

July 2024

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Mr. Afroz Khan
Dr. Ashok Behuria

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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Evolving discord between Pakistan & Afghanistan, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 01 July¹

There is a visible discord between Pakistan and Afghanistan over the evolving security situation. Kabul's vendetta-laden rejoinder to Defence Minister Khwaja Asif's submission that Islamabad could opt for hot pursuit is at the root of confusion. *The Taliban leadership, while warning of 'consequences', had simply failed to evaluate where it had blinked. Asif had highlighted the pathetic equation on the borders, and the failure of Taliban 2.0 in keeping its promise of checking non-state actors.* The last five months of the calendar year had seen a spiral of almost 80% in terrorist activities inside Pakistan, as the TTP remains unchecked on Afghan soil. This is a violation of Doha Accord 2020, wherein the Taliban are under an obligation to exterminate terror characters apart from ushering in an inclusive government. It's high time for the reclusive dispensation in Kabul to realise that Pakistan has gone out of its way to support the Afghan brethren, and been a major succour provider despite its own socio-economic limitations. Rather than opting for knee-jerk reactions, it should indulge in introspection and act against unscrupulous elements that are out to destabilise the region. The bounties of geo-economics and connectivity are at a standstill, and mushrooming of terror is threatening peace and security. *It is also noticeable that Pakistan faces an uptick in terrorism, compelling it to redraft another counter-intelligence operation in the name of Azm-e-Istehkham.*

Ties with Russia, Editorial, *The News*, 04 July²

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is busy conducting diplomacy. His most recent overtures have been to Russian President Vladimir Putin at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, marking a significant step towards revitalizing Pakistan-Russia relations. Trade seems to be the top priority for the PM and trade is what he has offered to Russia too.

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2475433/evolving-discord-edit1>

² <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1206071-ties-with-russia>

By advocating for the reintroduction of a barter trade system, PM Shehbaz not only seeks to circumvent existing financial and banking challenges but also aims to strengthen bilateral trade. The positive trajectory of Pakistan-Russia relations in recent years is a testament to the diplomatic efforts from both sides. President Putin's acknowledgment of the 'excellent' bilateral relations and his proposal to enhance cooperation in sectors such as power, agriculture, and food security, further solidifies this partnership. Such collaboration can provide Pakistan with much-needed support in critical areas, ensuring food security and energy sustainability. PM Shehbaz's broader diplomatic engagements at the SCO summit, including meetings with leaders from Uzbekistan, Turkiye, and Azerbaijan, reflect a concerted effort to bolster regional connectivity and cooperation. *However, while the prospects of a barter trade system with Russia are promising, the success of this initiative will depend on the meticulous implementation of agreed-upon terms and the political will to sustain such arrangements. Both countries must ensure transparency, efficiency, and mutual benefit in their dealings to foster long-term trust and cooperation.*

PPP, MQM-P tussle, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 09 July³

The PPP continues to trade barbs with the MQM-P in Sindh instead of letting its performance speak for itself. The most recent spat is rooted in MQM-P Chairman Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui's criticism of the rural quota system for government jobs in the province. Siddiqui also accused PPP founder Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of having introduced the quotas as a means to reward his own supporters and "igniting the politics of ethnicity and hatred". The comments came soon after the Sindh High Court scrapped recruitment rules introduced by the PPP last year. *The PPP is trying to lean on the PMLN-led federal government to sack Sindh governor Kamran Tessori, who got the role in return for the MQM-P joining the treasury benches in Islamabad.* It is worth noting that while the PPP is not formally part of the government, its agreement is essential to keeping it afloat. If the PPP withdraws support and joins hands with the opposition, the government would collapse. However, this is highly unlikely, considering the handouts the PPP has gotten in return for its support the Presidency and two Governorships. Meanwhile, the PPP-led coalition

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2477911/ppp-mqm-p-tussle>

government in Balochistan is similarly dependent on the PML-N. If the PML-N moved from the treasury benches to the opposition, the government would fall.

Afghan challenge, Editorial, Dawn, 15 July⁴

The recently released UN monitoring team's report on Afghanistan captures the dilemma confronting the international community where dealing with the country's Taliban rulers is concerned. On the one hand, the Taliban have managed to stabilise Afghanistan after decades of conflict. But on the other, under the hard-line movement's rule, terrorist groups are flourishing on Afghan soil. A third scenario should also be of concern to foreign states, particularly Afghanistan's neighbours: IS-K which is opposed to the Taliban is believed to have between 2,000 to 6,000 fighters, and is using Afghanistan as a base for its external operations. Moreover, the terrorist outfit is also looking to poach fighters from other militant groups. *Though the Taliban regime is by no means a progressive pro-people entity, it has managed to bring a semblance of stability to Afghanistan after over four decades of war. The UN report says that as the Taliban "transition from insurgency to governing authority", they have brought down petty corruption and reduced poppy cultivation, while managing to keep the precarious economy afloat.* Perhaps it is because of these limited gains that there has been no mass opposition to the Taliban's obscurantist rule. Afghans are tired of forever wars, while the Western-backed Karzai and Ghani administrations were notorious for their corruption and bad governance. *Yet if the Taliban seek full recognition from the international community, they need to do much more, particularly in the areas of women's rights and by creating a more inclusive governance structure, which guarantees fundamental freedoms for all.*

