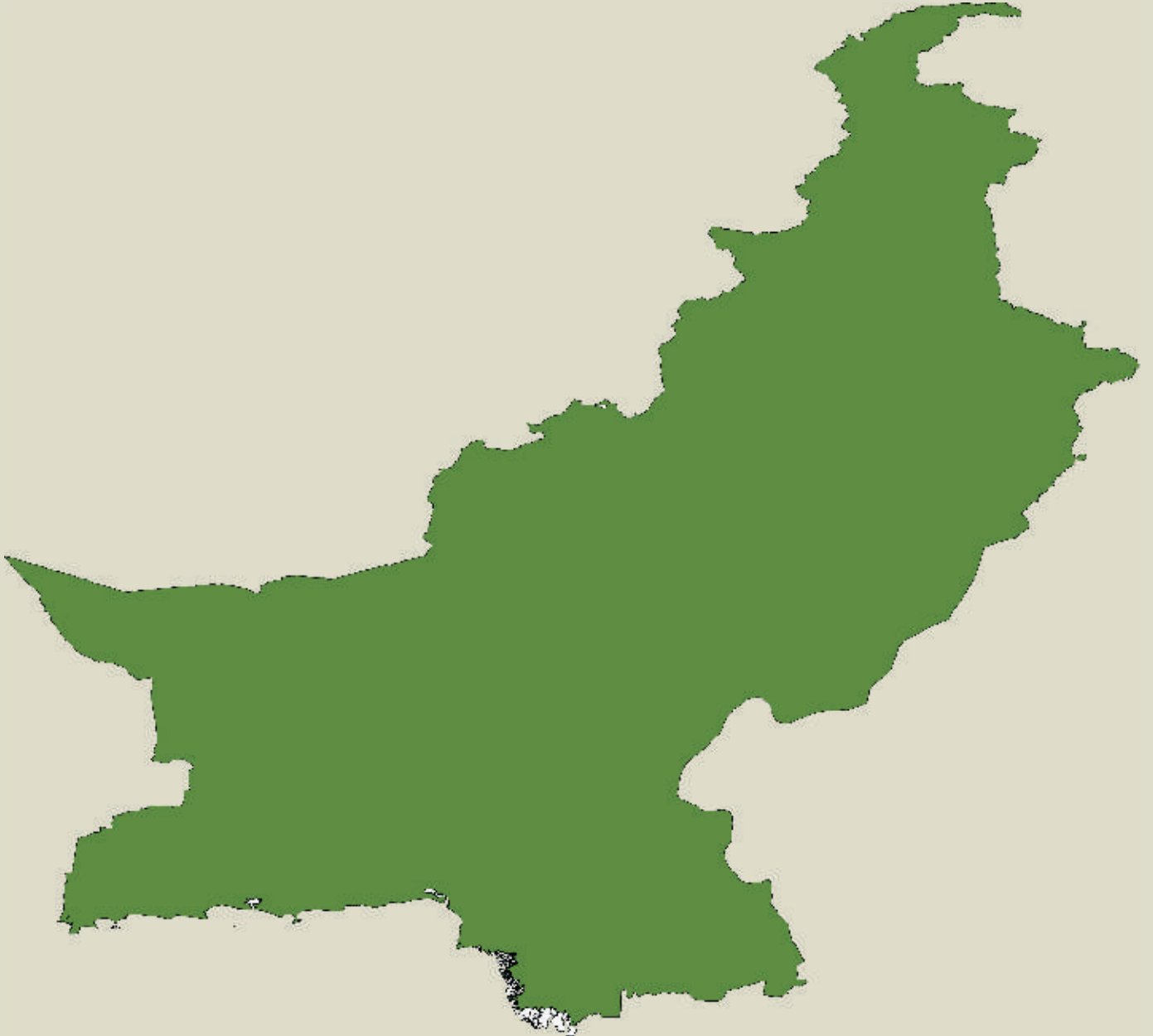


February 2020

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

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INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES
रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, February 2020

