

September 2022

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by

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Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir

Mr. Afroz Khan

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

ISPR statement, Editorial, *The News*, 06 September¹

Whatever the explanations proffered after the fact, the issue is that *the PTI has been travelling down a road of chaos and unfortunately seems to be wanting to drag everyone else down with itself*. It is little wonder that the ISPR chose to react to these needlessly controversial remarks by the former PM. It has been months now that Imran has been using the pulpit to spew all kinds of conspiracy narratives. *His constant jab at 'neutrality', his party members and followers taking never-before-seen swipes at institutions: everything has been headed south in this political non-thriller*. But the ISPR statement should be taken as a bit of sage advice by an Imran Khan who has clearly tied himself in knots with his speech. *Analysts have wondered what made him resort to such insinuations, especially regarding such an important and strategically sensitive appointment*. **It seems that as November approaches, and new elections are nowhere in sight, Imran's frustration is out of control**. Due to the usual whispers doing the rounds, Imran may have thought it best to build pressure to force an early election.

Irresponsible tone, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 07 September²

PTI chief's stature as a popular political leader demanded of him to act more responsibly, and not to bring under any debate a professional state organ, and that too when the chips are down in politics, and polarisation is at its peak. *Imran Khan is on record having urged his followers to respect and uphold the dignity of the Army as an institution, and not be a part of any smear campaign. Now his own slip of tongue is a point of concern*. It would have been wise of him if he had desisted from bringing up a constitutionally mandated procedure under debate at a public gathering. Political browbeating is admissible only to the extent that it should not come to infringe values or ridicule or bring into question public office bearers or their conduct. The political leadership across the board must spare a moment to ponder over it. *Pakistan these days is passing through a critical phase. It is bogged down with a natural calamity which has left more than 35 million people in distress. Inflation at more than 40% along with a depreciating rupee has made lives miserable. What is needed at this juncture is responsible politics, and that too without any misgivings*.

¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/988689-ispr-statement>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2375176/irresponsible-tone>

Alphabet conspiracy, Editorial, Dawn, 09 September³

*There is renewed talk of regime change in Punjab. Just a few days after local media, quoting sources, started reporting about a PDM plan for another 'in-house change' in the province, PTI chairman Imran Khan has once again pointed his finger at the mysterious 'Mr X' and 'Mr Y' the alphabet bogeymen of modern Pakistani politics. The former prime minister claims the two individuals, understood to be from national security institutions, are leading an effort to once again overthrow the coalition government in the country's largest province. Mr Khan has claimed that they are calling PTI and PML-Q lawmakers and either tempting them with bribes or coercing them to change their allegiances. It is a shame that the country's politicians and other power players are still showing no signs that they can reach an arrangement to coexist, if only so that could provide some measure of stability to a nation which is being roiled by a worsening economic crisis and the countrywide destruction caused by relentless rains and floods. *The game of musical chairs in Punjab is a disgraceful reflection of our power elites' priorities during a grave national crisis and is a testament to their shameless self-interest at a time when millions have been rendered destitute by the widespread floods which should have headed the list of national concerns.**

Political calculus, Editorial, Dawn, 12 September⁴

Few will be unfamiliar with the '*minus-one formula*'. Talk of it or one of its iterations seems to have coincided with the peak of every period of political turmoil in our history. The measure has usually been taken as a signal that a political leader may be close to being declared persona non grata by the powers that be and that those around the said individual should seize the opportunity and fill the vacuum that is about to be created. It is an attempt to turn a political party against its own leader, usually in return for a survival guarantee. The ultimatum is one of several unconstitutional means that have been employed in the past to sabotage Pakistan's civilian leaders when other measures fail. *For the nth time, the 'minus-one formula' has allegedly been reinserted into the calculus of power, with yet another civilian leader apprehending forced removal from the political equation. This time, it is the PTI chairman who claims that the forces opposed to him i.e., the "imported government" and its "handlers" want him removed from the picture over fears he may return to power stronger than he was before.*

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709184/alphabet-conspiracy>

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709692/political-calculus>

Dangerous turn, Editorial, Dawn, 16 September⁵

Over the years, much ink has been spilt warning against the misuse of religion in settling petty enmities and political scores. It is depressing to see that it has had little effect, even on those who should conduct themselves with more restraint and maturity than the average citizen. The new campaign to vilify former Prime Minister Imran Khan on religious grounds is both condemnable and unsettling, especially because several senior PML-N leaders including Maryam Nawaz herself seem to be quite unabashedly promoting it. Party stalwart Mian Javed Latif's press conference on Wednesday in which he attacked Mr Khan on vague grounds, repeatedly denigrated a minority community and seemed to willfully misinterpret offhand remarks made by the PTI chief during a recent event — made for arguably one of the worst displays of bigotry by a mainstream political party in recent years. *It is an extremely dangerous escalation by the PML-N, which can expose Mr Khan to grievous harm. The political leadership on both sides needs to de-escalate and engage within the bounds of civility. Using the religion card against a political opponent crosses a major red line and ought to be roundly condemned by anyone who wishes to see a progressive Pakistan freed from the shackles of intolerance and bigotry it has been caught in.*