Political vendettas, Editorial, Dawn, 24 July⁵

It seems that the PML-N and PPP need to be reminded again that they are doing themselves a considerable disservice by either directing or quietly endorsing the ongoing victimisation of the PTI. The police and FIA raid on the party's offices in Islamabad on

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1845839/afghan-challenge>

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1847661/political-vendettas>

Monday, linked to alleged ‘anti-state activities’, and the subsequent arrest of ailing septuagenarian Raouf Hasan should have been unacceptable to any party that claims to be democratically inclined. *The ransacking of party offices and hounding of political opponents are dictatorial traditions that should have remained buried in the past. And they serve little purpose: it may be recalled that the PTI, after being installed, had gradually lost its goodwill because it chose to focus on jailing opponents rather than delivering good governance.* Instead of learning a lesson, its opponents, when they came to power, continued to expand the scale of political victimisation to the point where they have now lost their moral high ground. Indeed, the scale of political repression and the number of political prisoners in custody today seems unprecedented for any elected government in the country’s history. If this trend continues and if history is any guide, the PML-N and PPP can expect to suffer that which they are failing to prevent today.

PTI’s ‘hunger strike’ Editorial, *Dawn*, 26 July⁶

In a theatrical display of protest, the PTI has introduced a novel concept: the four-hour hunger strike. While one might appreciate the creativity behind this brief abstention from food, the question arises: is this a serious attempt to instigate change, or a publicity stunt aimed at attracting media attention? *Called after a raid on the PTI’s central office and the arrest of Raouf Hasan, the strike demanded the release of Imran Khan from prison. Given the gravity of the party’s challenges, is this the best its leaders could do to protest?* Hunger strikes have historically been a profound form of protest. They symbolize an individual’s commitment to a cause so deep that they are willing to endure extreme personal suffering. Mahatma Gandhi’s fast in the British colonial era and Bobby Sands’ fatal hunger strike during the Troubles in Northern Ireland were poignant demonstrations of unwavering resolve. Such sacrifices have not been timed to end conveniently before dinner but endured for days and weeks. *In Pakistan, the history of hunger strikes is equally dignified and solemn. From teachers to families of missing persons and Baloch activists, hunger strikes for justice have been desperate measures taken when all other avenues are exhausted. These strikes garnered respect and sympathy because they were genuine and rooted in a desire for justice.*

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1848077/ptis-hunger-strike>

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Arithmetic of connivance, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 02 July⁷

The fresh hike in petroleum and gas prices are untenable. The decision will squeeze down not only the common man but also whatever industrial production is left behind. The government, perhaps, is clueless and is not mindful of ramifications. *The dispensation, it seems, just wants to stay put in power and for it the only chartered territory is to seek another sizzling bailout from the IMF to the tune of \$8 billion for the next three years.* This roulette of statistics is apparently meant to collect a staggering Rs1.28 trillion from petroleum sales in the new fiscal year against previous year's Rs960 billion. In the same vein, the wayward coalition has gone back on its promise to provide relief in average gas rates accruing from lower international oil prices for all other consumers, and on the regulator's plea has decided to absorb a Rs132 billion price cut to finance a part of circular debt, instead of providing relief to consumers. This arithmetic of connivance is anti-people and anti-development, to say the least. The budget, and its aftermath with this rise in energy prices, have unnerved the salaried class through multiple taxation, and pushed the poor in a miserable race for survival. It is leading to chaos, and protests and lockdowns are on the anvil. The government cannot absolve itself by financing its purse on illogically raised tariffs and taxes. This nexus of turpitude must come to an end.

