

June 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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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Cipher acquittal, Editorial, Dawn, 04 June¹

Yesterday afternoon, Imran Khan and Shah Mahmood Qureshi stood acquitted of the charge of compromising state secrets. ‘Traitors’ for a grand total of about four months and one week, the two have been vindicated by the Islamabad High Court of charges brought against them in the infamous ‘cipher case’, as it came to be known. *While the detailed verdict is awaited, it is worth recalling that this was the most serious of the three convictions former prime minister Imran Khan had been slapped with in quick succession in the days leading up to the Feb 8 general election.* Both Mr. Khan and ex-foreign minister Mr Qureshi had been handed 10 years’ rigorous punishment each for, in the eyes of the presiding judge, ‘leaking’ a secret cable and thereby compromising the safety, integrity and credibility of Pakistan’s secure communication system with its diplomatic missions abroad. *The conviction had precluded Mr Qureshi’s right to participate in the general election; Mr Khan had already been deemed ineligible by an earlier conviction in the Toshakhana case. The verdict had been secured on the state’s third attempt at prosecuting the case.* Two earlier trials were aborted by the IHC after it found serious irregularities in the proceedings. Even then, the trial court’s sentence was almost immediately slammed by the legal community; many had criticised the abnormal circumstances in which the trial was completed. This was the same case, it may be recalled, in which the court had denied the two defendants their right to appoint their own counsels or cross-examine the prosecution’s witnesses, even though the prosecution had sought the maximum penalty of a death sentence.

Triumph of bilateralism, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 10 June²

A meaningful and result-oriented visit to China by the Pakistani leadership has graduated the relationship to new heights. The rubbing of shoulders with the Chinese politburo by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1837680>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2470627/triumph-of-bilateralism>

has simply confirmed the obvious: there are no irritants, and rumours of a downslide in the time-tested ties are part of vicious propaganda. *The joint statement issued at the end of the visit has stated categorically that there is commonality of views from bilateralism to regionalism, and there is no distraction as far as CPEC and other innovative developmental ventures are concerned. Pakistan's endeavour to emulate the Chinese module of modernisation and buoy geo-economics cements them into a legendary friendship, and there is no looking back on it.* This visit has come at a time when the chips are down for Pakistan as it is budgeting its figures in the midst of pestering debt-servicing and balance of payments. The Chinese largesse to pitch in with cash tranches and rollover of loans has supplemented the desired breathing space. Likewise, the resolve to go ahead with the second phase of CPEC and set up industrial zones to kick-start production, along with the opening up of Gwadar port and a new parallel railway track, is a bonanza of sorts. Last but not least, this high-powered visit has come close on the heels of Fifth Strategic Dialogue and the 13th CPEC's Joint Coordination Committee meeting that unanimously agreed to expeditiously implement consensual projects and upgrade CPEC to new horizons.

Time for dialogue, Editorial, Dawn, 24 June³

The PPP, by virtue of its position within the government, is uniquely placed to facilitate this much-needed dialogue. With his experience and political acumen, President Asif Ali Zardari can play a positive role if he employs his negotiation skills to bridge the divide. By leveraging its influence within the government, the PPP can encourage PML-N to engage in dialogue, thereby clearing a pathway for the PTI to also come to the table. In fact, not only is mediation desirable, it is imperative for Pakistan's democracy. *Giving tangible hope to a polarised public crushed by inflation and unemployment should be the common goal, one that is hardly achievable if the PTI arguably the most popular party in the country remains alienated.* The consequences of continued polarisation are dire. If the PML-N and PTI remain mired in mutual acrimony, an ever-widening gap will continue to allow non-political forces to assert themselves. The three main political parties have had a taste of fraught relations with the establishment with the PTI the latest target of

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1841586/time-for-dialogue>

the latter's displeasure. *By uniting, even if temporarily, political parties can reduce external leverage over civilian affairs. Ironically, the call to end the 'politics of hatred' is coming from one of the youngest parliamentarians.* The more experienced of our politicians should know that the path to democratic consolidation lies in political maturity and a shared commitment to national interest. Engaging in dialogue, despite deep-seated differences, is not a sign of weakness but political wisdom.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Normalising inflation, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 05 June⁴