Sharif's' silence, Editorial, Dawn, 20 September⁶

With the political environment in Pakistan fraught with uncertainty, the benign press statement from London has done little to ease the pressures gradually building up in Islamabad. Nothing new or of substance has been shared with the public since the prime minister met his older brother, PML-N 'supreme leader' Nawaz Sharif, for what was reportedly a 'family only' discussion. *Most importantly, how do the government and the PML-N plan to counter the resurgent Imran Khan, who has made it clear that he is not going to rest unless he is shown a path back to power?* Will they, as some have threatened, unleash Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah to keep the PTI in check? How will they deal with the blowback if the party pushes back and the law-enforcement agencies once again go overboard in their response? It is clear that the Sharif's want to hold their cards very close to their chest. Such is the distrust prevalent in the party split into camps as it is that even the prime minister's cabinet is being kept in the dark. *This is hardly assuring. It is alarming that the government, while seeming intent on completing its tenure, has no clear plans for the future to share. With its own silence exacerbating the evaporation of faith in the government, the PML-N is taking a strange path indeed.*

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710371/dangerous-turn>

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1711061/sharifs-silence>

Populism vs the establishment, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 21 September⁷

The former prime minister has challenged the security establishment in way not done before. Matters have gone beyond the bitterness of being dumped. Khan has now taken the battle to the citadel. His latest public speech has put to rest all speculations about a possible reconciliation. *The security establishment now finds itself pitted against a powerful populist force and a cult that it once itself propelled. A lethal mix of popular support and Khan's imperiousness has indeed made the PTI chief extremely dangerous.* The project has gone wrong and diminished the establishment's role as the final arbiter of power. *Moreover, a breakdown of democracy may mark the unravelling of the existing political order. A weak political set-up cannot withstand this worsening crisis of state.* Like other populist leaders, Khan has successfully built a narrative that political elites are corrupt and that the people need better representation, but has made very few policy commitments beyond this criticism. *He has managed to cover up the misgovernance of his four years in power with his populist rhetoric for change. Khan has cleverly exploited the increasing public distrust of political parties and politicians, especially given the various corruption scandals involving the top leadership. Indeed, the military establishment too had a role in building this perception against politicians and projecting Khan as an alternative.* A hybrid arrangement tried to prop up a weak coalition. But all efforts failed to provide political stability, and instead, caused the weakening of the democratic political process in the country. Now the experiment has come back to haunt the establishment. The unpredictable cricketer-turned-politician could not be controlled.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Restricting INGOs, Editorial, Dawn, 01 September⁸

Considering the magnitude of the disaster that has struck Pakistan, relief and rehabilitation efforts need to be carried out on a massive scale to bring back a semblance of normalcy to the lives of millions of flood-hit people. *To put it bluntly, this country needs all the help it can get at this difficult time. Yet obstacles are being placed in the way of international NGOs by the state.* This will only hamper relief work, and prevent much-needed help from getting to the vulnerable. In this regard the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum, an umbrella group of 38 registered INGOs working in Pakistan, has said that the government is not giving permission to many foreign outfits already active in

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1711231>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1707848/restricting-ingos>

the country. Considering that the state itself has appealed to the international community to do its bit in the flood-relief effort, creating roadblocks for INGOs is both self-contradictory and counterproductive. *Massive amounts of funds and expertise are required to deal with the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase in the flood-hit areas. Pakistan, which is going through financial turbulence, lacks the resources to deal with the disaster on its own.* Blanket bans on foreign humanitarian outfits must be done away with, and all those willing to help Pakistan should be welcomed.

The IMF Bailout, Malik Muhammad Ashraf, *The Nation*, 02 September⁹

The commitment shown by the government to have the IMF programme revived, even though it involved taking some harsh decisions to fulfil the requirement of the lending agency, is commendable indeed. It surely had political costs because the people were hard hit by the hydra-headed inflation due to the rollout of energy subsidies, higher fuel prices and the pressure on rupees. *The PDM government did what the ground realities dictated, from which there was no escape and had to be taken to stem the rot in the economy. The PDM government deserves credit for its hard work to clinch the deal. It has certainly saved the country from a looming economic crisis. Though the IMF bailout is not big enough to fix all the maladies afflicting the economy, it will undoubtedly stabilise the economy by averting default on external obligations.* It is indeed regrettable to note that the PTI government had laid landmines for the incoming government by burdening the economy with unfunded energy subsidies which constituted a breach of the agreement with the IMF. The political instability fomented by PTI after its exit from power hurt the market sentiment and created the perception of a heightened political risk which badly affected the flow of direct foreign investment in the country. The uncertainty thus created, led to slowing down progress in negotiations with the IMF which surely looked for political ownership. But the PDM government managed to keep its head above the water. It was quite evident that PTI was looking forward to scuttling the deal with the IMF to create difficulties for the government and undermine its ability to weather the storm.