Re-profiling loans, Editorial, *Dawn*, 30 July⁸

As a report in the paper pointed out, Pakistan has “a peculiar financial arrangement” with the countries mentioned consisting of loans and deposits that can be renewed annually as Pakistan is unable to repay the money because of the dollar crunch. They “form a major part of the IMF programme”. *Pakistan owes \$5bn to Saudi Arabia, \$4bn to China and \$3bn to the UAE. Will these creditors agree to the request for extending the*

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2475771/arithmetic-of-connivance>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1848910/re-profiling-loans>

maturity period of these loans? The finance minister is quite hopeful, although others are not. He says he is in contact with his counterparts in these countries for the rollover of loans for an extended period of time, and claims that he has their assurances of support that would help Pakistan plug the external financing gap. Even if these countries agree and we secure the IMF dollars, it will not solve our deep-seated problems. Pakistan is in a fix due to its inability to earn enough export revenues and attract non-debt-creating flows, such as FDI, to pay its import bills and finance its growth. It is a shame that a country of 240m finds itself on the brink of insolvency and is forced to knock on door after door for bailouts because its elites have become addicted to living luxurious and subsidised lives on borrowed money. The sad thing is that they are not ready to change even in the face of Armageddon. Something has to change and soon before the economy collapses under its own weight.

SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

Surveillance state, Editorial, *The News*, 03 July⁹

It is jarring that a state would go to such lengths to spy on its citizens without any legal cover and for no rhyme or reason. Surveillance is used to nab terrorists or criminals but that too has to have a legal cover to stand in a court of law. However, we have seen that private phone conversations of politicians, their families, or even judges' families are leaked on social media in Pakistan and then they are discussed repeatedly in the media due to the nature of the conversations. Interestingly, not many ask who recorded these conversations and how they were leaked because somehow this is Pakistan's worst-kept secret. It is not uncommon for politicians, lawyers, judges, bureaucrats, journalists and many others to find out that their phone calls are being tapped. But most of the time, they feel that they cannot do anything to stop this illegal surveillance. *Now that it has been revealed how the state uses private telecom companies to access citizens' data, there is hope that the court will*

⁹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1205749-surveillance-state>

put a permanent stop to this. There are those who are sceptical that there will be an end to this because they believe that Pakistan has become a police state where no rules apply to some. The fact, regardless, is that only insecure states spy on their own people without any valid reason and in an illegal manner. If there is a need to spy on people who are high-valued criminals or terrorists, the judiciary would not refrain from giving legal cover to their surveillance. The state of Pakistan must realize how violating its citizens' privacy does not make the country strong; it only weakens it.

State of terror, Editorial, *The News*, 05 July¹⁰

Addressing the SCO Council of Heads of State Summit on Thursday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that state terrorism should be condemned unambiguously and that rooting out militancy is a precondition for economic development. PM Shehbaz said that terrorism, “whether committed by individuals, groups, or states, must be fought collectively in a comprehensive fashion”. *Pakistan has given evidence to the international community. And now that it has been clear how India has carried out assassinations on foreign soil, including in Canada and Pakistan, and how an Indian government official directed a failed plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil, there is little doubt of how India operates as a state.* It is important that PM Shehbaz's statement is taken seriously, and attempts made to rein in India. Over the years, Pakistan has raised questions on who is behind the killings of Chinese nationals on Pakistani soil in terrorist attacks and whose purpose such attacks serve. Hostile countries like India do not want Pakistan to economically prosper and would do anything in their power to stop our progress. CPEC, being a crucial component of Pakistan's economic progress, has suffered due to recent terrorist attacks. *This is why, for regional development and progress, state terrorism must come to an end. The likes of the TTP and other terrorist organizations need financial support to carry out attacks. If India is giving them financial support and the Afghan Taliban regime is providing them safe havens, then collusion between the Afghan Taliban and India is also not entirely unlikely.*

¹⁰ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1206407-state-of-terror>

Our twin battle: Digital Terrorism, Editorial, *The News*, 23 July¹¹

Director General Inter-Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif has in a press conference on Monday highlighted the physical threats Pakistan faces from militants as well as what he branded ‘digital terrorism’, referring to the pervasive impact of misinformation and propaganda spread via social media. *There is little doubt that Pakistan’s armed forces have long been at the forefront of the fight against terrorism, making immense sacrifices to protect the nation.* With over 22,000 intelligence-based operations conducted this year alone, resulting in the elimination of high-value targets and significant casualties among our brave soldiers, it is evident that the military is steadfast in its mission to eradicate terrorism. *However, given Pakistan’s unfortunate history, there are always going to be inevitable questions about the balance between military actions and democratic governance, and the essential principle of civilian supremacy, with democratic voices pointing out that the long-term stability and democratic integrity of Pakistan depends on robust, transparent, and accountable governance along with respect and adherence to democratic principles.* Part of the ongoing unfortunate polarization on social media has been the influx of fake news, which says the ISPR has tried to paint ‘Operation Azm-e-Istehkam’ in a light that is misrepresentative. The presser has sought to clarify that the Azm-e-Istehkam campaign is not a mere military operation but a comprehensive counterterrorism initiative, reflecting a national consensus. *The Bannu incident and similar events demonstrate the need for provincial administrations to effectively manage and control mobs, ensuring that miscreants do not exploit genuine public grievances to incite violence while ensuring that the state’s response always remains measured and pro-people.*

