

April 2020

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria



MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR
DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
मनोहर पर्रिकर रक्षा अध्द्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Relief force, Editorial, Dawn, 01 April¹

Urgency is the need of the hour. To fight a pandemic that is spreading like wildfire and to mitigate its impact on their citizens, governments need to fashion responses that make the best use of precious time and resources. *Raising a youth volunteer force called the Corona Relief Tigers, a measure formally announced by Prime Minister Imran Khan in his address to the nation on Monday, cannot be described as meeting that criteria.* Moreover, while the premier may have the best of intentions, the move also sends the wrong message to an opposition that feels alienated by the PTI government. Indeed, the PPP has already expressed its reservations, with Senator Raza Rabbani saying in a statement that the move would politicize the national effort against Covid-19. *He suggested that the centre take a leaf out of the Sindh government's book and form mohalla committees including members of different political parties and NGOs working in the areas where relief goods are required to be distributed.*

Corona virus and must to do, Saleem Safi, Jang, 01 April²

Pakistan is a unique country. Lies are common here: But many are ready to die on the name of Islam. More than any other country, hypocrisy is practiced in Pakistan: But one will find people offering *nimaz* and keeping fast as well. *Corruption, sectarianism, and discrimination against the poor by the governments have been defining features of Pakistan. Perhaps one of the reasons for all this is that the religious leadership has been trying to establish Islam on their followers more than upon themselves.* And the governments also want to hold only the oppositions accountable, not itself or its members. *However, when it comes to dealing with natural calamities or other threats, the unanimous role of the country has been surprising.* For instance, for last 18 years we have been fighting war against terrorism, especially in the Pashtun areas and have emerged as victorious, mainly because of the will of the society. *I believe that we will be able to overcome the Corona pandemic also: Not because of the government or its policies, as the government is incompetent, but because of the will of the people of the Pakistan. The Corona virus pandemic is a threat only to human lives but "PTI-Corona" has killed our economy also.* If our people follow the

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1545428/relief-force>

² <https://jang.com.pk/news/752669>

advisories issued by doctors and take precautions, we will control the damage that the virus is unleashing on whole world. Thankfully, barring some exceptions, all religious sects have cooperated in fighting the Corona pandemic. *In many places in the country people listen to their moulvis more than anybody else. I request these moulvis tell their followers to take all precautions to stop spreading of Corona virus.* I would even suggest that the army should rope in the volunteers of these religious groups for delivering essential services because their reach is wide and they are more dedicated.

Coronavirus and the society, Saleem Safi, Jang, 08 April³

Every natural calamity is a test for humans. It also has some blessing in it. *While dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic, we need to use the opportunity to address bad things in our society. In this, our religious groups and leaders have a pivotal role.* It is true that majority of the people of Pakistan have never supported any religious group. But it is also true that that 99 percent of the total population is religious. *This is the reason that Prime Minister Imran Khan did not ban religious gatherings unless some fatwa were issued by some prominent religious clerics.* The type of social distancing we require to deal with Coronavirus is not possible without support of such clerics. Though the different religious groups are divided in Pakistan but now because of Coronavirus they will have to come together. *I suggest that any religious group or leader convene a meeting of all religious groups and heads and come up with some collective statement to deal with the Coronavirus pandemic.* The country needs a decision on the issue of maintaining social distance when burying the dead. *One issue in Pakistan is that the state and the government have been considered one. If someone has issues with the government, that should not be seen as an issue with the state.* Difference needs to be maintained that doctors, nurses, police, etc., belong to the state, not to any government. We can also save lot of money by avoiding over spending on marriages, religious functions, etc. Many more things can be done. If the religious groups decide to take some initiatives and the government decides to address the social issues, many goals can be achieved at this time.

Government and the opposition, Saleem Safi, Jang, 15 April⁴

Since we were born we have been told that the country is going through difficult times. However, the current crisis is different. *First time we see a Prime Minister while addressing a nation instead of saying something encouraging, says that people will die because of hunger and*

³ <https://jang.com.pk/news/755770>

⁴ <https://jang.com.pk/news/758864>

unemployment. Pakistan is facing many issues: Afghanistan, India, terrorism, sectarianism and political crisis. But the urgent issue at the moment is economic crisis. Many including Imran Khan were saying in 2017 that the country was going towards a civil war. *In 2018 Imran Khan was voted to power with hope that he would stabilize the economy. But he has failed: growth has fallen, investors have run away and the work on CPEC has slowed down.* Now the Corona virus pandemic has complicated the situation. When every country is looking for itself, if the virus spreads in Pakistan the consequences will be harsh. With no right roadmap to deal with the crisis, in the month of Ramadan people will fight outside mosques. Corona is going to damage the economy most, as accepted by experts and the Prime Minister. *To deal with such a greave situation either the Government needs to have a plan or the opposition should come up with some agenda. But none has anything to offer. Imran Khan has become too arrogant and does not listen to anyone. He wants only sycophants around him. He hates who make sense or are critical. The opposition is silent and wants the people who brought Imran to power to be punished.* Only Allah knows what is inside the hearts of the people but it appears that PML-N is happy with the situation because the supporters of Imran Khan are being punished. But they forget that general public is also suffering. When one asks the leaders of PPP, PML-N, JUI or others why they do not do something, they say that when they will get any signal for the same, only then they will. In such a situation only *Khuda* can save the country!

IK's gambit, Editorial, *The Friday Times*, 17 April⁵

PM Imran Khan has made a virtue out of U- Turns as the hallmark of great leadership. *His COVID-19 "Lockdown" policy beats them all: now we have a lockdown, now we don't; now Islamabad and the provinces are locked into a consensual policy,* now each province is free to make its own policies, now the ulema have agreed to abide by the rules, now they are striking out on their own; and so on, ad infinitum. *Worse, at a time when the nation desperately needs a leader who can inspire and unify the people behind one solid policy decision, there is bitter discord between Islamabad and Sindh and between the ruling PTI and the combined opposition parties whose leaders are being relentlessly hounded.* The personalized "attack" on the Sindh Chief Minister, Murad Ali Shah, who has earned popular kudos for his heartfelt handling of the crisis in his province, by the usual pack of PTI louts, is particularly jarring. In fact, the PM has now jumped into the fray and tried to hog the limelight in Sindh as the "true" benefactor of the people. Even a national health crisis is not reason enough to stop such petty politicking!

⁵ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/iks-gambit/>

Is achievement of 20-points possible? Editorial, Roznama Pakistan, 21 April⁶

Governor of Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar has said that the federal and provincial governments are taking every step to curb the spread of Corona virus in Pakistan. *Mr Chaudhry said that a formula has been designed for the month of Ramadan with the consent of the ulemas. If the formula is violated that can have severe consequences. Interior Minister Brig (R) Aijaz Shah said that clause 20 states wherever the policy will be violated, the ulemas have given authority to the government to take any possible action.* ... There is no doubt that the government and the ulemas were honest in their intentions when they signed the 20-point formula. However, the real question remains whether action on 20 points is possible or not? *Even when the month of Ramadan is few days away, no rules are followed in mosques where congregational prayers are offered. In many places the stated distance is not maintained.* Also, the daily five prayers do not take much time. *During Ramadan, people will offer taraweeh and night prayers together and that will take almost two hours. In such case if there will be only one carrier of the virus, it can spread fast.* Experts have said that many corona virus patients do not show any symptom, making it more difficult to identify the carriers. Therefore, the 20-point policy is a difficult task at hand. Many mosques do not have any lawn and are in congested areas. Also in many mosques possibility of high number of people turning out for prayers remains high. It will be difficult to maintain six feet distance, creating chances for the spread of virus.