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

OIC visa row, Editorial, Daily Times, 04 February¹

Saudi Arabia being the host of the meeting and patron of the OIC is exhibiting non-diplomatic behaviour and in the end it will damage the OIC. The OIC meeting is to discuss US President Donald Trump's Middle East peace plan which has accorded numerous concessions to Israel and nothing to Palestinians. *The peace plan has overwhelmingly been rejected by the United Nations, Russia, the European Union, the Arab League and the OIC.* It is to be noted that every individual country of the European Union has rejected the 'one-sided' plan but not a single Arab country, except for Jordan, had the guts to condemn the plan. *Instead of being Muslim countries' representative, the forum has become a mouthpiece for Saudi Arabia. The kingdom has used the forum several times to settle regional or sectarian differences with Iran.* Moreover, it recently forced Prime Minister Imran Khan not to attend a moot of Islamic countries in Malaysia. Despite his commitment with host Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammed, Khan had to call off his plan to fly to Kuala Lumpur. The only reason behind the move was that Riyadh felt threatened with the Kuala Lumpur moot because of proactive participation of Qatar, Turkey and Iran in the event. The recent move by the Saudi authorities not to issue visas for Iranian participants is against the established principles of diplomacy. Despite being the harshest critic of the US, Iran has always been getting smooth passage to UN and other diplomatic forum in America. This time, Saudi Arabia knows that it is only Iran which is going to speak against the Trump plan and against Arab countries' muted endorsement. Saudi actions are going to harm the only forum of the Ummah.

PTI in a quandary, Editorial, Dawn, 10 February²

The PTI is in a tough spot. Already bruised and battered by its own poor governance and close to losing the war of perceptions, the ruling party now has to compromise again with its allies in order to save the coalition. This means its already cramped political space will shrink even further. The divisions are exacerbated by growing incidents of fighting within the party. The prime minister's economic team, led by his adviser on finance Dr Hafeez Sheikh, is under tremendous strain due to skyrocketing inflation and plunging key indicators. A blame game is reported to have already started with party members finding refuge in their respective camps. *These are*

¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/551902/oic-visa-row/>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1533581/pti-in-a-quandary>

dangerous signs for a leader who is increasingly finding himself on the defensive. Political mismanagement exemplified by growing fault lines within the coalition, and the party itself, is fracturing the political will that is so essential to combating major problems. The prime minister should focus on cementing these ruptures in order to achieve the level of teamwork necessary for a result-oriented performance.

Warning signs, Zahid Hussain, Dawn, 12 February³

It is evident that the PTI government has neither the vision nor the capacity to deal with the multiple challenges faced by the country. *But the power tussle between various interest groups within the party has intensified with the worsening crisis of governance.* The revolts in the KP and Punjab governments are a manifestation of the growing disarray. More alarming is the open polemics among federal ministers and party leaders. It is apparent that the prime minister is unable to resolve the internal power battle. The situation is fast becoming untenable. *The gravity of political and economic challenges faced by the country needs a consensus on key issues by all mainstream political parties. The major responsibility for reconciliation lies with the PTI government.* The politics of confrontation has weakened the political forces and allowed the security establishment a greater political role to play arbiter. Unfortunately, there is no indication of Imran Khan changing his hard stance and reaching out to the opposition parties. His tenor is getting harsher, and he doesn't realize that things are slipping out of his hands. His government stands on very fragile ground and the coalition partners are raising the stakes — this is a sign of things to come. *The PTI government cannot deal with serious economic problems on its own in an atmosphere of political instability. Greater reliance on the security establishment doesn't provide a solution.*

President Erdogan's tour, Editorial, Daily Times, 16 February⁴

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan is the truest friend of Pakistan. It was his record fourth address to the joint session of the parliament and it was as in keeping with the aspirations of the Pakistani nation. "Today, the issue of Kashmir is as close to us as it is to you (Pakistanis)", a national English daily quoted him as having said. His crucial support will help Pakistan come off the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force. *Though Pakistan has done enough to meet FATF terms, now it is becoming clear day by day that FATF is*

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1533986/warning-signs>

⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/558922/president-erdogans-tour/>

more about politics than tangible and intangible actions. Also, in Tayyip Erdogan, Pakistan found a friend who has regard for Pakistan's sacrifices in the war on terror. He appreciated Pakistan's journey towards normalcy, saying that he appreciated Pakistan's fight to rid this region of terrorism. He also recounted Turkey's spat with terrorism, saying both Pakistan and Turkey had fought against terrorism due to their geographic locations. *His message is a clear reminder to the world that Pakistan's sacrifices in the war on terrorism and its positive contributions to the peace process in Afghanistan should be regarded.*

Trump vs Pakistan, Touqir Hussain, Dawn, 20 February⁵

Pakistan should not be carried away by Trump's sweet talk. *Trump's remarks, whether on foreign or domestic policy, are political, not policy statements. They are opportunities to talk about himself.* When he says that relations with Pakistan have never been better, he means that they were worse under preceding US presidents when Pakistan was an uncooperative ally, but that he has now fixed this. It pleases his support base, but should not mislead Pakistanis. The substance of the US approach to Pakistan has been settled. It will be transactional. Pakistan is making a mistake by looking for a strategic framework for the relationship. To get Pakistan's cooperation on issues of interest, the US is taking advantage of Pakistan's economic weakness with threats and leverages relating to FATF and CPEC. *The aim is to keep up the pressure and mix it with cost-free sweet talk, like the promise to help on Kashmir. If Pakistan obliges, it would be 'rewarded' with the lifting of the pressure. A weak Pakistan will always have a troubled relationship with the US, giving the latter an upper hand.*

