

December 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



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

December 2024

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

Prepared by

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



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND
ANALYSES

1-Development Enclave, Near USI
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

December 2024

CONTENTS

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	06
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS	09
SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS	12
URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA	
Urdu	19
Electronic	23

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Bloody month, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 03 December¹

Pakistan is facing resurgence of terror - and for quite some time. The anti-terror gains made over the past decade through multiple security operations are eroding - gains for which thousands of civilians and security personnel laid down their lives. *A recent report by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) states that at least 245 people – including 127 terrorists were killed in terrorist attacks and clashes across the country in the month of November alone.* The tally also includes 68 martyrs of the security forces and 50 civilians. November is the second deadliest month after August, when 254 people - including 108 terrorists were killed and 92 civilians and 54 security personnel were martyred. However, in terms of casualties involving security personnel, November was the deadliest month this year compared to October when 62 soldiers embraced martyrdom. *Although kinetic action in the shape of intelligence-based operations has continued since the rout of terrorists in Operation Zarb-e-Azb, successive civilian governments have failed to capitalize on the gains and initiate meaningful reforms as envisaged in the National Action Plan (NAP) formulated after the December 2014 massacre at Peshawar's Army Public School. The Plan had kinetic and non-kinetic components.*

Madrassa bill, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 11 December²

The government's intermingling with religious scholars afresh with the express intent of "threadbare discussion" on an already legislated bill has annoyed the JUI-F. *The party sees it as a conspiracy to divide the Ulema and to backtrack on promises – apparently under Western pressure. Regulating religious schools and their content and curriculum in Pakistan has always been an agenda of concern for creditors and foreign governments, and there are many FATF stipulations too that go on to limit the source of funding to these largely semi-regulated entities.* The Societies Registration (Amendment) Act, 2024 - a new law passed by the parliament under the 26th amendment (which stands challenged in the apex court) introduces

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2513333/bloody-month>

² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2515118/madrassa-bill>

regulations for registration of seminaries through the relevant deputy commissioner's office. *Some of its salient features are: filing an annual report detailing its education and finances to the registrar; and prohibiting seminaries from teaching or disseminating militancy, sectarianism and religious hatred. The discord between sections of Ulema is not on the regulation of seminaries* – as they all stand registered since 2019 – but on whether the patron ministry should be of education or industries. With JUIF threatening to march on the capital, the government is on the receiving end. It has to mend fences with religious scholars and come out straight. The hoodwinking it indulged in was disgusting.

Faiz Hamid charge-sheet, Editorial, *The News*, 12 December³

Former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lieutenant General (r) Faiz Hamid's formal arraignment in the ongoing field general court-martial (FGCM) proceedings can safely be called a moment in history for Pakistan – especially when it comes to institutional accountability in the country. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) has confirmed that the FGCM process was initiated on August 12 under the Pakistan Army Act, and Gen (r) Faiz now faces charges of engaging in political activities, violating the Official Secrets Act, misuse of authority, and causing wrongful loss to individuals. Additionally, his alleged involvement in fomenting unrest, including events leading up to the May 9, 2023, incidents, is under separate investigation. For a recap: Gen Faiz's arrest in August stemmed from a Supreme Court petition filed by a housing society's chief executive officer, accusing him of land grabbing and theft during a raid. However, his case has broader implications, with speculation rife about his involvement in political activities during his service and post-retirement, particularly in relation to the PTI and Imran Khan. Predictably, Imran had distanced himself from Gen Faiz after his arrest, asserting no connection with him. *Now, the PTI's Barrister Gohar has also called the chargesheet an internal military matter, seeking to distance the PTI from this whole situation. But, in keeping with the PTI's fractures within, PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat has said that Gen Faiz had not benefited the party – an internal discord within the PTI over its past associations with the former ISI chief may come to the fore even more?*

³ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1260634-faiz-hamid-charge-sheet>

Talks, finally, Editorial, *The News*, 24 December⁴

The long-awaited talks between the government and the PTI have finally begun in Islamabad, offering a glimmer of hope for easing the country's deeply entrenched political tensions. For weeks, speculation and anticipation have surrounded these elusive negotiations, fueled by growing calls from senior PML-N leaders and PTI figures alike to break the political deadlock. *The first round of discussions reportedly ended on a positive note, with the PTI expected to submit a written charter of demands in the next meeting. While these developments are nascent, they represent a crucial step toward restoring political dialogue and creating much-needed political space. For far too long, Pakistan's political class has been relegated to a diminished role, particularly during the 'hybrid' years of governance.* This shrinking political space is largely attributable to Imran Khan's unwillingness to engage with his political opponents. Whether in power or out of it, his consistent refusal to negotiate with rival parties weakened the collective political framework, while his reliance on the establishment further entrenched its role in political matters. In Pakistan's context, with such a lopsided power structure, such disengagement among political parties only amplifies non-democratic forces. The initiation of talks, therefore, signals a welcome change and a potential rebalancing of political dynamics. It is time for Pakistan's political parties to craft a new charter – one that addresses the evolving challenges of the 21st century and recommits to democratic principles. Continued political chaos risks further disenfranchising voters and eroding public trust in democratic institutions. At a time when Pakistan faces economic hardships, security challenges, and a growing climate crisis, political stability is not a luxury but a necessity. *These talks, though just the beginning, offer a chance to move in the right direction. It is imperative that all stakeholders – political parties, civil society, and the public – support and sustain this momentum toward dialogue. The alternative, a perpetuation of hostility and gridlock, is a path Pakistan can ill afford to tread.*

⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1264699-talks-finally>

Peace with Kabul, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 26 December⁵

Gestures of reconciliation between Afghanistan and Pakistan are most welcome - and that is the way to go. While both the countries are on the receiving end owing to the presence of a plethora of non-state actors in their midst, all they need is astute diplomacy and political willingness to act against the dreaded elements. *The envelope was pushed further in a more comprehensive manner as a high-powered delegation from Islamabad led by Special Envoy on Afghanistan Muhammad Sadiq met the Taliban leadership in Kabul on Tuesday, and agreed to overcome the obstacles in their bilateral relationship. Pakistan has always been a strategic neighbour of Afghanistan, and is home to more than two million refugees.* Likewise, Islamabad has been at the vanguard in taking care of essential supplies to the western frontier in order to ensure that there isn't a humanitarian crisis. *But all that Pakistan is eager to achieve in reciprocity is a firm action from Taliban 2.0 leadership against TTP which has unleashed a reign of terror on both sides of the divide. The TTP, along with Al Qaeda, IS-K and other homegrown fissures, is a tangible security threat to the region and beyond, and cannot be overlooked under any connotations of exigency.* Moreover, Kabul is under an international commitment to ensure that its soil is not used for terror activities against the neighbours. This piece of reminder is what Islamabad keeps on sharing, hoping that congeniality and responsible diplomacy will prevail, and not the knee-jerk reactions, as has been the case.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

Slashing Inflation, Editorial, *The Nation*, 03 December⁶

This time last year, inflation stood at an alarming 29.2%, peaking at a historic 38% during 2023. The government's efforts to bring this astronomical rate below double digits earlier this year earned widespread praise, including from political rivals and economic commentators. However, the achievement of reducing inflation to below 5% underscores

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2518209/peace-with-kabul>

⁶ <https://www.nation.com.pk/03-Dec-2024/slashing-inflation>

the long-term effectiveness of its economic policies. *Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's acknowledgment and commendation of his economic team are well-deserved. While the cost of living remains a pressing concern for many Pakistanis, runaway inflation no longer depletes household savings as it once did. This newfound stability offers the middle class an opportunity to earn, save, and spend with greater confidence, knowing their financial efforts are not being eroded by unchecked inflation.* The concurrent stabilization of fuel and electricity prices, along with a steady rupee, further strengthens the foundations for economic recovery. As the Prime Minister prepares for another diplomatic trip to the Middle East, attention has rightly shifted from averting economic free fall to building on the gains achieved. Addressing persistent security challenges in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is now critical.

Escaping Debt, Editorial, *The Nation*, 06 December⁷

According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), acting on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has extended the maturity of its \$3 billion deposit by another year. Originally set to mature on December 5, this extension provides Pakistan with much-needed breathing room to maintain its recent economic stability while postponing debt repayments to focus on growth and development. *Saudi Arabia's continued support has undoubtedly been instrumental in helping Pakistan avoid default during critical moments, demonstrating the Kingdom's pivotal role in stabilising Pakistan's economy during challenging times. However, Pakistan must recognise that relying on Saudi Arabia's generosity is not a sustainable long-term strategy.* If the country aspires to true independence, both economically and politically, it must chart a path that reduces its dependence on external loans and grants. Decades of borrowing to sustain the economy have resulted in soaring debt, with interest payments and debt servicing now consuming a significant portion of the national budget. This fiscal pressure leaves little room for investment in critical areas such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, or the future of the country's younger generations. The budget is increasingly constrained, with large allocations

⁷ <https://www.nation.com.pk/06-Dec-2024/escaping-debt>

directed toward debt servicing, government overheads, pensions, and military expenditure, leaving only a meagre fraction for development and discretionary spending.