Debt swap proposal, Editorial, *Dawn*, 13 September¹⁰

UN Secretary General António Guterres has made an impassioned appeal for substantial debt relief for developing nations. At the end of his **'solidarity visit' to Pakistan**, he pledged to strongly advocate 'debt swaps' with the IMF and World Bank, as well as at the G-20 meeting, to enable poor and middle-income

⁹ <https://nation.com.pk/2022/09/02/the-imf-bailout-2/>

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1709865/debt-swap-proposal>

countries, including Pakistan, to use that money to invest in climate resilience, sustainable infrastructure and green transition of their economies instead of paying back loans to the creditors. *The country is virtually in a debt trap as it has to borrow more money every passing year to pay back its debt and support its budget. The IMF has forecast Pakistan's external financing needs to be just below \$31bn for the present financial year, and projected them to increase to \$39.1bn by FY27.* The enormous economic losses and food shortages caused by massive flooding mean that the external financing needs to spike significantly in the near to mid-term, forcing the government to borrow more to pay the swelling import bill and stay liquid in the face of declining foreign currency reserves.

Economic scorecard, Khalid Bhatti, *The News*, 20 September¹¹

In his address to the nation on September 15, former Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is perhaps the first opposition leader in Pakistan to address the nation through electronic media whenever he wants, compared his government's economic performance with that of the PML-N government from 2013 to 2018 and the current coalition government led by PM Shehbaz Sharif. The PTI chairperson used selective economic data to build a narrative that the economy was on the right track before he got ousted from power *It was fascinating to see how Khan carefully used the selective figures in his speech to support his narrative. He compared the current prices of several commodities with that in March 2022. But he failed to mention that Pakistanis experienced a high inflation rate in his 44-month rule.* The PTI clearly showed that it had no concrete plan or policy to enhance productive capacity and boost agricultural and industrial production. Industrialization is still a distant dream. Land reforms and the modernization of agriculture are necessary to reduce rural poverty. *The desire to reduce poverty and unemployment cannot be realized without investing in efforts to increase the productive capacity of the industrial and agricultural sectors.*

Rupee's apathy, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 21 September¹²

The currency is battered to the core, and there isn't any pause in its downslide. The fact that the government and the SBP are literally unable to arrest the slide is worrisome. It has impacted all sectors of the economy, and soaring inflation has made the equation horrible for the common man to make ends meet. This is why the government is unable to pass on the benefit of slump in international oil prices, and the greenback is getting in demand at home by virtue of rising

¹¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/992912-economic-scorecard>

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2377601/rupees-apaty>

imports. While the rupee was traded for Rs237.9 to a dollar in the interbank on Tuesday, its open market value was way high at Rs246. What makes it a terrible scenario is that this depreciation is even after a successful deal with the IMF, and pumping in of the desired \$1.27 billion tranche. *The dwindling currency situation is owing to a sense of ad hocism that had been there for long, and the SBP's inability to marshal demand and supply of foreign currency.* Likewise, authorities must also structure a module to stop misuse of debit and credit cards for outward remittances.

Pakistan appeals for debt relief from rich nations, *The News*, 23 September¹³

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday made an urgent appeal for debt relief from rich nations, reminding them that the country is paying the price for their greed and the damage caused to the climate. In an interview with Bloomberg TV in New York where he has gone to attend the 77th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Pakistani premier said that his government had just signed an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with “very tough” conditions that include taxes on petroleum and electricity. In response to a question about debt obligations, PM Shehbaz Sharif said they have spoken to European leaders and other leaders “to help us, in the Paris Club, get a moratorium”. “Unless we get substantial relief how can the world expect from us to stand on our own feet? It is simply impossible,” he said. “The world has to stand by us.” The Pakistani premier said that there is a “yawning gap” between what Pakistan is asking for and what is available, warning that the nation is facing the imminent threat of epidemics and other dangers. *The Pakistani leader shared that he'd spoken to the World Bank about immediate debt relief and would begin talks with China after the Paris Club. Pakistan owes \$30 billion to China, or about a third of its total external debt.*

SECURITY SITUATION

Pakistan's hybrid regime is coming to an end. What next? Uzair M. Younus, *Dawn*, 06 September¹⁴

Pakistan's hybrid democracy is facing unprecedented upheaval. *The ousting of Imran Khan in the country's first-ever successful vote of confidence has shaken up the system, primarily due to Imran's rising popularity in the wake of his*

¹³<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/993892-pakistan-appeals-for-debt-relief-from-rich-nations>