Silence speaking volumes?, Najam Sethi, The Friday Times, 21 February⁶

More significantly, a government that never tires of reminding everyone that it is on the same page as the Miltablishment on all issues and hence has nothing to fear from it must wonder whether its "stability" is more illusion than reality. Whether it is the ubiquitous but invisible hand of the Miltablishment or widespread public disgruntlement with the government's lack of "performance" that is creating sympathy for the opposition and affording it some relief in the courts, one thing is for sure: the government's economic and political narrative is bankrupt. Amidst this developing crisis of

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1535549/trump-vs-pakistan>

⁶ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/silence-speaking-volumes/>

confidence and runaway suspicions, Maulana Fazal Ur Rahman has put the cat amongst the pigeons. He is threatening another long march next month to unseat the government, setting off alarm bells for Sheikh Rashid and Imran Khan. The good Sheikh has warned the Maulana that he will be bunged into prison if he ventures into Islamabad. The beleaguered prime minister wants Article 6 Treason charges to be brought against him for conspiring against the government last month. Pundits will, therefore, be drawing straws to predict what happens next. The Miltablishment is already smarting for spawning the disastrous PTI government. Certainly, it will have to think twice before it commits itself to overtly defending such an unpopular regime. *The final signal will come when the PTI's "allies" in Punjab and Islamabad start forming forward blocks and jumping ship.* Of course, the signals may be mixed and ambiguous. But, come what may, there is only one potential winner or loser in this scenario. That is Shahbaz Sharif. Either his pro-Miltablishment "narrative" will be dead as a dodo and Nawaz Sharif's will be revived, or he will be bang in the game like never before.

The Ides of March, Murtaza Solangi, *The Friday Times*, 21 February⁷

The grave economic and political situation fused with the governance failure has generated great public resentment across the country. We haven't witnessed any government, elected or un-elected, becoming so unpopular in so little time in the 72-year history of Pakistan but we don't see any mass movement against it. Why? So far, both major political parties have shied away from any political agitation. Last year, both the PPP and the PML-N tried their best to persuade the JUI-F against the long march and the sit-in in Islamabad. When the Maulana didn't budge, they made a symbolic gesture of support, hoping that the political map of the country would change after the second tenure of the army chief. They rushed to approve the controversial army amendment act, but their woes are not over yet. Fact is that the Miltablishment fears complete routing of the PTI in a fresh poll and a massive landslide for the anti-Miltablishment parties and so there is no appetite for the mid-term elections. Once again we see the Maulana huffing and puffing and even the PPP is signaling some movement. But the PML-N, the largest group in the National Assembly and Senate in the Opposition, is conspicuous by its silence. The word from London is that Nawaz Sharif is very unhappy how his party acted during the army amendment act and does not want any slice of the power cake should the in-house change take place. Instead, for now, he wants his daughter with him to accompany him during the upcoming medical procedures and only wants fresh polls in Pakistan as the solution to

⁷ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/the-ides-of-march/>

the current crises. *Pakistan is headed south in a fast-spiraling crises. Only a political government with massive political support from the masses with a sound and competent team can pull it out of the multiples crises and put it back on the recovery track. There is no other option but the fresh polls. More it is delayed, more disasters we would have to face.*

What is PTI's ideological voter thinking today? M Bilal Lakhani, *The Express Tribune*, 23 February⁸

Here's a quick tease of how they're viewing the PTI government's performance so far: they're thrilled by foreign policy wins, willing to be patient on the economy, disappointed by progress on accountability, angry about too many compromises with the boys, delighted by Ehsaas and frustrated by the party's inability to control its own governance narrative. *Today, PTI's ideological voter is willing to stick with Imran Khan because they might as well give him a chance. He's sincere, not personally corrupt and can challenge the status quo.* They're okay with incremental change despite preferring a bolder reform agenda. But if the status quo tries to overthrow the government through shady deals, they want him to go down fighting for *tabdeeli* instead of leaning on the shoulders of the electables. Ironically, these young ideological voters are Imran Khan's biggest gift to Pakistan. This recently politicized generation will continue to produce and support leaders who challenge the status quo long after Imran Khan is gone. The only question is: will he be remembered as their first political martyr or the first man to let them down?