Economic Resurgence, Editorial, *The Nation*, 16 December⁸

The decision to establish two special economic zones (SEZs) in Karachi is a commendable step by the Sindh government. These zones, reportedly designed to circumvent the tariffs and sanctions impacting Chinese trade, showcase a forward-thinking approach to safeguarding and enhancing the country's economic prospects. A well-executed SEZ is more than a tax haven; it is a nucleus of robust infrastructure, connectivity, and streamlined processes, ensuring an attractive environment for both local and foreign investors. If managed effectively, these zones can play a pivotal role in revitalising Karachi's position as the economic hub of Pakistan. *The city, long regarded as the financial artery of the nation, deserves such forward-looking investments to reach its true economic potential. When functional, the SEZs will not only foster industrial growth and generate employment but also contribute significantly to national revenue.* The ripple effects could lead to ancillary industries flourishing, boosting trade, and strengthening the country's global economic standing. Karachi has long awaited such opportunities to fully capitalise on its economic capabilities. While this is a step in the right direction, the government must ensure that this project does not remain another ambitious announcement without meaningful realisation. An SEZ should not be a fleeting incentive but a cornerstone of sustained economic stability. This initiative, if executed as planned, could mark the beginning of Karachi reclaiming its rightful place on the map as a regional economic powerhouse.

Tax amendments, Editorial, *Dawn*, 20 December⁹

The proposed legislation seeks to share taxpayers' confidential data with commercial banks and private auditors that the FBR plans to hire for detecting tax evasion. *Through it, the FBR has arrogated to itself more powers to freeze bank accounts and confiscate the businesses and properties of entities that are not registered as sales tax payers. Further, it limits*

⁸ <https://www.nation.com.pk/16-Dec-2024/economic-resurgence>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1879894/tax-amendments>

the size of investment an ineligible person can make in stocks or the amount of cash they can withdraw from their bank accounts. The proposed legislation has a sort of amnesty for those who have not declared assets related to remittances or inheritance. On their own, the proposed changes in tax laws will not help the tax authorities achieve the elusive goal of jacking up the appallingly low tax-to-GDP ratio of less than 10pc to 13pc over the next three years as mandated under the \$7bn IMF programme. At best, we may see a surge in the number of tax return filers to circumvent the suggested restrictions but without actually boosting tax revenues. *It is because the bill does not endeavour to address the inherent structural flaws such as the system's inefficiencies, corrupt FBR officials, distortions created by massive tax exemptions given to powerful lobbies, continuous harassment of taxpayers, etc., which act as strong incentives to stay out of the net.* Nor does it withdraw the slew of adjustable and non-adjustable withholding taxes, representing inequity and lack of fairness in the tax regime.

SECURITY DEVELOPMENTS

November terror, Editorial, *The News*, 04 December¹⁰

Getting things back under control will likely require a fine-tuning of the terror strategy. This will be hard to achieve without a broad-based political consensus and a security atmosphere where one does not have to worry about the capital being under siege every few weeks. *Sadly, these are exactly the things that the country appears to be short of right now. It does not bode well when the chief minister of the province most affected by terrorism appears to be busier with planning and executing protests and getting into spats with law-enforcement agencies as opposed to working with them to better safeguard the people of his province.* It is also worth looking at the mistakes that turned what should have been a victory against terrorism into a terror resurgence. The PTI government years saw yet another olive branch being extended to militant outfits that have always remained adamant about their destructive goals and have shown no tangible signs of wanting

¹⁰ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1257803-november-terror>

peace. There is also the ability of anti-Pakistan terror outfits to use neighbouring Afghanistan as a safe haven and the interim Afghan Taliban government does not look like it is in a hurry to change this. It is also necessary for all stakeholders to form a consensus on the terror *Aside from not repeating the PTI government's mistakes, the current government must convince the Afghan Taliban to tackle the safe-haven problem. It must be made clear that terrorism is not just a threat to individual nations but will jeopardise peace and stability throughout the region* issue and to recognise the gravity of the situation. This is no time to destabilise the country over partisan politics. Whatever disagreements there may be, the terror problem threatens us all and has to be prioritised.

Taliban troubles, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 13 December¹¹

After their ascent to power following the exit of foreign forces, the Taliban designated ISKP as an existential threat to their rule. *A nationwide purge ensued during which several key ISKP figures were killed, leading Taliban officials to claim victory over the ultraorthodox terrorist group in 2024. Improvement in security situation followed, but Haqqani's killing by ISKP inside his ministry's building shows it was too early to claim victory. It highlights challenges to the Taliban's efforts to maintain control in the country where transnational terror groups still maintain presence, posing a security risk to not only Afghanistan but also to countries in the neighbourhood and beyond.* The Taliban have to eliminate these groups as per their commitment in the Doha Agreement to secure Afghanistan as well as the world. *The Taliban, which is not a monolithic entity, is also struggling with internal divisions. There is said to be a perpetual tug of war between the Haqqani and the Kandahari factions, as both aim to further consolidate their power and influence. Such internal dynamics pose a risk to the regime and lessen its cohesiveness.* The Taliban must confront threats from transnational groups, including ISKP, and heal internal schisms that prevent them from fully asserting control over the nation. Failing to do so will imperil their rule and erode their efforts for global legitimacy.