The decrease in inflation can be attributed to several factors, including tighter monetary and fiscal policies, record agricultural production, and a more stable rupee. The lower-than-expected inflation figures have also strengthened the case for the SBP to cut its key policy rate in next week's meeting. *S&P recently said a large rate cut may be in the works, with the company projecting a drop of about 450 bps by year end. The government's own target is to bring the record-high interest rate, 22%, down to under 7% by September 2025, which would require inflation to continue dropping steadily and without any significant upward spikes for the next year.* However, several variables can still come into play, and global oil prices alone can throw off the entire equation if they rise more than projected. Despite prices currently hovering below the \$80 mark, experts are projecting prices will shoot past \$90 in the next few months before stabilising next year. That increase alone could completely throw off policy planning going forward, so an abundance of caution is still necessary. Meanwhile, the Russia-Ukraine war is generating more international tension in the wake of the reports that the US recently authorised Ukraine to use American weapons on Russian soil. Even under the best of circumstances, Pakistan's economy is still at the mercy of international events.

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2469808/normalising-inflation>

Approaching budget, Editorial, Dawn, 10 June⁵

The constitution of the National Economic Council to review and approve the macroeconomic budgetary framework, as well as proposed federal and provincial development spending plans for 2024-25, gives hope that the announcement of next year's budget will not be delayed beyond June 12. Considering that the Annual Plan Coordination *Committee had firmed up its macro targets for FY25 at the beginning of this month, the delay in the announcement has been surprising, if not perplexing.* In this context, the government's budget priorities are clear: economic stabilisation by containing the current account deficit in the balance-of-payments, and reduction in the budget deficit and borrowing requirements through primary budget surplus. *Stabilisation is crucial for Pakistan to make its external debt payments on time, bring up its dwindling foreign exchange reserves to a safe level, and achieve debt sustainability by narrowing the gap between its income and spending by mobilizing additional tax revenue and cutting public expenditure.* It goes without saying that these goals require extensive policy reforms. Both the prime minister and finance minister have time and again expressed their commitment to carrying out the required structural reforms under the new IMF programme. The budget for the next year will be their first test. Many are sceptical of them translating their words into well-defined actions in the budget. Will they prove their doubters wrong?

Policy rate, Editorial, The News, 11 June⁶

With a reduction in the policy rate by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the economy is likely to get some much-needed boost. On Monday, the central bank announced it was reducing the key interest rate by 150 basis points. *As Budget FY24-25 looms, both the timing and margin of this rate are significant – coming on the heels of data showing a noteworthy slowdown in inflation to a 30-month low of 11.8 per cent in May. This improves the overall real interest rate, moving it into deep positive territory.* Many would see the rate cut as a sign of a cautiously optimistic outlook on Pakistan's economic trajectory. The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) has likely assessed the subsiding inflationary pressures, supported by

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1838916/approaching-budget>

⁶ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1199092-policy-rate>

fiscal consolidation, as foundation enough for the rate cut. *While acknowledging the potential risks associated with upcoming budgetary measures and energy price adjustments, the committee seems to be confident in the cumulative impact of earlier monetary tightening to keep inflationary pressures in check.* The rate reduction had been expected, with various surveys predicting a decline and hoping for a shift towards monetary easing. For people, what is important to know is that the SBP's monetary policy reduction could stimulate economic activity, providing much-needed relief to businesses and consumers alike and offering a favourable environment for investment and borrowing.

Another deficit-laden budget, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 13 June⁷