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1708579/pakistans-hybrid-regime-is-coming-to-an-end-what-next>

ouster. Refusing to cool down his narrative, Imran is facing contempt of court proceedings and an anti-terrorism case, which may lead to his disqualification from contesting public office. The temperature has risen once more after Imran's remarks at a political rally in Faisalabad, where he said that his political opponents "want to bring in an army chief of their choice through joint efforts". This has led to a reaction, with the ISPR saying that the military was "aghast at the defamatory and uncalled for" remarks by Imran. *This most recent flashpoint only sharpens the confrontation between Imran and the military establishment, increasing the likelihood that Imran and his party will be squeezed in the coming weeks. Should a scenario where Imran is disqualified or jailed plays out, massive protests are likely to erupt across urban Pakistan, raising questions as to whether it could lead to an undemocratic intervention in the country.*

FATF & militancy, Editorial, Dawn, 14 September¹⁵

Two recent developments separate but both related to militancy require the attention of the state as lack of action in these matters can cost the country dearly in economic terms, along with disturbing internal security. The *first issue concerns FATF, the multilateral anti-money laundering and terrorism financing watchdog*. A delegation of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, a FATF affiliate, was recently in the country to monitor compliance with the watchdog's requirements. It has noted that Pakistan's level of effectiveness is "low" on 10 of 11 anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terror goals, even though the country is compliant with 38 out of 40 technical recommendations. The *second issue of importance concerns the return of militancy in KP's merged tribal districts and their adjacent regions*. The issue was recently raised in the KP Assembly, with opposition lawmakers hammering the PTI's provincial government for its 'poor' response to the renewed threat. They pointed to the rising incidents of gun attacks, targeted killings and extortion in the sensitive area, while it was also said that militants were roaming around freely in parts of the province. One ANP member went as far as to accuse the provincial administration of playing the role of "**Taliban facilitator**".

A slip in Swat: Militancy Rising? Editorial, The Express Tribune, 15 September¹⁶

Peace in the picturesque valley of Swat in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province got a jolt as a blast ripped through its Bara Bandai area. Members of local 'peace committees' were targeted, who were at the vanguard to deal with

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710041>

¹⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2376685/a-slip-in-swat>

eventualities and exigencies. *Pakistan is passing through a difficult phase, as the security profile in the region is in turmoil. The western border is tense and non-state actors in Afghanistan are out to grab a slice in power.* The Taliban's grip is being challenged, and a number of attacks have unnerved the embattled administration. Its ripples are now being felt in former tribal belts as well as in settled areas of Pakistan. This evolving situation calls for a guarded approach while dealing with not only the security mosaic, but also the welfare of the people as nefarious motives thrive on a discriminated mindset. While the Swat valley is logistically inaccessible due to the recent floods and landslides, immense caution is needed in keeping an eye on unscrupulous elements, and to net them down. *Bara Bandai's bang must act as an eye-opener, before it gets too late.*

Sectarian concerns, Editorial, Dawn, 19 September¹⁷

A recently released study by the Brussels-based International Crisis Group has raised some pertinent but disturbing questions about the state of sectarian militancy in Pakistan. In particular, *A New Era of Sectarian Violence in Pakistan* underscores the troubling prospect of Lashkar-i-Jhangvi cadres, largely dormant at the moment, playing an active role in the malignant activities of the Islamic State-Khorasan chapter, as the local Daesh affiliate is called. *Separately, it also examines the role of the Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan in local communal politics and militancy. Though some conclusions of the think tank's report are a tad alarmist, certain aspects send up instant red flags which the state would be foolish to ignore.* Despite the presence of these malign actors, Pakistan is not in the throes of a communal conflict pitting Shia citizens against their Sunni counterparts. *Moreover, claims in the ICG report that mothers tell their children to hide their Shia identity, or people refrain from giving their full names for fear of revealing their confessional status, may be true in rare instances, but are not the norm.*

Re-talibanising K-P, Dr. Syed Akhtar Ali Shah, The Express Tribune, 22 September¹⁸

Terrorism is once again raising its ugly head in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, triggering a sense of insecurity among people. Reports from Waziristan, Bajaur, Mohmand and Swat indicate that members of banned organisations are regrouping for carrying out fresh attacks on their opponents, including Peace Committee members and local ANP leaders. But the law enforcers seem to be in a passive mode. ANP leader Aimal Wali Khan has described the

¹⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710874/sectarian-concerns>

¹⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2377802/re-talibanising-k-p>

situation as re-Talibanization of K-P, questioning the “inaction” of the government. Saqib Chamkani, another ANP leader, recently tweeted that Taliban had started targeting their known opponents. And in recent times, the release of terrorists and criminals involved in waging war against the state and accused of murder and other heinous crimes; lifting of ban on proscribed organisations; and allowing them to mainstream and contest elections depict erosion of the state writ. *Although in return, the TTP has committed to abandon violence, such promises have, in the past, proved bubbles the water. The situation warrants an operation like on the lines of Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad.* History bears witness to the fact that the policy of appeasement has never worked and it is time to take concrete steps to nip the evil of terrorism in the bud once and for all.