Trump in India, Editorial, *Dawn*, 25 February⁹

Donald Trump and Narendra Modi are alike in many ways. Both are political outsiders who have managed to reach the top of their respective systems through a blend of right-wing populism and maverick ideas. Both have pushed majoritarian agendas at the expense of minorities. Gaudy and full of clichés — much like the politics of both men — the event was seen reciprocating the 'Howdy Modi' episode in Houston last year, where a crowd of non-resident Indians eagerly lapped up what Messrs Modi and Trump had to offer. Moreover, despite all the glib talk of two 'great democracies', the fact is that Washington indulges New Delhi as an Asian bulwark against China, America's rival for great power status. *Mr Trump also mentioned in his speech that he had a "very good" relationship with Pakistan, and that he hoped for peace in South Asia. If Mr Trump really wishes to see stability in*

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2162360/6-ptis-ideological-voter-thinking-today/>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1536556/trump-in-india>

the subcontinent, he needs to tell his Indian friends that they must reduce their hostile posture where Pakistan is concerned. This country has offered numerous times to open channels of dialogue with New Delhi, only to be rebuffed by the other side. Also, the US leader should communicate that the situation in occupied Kashmir is unacceptable, and peace in South Asia will not be possible until a just solution to the issue has been found.

Bilawal's criticism, Editorial, Dawn, 25 February¹⁰

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has caught the PML-N by surprise. In a loaded statement, he said Nawaz Sharif was also 'selected' when he became the prime minister in the 1990s after Benazir Bhutto was ousted from power. However, if the intention is indeed a united front against the government then Mr Bhutto-Zardari's criticism of the Sharifs is puzzling. It could have been driven by the PPP's local political interests in Punjab but the larger cost of such remarks does not appear to have been factored in, otherwise there might have been an attempt at damage control to maintain the loose unity of the opposition. *It is possible though that the PML-N has viewed the criticism as a one-off statement that could be brushed aside for larger gains.* While the timing of Mr Bhutto-Zardari's statement is baffling, its substance is not off the mark. It is no secret that Nawaz Sharif was supported by the establishment against Benazir Bhutto and he was the direct beneficiary of her ouster. Similarly, Shahbaz Sharif's long absence from parliament also deserves to be criticised as an abdication of his duties as leader of the opposition.

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1536555/bilawals-criticism>

Politics of the Left in Pakistan, Farhatullah Babar, *The Friday Times*, 28 February¹¹

But this failure of the Left or apathy towards it should not be taken to mean that it has died its ultimate death in Pakistan. The appeal of socialism and socialists slogans has never been lost in human history. Countries like Pakistan have vast disparities between the rich and the poor on the economic front on the one hand and between progressive political forces and Miltablishment aided by right wingers on the political front on the other. As long as these disparities persist, leftist slogans challenging the status quo will continue to appeal to the people. *Pakistan needs the politics of the Left more than ever before. The moral compass imposed by the extremist right and the Miltablishment for more than three decades has de-humanized the state and society. The political discourse of the extremist right is that religion does not endorse the concept of nation state and that there should be one single state of Muslims under a caliph.* They maintain that democracy is alien to religion and the right to rule belongs to the pious and religious, instead of the one who is voted by majority. They also believe that disbelief and apostasy are crimes punishable with death and that it is their duty and right to implement this punishment. The beleaguered Left in the country must re-group itself to challenge this discourse. Pakistan needs the Left to challenge this narrative, to create and expand space for dissent and discussion and for airing of alternate views to resolve contentious issues. *We need the Left that helps nudge the people in a positive direction. Recently there was talk of some progressive political parties joining hands to lend strength to politics of the Left. The conversation must move forward.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

More inflation; Govt. needs to give some relief to people, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 03 February¹²

Inflation has reached to 14.6 per cent. Sugar has seen 5 rupees increase at once. *Since the PTI led Government has assumed power, in contrast to its claims, inflation is unstoppable.* The continuous increasing in the prices of basic commodities has badly affected the common man. People in general are unhappy. They expect the government to do something to provide some relief. But nothing seems coming. *Latest reports say the inflation will go up further rather than coming down. The poor is more affected. They are not getting enough food to eat. In such situation, their patience may wear thin.*

¹¹ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/politics-of-the-left-in-pakistan/>

¹² <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-02-03/page-10/detail-4>

They will come on roads. Before such a dire situation arises, the government needs to provide some relief. Government is supposed to provide relief to people, not to trouble them.

