaz is revealing, the tone and attitude is arrogant, she was not on any position to give such views. When the government and Establishment come on same page, the government misuses

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<sup>33</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=amobvSr0UBY>

the power against the journalists and others. The Imran Khan government asked for help from army to pass the bills and they got it, so it seems like the government will complete five years. *Arif Hameed Bhatti* pointed out that the PML-N is fighting a game of perception and if they go in court they might not be able to win the case. When Saqib Nisar opens his mouth this case will go in another direction and PML-N might have to fall flat on their faces. Shehbaz Sharif had a meeting with the establishment and when Maryam Nawaz got to know it, she called Nawaz Sharif. Instead of using audio and video leaks the PML-N should prove their innocence in the court.

## BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

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

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
<b>Balochistan</b>				
Kharan <sup>34</sup>	02/11/2021	At least 13 injured in blast in Balochistan's Kharan	00	13

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<sup>34</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1655513/at-least-13-injured-in-blast-in-balochistans-kharan>