URDU MEDIA

Khan still has an edge, Rauf Klasra, Daily Dunya, 02 September¹⁹

A video clip of former Prime Minister Imran Khan has gone viral in which he is seen saying that he has an expert team that would help in bringing the country out of the crisis. In another video clip he is seen saying that thankfully he did not get power in 2013 as he was not prepared then for making changes and development in Pakistan. In yet another clip Imran is seen saying that after being in power that he had no clue that there were many challenges. *People are making fun of Imran Khan's statements and of his claims as when in power he could do nothing. Imran used to say that prime ministers of some countries go to office on bicycle. Why the prime minister of Pakistan? But when in power Imran never stepped out of the helicopter. Now it has come out that two crore rupees were spent every month on Imran Khan's security.* But during Nawaz Sharif's rule, expenditures on security matters would rise up to billions as every family was being provided security. At the time of holding the SAARC conference in Islamabad 40 luxury cars were bought, despite knowing the meet could be cancelled as the prime minister of India did not want to come to Islamabad. Later the cars were given to the members of the Sharif family in the name of security and protocol. *Imran Khan convinced the nation that if he becomes the Prime Minister Pakistan would become a super power the next day. Imran even used to speak like the country was a superpower. It is a different thing that he never walked the talk. Now Imran Khan says that the next economic revolution will be brought by Shaukat Tarin. Earlier he used to say that it would be brought by Asad Umar. Three or four years later he will say again that he and his team were not prepared for the challenges.*

¹⁹ <https://nation.com.pk/2022/09/02/the-imf-bailout-2/>

Demand to waive Pakistan's debts, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 04 September²⁰

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has appealed to the international community that the loans of Pakistan, a country reeling under the devastating floods, should be waived. A British member of the parliament Claudia Webbe has also written on twitter that given the havoc unleashed by the floods in Pakistan, the country's foreign loans should be waived. *All the four provinces of Pakistan are inundated at the moment. The floods have incurred huge losses on the property and over a thousand people have died so far. According to the government estimation, 33 million people have been affected. Though the floods have started receding, the post-effects are going to be more challenging. Pakistan is going through tough times at the moment. That is why the demands of President Erdogan and Claudia Webbe appear right.* So far countries like China, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, EU and the World Bank have announced help to Pakistan which is appreciated. However, *from the political leadership of Pakistan so far there has been no announcement of any financial help from their personal wealth to show that they sympathize with the affected people.* The international community should seriously consider the demand of the Turkish President in the given circumstances.

Inflation, inflation, inflation! Editorial, *Jang*, 04 September²¹

On the one hand, the government is busy in giving relief to the people in bills which run more than 300 units by fuel adjustment charges and by importing vegetables from other countries for the poor sections of the society; on the other hand the condition of inflation is bad that the IMF has predicted the internal inflation would continue. In the ongoing week prices of 31 items have risen and the inflation has reached 14.50 percent in the country, recording a 1.31 percent increase. At the same time however, 13 items saw a drop in their prices and the prices of 17 items were stable. *Experts call the current inflation the worst in the country's recent history. The utility stores, meant to sell essential commodities at cheaper prices, are not enough to meet the demand in the country. At some places they are used for profiting. At some utility points the prices of essentials like milk, tae, spices and pulse are higher than the normal market.* The experts of economic management should not be used only for burdening the common pole. They should have some policy to give some relief to the needy poor people of the country.

²⁰ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2022-09-04/page-4/detail-8>

²¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/227755%22>

TTP announced the end of the ceasefire, Danger is looming, Editorial, Roznama Ausaf, 5 September²²

The banned Tehreek e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) has announced an end of the ceasefire due to a lack of progress in negotiation from the Pakistani side. The spokesperson of TTP Muhammad Khurasani said that the desired dialogue is not happening between the organization and the Pakistani government as a result his organisation is ending the ceasefire agreement. The negotiation with the TTP was brokered by the Afghan government. Many issues were agreed upon during this negotiation. Only two or three remained to be negotiated. But in the last few weeks, the anti-peace elements within the TTP started killing each other once again. Tee enemies have successfully high-jacked the whole process. Still, the TTP continued the negotiations with the Pakistani government. Pakistan should also show interest in the negotiation process. This hostility must end to improve the security conditions in the country. The government of Pakistan should continue dialogue with TTP and deal strongly with those who are trying to sabotage the process.