Debt and revenues, Editorial, Dawn, 03 February¹³

Two numbers released on Friday told the story of the straight and narrow path this government has to walk. The first was reported in the finance ministry's debt policy statement submitted to parliament, which said the country's overall debt had increased by 40pc in the previous fiscal year, rising by Rs11.6tr from June 2018 till September 2019. This is a massive increase and one is hard-pressed to find a precedent for such a steep rise. *The second figure was released by the Federal Board of Revenue, which showed the overall revenue collection to have fallen short of its target by more than Rs100bn in the month of January, taking the overall shortfall in the tax collection target to Rs387bn.* This shortfall now needs to be made up in the remaining five months of the fiscal year, or else the level of indebtedness will rise further. High debt contributes to the fiscal imbalance because it increases the cost of debt servicing, which is the single largest expenditure head in the government's fiscal account. This necessitates further revenue measures. The vicious cycle can only be broken if revenues rise and debt levels fall, but for now it seems that we are moving in the opposite direction.

The inflation stew, Khurram Husain, Dawn, 06 February¹⁴

Why are prices continuing to spiral? To some extent this was anticipated, but we are near the upper reaches of where inflation had been forecast to be at. The government's projections say inflation will rise to somewhere between 11pc and 12pc, where the monthly average is already around 11.6pc, approaching the upper band. If the monetary roots are sorted, what explains this continuing spiral precisely at a time when a vigorous adjustment is being undertaken? *The government argues this is because of administrative reasons or "temporary supply shocks" as the State Bank puts it. The prime minister prefers to blame 'mafias' and 'cartels', implying there is a sinister and deliberate side to it.* The problem then is this: if these are "temporary supply shocks", then why are they persisting for months? The State Bank referred to these in November and again in January. And if these are cartels or mafias, then why is it that they have become operative under this government? Perhaps the prime minister should seek advice from his predecessors on how they kept these mafias and cartels in check. *Inflation comes about either*

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1532176/debt-and-revenues>

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1532777/the-inflation-stew>

through excessive creation of money or through rising costs of items whose price feeds into the price of other commodities. To have high inflation amid falling oil prices and contracting deficits and ongoing adjustment, points only in one direction: governance failure.

Wheat Crisis, Editorial, Dawn, 07 February¹⁵

Unfortunately, the ruling PTI has repeatedly proved itself inept on this score. *It all started with a sharp surge in the price of tomatoes because of supply disruptions a few months back, pushing food inflation for the poorest segments of the population to above 20pc.* Just when tomato rates started tumbling, we had reports of wheat shortages pouring in from across the country with forecasts of a significant rise in flour prices. Even in Punjab, where there was no scarcity of wheat, the price of wholegrain flour shot up to Rs70 a kilo on the back of rising wheat prices. Following the wheat crisis was a very sharp jump in sugar rates, which have skyrocketed to Rs85 a kilo in the retail market from less than Rs70 a kilo a few weeks ago. Each time the people saw an administration standing on the sidelines, helplessly watching the market batter consumers. The elevated food rates seem to have entrenched themselves and there is little likelihood of prices dropping back to previous levels. *It means the poorer segments of the population will be forced to cut their health, education and other essential spending to meet food expenses. In a country where more than a third of the population lives under the poverty line, it is painful to imagine how the vast majority is coping with rising food prices rooted in rampant market greed and poor governance.*

Inflation is killing people! Assadullah Ghalib, Nawwa-i-Waqt, 11 February¹⁶

In Punjab, there is crisis. All attention is being given to how to convince the Chaudhry brothers of PML-Q. *At a time when inflation is hitting hard to common people of Pakistan, the rulers are concerned about how to retain power. The rich and the people who have looted the country do not care about the inflation. It is an issue for the poor, hardworking labour and honest salary class people.* Corrupt section of salary class also makes huge amounts of money out of corruption. Though it is indeed responsibility of the government to keep a check on the inflation, but it is not allowed to function. Different hurdles are created to impede its capability to deliver: Maulana's dharnas, MQM's grievances and the tantrums of the Chaudhry brothers. *Do not these people know that what the common people is going through? If they really care about their voters, they should have focused on the issues that are*

¹⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1532928/wheat-crisis>

¹⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2020-02-11/page-4/detail-9>

troubles them. Had the number of meetings that are held to convince each other by the people in power, convened to address the real issues, possibly some solution should have been found.