Reverse the decision, Editorial, Dawn, 23 April⁷

The administration, as well as sensible clerics, needs to realize that Pakistan cannot afford to take a chance by reopening mosques at this juncture. Attendance at masjids goes up during Ramazan, and it is hard to imagine how the state as well as mosque administrations will enforce social-distancing guidelines. Clerics say that social-distancing norms are also being violated in markets. That may be so, and the administration needs to do a better job of ensuring crowding does not take place in bazaars and markets. But the comparison between shopping for food — which is a necessity — and attending congregational prayers — in which there is much flexibility, especially in times of a pandemic — is not a sound one. Even Saudi Arabia has said only a few staff members will be allowed to offer Taraweeh prayers at the two holy mosques of Makkah and Madina. *If other Muslim states can take sensible decisions, there is no reason why our rulers should be swayed*

⁶ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-04-21/page-9/detail-6>

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1551497/reverse-the-decision>

by emotional, ill-informed appeals. For the sake of public health, both the state and ulema need to reverse the decision on congregational prayers.

Stark Warning, Editorial, Dawn, 24 April⁸

There is palpable alarm among Pakistan's medical community, a sense of foreboding that the country could be on the cusp of an unmanageable crisis. Three times this week, they have urgently asked the government to reconsider its decision to ease lockdown measures. *Pakistan's underfunded health sector is barely able to cope with the regular caseload, let alone an exceptional emergency like the present. If we do not 'flatten the curve' by enforcing a strict lockdown, the only way proven to be effective, the amplified pressure on this creaky edifice could be its undoing.* In what may be a sign of things to come, the doctors at the presser said that hospitals in Karachi were running out of beds to cater to Covid-19 patients. *Also consider that around 10pc of those infected need respiratory support, but public hospitals in Punjab alone have only 1,245 ventilators – and 77 of them are out of order.* With the caseload rising exponentially in the past few weeks, health personnel could be faced with wrenching decisions about which Covid-19 patients to treat with the limited resources available. We are on a knife edge. Listen to the experts.

COVID game changer, Najam Sethi, The Friday Times, 24 April⁹

Imran Khan insists the Pakistani media is not just the "freest" in the world; it is anarchic and completely unaccountable. Yet there isn't a single media watchdog, or independent newspaper or channel, at home or abroad that hasn't documented the terrible plight of the media on Imran Khan's watch. At last count, international references to highlight the tight and unprecedented censorship in "democratic" Pakistan had exceeded two dozen respected voices, including from the EU. The detention of Mir Shakil ur Rahman, the owner-editor of Jang-GEO the largest media group in the country, is a pointer in that direction. *As things stand, the few independent journalists left in the country have either been gagged or kicked out of their channels and survive only on crumbs from YouTube.* Three months ago, the media was rife with speculation that the clock was ticking for Imran Khan because the Miltablishment had seen the error of its "selection" and was looking to redeem the situation via a national unity government excluding Imran Khan. But the sudden arrival of COVID-19 put paid to all that. *Pundits say that COVID-19 could tip the scales either way. If Imran Khan's anti-lockdown strategy works, he will live to fight another day. But if it doesn't – if hunger,*

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1551774/stark-warning>

⁹ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/covid-game-changer/>

joblessness, strikes, riots and anarchy break out, or the economy sends out an SOS – it will be back to the drawing board for the Miltabishment again.

Violation of the government-ulema agreement, Editorial, Daily Times, 27 April¹⁰

Hopefully the government will take notice, accept that it was wrong to go down this road in the first place and take appropriate action. Yet there's that lingering fear that throughout this crisis the federal government has been living in a bubble of sorts. *It completely buckled under pressure from the religious lobby, making Pakistan the only country in the whole world to keep mosques open this Ramazan, and now the risk of the coronavirus spreading like wildfire has increased manifold.* Who will be responsible now, the government or the ulema, if failure to adhere to the 20-point agreement results in more people and their families testing positive? Of course everybody knows that the two will simply toss the blame between each other, and all the time continue with their congregations, while the rest of the country counts the high number of cases as things spiral out of control. *This is precisely the time when everybody, people and government, should be making every effort possible to enforce a smart lockdown.* The number of infected cases is expected to peak sometime over the next two months. Somebody should also explain why Pakistan must be different from the rest of the Muslim world. *When every other Muslim government has seen it fit not to open mosques for the present, why must Pakistan adopt a different strategy; especially one with potentially such a high cost?* In the interest of the country, both the government and religious lobby are urged to immediately review their agreement and scale down in the face of an expanding pandemic.

Weak Virus Strategy, Editorial, Dawn, 28 April¹¹

Lockdown measures in most cities have been eased. In some areas, the scenes at bazaars and in mosques are reminiscent of any other day in the pre-Covid-19 era. Overall, the atmosphere of urgency and caution which was palpable in the initial lockdown days is dissipating. *The scenario raises a serious question: what is the government's strategy? A survey has revealed that 80pc of mosques in Punjab and the federal capital are not implementing the agreement reached between the government and ulema. Observers conducting the survey noted that worshippers in 194 mosques violated preventive*

¹⁰ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/602820/violation-of-the-government-ulema-agreement/>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1552826/weak-virus-strategy>

measures. The experiment has failed and begs a reassessment. For the government to rely on the notion of individual citizen responsibility, it must confront an unfortunate reality: the Swedish model of self-regulation, if successful, is only possible because it relies on the notion of trust between citizens and state — a historical rarity in Pakistan and in many other countries. The crowds in public spaces are evidence that the government's appeals have not been taken seriously. Therefore, the government must rethink its strategy and impose stringent restrictions even as it ramps up testing to the promised 25,000 a day — a target it is yet to meet. *The approach of 'advice giving' must be abandoned. Instead, the government ought to exercise its constitutional authority to protect the public before it is too late.*

Provincial autonomy, Editorial, Dawn, 29 April¹²

A recent comment by the federal planning minister describing the 18th Amendment as flawed has sparked a new debate between the supporters of a powerful centre and those who want stronger federating units for a fairer, more effective federal system. The amendment, which was forged through consensus a decade back, not only transferred greater administrative and fiscal authority to the provinces, but also gave more powers to parliament. That the opposition felt the need to rebut the government's view despite the ruling elite lacking the parliamentary majority to reverse the devolution process set in motion by the 18th Amendment shows the growing trust gap between the two sides. *At one end is the fear that provincial autonomy could be eroded while at the other, there is the concern that the amendment, as well as the seventh National Finance Commission award, has administratively and financially weakened the centre by delegating too many legislative powers to the provinces and diverting a larger portion of fiscal resources to them.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Next two weeks of Corona virus pandemic, Editorial, Roznama Express, 03 April¹³