¹¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1212326-our-twin-battle>

Successful security operations in KPK, Editorial, Roznama92 News, 03 July¹²

During various operations based on intelligence in the regions of Tirah and Lakki Marwat in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 9 terrorists have been killed. The slain terrorists were involved in attacks on security forces and law enforcement officials and were operating from their hideouts in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Whenever they find the opportunity, they target security personnel through their facilitators, who also provide them with weapons. Last night, terrorists attacked a police checkpoint in the Khyber district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, martyring one police officer and one FC personnel who were jointly present at a checkpoint. Pakistan's security forces are continuously confronting terrorists and thwarting their attacks. It is only a matter of time before these terrorists are eliminated from the region. The nation takes pride in the sons who sacrifice their lives fighting against terrorists. To effectively combat the condemnable actions of terrorists, it is essential to strengthen intelligence, enhance security and surveillance in sensitive areas, and dismantle the network of terrorists and their facilitators. For this purpose, cooperation should be sought from the local communities, tribal elders, and social leaders who have influence in the region. Individuals providing information in this regard should be rewarded and honoured with commendation certificates.

Pakistan-Tajikistan Agreements, Editorial, Jang, 04 July¹³

During the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Tajikistan the signing of the memorandums of understanding agreements between Pakistan and Tajikistan have highlighted new aspects of mutual cooperation and cooperation. Also possible coordination on various international issues has also come to light. The documents signed by the two countries include memorandums of understanding on cooperation in aviation, diplomacy, education, sports, social relations, industrial cooperation, tourism and other fields. A major development was visa free entry on

¹² <http://www.roznama92news.com>

¹³ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/714133>

the passports of Pakistan and Tajikistan. A strategic partnership agreement was also signed under which the foreign relations of Pakistan and Tajikistan will be transformed into a long-term strategic partnership. This agreement will create new opportunities for cooperation between the two countries. *Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif informed the Tajik President about the worsening situation of human rights in “occupied” Jammu and Kashmir and the despicable Indian efforts to change the demographic structure. The two leaders expressed their concerns regarding the Israeli aggression and the worst violations of human rights in Gaza and agreed on the need to stop further loss of human lives in Gaza and intensify the efforts of the international community to establish peace in the region.* During the joint press conference, addressing the Tajik President, Prime Minister Sharif said that I am willing to work with you so that cooperation between Islamabad and Dushanbe in various fields including agriculture, industry, investment, and trade will increase. *According to Shehbaz Sharif, goods are being transported from Karachi port to Tajikistan through Afghanistan. He wants the road and rail network between Tajikistan and Pakistan to be strengthened.* Shehbaz said that both countries should find multilateral corridors. We are keen to be part of the trade corridor between China, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, he said. As evident from these details, measures to increase trade and investment between the two countries can be expected to be implemented soon. The more commercial activities are promoted in the region, the more prosperity will come.

Shipping and economy! Editorial, Roznama Jang, 11 July¹⁴

Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's efforts to stabilize the national economy by providing support and strengthening it on solid foundations are commendable. One aspect of these efforts is to bring order to the shipping sector and resolve issues related to import and export. Shipping has been a significant trade route for centuries. In this regard, the news that the Prime Minister has directed the immediate formation of a regulatory body for the shipping sector is crucial. Initiatives such as increasing green channel facilities and keeping customs open 24/7 are also part of these directives. After a meeting with Mian Shehbaz Sharif at the Prime Minister's House in Islamabad on Tuesday, *former Vice President of FPCCI, Khurram Ejaz, said that the Prime*

¹⁴ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/11-07-2024/page6>

Minister had fulfilled a long-standing demand of the business community by directing the formation of a regulatory body for the shipping industry. According to Khurram Ejaz, when the Prime Minister recently visited Karachi, he held a meeting regarding trade and industry issues with KPT members, during which some recommendations were also given. The meeting in Islamabad on Tuesday was a follow-up to these discussions. The business community's position was that instead of leaving import and export matters to foreign private companies' discretion, they should come under regulatory bodies. This would reduce business costs, establish government rates, and curb smuggling. The Prime Minister mentioned increasing the readiness of the green channel, which directly benefits the industry because reducing business costs will help control corruption. Similarly, the Prime Minister mentioned the use of modern technology for customs clearance, which could prevent smuggling facilitated by incorrect declarations and under-invoicing. According to customs sources, tax theft amounting to Rs. 1.3 billion occurs through misdeclaration and under-invoicing and the use of modern methods, including CCTV cameras, could reduce this.