Fighting inflation with subsidies? Editorial, *Daily Times*, 13 February¹⁷

Under the new subsidy regime, a 20-kg bag of wheat flour will be sold for Rs800, sugar at Rs70 per kg, ghee at Rs175, pulses at Rs15 and rice at Rs20 per kg at utility stores. The big issue is that the operation of the USC is mostly urban based, allowing minimum benefits to rural residents. Also, the working of the USC is questionable. The Rs10 billion subsidy to tackle the impact of food inflation is just a stopgap arrangement, and not a permanent or sane solution to the issue. The federal cabinet on Tuesday approved a wide-ranging package which will provide subsidized food items to the Utility Stores Corporation (USC), 50,000 tandoors and dhabas, and ration cards for deserving people. Subsidized bazaars are a popular measure to win public hearts. At some level, such measures expose weak government mechanism on price control. In broader terms, subsidies are offered to lower prices, help manufacturers maintain incomes and sustain services. To some extent, subsidies can be justified if they correct externalities or protect struggling or infant sectors. The present mechanism of subsidy, which is to benefit the poor segment of population, often remains short of targets.

Think Tank with Syeda Ayesha Naaz, PM's promise to control prices: Does the government has a plan? *Dunya News*, 9 February¹⁸

Prime Minister Imran Khan has made big announcement earlier that this year 2020 will be a year of development but the way inflation is going up and price of essential commodities are sky rocketing, it has scared the people of the country. And finally it looks like PM is also scared and has again promised he will not let the inflation effect the common people. In this episode, the host and the guests on this show discuss the government's efforts to control inflation and the reason behind the inflation. Does this government has a plan? *First, prices have been worryingly high for quite a while. And first the government just denied that inflation was a worry at all, even refusing to believe prices quoted in newspapers and TV programs.* The inflation has touched the highest in January after a gap of twelve years in the country which has shocked the people. Ayaz Aamir is of the view that this government does not have the capability to bring the inflation because they

¹⁷ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/557124/fighting-inflation-with-subsidies-daily-times/>

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

do not have a strategy or roadmap. They have already weakened the governance system in Punjab and KPK. *Second*, they pretend to take inspection in the market and say that sugar and wheat mafia will be grabbed. It looks like the mafia is stronger than the government that it is controlling the pricing of the item. But the truth is that the mafia cannot create a situation of inflation but only take advantage of the situation or gap created by the government. *Third*, Khawar Khoman questions the institutes that control price. He mentions that the national price monitoring committee headed by Finance Minister in Islamabad that is responsible to make sure items remains available in the market, especially staple food is not doing its duties. Their last meeting was held in September 2019, he informs. Also, the “national food security and research” organise any press conference, meetings or media interaction on food pricing. Therefore it is straight away case of incompetency of the government, he adds. *Fourth*, the ball is in the PM court and he has to take action. The government has announced that they will control the mafia in three weeks. Does that means we will see some change in the strategy of the finance ministry? PM should come on TV and tell who the mafia, that seems stronger are then him and he is incapable of controlling them.

SECURITY SITUATION

FATF Meeting, Editorial, Dawn, 18 February¹⁹

Among many steps, Pakistan has also legislated laws that will strengthen efforts to curb terror financing. In addition, there has also been commendable headway in tightening the noose around terror outfits and prosecuting them successfully through the criminal justice system. *The recent conviction of Hafiz Saeed, leader of the JuD, has been recognised by the United States and other countries as a major achievement by Pakistan.* There is little doubt now that Pakistan is displaying utmost seriousness in cleaning its stables and laying a financial, legal and administrative infrastructure that would comply with FATF standards for squeezing terror funding. Friendly countries have also played a positive role in ensuring that FATF looks at Pakistan’s case purely on merit and is not influenced by Indian mischief. Based on this, it is high time that FATF reward Pakistan for its commendable efforts and remove its name from the grey list. *This would incentivize Pakistan to expedite its efforts and also send a strong signal to the world that the country means what it says. The Paris meeting should make the call. Pakistan deserves to be off the grey list.*

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1535174/fatf-meeting>

Journalist's murder, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 19 February²⁰

Another Pakistani journalist has fallen in the line of duty. Aziz Memon was associated with a Sindhi-language television channel and newspaper, and reportedly suffered the consequences of his bold reporting. *His body was found floating in an irrigation canal in district Naushero Feroz of Sindh province.* Like many other news reporters, Memon was not new to threats of dire consequences. The 56-year-old journalist had had too many during his 30-year-long professional career. Of late, he is said to have been receiving threats from some political personality due to which he had left his hometown in Sindh and moved to Islamabad for some time. But once back, Memon had to pay the price of his professional obligation with his death. *The impunity with which journalists are killed in Pakistan is one of the highest in the world.* Including Memon, a total of 34 journalists have been killed in the country during the past six years, according to the Freedom Network, a Pakistan-based media and development sector watchdog. Over these killings, 32 FIRs were lodged, but only 20 cases went to the courts for trial and just six completed the prosecution and trial process. *While just one of all these cases culminated into conviction, the killer got his conviction overturned at the appeal stage after which the family of the slain journalist gave up. And this literally means no conviction at all.*