The Corona virus pandemic has spread in whole world. *WHO head has said that the pandemic will last longer in Asia and the Asian countries need to*

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1553097/provincial-autonomy>

¹³ https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1107322224&Issue=NP_MUX&Date=20200402

take long lasting measures to fight Corona virus. Prime Minister Imran Khan has also said that Corona virus is a threat and challenge. He took stock of the arrangements made to deal with the unfolding situation because of the lockdown in the country. PM Khan said that no essential services should face any difficulty. Different relief packages for daily wagers, exports and the poor were announced in the meeting. ... *Though the government is trying its best to rise to the occasion, the country lacks a clear cut strategy and method.* The Corona virus pandemic has shattered health system of developed countries like Italy, the U.S., UK and France. Their hospitals are overwhelmed with the high number of COVID-19 patients. *In Pakistan, it is difficult to have an exact estimate of the number of deaths. But the provincial governments in Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa are taking every measure to fight the pandemic. The chief ministers, governors and the other officials will have to wage jihad to defeat Corona virus.* There will be more challenges in terms of reconciling with the damage on economy and society after the pandemic is defeated. *According to a report, already foreign buyers have rejected a \$30 billion garment order which will have deep impact on the garment manufacturing sector.* The provincial governments should not ignore and be attentive towards economic aspect of the Corona virus pandemic. The economic situation in the country is not good which is creating difficulty in announcing relief packages, much needed at the moment. *The needy are waiting for such relief from the government. People should get all kind of succor and relief in these tough times.* The federal and provincial governments need to work for providing the same. Meanwhile, during the lockdown, people need to cooperate with the federal and provincial governments.

Pandemic's economic impact, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 15 April¹⁴

With its economy already struggling, Pakistan is likely to be hardest hit as it struggles to simultaneously save lives and livelihoods. Along with Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, Pakistan is in danger of experiencing a negative economic growth rate. With the population growing at 1.8pc a year, the prospects are dismal. *The population explosion that has never been on the radars of our policymakers has also been a major reason for our deteriorating health situation. The current crisis has exposed all these fault lines.* Another serious problem adding to the country's woes are the shrinking job opportunities in the oil-producing Arab and Gulf countries that are the biggest source of employment for Pakistani expatriate workers. This will not only add to the rising unemployment problem but will also affect remittances. The development will have serious social and economic implications. For a country facing a massive debt burden — both domestic and external — it is an

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1549307/pandemics-economic-impact>

extremely serious situation as the Pakistani government is now compelled to divert its resources to fighting the pandemic. *It is certainly the right approach to provide monetary help to the poorest sections of the population worst hit by the economic shutdown. But given Pakistan's limited financial resources the effort will not be enough to meet the enormous challenges.*

COVID-19 and Expansion of CPEC, Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, Daily Times, 13 April¹⁵

Although, China is going through testing times, but China is putting efforts to expand CPEC. The efforts of both governments give confidence that the CPEC will be implemented on time and there will be no delay as it is being propagated. Chinese government is also extremely committed to help Pakistan to implement CPEC. The commitment can be seen from the efforts of China, even during the spread of COVID-19, China spared time to invite President of Pakistan and signed two extremely important MoUs. Although, China is going through testing times, but China is putting efforts to expand CPEC. The efforts of both governments give confidence that the CPEC will be implemented on time and there will be no delay as it is being propagated. *The commitment of Pakistan has also improved, and it is evident from the establishment of CPEC Authority.* Pakistan is trying to imply all required instruments to make CPEC a success story. In this backdrop we can say, negative propaganda seems unfair and based on malicious intents. The purpose of which is to undermine the importance of CPEC and create hurdles for the development of Pakistan. *However, it will never be successful because CPEC is not joint venture between governments; it is joint venture among the people of China and Pakistan.*

On the matter of the debt rollover, Editorial, Daily Times, 15 April¹⁶

It's for a reason that the prime minister has been calling for poor country debt write off ever since the coronavirus pandemic changed everything. Pakistan has to pay back approximately \$28 billion dollars in public debt by mid-2023. There is clearly no way to make such payments in the present circumstances. The lockdown has brought the economy to the halt with predictions of a sharp jump in the fiscal deficit, doubling of poverty, contraction of growth and a sharp recession by the next fiscal. According to news reports, Pakistan plans to seek rollover of half the amount due, to the tune of \$14 billion; although it would be lucky to get even half of that. That much is not a surprise, mostly because this is just about the only option Pakistan really has. Whatever good was coming from the IMF program is now lost to the coronavirus response. *And not only will countries like*

¹⁵ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/594519/covid-19-and-expansion-of-cpec/>

¹⁶ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/595820/on-the-matter-of-the-debt-rollover-daily-times/>

Pakistan not be able to make debt payments for quite a while, they will also need increasing amounts of foreign loans to avoid large scale social unrest as well as hunger and starvation. Pakistan's debt will grow manifold as it fights off the coronavirus pandemic. And it will get more and more difficult to meet repayment deadlines. Unless our friend agree to roll over some of our debt, if not write some off altogether, a recession might just be the beginning of far deeper problems.

Covid-19 and impact on economy, Fahd Rehman, *The Express Tribune*, 20 April¹⁷

Regardless of the available narratives, one thing is for sure that the global economy is in recession and *Pakistan's economy is not an exception in this regard. Then came Covid-19, triggering lockdowns across Pakistan. These lockdowns have created lots of socio-economic problems.* On the social front, livelihood opportunities have been squeezed all of a sudden. Daily-wage earners, small and medium businesses and traders took a big hit due to this unavoidable action. *On the economic front, the sudden closure of large industries, small and medium businesses, ports, airports and transport have almost jammed the wheel of the economy.* In a nutshell, the marked economic slowdown is now leading to negative GDP growth, as projected by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the SBP. Although philanthropist/charity organisations actively jumped in to provide essential food items to a large chunk of people, the scale is quite large and it is not easy to reach out to all the deserving people.

Pakistan fails to ask G20 for relief, Shahbaz Rana, *Express Tribune*, 21 April¹⁸

Contrary to claims made by a few ministers about securing a substantial debt relief, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) resident representative had said that Islamabad had not made an official request to G20 countries for payment relaxation. Teresa Daban Sanchez, IMF Resident Representative, also said that inflation in Pakistan would remain in double digits this year due to inflationary expectations and expected revision in prices. *Pakistan has neither made any official request to G20 countries nor has it made any announcement in this regard, she said. She was responding to a question about the quantum of debt relief for Pakistan from the G20 countries.* Sanchez said only those countries could avail debt relief that had made requests for forbearance to the G20 nations – the club of 20 big economies of the world. The rupee had fallen to 170 to a dollar but

¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2202021/2-covid-19-impact-economy/>

¹⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2202934/2-pakistan-fails-ask-g20-relief/>

gradually recovered to Rs163.49 in the past few days. *To a question about Pakistan's response to the Covid-19 and its implications for the economic health, the resident representative said "fiscal and SBP measures must be targeted and temporary".*

SECURITY SITUATION

Protect the police at all cost, Editorial, Daily Times, 06 April¹⁹

News reports that the Punjab police force is "ill-equipped" and therefore runs the risk of contracting the coronavirus in high numbers are cause for the gravest concern for a number of very obvious reasons. One, they are no doubt the front-line soldiers in this war against the virus; along with our legions of doctors of course And three, since every government must always factor in the absolute worst case scenario in all circumstances, not the least when faced with an unprecedented, out-of-control existential crisis, the Punjab government must have considered what it would do should a large number of the police force catch the virus and law enforcement becomes problematic. Let there be no mistake, if the police force is not protected, it will not be able to protect the people in turn. And, in that case, there is just no way that this fight can be won. Doctors, apparently, are expressing similar concerns. This is unacceptable. Everybody knows that the government has its plate full. *But it is unclear how Chief Minister Usman Buzdar expects his province to lead the global fight* against the pandemic when his front-line warriors are compromised in this manner.