The issue of banning PTI, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 19 July¹⁵

The Minister of Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister, Ishaq Dar, has said that no decision has been made regarding the ban on the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI); a decision will be made after consulting the allies. Concerns have arisen within government circles regarding the ban on the PTI, which were expressed by government ministers during press conferences. The PTI is one of Pakistan's major political parties. There should have been a consensus within the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), the largest party, regarding the reasons for imposing the ban. Subsequently, it is essential to garner the confidence of allied parties. However, the current situation is such that several leaders within the PML-N are also not endorsing the idea of a ban, whereas the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has opposed it. The Q-League has called it a hasty decision. As soon as this press conference of the Information Minister took place, the political temperature in Pakistan, which was not low to begin with, rose even higher. The media showed signs of panic. Now, Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has said that the decision to ban the PTI is

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2024-07-19/page-5>

not final. The question arises: when a final decision has not been made, what was the need to raise the issue in the media? In the past, parties have faced similar bans, but those experiments were not successful. Prima facie, this initiative also does not seem to be successful. Such actions only add to animosities, while today there is a need for broader political understanding and reconciliation. In their daily struggles with issues of livelihood, the common people are already troubled by the system and governance. In such circumstances, the government should focus on providing relief to the people.

Press Conference of DG-ISPR, Editorial, *Roznama Dunya*, 23 July¹⁶

In yesterday's press conference, DG ISPR Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry addressed several critical issues, including internal security, the commitment of armed forces against terrorism, new threats to national security, propaganda against the Pakistan Army, and digital terrorism. The stance of the Pakistan Army was presented to the public regarding these matters. During the press conference, clarification was also provided regarding the Faizabad and Chaman sit-ins and Bannu incidents. Regarding the Azm-e-Istehkam, DG ISPR stated that it is not a military operation but a campaign being opposed under specific agendas. Following the National Apex Committee meeting on June 22, attended by the Prime Minister, Defence Minister, Chief Ministers of all provinces, Army Chief, and heads of relevant institutions, the first mention of the Azm-e-Istehkam came up. However, there has been ongoing ambiguity surrounding this issue since then. Although *the Pakistan Army has clarified immediately that Azm-e-Istehkam is not a military operation, nor should it be compared to past operations. Instead, it is a sustained campaign aimed at eliminating terrorists and their facilitators. Despite this clarification, reservations have been expressed by various classes and several political parties regarding Azm-e-Istehkam. The government had also announced the intention to convene an All Parties Conference (APC) on this matter, but so far, it has not been convened.* Now, acknowledging its responsibility, the government should immediately convene the APC to achieve consensus on the counter-terrorism action plan. DG ISPR also expressed concern over the escalation in propaganda campaigns, falsehoods, and misinformation against the armed forces, emphasizing the need for

¹⁶ https://e.dunya.com.pk/index.php?e_name=ISL&edate=2024-07-23&page=25

frequent press conferences to clarify the Army's position. Currently, the Pakistan Army is conducting daily operations, but the question remains whether other stakeholders are fulfilling their responsibilities. Normalizing the social situation is not the responsibility of military institutions; rather, it falls upon the government and political leadership. Without political unity, social harmony cannot be achieved.

Why so? S.M. Zahid, Jang, 26 July¹⁷

More than a year has passed since the events of 9 May. All the videos and evidence are there but surprisingly no one involved has been punished yet. There is an endless series of dates and guarantees and attendance on dates. On the one hand, the unfulfilled determination of "we will not spare the involved people" and on the other hand, the rhetorical war of "we are not afraid of anyone" is going on, which is causing unnecessary instability in the country. After all, why is this happening, who are they who are obstructing the process of punishment? Are they so powerful that political and economic stability in the country is not possible without their consent? The destabilizing elements are running rampant in the country. The country is moving towards anarchy When and who will rein in such elements? Why is a section angry about the DG ISPRs' press conference? After all, what did he say that is against the establishment of national security and peace? Should not action be taken against terrorists and their facilitators? Is it fair to do politics on this most important issue? Can anyone tell if there is any law in the world that justifies terrorism or if there are no strict operations and actions against terrorists? Perhaps there is no such country except one neighbouring country in the present world. As far as Operation "Azm-e-Istehkam" is concerned, it has been made clear many times that there is no possibility of anyone becoming homeless. Those who are trying to stop this operation against the terrorists and their facilitators are either trying to pursue their political interests or they have other motives. Otherwise, everyone sees that there are daily incidents of terrorism in the country in which officers, soldiers of the Pakistan Army, the FC and police personnel are killed. Operations and actions are going on. "Azm-e-Istehkam" is the name given to organized operation against terrorists and their facilitators to clean the country from such unfortunates and restore peace and stability. The PTI founder has admitted to the