A difficult budget in difficult times promises to focus on fiscal consolidation in an attempt to contain soaring deficits. The trajectory of figures makes it a baffling case of optimism when the chips are down, and as growth is forecasted at 3.6%. The intention, however, is to rein in inflation at less than 12%, a gigantic task as the central bank's interest rates have been slashed by 1.5 percentage points, and the price spiral presently hovers at 30%. The Rs18, 877 billion budget has come up with an exceptional allocation of Rs1, 500 billion for PSDP, at a time when the same was lingering at less than Rs800 billion last year. Likewise, a proposal to raise salaries of the government employees by 25% from grade 1 to 16, a 15% increase in pensions, along with an enhancement in petroleum levy from Rs60 to Rs80 will keep the lower and middle strata on the edges. *This budget apparently is a window-dressing to oblige the IMF as the government intends to do a long-time borrowing of more than \$8 billion to the tune of exhausting its SDR limits. In lieu, the budget promises to ensure stability by efficient use of public money, introducing indispensable reforms in the taxation machinery, reduce current account deficit and mobilize the private sector to stimulate growth.* That is easier said than done. But the good point is that the budget has retained the slab of taxation for salaried class at Rs600, 000, opted for progressive taxation for higher income sections and encouraged tax compliance with a capital gains tax fixed at 15% for filers and up to 45% for non-filers. This, nonetheless, is an innovative strategy to enhance revenue and also to digitize the economy.

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2471318/another-deficit-laden-budget-edit1>

Budget and politics, Editorial, Dawn, 14 June⁸

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Thursday expressed his ‘resolve’ to increase Pakistan’s tax-to-GDP ratio to 13pc in the next three years. Addressing a post-budget media briefing, he said: “*Our basic principle while framing this budget was to expand the tax base.*” *Given this statement and his earlier declaration at the launch of the Economic Survey that “countries cannot be run on charity but taxes”,* it was expected that the new budget would have significant measures to broaden the tax base. The reality of the taxation measures announced by him in the budget, however, does not match his rhetoric. Before we delve into the reasons for this gap, it should be acknowledged that the budget does propose the revocation of certain tax exemptions being enjoyed by certain privileged sectors of the economy. That, though, has been done to raise the annual tax collection to Rs12b.97tr, a sine qua non to qualify for the three-year Extended Fund Facility being sought from the IMF. *The next budget, in fact, reflects the ruling PML-N’s political concerns more than its economic reform agenda. For one, it has left its traditional support traders virtually untouched.* Nothing except such political imperatives explain why the finance minister did not levy any direct taxes on retail trade even when the government has talked a lot about it of late.

Priority or High Priority? Editorial, Daily Times, 20 June

Considering the unprecedented reliance of Pakistan’s economy on China as it believed in the game-changer CPEC to fulfil all its wishes with the charisma of Alladin’s lamp, perhaps, this pessimistic outlook was hiding in the bag for quite some time. *After all, glorified mentions of CPEC II cannot change the fact that nothing substantial has yet been achieved from the first leg of the journey.* Add to that the constant friction between what the two sides aspire to target (Pakistani authorities are prioritizing IT and energy investments while the Chinese side is emphasizing agriculture) and one is forced to wonder about the nature of talks held between the highest ranks of governance. *But while the constant need for improvement in Pakistan’s own affairs cannot be stressed enough before it ensures the arrival of a much-needed stream of foreign investment, nothing*

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1839786>

substantial can come out of bickering over semantics. Three recent high-profile visits to Saudi Arabia, the UAE and China would only prove to be fruitful if the Sharif administration succeeds in proving reliability and a way out of the political abyss. At present, the volatile landscape suggests that no matter what is promised on the international stage, the entire kitchen is on fire inside the house.

Surplus budget, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 24 June⁹

Balochistan has proposed a surplus budget with a total expenditure of Rs930.20 billion, and is comfortably placed in terms of receipts from the federal and provincial pools. One of the prominent aspects of the budget is that it has hiked allocation in the education sector by 52%, earmarking a staggering Rs146.9 billion. *Likewise, allocations have seen a substantial rise in health, agriculture as well as law and order in the restive and desolate province which is once again hit with lawlessness and political instability. While the province does not seem to have a problem in making its ends meet, the beleaguered coalition got a shock from the judiciary as it expressed its displeasure over the procurement of wheat from farmers on a subsidised rate.* A two-member bench of Balochistan High Court ruled the cabinet's decision to purchase wheat at subsidised rates as illegal, stating that it "did not meet the standards of reasonableness and prudent financial management." This is an evolving phenomenon countrywide as Punjab and Sindh too had witnessed similar highhandedness from local dispensation as farmers were neither given their due, nor was their produce purchased by the respective provinces in due course of time. This is tantamount to a scam in the making, and the court has rightly addressed it. The BHC, likewise, went on to direct the Chief Secretary to allocate Rs500 million of wheat procurement for loan repayments, town planning, clean water supply projects and shutting down the ineffective departments. Submission in solemnity is indispensable.

⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1202150/priority-or-high-priority/>

SECURITY SITUATION

Act Now, Editorial, *The News*, 11 June¹⁰

In yet another deadly attack, seven Pakistan Army soldiers, including a captain, were martyred on Sunday as a result of an improvised explosive device (IED) explosion near their vehicle in the Lakki Marwat district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. Another senseless loss of life in the border region, and there seems to be no end in sight. With every passing day, more brave sons of the soil are paying the ultimate price for the defense of the nation. There must come a time when the government responds with force and retribution. However, our response continues to be sporadic. With each passing day, it becomes clearer that Pakistan must undertake a military operation in the border regions of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan on the same scale as Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad. The time for half-measures has long passed us. *We must remember, in the mid-2010s, a decade of inaction allowed the terrorist threat to infiltrate our major urban centers, with bombings becoming so common as to render social life impossible. Only direct action was able to stem the tide. After Zarb-e-Azb and Radd-ul-Fasaad,* Pakistan saw a significant drop in terror attacks, increased security, and a turn towards prosperity as the economy rallied in the safety those operations created.

Countering terror, Editorial, *The News*, 14 June¹¹

At least 11 terrorists, involved in the martyrdom of seven army men, have been killed during an intelligence-based operation in the Lakki Marwat district. On Sunday (June 9), an improvised explosive device (IED) exploded on the vehicle of the security forces in Lakki Marwat district, martyring seven Pakistan Army soldiers. In a statement on Tuesday, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the intelligence operation was carried out in response to Sunday's attack to bring the perpetrators to justice. According to a security report issued by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan accounted for over 92 per cent of all

¹⁰ <https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Jun-2024/act-now>

¹¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1200175-countering-terror>

fatalities and 86 per cent of attacks – including incidents of terrorism and security forces operations – during the first quarter of 2024. Pakistan witnessed 432 violence-linked fatalities and 370 injuries among civilians, security personnel and outlaws resulting from as many as 245 incidents of terror attacks and counter-terror operations. This includes 281 fatalities among civilians and security forces personnel. These numbers are terrifying, but they are not surprising given how terrorism has made a comeback in Pakistan during the last few years. *Experts say that ever since the fall of Kabul became imminent, the number of terrorist attacks gradually started increasing. The Taliban takeover in Afghanistan in 2021 gave a boost to terrorist organizations, especially the TTP, which had found a safe haven on Afghan soil and started carrying out its nefarious activities from across the border.*

Anti-terror policy, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 25 June¹²

Pakistan once again is at the crossroads of redefining its anti-terror policy. The rise in violence and meddling from extra-territorial elements, especially in the wake of Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, has pushed Islamabad to the brink. An escalation of around 83% in terrorist attacks in the last five months needs to be given a befitting response, and that is exactly what the civil and military leadership is contemplating. *A two-pronged strategy at work is of diplomatically engaging Kabul to do the needful by reining in the terror apparatus, and at the same time going out to exterminate non-state actors holed inside Pakistan.* Taking all the stakeholders on board is a must, including the government of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, which is supposed to be the theatre of operation. It is incumbent upon the powers-that-be as well as the civilian strata to be on the same page, and address the fissures of terrorism without jumping over the gun. Security and serenity is sine qua non for progress and prosperity, and the multibillion dollar geo-economic projects, including CPEC and connectivity with Afghanistan and beyond, demands astute resilience and a carefully choreographed national policy. Let the parliament be the springboard of decision-making to grant the offensive its due legitimacy and vitality

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2473643/anti-terror-policy-edit1>