FATF Extension, Editorial, Dawn, 09 April²⁰

An unexpected development has given Pakistan an additional two months in which to complete the action plan steps that were going to be reviewed in June. *No doubt this comes as a relief to some in the government, since much work remained to be done by June. But it would be a grave mistake to treat the additional time that has unexpectedly been granted as some sort of 'relief'.* Instead of an excuse, the present conditions, in fact, grant an opportunity to the government. The priority now is not simply getting through the review meeting without falling into the so-called blacklist. The

¹⁹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/589932/protect-the-police-at-all-costs/>

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1547703/fatf-extension>

clear priority is to get off the grey list altogether. *No matter how well the stars are aligned for us on the geopolitical table where Pakistan is seeking to draw linkages from, there is no better reason to aim for an expeditious end to the grey listing status than the country's own economic interests.* In the perception of outside observers, a pattern has emerged of Pakistan taking cosmetic action and asking for extensions. This is a good moment to lay this view to rest.

Re-emerging terrorists groups need to be nipped in the bud, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 28 April²¹

During an operation in Northern Waziristan, nine terrorists were killed. Two soldiers also lost their lives. It is well known fact that terrorism came to Pakistan through Afghanistan. *They were supported by external forces. Pakistan tried to mainstream them and offered talks. However, terrorist groups took the offer as weakness of the Pakistani state. Subsequently, whole world saw how these terror camps were attacked and terrorists killed. In Northern Waziristan terrorists had declared state within state, which was eliminated. Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi and NSA Ajit Doval are on record to say that India would revenge Kashmir in Balochistan. Many areas in Afghanistan were used against Pakistan. Many fugitive terrorists were given safe hideouts in Afghanistan. Kabul is helping India in all this.* When these terrorists get a chance, they attack Pakistani army and other security establishments. Even their cowardice minor attacks need to be stopped. This goal can be achieved only by eliminated last remaining terrorist. The recent operation in northern Waziristan was a successful one. *Question remains wherefrom such a big number of terrorists came in the area? Wherefrom they could get huge chunk of weapons? Are they trying to reassemble? Kabul has been helping some tribal's who need to be put under surveillance. Also, it is not unlikely that some terrorists would be hiding in Afghan refugees.* The fencing on the Afghan-Pakistan border needs to be completed. National Action Plan (NAP) needs to be implemented in letter and spirit. At last, facilitators of terrorists need to be arrested so that terrorists do not get a chance to reassemble.

War without weapons, Saleem Safi, *Jang*, 29 April²²

²¹ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-04-28/page-4/detail-3>

²²https://jang.com.pk/news/764747?_ga=2.179707309.80345984.1588140292-1172285561.1585539487

“We do not need to fear Corona but fight it” was an inappropriate slogan. *War is fought with powers on earth and with people. One cannot fight with natural calamities and pandemics. In such situations we can only pray and seek forgiveness from Allah.* Corona cannot be fought with nuclear and other weapons. No sophisticated weaponry and jets can defeat the virus. It will be only conquered by doctors. *Unfortunately our behaviour with our doctors and medical professionals has been so bad that they preferred to leave Pakistan and settle in the West.* We do not provide facilities to our doctors. Condition of our hospitals is abysmal. Toilets in western hospitals are cleaner than our hospitals. We have misbehaved so much with our doctors and paramedics that they are often forced to go on strike. Consequently, though we declared war on Corona virus but we did not have cantonments or conditions to fight the pandemic. They were not equipped for war. Many doctors and nurses became victims of the virus. *Doctors are begging for imposing lockdown. But they are ignored. In cases of war with India or against terrorists within the country, whole country listens to the frontline soldiers. But in case of corona virus pandemic, the frontlines, i.e., doctors and paramedics are being entirely ignored.* Some politicians and experts from IMF are deciding the policy. We ought to respect doctors and nurses. Provide them all equipments and safety kits and double their salaries. If some of them become victim of the virus, their kin’s need to be given jobs. **Doctors and experts on Corona need to be consulted for framing policy to deal with the pandemic.**

URDU MEDIA

No one will be spared, Editorial, Ummat, 12 April²³

Gen. Ayub Khan was criticized when there was an increase of one paisa in the price of sugar in the 1950s. Otherwise, Ayub was praised for his management of economy and providing governance. Later, it was Gowher Ayub, Ayub Khan’s son who became reason for his embarrassment and his popularity started decreasing with the increase of public criticism. *Now the people seem to have grown complicit. There are no mass movements like there were during the tenures of Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Bhutto.* For sugar and flour crises, it has come out that close aides of Prime Minister Imran Khan, Jahangir Tareen, Khusroo Bakhtiar and his brother are involved. Even Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar’s name has also come up. *But they all are safe and no action has been taken. Prime Minister Khan has appointed one more committee for*

²³ <http://ummat.net/2020/04/12/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

forensic auditing. Meanwhile, there are new revelations. For example, the sugar mafia has used accounts on names of their employees to evade taxes worth Rs 33 billion. Thus these people were looting the national money and draining poor people's pockets. Buzdar may not have made money directly. But he has helped these corrupt people. After final investigation, it will be revealed who are these anonymous people. This will be last chance for Imran Khan to prove his claim: no one will be spared. All corrupt people need to be treated equally before the law.

Why national government and how? Saleem Safi, Jang, 13 April²⁴

If we try to keep all our biases aside, then we see that we are faced with three bitter realities. *First, the corona virus pandemic is going out of control. It should not have been allowed to enter in the country. At worst, immediately lockdown should have been imposed to curb its spread.* But the government was confused. Now the situation is like that it can be dealt with only by an extensive government that will include all political and religious groups. *Second, economy of the country was in the shambles when Imran Khan took over as the Prime Minister. It was expected that he would help to improve the economy. But it seems he has neither a vision nor a competent team to deal with the economic crisis in the country.* Such a grave economic situation can be dealt with national consensus and with a strategy that will entail every Pakistani citizen. *Third, honesty and commitment that were associated with Imran Khan and his party have been turned wrong.* Many PTI leaders tell me that the government has fallen in wrong hands. Even the spokespersons of the government say now that the party and the government have been high jacked by sugar mafia. Jahangir Tareen has also accepted that how he assembled different dynast politicians in PTI. *Thus the government has become hub of different mafias. Additionally, there are foreign lobbies which are influencing the government, like American, Chinese, Saudis and Iranian lobbies.* This remains the reason for that Islamabad could do nothing when India integrated Kashmir. Group politics remains active in PTI affecting its performance. Thus, there remains only one option to deal with these looming threats: National government for few months.