Conspiracy to divide the Pak Army Saleem Safi, Jang, 07 September²³

The ongoing natural calamity is the mother of all calamities fallen in Pakistan. Pakistan was already suffering an economic crisis with the floods making it more difficult. *To deal with the situation, Pakistan needs to approach the international community for aid and also demand waiver of the loans from various international financial institutions. This is only possible when the focus of the politicians in the country becomes the flood affected people. In these circumstances if anyone is trying to raise any other issue that will divert attention from the relief work s/he is being cruel towards these people and towards Pakistan. Holding political rallies is right of Imran Khan but in his every single rally Imran targets the Pakistan Army which makes all to focus on this matter; even the attention of the world is shifted from the flood towards this matter. This is extreme abuse of the country and extreme cruelty on the flood victims committed by Imran Khan time and again.* At this moment, when country is dealing with the floods, the Pakistan Army is not only fighting a war against terrorists but also involved in relief work. *When Imran Khan generates controversies about the army that hurts the jawans who are involved in relief work. Despite the fact the appointment of the new Army Chief is to be made in November, Imran raised the issue and started a debate in the country.* Along with other eminent personalities, DG ISPR had to say that such statements of Imran Khan have created anger in the rank and file of the

²² https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/page?station_id=1&page_id=168656&date=2022-09-05

²³ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/230776%22>

Pakistan Army. If the army does not stay neutral towards politics, judiciary, journalism or the government, then it violates its constitutional mandate. But Imran Khan's problem is that why is the Army following its constitutional mandate? ... Imran Khan is targeting the army to compel it to support Imran Khan in the ongoing political confrontation in the country. While people like this writer argue that the army has no role in politics, the parliament and journalism in the country.

Terror activities on rise across the border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa! Editorial, *Roznama Pakistan*, 7 September²⁴

The overall law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is deteriorating day by day and it is being reported in the media that civilians are being killed in the incidents of kidnapping for ransom, extortion, murder and robbery. This is causing huge financial losses. Officers and officials of other law enforcement agencies, including the Pakistan Army and police, are being targeted in the incidents of targeted killings. The effects of terror operations in Afghanistan are also occurring in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. In Waziristan and other surrounding tribal areas, something happens every day and many civilians are losing their lives in it. Law enforcement agencies say that terrorists entering secretly from across the border are involved in these activities. Police and army personnel are also being targeted in some urban areas. Constable Mir Alam Khan was killed in firing by unidentified persons in Charsadda. Law enforcement agencies and the provincial government should keep a close watch on cross-border migrants and take strict action against those who come and hide in KP.

Pak-Iran trade, Editorial, *Jang*, 13 September²⁵

Iran and Pakistan have been friendly neighboring countries from the beginning. They are also engaged in trade. However, *the volume of the trade is small and far less than the potential. To increase trade two countries have been making continuous efforts.* The two countries signed a trade agreement at the ministerial level in 2006 and then in 2016 they agreed to increase their trade from 300 million to 5 billion in 2021. However, the goal could not be achieved in the given time. *Last year the countries agreed to increase the time to achieve the goal. According to some reports, Iranian ambassador in Pakistan Syed Muhammad Ali Hossaini has reaffirmed that the trade will be increased to \$5 billion in next five years.* It is a welcome development. It should not be delayed further as it includes some projects on energy which are needed for Pakistan but have been delayed for the last 12 years. Despite opening two new crossing points, *the trade is not increasing because of some*

²⁴ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2022-09-07/page-9>

²⁵ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/236167%22>

issues. At the top of them is smuggling which is not possible without the help from the people of the government. Thus the money that should have gone to the national treasury of the two countries through taxes goes wasted illegally. The authorities in Pakistan and Iran need to pay attention to this matter without any delay. So that all hurdles in doing trade between them are removed.

Do not make the Army Chief's appointment controversial! Editorial, *Jang*, 14 September²⁶

By asking that the new Army chief's appointment should be "free and fair", better it should be delayed till the fresh elections were held and till then existing Army chief should be given extension, former Prime Minister Imran Khan has started a new crisis in Pakistan. Various political, military and legal sections have expressed their surprise at Imran Khan's statement and said that it is to make a normal issue controversial. Imran Khan has also said that when he wants he can bring the nation on roads to protest. Army Chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa is retiring by the end of the year. Given the fact that the army has had a role in making breaking governments in Pakistan, both the ruling parties and PTI want to get the chance of appointing a new army chief. It is also true that there is a proper mechanism for the appointment: The prime Minister is given some names and he picks one which is his constitutional right. Also, the military's top brass is professionally competent. Making one among the senior most generals army chief should be based on merit. The issue should not be sacrificed to one party or the other party's liking or disliking. Though while clearing his stand Imran Khan has said that he wants the appointment on merit only; critics argue that Imran Khan considers his choice as merit. They say whether in government or not, Imran wants his people of liking in all state institutions. The appointment of the army chief has remained controversial in the past as well. It is time for that to clear any weakness in the law and rules of the appointing the army chief. Political parties should rise above their political interests in this case and think about national security.