Extremist threat, Editorial, Dawn, 26 June¹³

As the state continues to explain to the nation what exactly the Azm-i-Istehkam campaign will entail, particularly in the realm of counterterrorism measures, there is also a need to discuss steps to counter violent extremism in the country. *While the military and civil law-enforcement agencies battle militants in the field, a similar campaign should be waged to deradicalise society, as both terrorism and extremism are joined at the hip, and feed off each other.* Just over the past few months, we have witnessed lynchings based on doubtful allegations of blasphemy, as well as the persecution of minority communities for practising their faith even within the privacy of their homes. *Thus, while the state takes on what it calls the ‘remnants’ of terrorist outfits, it should not ignore the extremism threat. There may be some realisation of this at the top, as a recent statement from the PM Office, while discussing Azm-i-Istehkam, specifically mentions the need to implement the revised National Action Plan.* Indeed, a blueprint for the deradicalisation of society exists in the shape of the updated NAP. But until NAP’s goals are implemented to the letter, deradicalisation will simply remain a theory, as extremists continue to further their toxic narratives in society. Point number three of the updated NAP mentions “taking effective measures against religious/ sectarian persecution & terrorism”. As noted, there has been no shortage of incidents of religious and sectarian persecution in Pakistan.

URDU MEDIA

State has illegal and unconstitutional control on resources and coal mines in Balochistan, NDM, Daily Sangar, 04 June¹⁴

The National Democratic Movement (NDM) has strongly condemned the brutal incident of killing innocent workers of coal mines in the Daki district of Balochistan. The party held the state institutions responsible for it. *It has been said in the statement that the state has unconstitutional and illegal possession of coal deposits and mines throughout Balochistan*

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1842066/extremist-threat>

¹⁴ <https://dailysangar.online/?p=47358>

including Harnai district, Daki. Extortion is being taken from coal mining and business, which is set from 230 rupees per ton and millions of rupees are extorted through mobile calls threats every month. *Extortion is collected publicly, without any fear. To increase the extortion money. Innocent workers, drivers, mine owners, contractors and common people are killed. In the last few years, hundreds of Pashtuns associated with the coal mining business have been killed and financial loss of billions of rupees has been incurred.* It has been said in the statement that every conscious citizen and political activist and every man of Balochistan should weigh the real facts of the attacks on coal mines and related businesses in other areas of Balochistan, including Harnai district and Daki district, and those responsible for it. Is aware.

IMF's anti-people demands, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 09 June¹⁵

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has reiterated its calls for taxing pensions, withdrawing exemptions in income tax, sales tax and customs, increasing tax rates on salaried and business income. The Prime Minister will take final decisions in this regard after completing his visit to China. It is like you let the camel put its mouth inside the tent and then it will overtake the tent completely. This is what is being done to Pakistan by the IMF. It keeps increasing its demands one after another. Each demand is being accepted only because it has to give Pakistan one package, another package, and then again a package. *Instead of going towards self-reliance, every incoming government looks for an easy way to get a loan Loans after loans are taken because it is hoped by the taking regime that when the time to repay them comes by then a new government would be in power. But the loan is not a burden on the governments but on the nation: In any case it has to be paid sometimes with interest.* Like milking the dead, the IMF has demanded that the salary and business income should be taxed equally. Exemption on all taxes should be abolished. Pensions should also be taxed. The IMF's submission to every strict condition has boosted its morale so much that it is demanding to tax even the meager earnings and salaries of the poor. It is like taxing their breathing. The demands of the IMF have left no stone unturned to subjugate the poor and the middle class. The common man has become incapable even of two meals. Inflation and unemployment are rampant.

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/09-Jun-2024/1798169>

Approval of “Operation Azm-i-Istehkam” against terrorism, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 24 June¹⁶