¹¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2515605/taliban-troubles>

Kurram's tragedy, Editorial, *The News*, 17 December¹²

The situation in Kurram continues to both outrage and baffle. In the latest, social media reports have alleged the heart-breaking deaths of 29 children in the Kurram district – apparently caused by a severe shortage of medicines and compounded by road closures. While these reports have been denied by the provincial government, the fact is that Kurram's condition today is a direct indictment of the state of Pakistan, reflecting the consequences of a dysfunctional and distracted governance system. *The ongoing sectarian clashes and the ensuing governance collapse show just how much political indifference and administrative failure have allowed the most vulnerable citizens to suffer unimaginable loss. The clashes in Kurram, initially triggered by a land dispute, have spiraled out of control.* With more than 130 dead, 180 injured, and now the silent toll of children allegedly dying due to preventable conditions, the crisis demands an immediate, coordinated response. Yet, political wrangling – as seen in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government's sluggish approach – has only aggravated matters. This issue should have been addressed months ago before it snowballed into such devastation. Unfortunately, Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and his cabinet failed to prioritise Kurram when it mattered most. The situation demands action, not excuses. *The KP government must urgently restore medical supplies, disarm militant factions, and secure key routes to ensure aid reaches those in need. Equally, it must take accountability for its delayed response. Sectarian clashes, once ignited, are not easily contained – and their repercussions can spill over to other parts of the country.* Failure to act decisively now risks further loss of life, escalation of violence, and a destabilization that Pakistan cannot afford.

Kurram's misery, Editorial, *Dawn*, 19 December¹³

The unfolding humanitarian crisis in Kurram district, particularly in Parachinar city, has reached alarming proportions that demand immediate state intervention. *For over 70 days now, the district's main artery connecting it to Peshawar has remained blocked, transforming*

¹² <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1262677-kurram-s-tragedy>

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1879682/kurrams-misery>

Parachinar into a virtual island accessible only by air. The consequences for its residents have been devastating. The crisis stems from deadly tribal clashes that erupted after a November attack on a convoy claimed at least 43 lives, spiralling into internecine violence that has now killed over 130 people. While the immediate trigger was this incident, the region has long simmered with tribal tensions over land disputes, occasionally inflamed by sectarian undertones. However, the real tragedy today extends far beyond the fighting it lies in the suffering of innocent civilians caught in the crossfire of this complex conflict. Reports from Parachinar paint a grim picture. The local hospital faces critical shortages of medicines and oxygen. Children suffering from pneumonia in sub-zero temperatures cannot access proper treatment. Diabetes patients are in need of insulin, while cancer patients struggle to reach facilities outside the district. *The closure of roads has created severe shortages of food, fuel, and other basic necessities. In this harsh winter, families lack even firewood to keep warm. While private organisations have stepped in to provide emergency aid via air ambulances, their efforts cannot replace the state's responsibility.* The government's sporadic helicopter missions carrying medicines, though welcome, fall woefully short of addressing the scale of civilian suffering. More concerning is the politicisation of the crisis, reflected in the decision of the PTI, that rules the province, to skip a multiparty conference aimed at addressing Kurram's plight. Such political point-scoring has no place when citizens' lives hang in the balance.

URDU MEDIA

Propaganda and its prevention, Editorial, Roznama Jang, 03 December¹⁴

Social media, intended to promote true freedom of expression and prevent the spread of lies and incitement, has increasingly been used for negative propaganda. Pakistan, already struggling with political instability, has become a major victim. *Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has set up a 10-member task force, led by the Pakistan Telecommunication*

¹⁴ .<https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/03-12-2024/page4>

Authority (PTA) chairman and ISI officials, to identify those involved in spreading false information during the recent protests from November 24 to 27. The task force will investigate individuals, groups, and organisations using social media and other platforms to spread misleading news and run malicious campaigns within Pakistan and abroad, holding them accountable under national laws. It will also suggest policy improvements and submit recommendations within 10 days. A letter from the Prime Minister's office highlights how fake news is being used to defame the state, provoke unrest, and incite divisions for political gain. The task force's recommendations will clarify the situation, though such actions may have more negative than positive consequences. Restrictions can lead to frustration and hinder development. Dialogue, reconciliation, and moderation would be more effective, and the opposition should avoid wasting energy on futile expectations of power misuse

PTI workers disheartened with the party, Mohd Qasim, Ummat, 05 December¹⁵

After leaving the party workers on their own and not helping those who were arrested recently during the protest in Islamabad legally many Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) workers are disappointed with the party. At the same time the confessions of the rioters added fuel to the fire and further damaged the image of the PTI. During the protest on D-Chowk the top leadership of the PTI had run away while a large number of party workers were arrested. They are in various jails of Islamabad. However, neither any legal help is provided to these workers nor are their families allowed to meet them. For being not able to meet their children the parents are concerned and are angry with the PTI. According to the sources, the families of the arrested workers are disturbed. At the same time these parents are supported by their relatives. According to the sources, while on the one hand the parents are concerned and angry with the PTI for not helping their kids to come out of the jails, on the other hand the confessions of the PTI rioters have created further problems for the party. The image of the party has been further damaged by these confessions and the party is criticized in the entire Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. Meanwhile, provincial media advisor barrister Saif has said that the government is not allowing the family members of the