Corona: Prime Minister's reservations, Editorial, Jang, 20 April²⁵

Pakistan is one of the poorest and most congested countries of the world. Over 14 percent of population lives under below poverty line (BPL). *38 percent of people are daily wagers. Being a leader of democratic country, it is responsibility of the Prime Minister to stand with the people during time of*

²⁴ <https://jang.com.pk/news/757988>

²⁵ https://jang.com.pk/news/761065?_ga=2.214702743.1019582940.1587365528-1172285561.1585539487

crisis. Corona virus pandemic is a test for the PTI-Government. Despite having limited resources, the government needs to save lives of the people. That is the reason for that Imran Khan is working hard along with his team from the first day. Despite the lockdown in place, the number of COVID 19 cases has been increasing. Therefore, it is fair if the government is concerned about the rising numbers. *Prime Minister Khan said that though the number of the COVID 19 patients is not as high as in other countries but that should not make us to ignore the threat. The month May is going to be crucial. If people come on roads, the purpose of lockdown will be lost.* We need to be careful during the crisis time and need to act together to defeat the Corona virus pandemic.

Corona and religious people, Saleem Safi, Jang, 22 April²⁶

Crisis either proves or makes leaders to fall. *In Pakistan, religious leadership of Fazl-ur Rehman, Siraj-ul Haq, Maulana Tariq Jameel, Mufti Taqi Usmani and Peer Naqib-ur Rehman have increased their stature at the time of Corona virus pandemic.* Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman's rights were sacrificed in the name of "tabdili" (change). Then the government crossed every line while targeting him. If the Maulana wanted he could have used the pandemic against the government. Instead, he took a sensible position and asked his followers to listen to doctors and do whatever they advise to do. He supported government's decision to ban congregational prayers. Similarly, Siraj-ul Haq, Mufti Taqi, Tariq Jameel and Mufti Taqi advised people to maintain social distancing and offered their help to the government in fighting the Corona virus. *If someone is confused about lockdown it is the government. It invited more trouble by announcing some relaxation in the lockdown on 14 April. This provoked Mufti Muneeb-ur Rehman that if businesses can open, why cannot be mosques opened for prayers?* Ulemas met in Karachi in the background of the government's decision and the Chairman of the Hilal Committee Mufti Muneeb-ur Rehman said that there would be no lockdown on mosques. Then President Arif Alvi convened a meeting which came up with 20-point formula. That formula was a face saving for the government. *I would like to ask the ulemas with due respect that when Masjid-e-Nabawi can be closed for prayers in the wake of the pandemic, why cannot other mosques? When old people are allowed to offer prayers at home to avoid any trouble, why cannot people do same to avoid spread of Corona? Also, when the ulemas agreed to offer five-time daily must prayers at home, what is wrong with offering taarawaha at home?* Additionally, Moulana Fazl-ur Rehman has said to me that he would offer all prayers at home. If he can do it,

²⁶https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1107374241&Issue=NP_I SB&Date=20200422

why cannot others? Mufti Muneeb has been saying that because he is appointed by the state, people do not need to oppose but listen to him. Now since the government has announced the extension of lockdown, why is he challenging the state?

Afghan-transit trade, Editorial, Jang, 23 April²⁷

Many experts on trade have welcomed the opening of the Gwadar port for Afghan-transit trade. They said that it would boost economy of the country. *It would also create avenues of employment and will help in development of Balochistan.* Advisor to the Prime Minister for commerce, Abdul Razzaq Daud said that Pakistan has allowed exports of food essentials to Afghanistan from Gwadar. Because of the lockdown, six thousands containers were stranded at Karachi port and two thousands containers were stuck somewhere in the road. Besides, four hundred containers were stranded at the Torkham border and 16 hundred at Chaman border. *Afghanistan, a land locked country, receives most of its food supply through Pakistan.* Because of the Corona virus pandemic, the supplies were stopped. *Islamabad has resumed the services during these times of crisis, demonstrating that it values its relations with Kabul.* It is good news also as by starting trade with Afghanistan, Gwadar port will also resume its activities.

Is COVID-19 just a virus or Affliction from God, Khalifa Mufti Usman Mansoor, Noor-e-Hidayat, April 2020 Issue

What is Corona virus and what does it mean?

How and why Corona virus attacked a country (China) which believes in materialism and takes pride in its technological advancement. Also its anti-Muslim character is known to everyone. Has any other infidel nation been punished with such virus in past? To understand meaning of *Karo-na* let us consult Urdu, national language of one of China's favorite friend Pakistan. **So *Karo-na* means o Chinese oppressors!** Lord of Muslims is taking revenge from you, so don't indulge in further atrocities and oppression. (*ab mazeed mazalim, masti awr bad mashi karo na???*). As per above, **this virus is an Islamic challenge to Chinese rulers.** Whenever Muslims are oppressed and Pharaoh of the time becomes tyrant towards them then Sustainer of the world comes in to help Muslim and afflict rulers with such virus. This virus has disturbed China and other infidel nations a lot. This trouble is not different from what Pharaoh and his men faced when they persecuted (Tribe of Israel) *Bani Israel*. **Same Pharaoh like tyranny and disobey is the reason for**

²⁷ <https://jang.com.pk/news/762383>

outbreak of virus. Readers must be aware how China made the life of more than ten Lakhs Uyghur Muslims in 2018 miserable and how Uyghur were forced into special (vocational) camps and targeted with *Bani Israel* like oppression. Chinese president also appealed Muslims to pray to get rid of this virus as Pharaoh asked *Bani Israel*. *Pharaoh was whipped out of map of the world; the same fate is waiting for Chinese and Burmese rulers if they don't stop their tyranny and oppression. We are praying for virus's outbreak in Europe and USA.* It must be in the knowledge of the people who follow media that 33 countries including USA cried like crocodile over persecution of Uyghur Muslim and termed this confinement of Muslim in re-education camps as tyranny. In fact it was economical revenge from western countries. *While at the same time so called Muslim countries shamelessly supported China's inhuman treatment of Uyghur, leaving all ethical and moral behind.* Now all Muslim and non-Muslim countries, who supported China, are under attack of this virus. Till today more than one Lakh communist contracted this virus and almost three thousands of them lost their lives. And numbers are increasing by every passing day. People must remember that Chinese were also punished with Sars virus when they tormented Uyghur and Burmese Muslims back in 2003 and no so called Muslim country protested against this tormentor. We are giving this good news that Pharaoh son of Pharaoh (Firoon ibn Firoon) *"Xi Jinping will meet the fate of pharaoh and Uighur will be survived like Bane Israel provided they refrain themselves from Fironic (False God) system and legislation.* Now Chinese false gods caught in decease in such a manner that parents cannot sit together with their children. *Chinese officials were forcing Muslims to unveil their faces and now Chinese women and men both are compelled to cover their faces.* They confined Uyghur Muslims forcefully now whole China is under complete lock down. Uyghur Muslims were tortured and tormented and now Chinese are dying on roads, homes without any care. *The imposed ban on meetings of Uighur Muslims now Communists cannot meet each other. Why virus broke out in China?* Recently China announced to do away with those Qurnaic and Biblical verses which oppose communist ideology and are not friendly with development of the world. Chinese government put more than a million Muslims in vocational training camps forcefully. Lakhs of Muslim youths were picked and killed or put behind bars and they are untraceable to their parents. *Why Pakistan supports Chinese aggression?* Pakistan tops the list of the countries supporting China on its treatment of Uyghur Muslims though this list include so called Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia, UAE and Iran. Pakistan was served as cantonment for USA for a good amount of time. Pakistan also played a pivotal role in fall of Imrat-e- Islami Afghanistan. Now when USA failed in Afghanistan and trying to hide its failure through conference and dialogue. At this critical time Pakistani slaves want to change their masters. *In that case only China is about to emerge as economical, military superpower*

with technological advancement. Therefore Pakistan wants to change its direction from White House to Beijing. When China saw this warm following from its new slaves it tried hard to save them from gray list of FATF.