The increase in terrorist incidents in Pakistan in recent years implies that the country needs a systematic planning and strategy to control this monster. There is not much time for this as the anti-peace elements are increasing rapidly to advance their nefarious agenda. The terrorist attack on the check post of FC in Maidan Suri area of Deir Zirin on 22 June in which two officials were martyred is connected with the same agenda and such attacks are happening continuously in different cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). In order to control the menace of terrorism, a comprehensive operation was needed which would destroy the terrorists. It was needed to assure the nation that the security forces are not weak to fight off terrorists and on the other hand it would woo foreign investors towards Pakistan by convincing them that their investment was safe in the country. One major loss of the terrorist activities in Pakistan is that its economic relations with a sincere friend like China were not developing further (. Apart from the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Chinese government and investors are ready to cooperate with Pakistan. They, however, only want to move things forward if there is an atmosphere of peace and stability in Pakistan. Terrorists have attacked Chinese citizens many times so that they can convey the message that Pakistan is unstable. Now by approving “Operation Determination of stability”, the government has finally decided that the terrorists will have to be defeated. In this regard, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has announced the reactivation of the national anti-terrorism campaign to eliminate terrorism and extremism from the country with the consensus of all parties including the four provinces. The decision was taken in the meeting of the Apex Committee of the National Action Plan (NAP) under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister. During the meeting, a detailed review of the ongoing anti-terrorism campaign and the internal security situation were discussed and the progress on the multi-pronged principles of the NAP was also reviewed. The need for a comprehensive and innovative counter-terrorism strategy based on national consensus and broad coordination was also emphasized, particularly in

¹⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/24-Jun-2024/1802053>

Prime Minister needs to take national leadership into confidence,
Editorial, *Ummat*, 26 June¹⁷

The federal cabinet meeting under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the decisions taken by the Apex Committee of the National Action Plan (NAP). The decision to launch “Operation Azm-e-Estehkam” has also been approved. Rejecting the speculation related to the operation, the Prime Minister said that “Operation Azm-e-Istehkam” is an intelligence based operation in which no one will be transferred. Few days ago a meeting of the Apex Committee of the Nap was held presided over by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in which “Operation Azm-e-Istehkam” was approved. However, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) along with other political and religious groups have expressed their reservations on the operation. This has led to new debates in the country. *The people of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are protesting against the possible operation as they have suffered from the previous operations. The Prime Minister has acknowledged the wrong measures were taken in the past. He said that this time a more cautious approach will be adopted.* Meanwhile, Barrister Gohar, Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman, Hafiz Naeem-ur Rehman, Muhammad Khan Achakzai and others have criticized the operation. Moulana Rehamn has even said that “Operation Azm-e-Istehkam” will turn out to be “Operation Adm-e-Istahkam”. He said that there is need of having new goals with nationalist sentiment that would ensure survival of the country in which the constitution will remain supreme. The Maulana said that the end results of the past operation also need to be assessed. Where is the country today? Despite the presence of the army everywhere, why do terror attacks take place? The establishment is not above the law; everyone is equal. Still if some sections think that they are superiors then they need to change that thinking. Emir of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Naeem Ur Rehman said that Pakistan needs political stability, not military operation.

¹⁷ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2024/06/26/&p=idr1.gif>

Imran Khan Live Hearing? *Talk Shock*, 9 June¹⁸

In today's episode of *talkshock*, journalists Azaz Syed and Fakhar Durrani talk about facilities being provided to Imran Khan in Adialia jail. Imran Khan remain in jail since August 2023 and in a recent interview with Mehdi Hasan Khan claimed that he has been put in a death cell. Earlier advocate general Punjab informed the court that nearly 12 lakh per month is being spend over Imran Khan and besides other facilities are offered to him in which he decides the food of his own choice and facilities of dry fruits, exercise machines among others. *The advocate general also informed the court that seven barracks bounding Imran Khan's cell have been left vacant for his security and exercise purposes.* Maybe it was an exaggeration on the behalf of government and in the aftermath of Khan's interview, the government was bound to respond whether he was being kept in death cell notes Durrani. But today the government shared pictures of the Khan's cell and whatever the advocate general told the court, each and everything seems to have been provided to Khan. *This has elucidated that Khan not only on the local level but on the international level chooses untruthfulness.* This is strange and especially with regard to things which could be proven but then Khan has a habit of taking U-turns. Azaz Syed notes that these pictures clearly reveal that Khan has been provided with an exercise machine, including good books and food. Azaz Syed underscores that Pakistan's leaders should avoid making incorrect statements. If they are in jail which of course remains a tough but there are other leaders of Pakistan who have faced prison such as Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif. Credit must be given to Asif Ali Zardari who endured most years in prison and didn't complain. He would say that either you find Zardari in jail or in parliament. Both Sharif and Zardari faced health complications because of imprisonment whereas Imran Khan is healthy. The second part of the show discusses Justice Athar Minallah's dissent note supporting the live streaming of court proceedings in related to NAB amendments case featuring Imran Khan. Four Judges had favored against live streaming but the dissenting note of Minallah. Basing his live streaming on

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p4O3WqjNkfU>

Article 19 A, Minallah argued that access to information is everyone's right especially with regard to public importance but subjected to regulations and reasonable restrictions.