¹⁷ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/726386%22>

journalists that he had given instructions to the workers to protest in front of GHQ and other military posts in case of his arrest. While some PTI leaders denied the words of their own party founder, saying that the founder PTI did not say so. It is nobody's business to deny what he said in front of so many journalists. *What is the role of the Army Chief and top military leadership in the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) and how are they trying to put the country's economy on the track of recovery? The Pakistan Army is busy day and night to end the smuggling. Pakistan Army plays an important role in the improvement of education, clean drinking water, health and communication system in Balochistan and KP. The nation also knows that by arranging necessary and important education in the backward areas, the Pakistan Army provided opportunities to the youth there to join the army from soldiers to officers.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

PTI alliance with Maulana? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 02 July¹⁸

Maulana Fazlur Rehman said that the incumbent government was incapable of allaying their concerns about the Feb 8 polls, while the PTI appeared confused about the way forward. Addressing a press conference after a meeting of his party's Majlis-i-Shura, which spanned two days, the JUI-F chief demanded snap elections without the interference of the establishment. *The host underlined that the JUI-F Chief and the PTI are aligned on many issues and it looks like that they are getting closer.* Asad Kaiser, PTI on this show pointed out that there is no technical alliance with the PTI but the talks are on with them. We will form five member committee from this and other side, JUI-F and talks will begin soon. Lashing out at the federal government for delaying the issuance of a no-objection certificate (NOC) for holding a public meeting on July 6 in Tarnol, Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leaders on Tuesday announced that they would hold a record-breaking public gathering at the designated place, come what may. They said Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and Maryam Nawaz had held

¹⁸ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MGoWh3a6_F8

public gatherings and sit-ins without any obstacles during the PTI's tenure but they were not being allowed to hold the meeting. This announcement was made during a press conference by senior PTI leaders, including Additional Secretary General Firdous Shamim Naqvi, Shoaib Shaheen and PTI Islamabad President Amir Mughal.

Ban on PTI & National Security of Pakistan, Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 05 July¹⁹

PM Shehbaz Sharif has talked in favour of Palestine in the SCO meeting and is planning to call an all party conference in relations to the security of the country when he returns. Hamid Mir pointed out that at one hand he is talking about all party conference but on the other hand there are talks of banning the PTI by the Punjab government, so how will this go hand in hand? **Tariq Fazal Chaudhry** of the PML-N on this show underlined that the operation that has started by the government is important, ***Azm-e-Istehkam*** he said is the need of the hour. As far as banning of Imran Khan's meeting his leaders, he said that these are administrative issues and is for law and order. He added that no election is perfect and if the form 45 is uploaded by Lahore commission then we should say better late than never, we should appreciate it. **Sheikh Waqas Akram** of the PTI said that we are not happy that Imran Khan is kept away from his leaders and the government is not letting him meet the workers of the party. About the all party conference and the PTI taking part in the conference, he underlined that the PTI will decide. We follow the rules to meet Imran Khan and take all the actions and legal process needed to meet him but still they are not allowing. He questioned that lets say that there were issues from election commission but why the PML-N benefited from all these faults of the commission and why not PTI? We have demanded in the Supreme Court to inquire about the rigging in the elections but they are not giving any dates. He underlined we support the report by the Pattan organization and urge the government to take this report seriously and investigate. **Sarwar Bari** head of the ***Pattan Development Organisation*** informed that the election commission has been paid to conduct the elections and there is a structure to conduct the elections, it's all systematic and there

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ykNEAp4hl7c>

should not be any issues or troubles. We surveyed the election commission website and after all research and analyses we have taken out this report and this is not the first report, we have done so in the past too. The latest report we took 20 *halkas* and 1 NA and audited them, we discovered that there were no form 45, when we opened it was form 46. He informed that that after this report was published the government started uploading the form 45 in a hurry but still they have made mistakes.