China bought Gwadar against a hefty amount from Pakistan during rule of General Zia ul Haq. Now China has been pleased by ruining and destroying bazaars, markets, homes, and agricultural lands belonging to Pashtuns against few dollars and economic prosperity in future. ***This will pave the way for China to use Pakistan as cantonment.*** Since Pakistan is increasingly tilting towards slavery of China. Seeing this, ***Uighur should not expect any help from ruler of Pakistan.*** In China only Uyghur ethnic Muslims are imprisoned while in Pakistan, Swat, Bajor, Mehmand, Khaibar, Karam, Orakzai, Pashtons from Waziristan to Baluchistan, Ballauchi, Sindhi, Punjabi, Saraiki, Hazara and Kashmir Muslims going through shameful acts. ***Therefore all oppressed Muslims are praying that this Corona virus or other affliction must infect rulers of Pakistan and their friends and this virus should be there forever.***

Mr. PM, if not Corona at least control inflation, Muhammad Akram Chaudhry, Nawa-i-Waqt, 27 April²⁸

Inflation has been hardly a serious issue for governments in Pakistan. That is why we see no decrease in the prices of essential commodities since 2018. With the start of holy month of Ramadan, prices of vegetables, pulses, flour, sugar, meat and fruits are skyrocketing. ***Only thinking about and issuing statements by Prime Minister Imran Khan are not going to bring the prices under control. The rise in sugar prices is because it is controlled by mafia.*** Experts in the government should come out of their offices and visit markets to check the prices of these things (*lekin hakumat ke a'dad-o-shuma'ar ke mahir thunde kamroo mei ba'th kar file-oon ko upper-niche karne ke bajye sabzi mandi jayein, kisi bazaar mei jayein tu unehin andaza hoo ki sabzyoon aur faloo ki kimatein kya hai*). For example, lemon and garlic are sold at 600/kg; apple 250/kg; banana 150 to 200/dozen, etc. In Quetta, mutton is sold at 1100/kg while the government rate is 780/kg. The recent inflation has hit hard common people. ***Does the Prime Minister have any answer to the questions and troubles of these people? This is complete failure of the government; unconcern of the ministers. The inflation is because of negligence of important people. The trouble is because of the people who were voted to power with hope that they would get people some relief*** (*yeh [inflation] mukamal toor per hakumat ni nakami hai. Yeh wuzraa' ki adam-dilchuspi hai. Yeh mehngai aham afraad ki adam tawjah ke ba'es hai. Yeh mesebat enki wajah se hai jinhein najaat*

²⁸ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/islamabad/2020-04-27/page-3/detail-4>

dehenda samajh kar vote deye gaye the). On the one hand, Corona virus pandemic has crippled all businesses. Daily wagers are facing unemployment. On the other hand, there is high inflation. On all this, there seems no government working in the country. *Close members of the Prime Minister are sitting in closed AC rooms. They issue statements from their cozy places. People are looking at Imran Khan. When will he listen to these people?* Will he be able to overcome the forces/mafia sitting around him and work for people that voted for him with hope!

Increasing rush at public places, Editorial, Jang, 27 April²⁹

Different groups of doctors, apart from PMDC, have said that the number of COVID-19 cases is going to increase in coming days. It is unfortunate that people think because the number has been under control so far they can violate social distancing. They should not forget that the most affected countries were of the same view. They violated social distancing which resulted in havoc. *Lockdown has been extended in Pakistan in view of the rising cases. However, it is seen that people are visiting markets and mosques in large numbers. They are violating the lockdown. It is true that Pakistan cannot afford complete lockdown. Over 14 percent population in the country is below poverty line. Because of the Corona virus pandemic, the number may increase by 10 percent. If lockdown is relaxed, the number of cases and deaths may increase. And if strict lockdown is imposed that will create problem for the poor. They may come on roads, creating more problems.* The need of the hour is that all religious and civil society groups be briefed about the gravity of the situation. They need to be asked to maintain the purpose of the lockdown.

What happened to PTI's sensitivities? Nasim Shaihd, Roznama Pakistan, 28 April³⁰

Many PTI-workers are celebrating 24th foundational day of the party with less fanfare due to Corona virus pandemic. PTI has been successful to form the government in the country. *I recall getting thanks-giving calls from Imran Khan on writing columns in his favour. Imran used to say that media was ignoring him.* What happened to the people who were standing with Imran Khan then? PTI is full of parachuters now. The original workers are not seen anywhere. *I burst into laughter on seeing people like Firdous Ashiq Awan, Shehbaz Gul, Afzal Chun, Mehmood Qureshi, Sheikh Rasheed and others to*

²⁹https://jang.com.pk/news/763906?_ga=2.243788290.624610242.1587959715-1172285561.1585539487

³⁰ <https://dailypakistan.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-04-28/page-9/detail-1>

praise Imran Khan. All these people came from PML-N or PPP. What happened to PTI ideology and its sensitivity? It is true that only commander takes final decision. *Can Imran Khan act like that? He is surrounded by traditional politicians. Imran Khan cannot even touch the ministers and party members those are found involved in sugar crisis. Jehnagir Tareen is right when he said that if Imran would not have taken dynast politicians along, he would not have been able to form the government. Question is when Imran Khan became Prime Minister by colluding with the people against whom he was standing at the first place, how can he be called a person of ideology?* (ab sawal yeh hai ki jis mooresi siyasat ke khilaf Imran Khan 22 saal ladne ka dawwa karte hain, es ke numayudoo hi se agar iqtidaar ki bheek maang ke wazir-e-azam bane hain tu kaise kaha jaye ki who nazaryati aadmi hain). When one sees the members of PTI today, it does not look the party that fought against the system for 22 years. Unlike in PPP and PML-N regimes, it is unfortunate that the members/ministers of PTI are in collaboration with bureaucracy. Bureaucracy has been given complete power. In Punjab, it is the reason for bad governance. If this was to be the result of 22 years of struggle, then one feels ashamed.