Imran relents, agrees to negotiate with rivals, Javed Chaudhry, 11 June¹⁹

Javed Chaudhry in his vlog discussed recent developments in Pakistan. Imran Khan has repeatedly been saying that Gen. Asim Munir will be responsible if anything happens to him or his wife Bushra Bibi. In a recent tweet from official account of PTI, the same was repeated. Earlier, Imran Khan had told FIA to apologise for framing him in cipher case. He also claimed that the cipher was written for Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa. However, Javed Chaudhry pointed out that the cipher was written by Pakistan's ambassador to US and sent to Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Imran Khan also compared the present situation with the situation in 1971. At that time Gen. Yahya Khan had taken certain steps that were not favoured/approved by the rest of the military leadership due to which two officers had resigned. Maj. Gen. Sahibzada Yaqoob Khan was one of them who refused to fire upon the people of East Pakistan. Other was Admiral Ehsan of Pakistan Navy who resigned. Aleema Khan, Imran Khan's sister, also discussed with the social media team and told them that Imran Khan was concerned about the social media team and loves them. She also told that when she met with Imran Khan, he told her that during 1971 some officers had resigned. Javed Chaudhry correlates this with Imran Khan's comparison with 1971 situation. Javed Chaudhry argued that Imran Khan intends to create mutiny within the establishment. However, he emphasized that nothing of that sort is possible at present. Imran Khan should create his space within the system. Imran Khan naming Asim Munir is a ploy to create pressure on the COAS. Imran Khan has directed his legal team to draft a letter regarding negotiation with political leadership. He has instructed the team to send that letter to Chief Justice. The letter may contain points related to dialogue with political leadership under the supervision of Chief Justice. He has agreed to be part of a grand dialogue with three conditions. Firstly, a judicial commission should be formed to look into the mismatch between Form-45s and Form-47s and take actions accordingly. Secondly, the government should accept our mandate and give our 180-190 seats to us. Thirdly, all people arrested in May 9 case must be

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t3CsdcbXlg0>

released and our party be allowed to function properly. These are quite tough conditions and there is no possibility of these being accepted.

Will Imran Khan be released from jail after Eid? | PPP & PML-N differences | Govt & Budget targets! *Talk Shock*, 13 June²⁰

In today's vlog journalists Fakhar Durrani and Azaz Syed talk about whether there remain any chances of Imran Khan's release after Eid? Meanwhile the judiciary has announced that the verdict will be announced in ten working days. The verdict on Iddat case is pending and if he is provided with bail on this then there remain chances that he will walk out of jail. Both in Cipher case and Toshakhana Imran has already received relief and now remains the Iddat case. A plea has been sought for suspension of the sentence. With regard to appeal filed by Imran Khan and his wife on the verdict of the Iddat case, the judiciary has asked the sessions court to decide the matter in a month. By 28 June, it is expected to hear results but Durrani doesn't anticipate a reverse in decisions. The appeal has gone to additional session judge Afzal Majoka. Given the merit of the case, there remains less chances of the suspension of the sentence at the moment. Azaz Syed notes that there is an increasing wedge and conflict occurring between the establishment and the judiciary. The second part of the vlog talks about the budget and most observers claim that this budget is anti-middle class. The targets set by the government for the fiscal year are ambitious and in fact unattainable, notes Durrani. New taxes have been inflicted and despite all this, it looks too difficult and it is bound to raise inflation. If revenues of Pakistan don't rise, Pakistan will face more problems. The third part of the vlog discusses tensions between the PPP and the PML-N. Based on sources, Azaz Syed notes that the PPP will finally support the budget and already the tensions between the two are resolved.