Will Shahid Khaqan Be An Alternative To Big Political Leaders? Sethi Se Sawal, Samaa TV, 07 July²⁰

In this episode Najam Sethi discuss the political scenario of Pakistan at the present and analyses the emergence and launch of the new political party the *Awam Pakistan Party* started by the likes of ex PM *Shahid Khaqan Abbasi* and *Miftah Ismail*. The host asked what will be the utility of the new party and does Pakistan needed a new political party. Najam Sethi underlined that although there is a void in the politics of Pakistan but that has been filled by the PTI and Imran Khan, and there is no room for a new party. But it is possible that the two legend leaders know some secrets and think Imran Khan is gone and this is the time for a new party. About the name of the party Awami party, PPP is also Awami party and Nawaz Sharif is also Awami so there is no need of a new one. Shahid Khaqan and Miftah Ismail are well educated and competent and there is no case of corruption or negative comment on them. They love the country and both were faithful to the PML-N and part of it and never complained about the party but both think that the PML-N leadership has let them down and not given them their due and respect. They had an option to stick with PML-N and become non entity or to leave politics or join Imran Khan, the popular party or third option was to form a new party. But they have their integrity and could not join Imran Khan on ideological grounds. The question is in today's environment will this party be appealing to the people? He added there is a necessary condition and sufficient condition, in the first case it is important to take the public along but in the second case, it is not important to take the people along. He added that in this point of time, people only support Imran Khan and

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACztuAaqyq8>

it is his time, there is no room for a new party. The establishment has propped the PML-N in opposition to the PPP and brought Nawaz Sharif into power. But when the establishment brought him down and his government, he started giving anti-establishment speeches, rest is history how he was treated after that. He added that if the parties want to be in centre they need the blessing of the army. It has to be seen what ideology the new party will take and go forward and we have to see the approach of army to this new party. Najam Sethi pointed out *that right now the PTI and Imran Khan is going on an ideology that he is antiestablishment and pro people and is fighting for people from behind jail*. If this new party want to make an impression then they have to remove the PTI and Imran Khan and what is their approach to the public. There is a clash of party with army and also a clash of institution, the future of the party is unclear. He added that the Awam Pakistan Party and its founders are neither revolutionary nor reformist. Miftah wanted to follow IMF agenda but people think its anti-people and Khaqan is not antiestablishment in total, therefore they have to carve an agenda for the party. Their quest “Reimaging Pakistan” which they started as conference is shallow and do not see anything fruitful out of it.

The CPEC Debt Trap: Dead End for Economy, Kamran Khan, *Dunya News*, 10 July²¹

Pakistan is now locked in a CPEC debt trap, and only China has the key to set us free. Today, Pakistan's IPPs under the CPEC offer a classic example of a debt trap: "The creditor country extends excessive credit to a debtor country with the intention of extracting economic or political concessions when the debtor country becomes unable to meet its repayment obligations. Most importantly the conditions of the loans are often not publicized. The borrowed money commonly pays for contractors and materials sourced from the creditor country." Highly over-invoiced, non-competitive CPEC power projects, with a promised minimum of 17 percent dollarized profits, have delivered the world's most expensive electricity to Pakistani people and industries. Capacity payments and 3.5 percent plus LIBOR loan terms have turned Pakistan's debt burden into a full-fledged national security crisis. And now classic outcome of an

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/fq8a4veFOBo>

intelligently laid debt trap: Pakistan just can't pay the financial charges and now China has a critical say in our economic destiny.

Will Govt Succeed In Banning PTI? Sethi Se Sawal, SAMAA TV, 18 July²²

In this episode Najam Sethi gives his views on the latest news of banning PTI and why this government is taking the steps in a hurry. He added that earlier it was the clash between PML-N and PTI but now it looks like there will be an institutional clash with the entry of other players. The government is trying its best to keep Imran Khan behind bars and at the same time Khan is not ready to give up. *This ban on PTI is a knee jerk reaction by the government because they were not ready for the courts to dismiss Imran Khan in the Iddat and Cypher case. There is an internal debate within the government and some are saying that the step to announce the ban on PTI is taken in hasty.* About the *Idat case* Najam Sethi said that it was a useless case and the government should not have taken up this weak case which was absurd but it was politically motivated. Even this ban is politically motivated and it will be reversed due to the backlash. The government is clueless about how to deal with Imran Khan and his populism. In the past also parties like the communist parties were banned but it was reversed later. Even in the recent times TLP was banned but later after four months the ban was reversed and the party came back. The ban on PTI should be revised by the government but it will go on with the decision and will stretch the issue because they have to keep on the pressure and delay the judicial procedure of Imran Khan. The Parliament has become zero and the leaders are not doing their duty. Although the judiciary might release Imran Khan in all the cases but the government will invent cases against Imran Khan and try to keep him behind the bars for a longer time. Unless the institute/establishment or Imran Khan step down, things will go on like this in the future but at this point no one is ready to step back. This ban case will take more than three months and it will be taken up in the Supreme Court and he added that every day there will be a crisis.