Hiding his incompetency behind OIC, Editorial, *Jasarat*, 06 February²¹

The Prime Minister of Pakistan, who visited Malaysia and apologized for not attending the Kuala Lumpur Conference, thinking that it would divide the Muslim Ummah. But now it has been proved that this conference was meant to unite the Ummah. We have no voice because we are divided. The state of the Muslim world is such that we not convening OIC meeting. *This is more to do with Pakistan's foreign office, rather than division of OIC. It was prime duty of Pakistan and Pakistan's foreign office to convince and educate Muslim countries about Kashmir issue and how it could be solved. The present Pakistani government and former rulers were also repeatedly warned to launch a serious diplomatic campaign on Kashmir, but no one has shown seriousness in this regard.* Pakistan may be weaker economically in comparison to other Muslim countries but strategically and military wise it tops the rank in Muslim countries. Pakistan can convince OIC on the basis of its available strength. As an example the highest numbers of pilgrims of Hajj and Umra are from Pakistan, but our government cannot convince Saudi Authorities on expenses. Here Ummah's unity is not required. This is incompetency of government of Pakistan. There is no political pressure in Hajj

²⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2159537/6-journalists-murder/>

²¹ <https://www.jasarat.com/2020/02/06/200206-03-4/>

as well. *Since the highest revenue comes from Pakistan, despite that if Pakistani government is not able to convince on its terms and conditions, then how will it persuade Kashmir issue.* Prime Minister Imran Khan finally took U-Turn for not attending the Kuala Lumpur Conference and announced his intention to participate in the upcoming conference. The Prime Minister's criticism of the OIC will certainly bring further weakness to this institution. It is good for other Muslim rulers to think why OIC is weakening and why the Ummah is turning towards Malaysia and Turkey? But Imran Khan never skips a chance of complaining about Pakistani politicians and corrupt elements anywhere in the world and he did the same in Malaysia. Imran Khan now stop complaining and start action.

One more journalist killed, Editorial, Jang, 18 February²²

The killing of a senior Sindhi journalist and TV anchor Aziz Memon the other day is not something entirely new in Pakistan. *This is just one more addition to the names of journalists who have been killed while or for doing their work. Aziz was found strangled to death in an irrigation ditch on 16 February near the town of Mehrabpur in the Naushahro Feroze District of Sindh.* The deceased had received some threats also. Almost all journalist unions have condemned the killing and have demanded swift action against the culprits. *The killing of Aziz should not be seen as a standout incident. It needs be seen in the context of obstructions that Pakistani journalists face while doing their work.* This was eighth journalist killing in last one and quarter year. According to Freedom Network, no one has been punished for the killing of 33 journalist in Pakistan in last seven years. In 40 percent, no cases were filed. That is why Pakistan is considered worst place for journalism. Pakistan needs to assure freedom of expression and work if the institutions want the country to be civilized and have some say at the international level.

Three years of operation "Radd-ul-Fasaad", Editorial, Jang, 24 February²³

Three years ago peace and security situation in Pakistan was abysmal: bomb blasts were common; religious worship places were targeted, educational institutions, markets, even military establishments were often targeted. *It is hard to get red off these recalls from the nation's common memory. The current Army Chief took strong and effective measures to eliminate terrorism. The operation "Radd-ul-Fasaad" was launched to address the menace.* By acting together, different institutions of the state have been able to eliminate terrorism from Pakistan. *During this period of three years, over 400 terror plans were foiled, 344 terrorists were sentenced to death and 301 were given*

²² https://e.jang.com.pk/02-18-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=06_002.png

²³ https://e.jang.com.pk/02-24-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=06_001.png

other punishments, 1,450kms were fenced out of 2,611kms on the Pak-Afghan border and 343 out of 843 bankers were completed. The people of Pakistan are happy that the Pakistan Army has succeeded in its goals. Army Chief Gen. Bajwa is right in saying that for peace and security in the region terrorism needs to be fought. *The current Government is fortunate that it is not facing the instability and security issues that existed in the country few years back.* Pakistan has moved from the place of terrorism to place of tourism. Countries that had put some restrictions on their citizens from visiting Pakistan have removed them. *At the meantime, peace talks are going on in Afghanistan and it is likely that America and the Taliban will sign a deal soon. Pakistan needs to strengthen peace efforts in the country.* To set Pakistan on the track of prosperity and development, the Government in Islamabad needs to take serious and effective measures at the right time.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Oppositions Protest in March & Amendment in anti-terrorism act, Geo News, 18th February²⁴