Inevitable change, Editorial, Roznama Express, 29 April³¹

At a time when the country is facing fifth-generation war from its enemies, Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision to appoint a former general as special assistant in information ministry is welcome decision. *Gen (R) Asim Bajwa's appointment is meant to state clearly the country's policy, to defend regional and international interests, and to swift out lies from truth to improve the image of Pakistan.* Prime Minister has also replaced Firdous Ashiq Awan with Senator Shibli Faraz as minister of information and broadcasting. *At a time when Hinduota forces in India and the government in New Delhi are pouncing on its "enemies" and are targeting Muslims (in India) by accusing them of "corona jihad", when these forces are aggressively depriving Kashmiris of their identity, doing everything to sabotage peace process in Afghanistan, and when our enemies are trying their best to target CPEC, the appointment of Gen (R) Asim Bajwa in the information and broadcasting ministry seems most appropriate and sane decision.* He is apt for the post (Asim Bajwa ki taqreeri ka es se behtar aur koi waqat hu hi nhi sakta. Es mei koi doo rai hi hai ki Asim Bajwa ki taqreeri na gurez thi). He has served with three army chiefs and has complete knowledge of hybrid warfare and new war strategy. Asim Bajwa is articulate and knowledgeable person and is expert in image building. He will do justice to the post.

³¹https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1107392918&Issue=NP_ISB&Date=20200429

**Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Debate on the Corona Tiger Force, Geo News
08 April³²**

The guests on this show are Usman Dar, PTI; Tariq Faisal Chaudhary, PML-N and Senator Mustafa Nawaz Kokar of the PPP. Hamid Mir opens the debate and underlines that the Corona Tigers Force has been widely criticized as a political gimmick by the PTI government. *Pointing towards Usman Dar he asks you have said more than 7 Lakh have registered for the force so far, who are these people?* Usman Dar answers that it is true and we are expecting more than 10 Lakh registrations for the force till the last date. They include students, engineers, teachers, medical workers and retired armed force. The registration is still open and the number will go up. The youth registered from their districts will work in their respective regions. Even the opposition supporting youths or leaders can join the force. The people who could not register in the rural areas, the tigers will go and register them in the force. *Tariq Faisal Chaudhary of the PML-N points out two things is important for the tiger force, first the way of selection and second mechanism adopted. On paper it looks attractive but implementation will be a problem. It is an irony that the PTI government promised one crore jobs for the same youth they are now targeting to volunteer as tiger force. Also the name of the force could be Pakistan force, not tiger.* Additionally the time is critical and there is no time to train a new force. *Senator Mustafa Nawaz Kokkar, Translator of Bilawal Bhutto PPP underlines the idea of having a force is a novel one but training them, providing them uniform, protective gear will be a weigh down on the already burdened economy. He points out instead of making a force; the government can use existing structures to fight the pandemic, for example health workers and teachers.*

Sethi Se Sawal, Who will come after Imran? Najam Sethi Official, 11 April³³

In this episode latest episode of Sethi se Sawal Najam Sethi answers questions from viewers on possibility for regime change in Pakistan, the circumstances that may lead to such a change and who will take over after Imran?

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vLNQft3tchk>

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3eGjKRbb0v0>

Q: Can Imran Khan Government complete five years? Will there be any forward bloc as there is news that Imran Khan's close associate Jahangir Khan Tareen is not so happy with the PTI government?

A: There are indeed lots of discussions on this topic in the Pakistan media and questions are asked if Imran Khan will be dismantled within 30 days. These kinds of signals were also there when Maulana Fazl-Ur-Rehman led the protest against the PTI government. But things were settled and no action was taken by establishment (army) as it continued working with Imran Khan. But Imran Khan Government did not improve and was unable to improve its governance and hence yet again in this time of crisis the rumor mills are on about a possible change of government in Pakistan. But there is complete silence from the establishment side, there was a time when army and Imran Khan use to say they are on the same page on issues but it looks like the unity is gone. Since 18 months of its government the PTI has failed to deliver results and Imran Khan is also acting very stubbornly as he is not listening to the army. The establishment indicated that they want change in the Punjab government and some new leader should be brought in place of Usman Buzdar but Imran Khan did not listen and Buzdar still continues to rule and ruin Punjab.

Q: Who will replace Imran Khan?

A: Even though the establishment can bring change in 15 days by forming a forward bloc and bring a national government. But it has very limited options for replacement of Imran. Army has already burn bridges with Nawaz Sharif and even if they are thinking to bring in Shehbaz Sharif, the vote bank and public support lies with Nawaz Sharif. So the problem is will the PML-N support a national government. Especially in times of crisis like this, COVID-19 and the worst economic situation that will be ready to take responsibility? In case, there is a public movement against PTI, and there are riots in the country, then the establishment can think of replacing Imran, otherwise they will continue with him till the situation becomes bit normal.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, The fight between Federal and Provincial government, Geo News, 15 April³⁴

In this latest episode of the Capital Talk, Hamid Mir discuss disconnect between the federal and provincial government in working on a common policy to fight the pandemic. *The main points are,* First, while the federal government has announced that it will continue with a relaxed lockdown, opening low risk industries but the Sindh government has announced complete lockdown not agreeing yet again to the federal government.

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5uudH6x3kFY>

Second, the Federal government has charge sheeted the Sindh government for not agreeing to the federal government policies on the containment of the lockdown. Dr. Shehbaz Gill of the PTI on this programme argues that Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah is continuously doing politics on the issue. First he thank Ali Baba cooperation for the Kits and then later the CM said that the kits are not working and that they are sending back 20, 000 kits back to the federal government. Shehbaz Gill also underlines that under the 18 amendment, Sindh has power to take decisions so why CM is making a big deal out of it, rather than taking decisions on their own. *Third*, Nasir Hussain Shah of the PML-N brings in the point related to the money released to the needy and poor under the Ehsaas program. He underlines that in Sindh and many other provinces, the sum of total 12, 000 rupees given out to the needy is not given in the full amount. The officials are taking 500 or 600 Rupees out of the amount meant for the poor.

On the Front with Kamran Shahid, Governments decision on opening up Mosque during Ramazan, *Dunya News*, 20 April³⁵

On this episode the Anchor analyze the government's decision to review and allow prayers in mosque during Ramazan and open Mosques for prayers from this Friday. *The main points are, First*, Muslim countries have closed Mosques for Friday prayers and Ramazan Taraweeh nimaz but the PTI government has given into the pressure and has appointed religious scholars to oversee the congregational prayers during Ramazan. *The anchor argues that it is not the responsibility of the Ulema to take care of the health of the people but of the government and it has failed miserably in protecting them.* *Second*, After a consultative meeting between religious scholars and President Arif Alvi, this decision was taken and a 20 point plan was approved for preventive measures against the virus during the prayers. *Mosques committees are asked to form congregational rows by maintain a distance of six feet and underlined that people above age of 50 are not allowed in the mosque.* But the anchor underlines, who will make sure they will not attend mosque prayers? He says that people will come to the mosques on the basis of faith or other reason and no one can stop them if the mosques are open. Who will control them, rangers or Police? *The Ulema, Muhammad Taqi Usmani said we have talked about 3 feet gap not 6 feet that means already confusion has been created.* *Third*, The Anchor asks Ali Mohammad Khan (PTI), Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs guest on the show about the government's decision and underlines why have you taken this step, the truth