¹⁵ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2024/12/05/&p=story4.gif>

arrested people to meet the latter. Because of this the parents are being pushed from pillar to post. He said that the government should arrange meetings at the earliest so the families can meet their beloved ones. He said further that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has asked advocates of the party to make sure meetings of the families of the arrested people with their beloved family members. He further said that the government is forcing the arrested people to record videos/ he said that the injured workers should be shifted to hospitals in KP. On the other hand, *commentators have said that the PTI should get out its party workers as soon as possible. More the delay, the more the party workers will be disappointed with the party. Since these workers had helped protest to get the party founder released now the party should come forth and arrange their release from jails and bear all expenses for that. Many of those arrested are poor and cannot afford the hefty fees of advocates. Therefore the KP provincial government has the responsibility to arrange their bail.*

Important military conference, Editorial, Jang, 07 December¹⁶

It is imperative to eradicate the spread of poison, lies, hatred and social division in the guise of freedom of expression from society. It is the need of the hour to identify those who spread fake news for political and financial gains and bring them to justice. Any attempt to pit innocent citizens against each other for personal gain and to use violence as a weapon will never be tolerated. These views were expressed in the declaration of the 84th two-day Formation Commanders Conference held under the chairmanship of Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir. It was urged in the conference that the government enact effective legislation to uproot the seeds of incitement, lies and social division and implement it. In the context of external and internal threats that the country is facing, the conference participants were briefed about the current overall situation, the most important aspect of which is social media, on which every individual and public have the good and bad aspects of freedom of expression. *The conference expressed its determination to continue supporting the government's efforts to promote the country's economic development, crackdown on illegal activities and eliminate the nexus of terrorism and crime. The conference focused on operations against terrorists active in Balochistan,*

¹⁶ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/807464>

including the BLA Majeed Brigade, and resolved to neutralize those working on behalf of enemy forces to destabilize Pakistan, as well as their facilitators and encouragers. The participants expressed their concerns over the unbridled use of Afghan soil by terrorists against Pakistan. It was stressed that Afghanistan should prevent its soil from being used against Pakistan and that it is in the interest of both brotherly Islamic countries to focus on mutually beneficial relations.

Game is Over, Malik Altaf Hussain, *Roznama Jasarat*, 11 December¹⁷

The 84th Formation Commanders Conference, chaired by Army Chief General Asim Munir, emphasised the need to eradicate the spread of lies, hatred, and social division under the guise of freedom. The statement called for identifying those spreading false news for political and financial gains and bringing them to justice. It warned against using citizens for personal interests and promoting violence. While the statement accurately reflects the situation, there are still unresolved issues, such as the ongoing political and economic crises in Pakistan and concerns regarding constitutional authorities. The government's failure to restore its credibility since the February 8 elections is a key issue. If those elections had been fair, the ruling party would have had public trust. The lack of transparency in elections was a major mistake, which was not corrected in time. The statement also noted that spreading false news and creating unrest is an agenda of the state's enemies. However, it pointed out that the ruling class has been involved in similar mistakes. The government has shown a lack of tolerance, wisdom, and reconciliation, and many in power were once wanted by NAB. There has been little progress for the welfare of the country or its people, and the government has focused more on political vendettas than public welfare. The ongoing terrorism in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the control of criminals in Sindh, suggest that measures like imposing "Governor's Rule" in these areas or military operations in Sindh could have been taken. Corruption and mismanagement remain rampant, with accountability processes stalled, and major corruption cases shelved.

¹⁷ <https://islamabad.jasarat.com/2024/12/11/islamabad/2>

Chinese projects for Punjab, Editorial, Roznama Jang, 12 December¹⁸

China is strengthening cooperation with Pakistan in all sectors that benefit the people of both countries. According to a media report, China has developed an education outreach and poverty alleviation plan for South Punjab, which will help provide education to out-of-school children in underdeveloped areas of the region, aiming to eliminate poverty and curb extremist tendencies. Small but effective projects will be launched to increase the livelihoods of the region's people. Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz is currently on a visit to China, where decisions have been made to enhance cooperation in various sectors with the Chinese leadership. China will assist Punjab in areas such as hydropower, water management, agriculture, e-transport, waste management, and environmental improvement. A Beijing-Punjab Clean Air Working Group will also be established. The Chief Minister has also proposed twin cities and provinces proposal. According to the report, a security audit of Chinese projects will be conducted, and areas with higher security risks will be identified. In such areas, bulletproof vehicles will be used for the movement of Chinese nationals. Currently, there are 20,000 Chinese citizens residing in Pakistan, of which 2,700 are working on CPEC projects, while the rest are involved in non-CPEC projects and living independently. Since 2021, 14 attacks have been made on Chinese nationals, resulting in the death of 20 Chinese citizens and injuries to 34. It is evident that foreign agencies are behind terrorism in Pakistan and are involved in a malicious conspiracy to undermine the strong friendship between China and Pakistan. However, both countries are firmly bound by the iron-clad bond of friendship and are determined to thwart all conspiracies against them. Any attempt to weaken mutual trust and cooperation between Pakistan and China will not succeed.