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxwrxgU2Prc>

Judiciary vs the Government, Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi, *ARY News*, 23 July²³

The Supreme Court has said that the PTI should get the reserved seats and that nobody has the right to ban the PTI as a party, it has every right to exist as a party, although their symbol has been taken. The government has said that it will resist this judgment and will not be a cake walk to implement this judgment. The host pointed out that the judiciary has become a punching bag, the judgments given by it are accepted according to the party's convenience and if it is not in the parties favour they criticize the judiciary. PM Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz has heavily criticised and has said that some judges in the SC has tried to re write the constitution and we will not bear this and speak up. **Faisal Vawda** talking about the reserved seats pointed out that the courts should have given the judgment and should have given the seats to Sunni Ethadi Council but now that there is confusion so everyone is talking about constitution. Parliament is not a rubber stamp and we have to take constitution into consideration. The PTI is sad about the reserved seats at the end of the day, and they are sinking into more troubles by protesting and going against the establishment. He added that there will be no compromises on the 9th May event and perpetrators will be punished. **Zain Qureshi**, PTI underlined that the ground reality is that the whole war is to save the constitution and today when the government is not liking the judgment of the SC, they are attacking the judiciary. The way the PML-N leaders like Maryam Nawaz are attacking the judges personally, if they do not like it they should file revive petition. He added that PTI has protested on 9th May but there was no talk of violence and Imran Khan never said that the PTI will attack the GHQ. **Tariq Fazal Chaudhary**, PML-N added that Imran Khan has directed the PTI workers on 9th May that if he will be arrested the PTI should protest and the media reporters has also accepted that this has happened. Even if the protest was peaceful and it turned into violence, Imran Khan is responsible for giving the call. He said that politics should be played in Parliament and not on the ground. He also said that the government will run for five years and there is no crack in the system. Even if

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

there is new elections, there will be no stability in the country, the only option for Pakistan is to let this government be stable and run its course.

PTI's overtures to establishment: is the ice-melting? 11th Hour with Waseem Badami, *ARY News*, 25 July²⁴

In this episode the host discussed the politics of PTI and the Imran Khan and how some leaders of the PTI are now coming out and saying that Khan has asked its workers to protest on 9th May in front of the GHQ. Now after the meeting with Imran Khan, Gohar Khan came out of the jail and shared a message of Khan to General Asim Munir, and asked the establishment to come into senses and not fight with the PTI on the directions of the PDM and this government. He added that the PTI will not let this happen and urged the army not to let this happen. The same was repeated by Fawad Chaudhary in an interview with this same channel. *Allama Raja Nasir Abbas*, head of the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen on this show pointed out that this government has failed to deliver and now the government/PML-N want the establishment and PTI to lock horns with each other. Now they are trying to change the narrative by saying that Imran Khan has ordered on 9th May to attack the GHQ, this is a media trial. It is true that army is important for the country and they should think to save the country not to get involved in the politics. He added that after meeting Imran Khan in jail he informed that Imran Khan wants to build the country and not to break it. *Mohammad Malick*, senior analyst pointed out that the development is surprising how suddenly the PTI is changing its narrative towards army and trying to please the establishment. But the presser by DG-ISPR was very tough towards PTI and they connected the party to digital terrorism. Today the PTI extended an olive branch, it is a tester and tried to save itself. But the most important are the tribunal cases and these will be a game changer. *Muneeb Farooq*, Analyst talking about the new twist stated that this is a good narrative by the PTI on the face value but nothing has changed in the ground. Unless Imran Khan comes out and give a statement /policy statement that 9th May was not a false flag operation and it was not done by army. The press conference by DG-ISPR is a warning to the PTI and nothing has changed. These kind of overtures will be a unilateral effort to impress the army and if Imran Khan has to come back to politics they have to cool down the temperatures

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vfnwMjhuxgQ&t=1s>

and make peace with the army. *Mazhar Abbas*, senior journalist pointed out that this is a teaser and the show is on Friday, the countrywide protest by PTI. It has to be seen how this protest will go and we have to see the impact of the protest and gauge the mood of the government and PTI. The problem is that Imran Khan gave one view to the journalists and on other to PTI leaders on the 9th May event. He added that there is no doubt that Imran Khan might have given peaceful protest calls on 9th May, but why in front of the GHQ.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Bajaur ²⁵	05/07/2024	At Least 3 Killed, 8 Injured In Northwest Pakistan Bomb Blast	03	08
Bannu ²⁶	15/07/2024	3 killed in car bomb-and-gun attack on Pakistan military compound	03	12
N. Waziristan ²⁷	22/07/2024	Girls' school destroyed in North Waziristan blast	00	00

²⁵ <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-bombing-khyber-taliban/33023302.html>

²⁶ <https://www.voanews.com/a/car-bomb-and-gun-attack-on-pakistan-military-compound/7698526.html>

²⁷ <https://www.samaa.tv/2087318112-girls-school-destroyed-in-north-waziristan-blast>