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2ppKVBE-XY>

is that you have not looked at Saudi, Malaysia, Turkey and other Muslim countries who have decided to continue with ban on prayers in mosques even during Ramazan? The Minister replies by saying that he is happy that the government and the Ulema's *met and came out with a balanced decision with conditions on opening the mosques during Ramazan. He says there is no complete lockdown in any part of Pakistan, not even in Sindh and if we impose a complete lockdown then not Corona but people will definitely die of hunger.* He said as an independent country we are free to take our own decisions, irrespective of any Muslim country. *Fourth*, Dr. Musadiq Malik, PML-N on this show underlines Pakistan is going in a wrong direction, the cases of virus are going up and we are talking about opening up the country. The main point is that there is no lockdown in Pakistan as everything is open except Schools. *In Saudi Arabia everything is closed, even the Haj pilgrim is closed. The government is pushing the people towards the door of death by opening the country amid the crisis.* *Fifth*, Kamran Kara, PPP informs that WHO underlines that the only best practice is lockdown. Ulema has pressured the government, as all other sectors are open why not mosques. He says that Ulema are not responsible to take decisions but the elected government has the right. We have a compromised government.

Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi, Need for change in 18 Amendment: PTI Government, ARYNews, 27 April³⁶

Lately the noises in the PTI government is getting louder for a change in the provisions of the 18th Amendment amid the increasing differences between the centre and provisional governments on the issue of lockdown, especially with Sindh. On this episode the host asks why there is a sudden need for the urge to revisit the 18th amendment. *The main points are, First*, there are two views in Pakistan and the media too is divided between these two views. One, in favour of complete lockdown led by Sindh government and the other not in favour of complete lockdown, this view led by federal government. *Second*, Bilawal Bhutto in a recent interview with BBC criticizing the PTI government underlined the need for independent decision making for the provinces. Shazia Murrey, PPP leader and one of the guests on this show underlines that Pakistan needs a global strategy to tackle the issue of the pandemic but the truth is that the centre has not been able to formulate a common strategy with the four provinces, AJK and GB. *She stresses that the*

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RiLsC63IP3E>

whole world is saying that lockdown is the only solution, why PTI government is only pin pointing Sindh government's strategy of lockdown. Second, the host asks Murray, are you saying that Sindh government's solution is the only one and that Federal government is wrong? She underlines, that PPP has always stressed for uniform policy. The government cannot bear the fact that Sindh government has followed a global strategy to fight the virus for which it has been appreciated. Taftan blunder was due to centers mis-management she adds. Third, Shafaqat Mehmood, Senior leader of the PTI reacts to Shazia Murray's statement and says that the Sindh government has the right to take an independent decision and they can disagree to follow the 20 point SOPs announced by the centre and also they can close the border. From one month we are discussing the lockdown, but why do not we ask what the businessman, traders, labourers and poor of the country want. I think the 18th amendment should be reviewed as we cannot afford to have a different policy for each province, for example schools should be taught according to one curriculum. Problem is that Sindh is always playing politics. Fourth, Musadiq Malik of the PML-N on this show argues that the centre can say that provinces can act independent but until they provide federal fund, the provinces cannot succeed in doing its duty. There are issues between Sindh and government because for making lockdown successful Sindh will need federal money to provide ration and help to the people otherwise it will fail. Now that Pakistan government has received fund from IMF and also there are announcements that debt will be delayed or reduced, so the PTI government can use or divert the money to help the people during the lockdown. But the real question is, does the PTI government want to give the money to exporters or to the poor?

On the Front with Kamran Shahid, PTI government's failure to fight the Pandemic, *Dunya News*, 29 April³⁷

On this latest episode, there is a discussion on if Pakistan is under-testing, especially in Punjab? Why there is carelessness and confusion on the part of the government? The guests are Dr Salman Haseeb, Head, grand health alliance, Ali Nawaz Awan, PTI; Dr. Musadiq Malik, PML-N and Chaudhary Manzoor Ahmad, PPP. *Kamran Shahid* starts by pointing to the wrong signalling of the government ministers. *Recent ally Punjab CM Usman Buzdar did not follow the social distancing norm and was without mask while inaugurating Corona Tiger Force in Punjab. Even Firdous Ashiq Awan was seen without mask while they all where posing together for group photo.*

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3GvJFwVFSDY>

Dr Salman Haseeb: Head, Grand Health Alliance: He informs that there were press conferences of doctors in most part of Pakistan including Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Balochistan and Sindh pleading the government to act against opening up the lockdown. He informs that there has been no such press conference by doctors in Punjab *and underlines that Punjab is under reporting the number of cases and that more than 200 paramedics in Punjab are reported positive. He adds that the doctors and paramedics are protesting that they are not getting the minimum required PPE.* He rejects the claims of the Punjab government that they have build COVID hospital like Wuhan did in one week and informs that it is just a hotel without any basis amenities. *Ali Nawaz Awan, PTI claims that out of the South Asian countries, Pakistan is performing the largest number of test and that the government is in the stage of enhancing the capacity.* However he underlines that the government is making sure test is performed on people who are showing symptoms. *On asked why Punjab is doing less test then Sindh, he replies that we have not gone yet towards mass testing or random testing.* He informs that the chief secretaries of the four provinces every day discuss the issue of testing and we are also considering asymptotic cases also now. But he did not tell about if POK and GB secretaries too join the meeting or not. *Dr. Musadiq Malik, PML-N argues that the PTI government has given up at this stage and opened up the whole country except malls. In Lahore the traffic is running as on a normal day and there are traffic jams in the city. He underlines that Corona has given the PTI government an opportunity to temper with the 18 amendment and empower the federal government to dictate terms to the provinces, not vice versa.* In other parts of the world the center is giving money to the states to fight the pandemic but in Pakistan the centre is telling Sindh take your independent decision but not giving the fund to tackle with the pandemic. He underlines that the money given by the IMF should be equally distributed between the provinces. *Chaudhary Manzoor Ahmad, PPP asks how much test the Punjab government is doing, he informs that 21 Lady Doctors in Lahore has been diagnosed positive and even then Lahore is open without any lockdown. He adds that the government can hide number of testing but not casualties. He underlines that Imran Khan Government want to move towards herd immunity and let everyone get infected so that they can become immune themselves and letting the others die.*

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
KPK (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa)				
North Waziristan ³⁸	13/04/2020	Soldier martyred, two terrorists killed in North Waziristan operation	00	03
North Waziristan ³⁹	14/04/2020	Army soldier martyred in North Waziristan operation	00	01
North Waziristan ⁴⁰	20/04/2020	Army soldier martyred, three injured in North Waziristan terrorist attack	01	03
North Waziristan ⁴¹	27/04/2020	Two soldiers martyred, nine terrorists killed during IBO in North Waziristan	11	05

³⁸<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2197254/1-soldier-martyred-two-terrorists-killed-north-waziristan-operation/>

³⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2197895/1-army-soldier-martyred-north-waziristan-operation/>

⁴⁰<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2202291/1-army-soldier-martyred-three-injured-north-waziristan-terrorist-attack/>

⁴¹<https://dailytimes.com.pk/603026/two-soldiers-martyred-nine-terrorists-killed-during-ibo-in-north-waziristan/>