PM vows to give top priority to Balochistan issues, Editorial, Nawa-i-Waqt, 13 December¹⁹

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with the Governor of Balochistan, Jaafar Khan Mandokhel, during which the Prime Minister stated that the government is taking all possible measures to provide employment opportunities to the youth of Balochistan so that they can play an active

¹⁸ <https://islamabad.jasarat.com/2024/12/11/islamabad/>

¹⁹ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2024-12-13/page-5>

role in the country's development. He emphasised that the development of Balochistan and the welfare of its people are the government's top priorities. The meeting involved a discussion on the issues concerning Balochistan. The Governor thanked the Prime Minister for showing special interest in the province's development projects. It is a bitter truth that Balochistan has suffered from deprivation during every government's tenure. This has led to the alienation of the Baloch people, particularly the youth, who, due to these grievances, are being pushed towards the separatist movement, which is being fuelled by Pakistan's internal and external enemies, especially India. Despite several government announcements of special packages aimed at addressing Balochistan's deprivation, none have been effectively implemented. In 2009, the "Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan" initiative was launched, and in 2020, a special package for the southern and conflict-ridden areas of the province was announced, but none of these initiatives have been practically realized. In February 2024, an important leader of the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Sarfraz Bangulzai, along with 70 of his companions, joined the national mainstream and revealed deep-rooted grievances of the Baloch people during a conference. However, no significant actions have been taken to address these issues, which is why the disgruntled Baloch people do not trust government statements nor are they inclined to join the national mainstream. This has been exploited by India, our eternal enemy.

Indifference of the government, Nusrat Javeed, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 18 December²⁰

It must be admitted openly that the "government arrangement" that has been introduced since February 2024 appears paralyzed and ineffective to the public. Thanks to the aforementioned system, the economy has certainly been saved from bankruptcy. The issues of taking our economy forward after its recovery have also been settled with the global economic watchdog. It is a separate matter though that countless economists insist that the trends of recession or boom in the stock exchange are not key indicators of a country's economy. The main thing is the mood of the majority of the people living there. This is called the "Feel Good Factor". To bring this criterion into mind, on 14 December I had to go to a few shops located in three bazaars of Islamabad to buy a few essential items. Thanks to my appearance on TV screens, even

²⁰ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/18-Dec-2024/1851268>

unfamiliar shopkeepers recognize me. As soon as they saw me, instead of selling their goods, he started *asking with a worried face, "Is there any hope for our situation to improve or not?"* With this message that *"all is not well", the news of a reduction in interest rates or an increase in the stock exchange cannot create a "feel good" atmosphere.* In addition to these two news items, statistics are also being presented these days to prove that inflation has come down. A few days ago, after watching the statistics proving the reduction in inflation on TV in my house, *a female guest, who buys household goods herself every week, said with anguish, "Nusrat Bhai, when I go to the market, I do not feel the reduction in inflation that you are talking about."* The use of "you" in her sentence was not actually a condemnation of me, but rather to prove the traditional media as a whole as a liar. *The issue of the credibility of traditional media is not limited to Pakistan. It is being questioned all over the world. Our traditional media has not paid serious attention to this aspect. The indifference of the rulers in this regard is understandable. The question arises whether the reputation of the rulers is also intact. The answer to this is in the negative.*

What is the outcome of the negotiations between the government and PTI? Hammad Ghaznavi, Roznama Jang, 26 December²¹

When the Pakistani military courts recently sentenced twenty-five civilians involved in the May 9 attacks, the United States, the European Union, and the United Kingdom strongly objected, calling military courts a violation of established principles of justice and human rights. Forget about military courts, the US and Western countries even support martial laws worldwide, actively assist in maintaining monarchies, and support dictatorships. So, where do these concerns about human rights and justice suddenly emerge from? A straightforward issue is that Pakistan is no longer involved in any proxy war for imperialism, and history shows that whenever the war in the region halts, Pakistan is no longer remains useful, the US quickly recalls many "principled positions." Last week, the US imposed sanctions on some private Pakistani companies on the grounds that they were involved in the production of long-range missiles. Evidence suggests that preparations are being made to twist Pakistan's arm, and for such situations, the US has several special tools, including measures related to Pakistan's nuclear power

²¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/26-12-2024/page8>

and human rights issues. We can attempt to understand this harsh approach in the context of the conflict between China and the US in the region, but on the other hand, *PTI's supporters insist that the US and Europe want Imran Khan's release, and that pressure on Pakistan will increase in the coming days, with the final round beginning after Trump enters the White House. We have never doubted that Imran Khan's devoted supporters live in a parallel universe and their 'facts' are completely foreign to us.* Regarding the issue of military courts, we agree that “military courts hold the same position in the world of justice as military bands do in the world of music.” *In principle, civilian cases should not be tried in military courts. Now, take a look at the events of May 9. Internal sources within the institution are adamant that the May 9 incident was a well-organized plan to instigate a rebellion within the military. The idea was that millions of “haqiqi Azadi” (real freedom) supporters would attack military buildings and martyrs' monuments across Pakistan, a historical display of hatred against the descendants of Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq would be showcased in the media, the entire country would be put under martial law, and when the time was right, a blow would be struck from within to force the army chief to leave in the same manner that Yahya Khan and company had forced Ayub Khan out.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Imran Khan's Health & PTI's future Strategy Shocking Revelations, Naya Pakistan with Shahzad Iqbal, Geo News, 01 December²²

The host took stock of the overall political situation in Pakistan after the 26th November March to Islamabad by the PTI. He pointed out that there is a war of words between the government and the PTI over the protest and the violence used in the protest, the government is blaming the protestors of using violent means to attack the rangers and even killing them but on the other hand the PTI is blaming the government for the violent crackdown on the protest in middle of night and killing the protestors. Amid this blame game the PTI seems to be divided into two groups he added, one group is asking questions

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M4eW7ZZ1op0>

about the political role of Bushra Bibi and her leading the protest, and the other group is defending her role in the protest. There are also concerns among the PTI about the health and ill treatment of Imran Khan behind the bars. **Guests:** Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif- advisor to CM KP on information & PR's. **Barrister Muhammad Ali Saif** added that there is no point in the government's words that they have not used violence, we have proof and the whole world has seen the footages on television. By now they should resign from the posts, after attacking the armless workers and protestors of the PTI. If the rangers and police have been killed where are the proof and diagnosis of the government sides? Talking about the participation of Murad Sayed he added if they have seen him in the protest, why the government could not arrest him in Islamabad. The government is telling lies and doing wrong press conferences about the same saying Syed is in CM house in KP. Talking about the misinformation about the participation of Afghan nationals in the protest he added this is wrong and we have own workers, why to bring the Afghans in the whole thing. Talking about his meeting with Imran Khan on 26th Nov he added that this is a past now and we have already told what he said, adding he informed Khan that we should not go to D-Chowk as there are rangers all around but should go towards Sangjani. Khan said yes to the same but there was no unity in the protestors and things went in a different direction on the ground.

Seven new cases on Imran Khan: Political Stalemate b/w Govt & PTI, Khabar Muhammad Malick Kay Saath, ARY News, 03 December²³

The host pointed out that the power politics of Pakistan has gone into a closed tunnel, the government thinks they have won by stopping the PTI protest but on the same time the PTI thinks they have been able to enter D-Chowk and have won to break the barriers. Seven more cases has been put on Imran Khan and he has been rest cited in the jail and government has increased the restrictions. The host pointed out that three parties out of this conflict, establishment, government and Imran Khan. He added that the message of Bushra Bibi was interesting when she said that Khan does not want to take revenge on anyone, this message has to be clear, and the wrong messages are coming out from the

²³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9IMO-fP8x9M>

jail. There is also controversy about the number of dead's in the 26 November, both parties are claiming that the number of dead's are increasing (PTI) and government is saying there is no deaths. **Guests:** Senator Faisal Vawda (Senior Leader) & Fawad Chaudhry (Senior Leader). **Senator Faisal Vawda** pointed out that Imran Khan has gone mad behind the jail, these gossips are all around. The claims that Khan is in danger behind jails and that some gas has been spread, it all propaganda to divert from the failure of the latest protest on 26 November. The government has tried to portray that it is between them and PTI and the establishment has kept away. The COAS has said in Balochistan recently that they are not part of any political party but they are with the people of Pakistan and the country. The kidnapping of the people (*recently the Pathans*) and leaders are done by the government and not by the establishment. He added that illegal people should be arrested but the common man who have to nothing with all of these has to be stopped. Asim Munir has brought the country on the right path and he is not leaning on any party. Talking about his meeting with Bilawal Bhutto he added that Bilawal is a young and educated leader, and we have every right to meet each other, it is other thing that if we are talking about any alternative to this government. **Fawad Chaudhry** talking about the role of Bushra Bibi in the protest he pointed out that PTI was broken two years back and we were out of the party because of that the party has lost the importance. The present leaders in the PTI has no political gravitas and there is no tall political leader to lead the government. There is no political counter narrative of Imran Khan, so the PTI has failed to build a parallel counter narrative. On the other hand PML-N is trying to use the sympathy of the establishment and trying to remind them of the 9th May event to punish the PTI. The establishment should not react on the results of the protest. It is not the issue of information and how it is coming out and to expect from Imran Khan to give a positive speech after the deaths is not done. The distrust in the PTI is big and there is no coordination in the team. The issue was almost resolved when the protest was to divert to Sanjani and release of political prisoners but due to the misinformation and distrust things went to the other disastrous side.