Operation Azm-e-Istekham: Large scale military operation, Moeed Pirzada, 23 June²¹

PTI has strongly protested the new Operation Azm e Istekham, demanding an open debate in parliament. Asad Qaiser has met Maulana Fazal Ur Rehman and has tweeted that we

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QjOwHNgFhK0>

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOnuWC2ycLA>

both parties don't think that a new operation is the solution. Why PTI is panicking? Because perhaps it has sensed that *Azm-e-Istehkam is a strategy to take over the politics of PTI in KP*, by taking control of the political administration. What then is the solution? I argue that solution lies in two things: Intelligence Based Operations (IBO) and Political Negotiations with the real powers that are behind the attacks on CPEC. Looking forward to your comments. The PTI and JUI-F has underlined that this kind of operation is not the solution and has pointed many concerns. The regime is trying to control the region of KP by invoking a war against terrorism in the region. He underlined that during the visit of PM Shehbaz Sharif to China, they were told about the concerns of the Chinese investors in Pakistan and their safety issues, especially in KP. It has been reported that the operation would be a large scale military operation and the government has also allowed rangers to be placed in Azad Kashmir. The government and establishment has presented this as a military operation against terrorism but Moeed Pirzada underlined that this is a political gimmick to control the KP region which is ruled by the opposition, PTI. He added that the government is controlling the social media, there is a ban on twitter and now they are trying their best to control the YouTube reach. The question is should we or how much we should trust the narrative of the government and establishment. He also informed that there is no upgrade of CPEC projects, as China has shown concerns of their safety in Pakistan. *Azm-e-Istehkam*, the word in itself shows that the operation is for stability and this is on demand of China to provide stability to Chinese infrastructure. The opposition is saying that military operation is not the solution in KP and that the new operation is an effort to control the politics of KP and delegitimize the government in place in the province. It is to control the politics of KP. When there is army in the picture, it throws away the legitimate government, it weakens the democracy and everything will be looked through the lens of military.

Operation Azm-e-Istehkam in KP & Balochistan: Restore for Stability, Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 25 June²²

This operation will take place in KPK and Balochistan, the opposition including PTI, JUI-F and ANP has opposed this operation. The host asked why this operation is different and

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcaKbQGcxS0&t=608s>

why the opposition is resisting the new operation. The governor of KP and ANP has organised a press conference and has criticised the new operation. **Rana Sanaullah**, Advisor to PM on this show pointed out that the operation against the elimination of terrorists is ongoing process in the country but with this new operation we will also target elements/forces that are hell bent in misbalancing the stability of the country. He added that the Taliban will be one target and we do not need to define who they are and who the facilitators in Pakistan are, we need to pin point the internal collaborators and target them as well. Terrorism has become a business in Pakistan and we need stability and end of terror to bring stability. He added there is no terrorism in Punjab and the CTD has wiped out terrorism from the region but in KPK there are hints that there is terrorism in the region which need to be tackled. **Humayun Mohmand** of the PTI pointed out that seven such kind of operations has taken place in the past in the tribal areas and asked what we have achieved with these operations. He added what will change after the new operation, we need to step back and analyse what is going wrong with these operations. The solution is multifaceted but this operation is a disguise and in that disguise they want to control the politics of KPK. He asked who will decide what stability is or not? We have to learn from the other parts of the world to tackle terrorism, we need to bring the right approach and address this multifaceted problem with multilateral approach. KP is bleeding from a long time and the displaced people are still facing the wrath. We need to build a trust with the local population and tell them what the government want to do and take their advice.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Peshawar ²³	09/06/2024	Roadside bombing targeting security convoy kills 7 soldiers in northwest Pakistan	07	00

²³<https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-roadside-bombing-soldiers-killed-khyber-pakhtunkhwa-c06bc7b0d75cb50847fc34127c330654>

Dera Ismail Khan ²⁴	11/06/2024	Pakistani army kills 11 militants in raid in the northwest following bombing that killed 7 soldiers	11	00

²⁴<https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/2024/06/11/pakistani-army-kills-11-militants-in-raid-in-the-northwest-following-bombing-that-killed-7-soldiers/>