Shehbaz- Putin meeting, Editorial, *Roznama Jang*, 17 September²⁷

Diplomatic and trade relations between Pakistan and Russia have been volatile since the beginning, but in the 1970s there was some improvement in the relations due to which Pakistan steel mills were built. Later, the Soviet War, the Afghan Civil War and the situation of terrorism prevailed in the region, which led to a large gap between the two countries. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets Russian President Vladimir Putin during his visit to Uzbekistan. In this context, it should be remembered that the experts have been

²⁶ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/237169%22>

²⁷ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/17-09-2022/page6>

warning about the energy crisis that Pakistan is currently going through for the last two decades and the current situation is that local reserves of natural gas are meeting only a few percent of the country's total needs. *However, Pakistan currently has different options to import gas through pipelines from countries in the region. Iran is ready to supply gas to the Pakistani border in the near future under a previous agreement. A project to transport gas from Turkmenistan to Pakistan and beyond to India via Afghanistan (TAPI) is lying in cold storage, some other Central Asian countries have also offered to provide energy projects to Pakistan.* While a lot of progress has been made in getting natural gas from Russia. In a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, the Pakistani leadership reiterated its commitment to work with Russia to expand cooperation in all areas of mutual interest, including food security, trade and investment, energy, defence and security. At the same time, the Russian President revealed that Russia already has the infrastructure to supply gas to Pakistan, so the project is viable. It is to be noted that in 2015, *during the tenure of Nawaz Sharif, Pakistan and Russia had signed an agreement to lay an 1100 km long gas pipeline through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan for \$ 2 billion, which was to be completed in December 2017.* This year, the two countries have held talks to take it forward at the leadership level, which is also the need of the hour. At present, it has become very difficult to keep the country's domestic to industrial wheel running, due to which the export sector is being affected the most and the dollar is going out of the country instead of coming. Pakistan should also see that if the import of cheap gas from Russia is feasible in all respects then this work should not be delayed further.

New wave of terrorism in North Waziristan, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 22 September²⁸

Despite the fact that there is Taliban led Government in Afghanistan, Pakistan has not got any relief in terror attacks from the Western front. *This is happening despite the fact that the Taliban had promised at the time of taking over Kabul that the Afghan territory would not be allowed to be used for terrorism again any other country. But immediately after this assurance from the Afghan Taliban, the Therik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) resumed its terror attacks and its members are operating from Afghanistan.* Despite strong protest from Pakistan, terror attacks from the Afghan territory on Pakistan have continued. On Tuesday (20 September), in yet another attack in North Waziristan, terrorists killed a 34 old Pakistani soldier. *There is no doubt that India clearly is involved in these terror attacks in Pakistan. The way Afghanistan has behaved so far and ignored all requests of Pakistan for not allowing the use of*

²⁸ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2022-09-22/page-4/detail-10>

Afghan territory against Pakistan, expecting that the Taliban will not let the land be used against Pakistan is like fooling oneself. Pakistan needs to raise the issue at the ongoing UN General Assembly meeting where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is attending the meeting. He would address the assembly as well. The Prime Minister should put the issue in front of the assembly and request it to take concrete measures in this regard.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Muqabil with Haroon Ur Rasheed, 92News HD, 1 September²⁹

Imran Khan addressed a rally in Sargodha and warned the government that he cannot be pushed towards the wall. He also appeared before the court and his bail application was also accepted. *He said that in the coming days the politics of Pakistan will be tenser. I am becoming dangerous for this imported government day by day, Imran warned. Haroon Ur Rashid noted that the current government has become so obsessed with Imran Khan that each and every discussion revolves around him. He has become the center of all political activities.* The propaganda and use of state machinery to silence Imran Khan is becoming counterproductive. In fact, it strengthened his position. On the issue of flood management, *Haroon Ur Rashid said that many countries around the world have faced natural calamities but they came out of it through proper planning and management. But this does not happen in Pakistan because the priorities of our leaders are different.* Indian foreign minister openly said that we are free to buy anything from any country if it suits our economic interest. Can Pakistan's foreign minister say something like that?

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan still has time to tender an apology? Khabbar Se Aagey, Naya Daur, 09 September³⁰

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan still has time to tender an apology, veteran journalist Matiullah Jan said on the show. He said it would become extremely difficult for the Islamabad High Court to continue proceedings if Imran tendered an unqualified apology. There was still scope for that to happen, he said. *Lawyer Abdul Moiz Jaferii* said the contempt case against the PTI chairman was a fairly straightforward one. Taking notice of this was incumbent on the IHC. He said only Imran's vanity was to be blamed for foisting this upon him. Jaferii said Imran should have quickly tendered an apology. This, however, he had not done. Given the situation, Jaferii said, the

²⁹ <https://youtu.be/oM--zn81pZM>

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g-U8c5rk3ak>

IHC should apologise to itself, he said in a lighter vein. The IHC, the lawyer said, would now have to burden this wait. If the court wanted to let off Imran easy, it should have not taken notice. If they wanted the opposite, they should have not dragged proceedings. *Journalist Abdul Qayyum Siddiqui* said the situation was now critical. He quoted Imran as telling him off the record that he not appending a signature in a reply to the court was actually a response to the IHC's questions.