Is Government in Trouble: Civil Disobedience call by PTI? Sethi Se Sawal, *Samaa TV*, 08 December²⁴

Talking about the recent political updates the host pointed out that the PTI is gearing up for civil disobedience movement and many high profile cases will be discussed in the courts. These cases are fixed, election case, 9th May and civilian trails in military court are lined up for December. When asked how it will proceed Najam Sethi pointed out that most of the cases will go in favour of the government because they have already formed the constitutional courts. The government wants to resolve these issues once and for all. Mohsin Naqvi is a military man and he has done what he had to do, stopped the long march of the PTI. The most important is the trail in military court, government is ready to form the judicial commission which is also the demand of Imran Khan. Government will be ready to form an inquiry commission for sure to investigate in the 9th May event. On the election he added that the government will say it has already formed tribunals. The constitutional courts are made to decide the cases, and the establishment knows that the results will be in their favour. In history civilians have been tried in military courts and court martialled but these are changed times and we have to see what the benches will decide. The army act is very specific and terrorism is also defined. The decision will be like civilians can be tried in military courts with conditions and the court will decide the conditions. This is going to be very tricky issue but the saving clause will be that though they can be tried in the military court but the appeal should come to the court. This time the pressure will be to send a message to the PTI. Talking about the possible military trail of Imran Khan and Faiz Hameed he added that the trail of Faiz could be a message to PTI. Najam Sethi pointed out that there will be a judgment on Faiz's case and the sword of danger will be hovering over Imran Khan in the coming days. Talking about the call of civil disobedience by the PTI he added it will not be success in Pakistan, there is desperation in PTI and they are out of option what should be their next step. After the failure of long march to Islamabad he added the PTI is looking for options, they have also formed a committee to hold talks to stakeholders. He added that Imran Khan is on the back foot after the failure of the march. And now they have kept demands that are not so

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6sDnTaLwrps>

extreme. He added there will be some relative for Imran Khan in the near future. The national government is not a bad idea but there main aim is to conduct new elections, which is not possible at this point of time. PPP, JUI-F and PTI are all in favour of this new government but Sethi added there will be no big change, a few new faces can come and some may go.

Will the deadlock between Government & PTI break? 11th Hour with Waseem Badami, ARY News, 11 December²⁵

The host talked about the deadlock between government and the opposition (PTI) and the way both have avoided sitting together for dialogue. The PTI has been saying that the government has no power so that they will not talk to them but the establishment who is controlling the puppet government (dummy government). While the government has been claiming that the PTI is not ready to sit on the table we have invited them many times. Waseem pointed out that there is news that the PTI and government have agreed to talk and an unofficial contact has been made. Shibli Faraz senior leader of PTI has said that they are ready to talk with all stakeholders and Barrister Gohar has said in the national assembly that they want justice and indicated they are ready for talks. He asked what is happening, will they sit together and talk? *Guests:* Raouf Hasan- senior leader PTI & Fawad Chaudhry (Senior Leader). *Raouf Hasan* talking about the statement given by Barrister Gohar that PTI is ready for talks with all parties, he added that this is a wrong projection and we are still suffering from the 26th November protests and killings. Hasan pointed out that on ground nothing has changed, we still believe that the government has nothing to give and the government is a dummy government. The need of the hour is political stability but operation by government on the protestors on 26th November make it difficult for us to talk to them. He denied that there is no formal dialogue with the government and there is no window opened for talks with government. Imran Khan has taken a step and made a committee that is true and this committee will be responsible for any talks in the future, the deadline for talks from PTI is 14th December for the government and if nothing happens there will be civil disobedience movement from 16th December. He agreed that PTI had engagement with the establishment form time to time and we are still

²⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=264EKun0G20>

considering to talk to them, but he added cannot indulge in the details. There is no truth in the tickers on TV channels and media houses are under pressure to run it. The PTI's stand on 9th May is intact we still demand judicial commission to investigate the issue. **Fawad Chaudhry** talking about the possibility of talks between government and PTI he added that there is no way there will be talks. Ayaz Sadiq as a speaker is fine but he cannot do anything and did not when PTI leaders were arrested from Parliament. It is true that negotiation is a solution but there is no thinking both sides that they want to talk. The committee formed by PTI is to talk to the opposition, there is a problem in the narrative. The biggest issue for PTI is elections and they have no idea about the date of hearing of these cases in the court. He added that first PTI has to put its house in order and then they can think of talks with the government. The government is giving signals that they do not want or need to talk with the PTI and when they want it they will do it. He added that it is very important to give space to PTI, and the PML-N and PPP should understand that they need to accommodate the PTI. These are the three top parties and it is in the interest of these three parties to accommodate each other to suppress radical elements and parties.