Will Pakistan default on debts due to floods, political & economic crisis? *Aiteraz Hai, ARY News, 18 September*³¹

The host *Adil Abbasi* pointed out that there is no long term policies made in Pakistan, it changes when the tenure of a particular government ends. *He asked why the political parties are not sitting together for dialogue and draw out a plan for elections and create consensus for political stability.* *Arshad Bhatti* pointed out that the country is relying into a crisis due to the recent floods and there is a big question of rehabilitation and food, this is the main focus. *Floods have affected 33 million Pakistanis, inflicted billions of dollars in damage, and killed over 1,500 people creating concern that Pakistan will not meet debts.* These big words like in swingers etc. in the politics of Pakistan is a shame as Pakistan has to come out of the flood impacts. GDP growth is down, price rise is on new high, so what is the new government doing? *Sadaqat Abbasi underlined that Pakistan is going through an economic crisis.* For the PTI politically we are stable as the public is with them, the only question is now the new elections. There is no control on dollars and the growth has gone down from 6 to 2 and the price rate has increased by 27%. *Pakistan will "absolutely not" default on debt obligations despite catastrophic floods, the finance minister Miftah Ismail, signaling there would be no major deviation from reforms designed to stabilise a struggling economy.*

Red zone in Islamabad sealed: Is this to prevent Imran Khan's march? Off The Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARY News, 21 September³²

Irrespective of if Imran Khan will lead the march to Islamabad, the government has sealed the red zone with barbed wires and containers. *All entries to the capital has been closed.* In the meantime it has been a week since Khan said he will give the call to March but the host pointed out that after the Chakwal speech it seems like he is approaching towards some understanding and might not give the call. He asked the guest what signal the government is giving. *Asad Umar, PTI on the show underlined that the government is scared of Imran*

³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39_FeoNcFpI

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A6IbNImb6GM>

Khan and its call to march, right now they are saying that it is to prevent March of the farmers but this looks more like contain the march of Imran Khan. *The farmers does not deserve such extreme measures, the government might announce that Imran Khan is disqualified and therefore they are preparing to stop the public anger.* In the regard of the contempt of court, Imran Khan has already apologized in many words but still the judges are not content, so they should tell him which words to use in the letter. Imran Khan is a tall leader and even remain so after the hearing of the contempt of the court case. Imran Khan's speeches always have a surprise element but the main message is the same, so there is no new messaging in the Chakwal Jalsa. *The PTI is of the view that if the elections are delayed further, it is dangerous for the country and will impact the economy. The fresh mandate is the only solution.*

Imran Khan will stand disqualified for five years? Khabar Say Aagay, Naya Daur TV, 29 September³³

PTI chairman Imran Khan will stand disqualified for five years if convicted till the rising of the court by the IHC on October 3, former attorney general Pakistan (AGP) Irfan Qadir said on this show. The former AGP said the case had not concluded with Khan's apology. He said Khan would be convicted on October 3. If delivered till the rising of the court, Qadir said, Khan would stand disqualified for five years. He said Khan must be punished less the proceedings started reeking of favoritism. Khan could stand disqualified for life, on the other hand, if convicted in the Toshakhana case, he said. Veteran journalist *Matiullah Jan pointed out that PTI chairman Imran Khan's call for a long march is the final nail in the coffin of his politics. Jan said today's proceedings did not bode well for the IHC's reputation.* He said it had been decided in the earlier hearing that Khan would be indicted today and he would present a written apology. What exactly transpired, he asked, that Khan was given an opportunity to deliver a speech wherein he did not even present an unqualified apology? Jan said Thursday's proceedings (Chakwal) had left him rattled. If he was guilty of contempt of course, the journalist quipped, why was Khan repeatedly being presented with opportunities to apologies? *He said if Khan did mount a long march, it was worth wondering who this would be against. Jan said this would constitute a national first given how a politician would undertake such an initiative against the appointment of the COAS.* Khan's lawyer *Ahmed Pansota* said the case was close to conclusion following Thursday's proceedings. He said he considered the PTI chairman's statement an unqualified apology. Pansota said Khan had been advised to do so and then present his stance.

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9OcZc1WVnp0>

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
Kohlu ³⁴	30/09/2022	At least one killed, 20 injured in blast in Balochistan's Kohlu	01	20
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Swat ³⁵	14/09/2022	Six killed, seven injured in Swat, Kohat blasts	06	07

³⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1712722>

³⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1710027>