Today's Guests: Riaz Fatyana, Senior leader PTI, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar, PPP and Mohsin Shahnawaz Ranjha, PML-N. In today's episode the discussion is on the opposition parties plan to protest in March against the PTI government and the new law by the government to amend the anti-terrorism act of 1997. The main points are, *first*, Hamid Mir asks is the oppositions plans to protest in March will be a spring offensive for the PTI government? Riaz Fatyana responds by saying that right now there is no unity among the opposition and I agree that it looks like the 'opposition is on a vacation'. Also the call for protest is given separately by all the three parties that shows the level of mistrust among them. Already Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman is not happy with the result of his long march as he was left in the middle by the main opposition parties like PML-N and PPP. Right now it is time for unity as the country is facing economic threat as well as security threat at the border. *Second*, Shahnawaz Ranjha of the PML-N says that it is very heart breaking when the party and its work is sidelined and the media only focus on the main leadership of the party. When the main leaders are not in the country like that of PML-N its work is not registered. I disagree that opposition is on vacation rather most of them are inside jails under NAB. For us if we talk we are put behind bars and that is the biggest irony in the country. *Third*, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar is of the view that right now there is a disconnect between the people and the government and he believes it is an ideal opportunity for the opposition to fill in the gap and connect with the

²⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=507aYuS7aOE>

people and highlight their issues. The opposition should pressurize the government to bring people friendly policies. Definitely people are looking for some relieve and the opposition can use that in their favour. *Fourth*, The government is looking forward to amend the anti-terrorism act of 1997 and under the new changes a person who send more than five crore rupees outside Pakistan through illegal ways like hawala will be arrested and investigated. The PPP and PML-N leaders on the show are of the view that this is again an attempt by the government to target opposition leaders and individuals that oppose the government policies. They can arrest anyone and take them under 90 days remand and keep them under detention anywhere in the country. This law that says will target terrorist is yet another draconic and people unfriendly law.

URDU MEDIA

Govt decides to not ban PTM rallies, Report, Ummat, 03 February²⁵

The Government is not going to ban any rally of Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM). But any provocative speeches will be watched closely. Any act of violence will be dealt appropriately. *PTM on its side has decided to cash on the arrest of Manzoor Pashteen. It has started a country wide campaign in that regard. Rallies in major cities like Karachi, Lorolai, Charsadda, and Dera Ismail Khan will be held.* They are doing door to door campaign to woo people for these rallies. *PTM has decide that it would project Manzoor Pashteen as a victim in front of the world. For that it is getting foreign funds as well which is spent extravagantly. Money is also being distributed among people.* According to some sources, PTM is planning to unleash some violence in these rallies and then show to the world that they peaceful gathering is not allowed in Pakistan. *On the other hand, security agencies are keeping close watch on the activities of the PTM. They have allowed it to organize rallies but they will have to take permission from local police.* However, they will not be allowed to speak provocatively and speak against Pakistan and Pakistan army. Any such provocation will invite action.

²⁵ <http://ummat.net/2020/02/03/news.php?p=story5.gif>

Differences between Imran and Jahangir on Punjab, Wajih Ahmed Siddiqui, Ummat, 04 February²⁶

Power struggle in Punjab is causing trouble in friendship of Imran Khan and Jahangir Tareen. In view of this, Jahangir has been removed from the committee that is talking to the alliances of the Government. Jahangir along with Khusro Bakhtiar were blamed for the flour and sugar crisis. *Internal sources from the PTI say though that it was a pretext to remove Jahangir from dealing with the alliance parties. The real issue is the battle for power in Punjab for which there is internal fight in the PTI.* Till now Jahangir was dealing with the alliance parties and he was responsible for stitching the alliance together. He was looking into whether the promises made to the alliance parties were kept or not. The alliance parties have complained that the appointments in the constituencies of the elected party members were not according to their wishes. They are not also getting enough funds. *Imran Khan has warned the alliance parties. It is also said that he might break the alliance if pushed too much.* Imran has set up new committees to talk to the alliance. None of them has Jahangir. For Punjab the committee is headed by Governor of Punjab Chaudhry Sarwar and includes Usman Buzdar and Shafaqat Mehmood. *However, PML-Q has refused to talk to the committee. For MQM and NDA, the committee is headed by Asad Umar. For BNP, BAP, JWP, Pervez Khattak is convener of the committee. There are reports that some members within PTI are unhappy with Jahangir. They are telling Imran Khan that Jahangir who is provoking PML-Q because he is playing double-game.* Meanwhile, PNL-N has started to establish contacts with PML-Q. It is possible that Chaudhry Elahi may go to London to visit Nawaz Sharif and PTI loses power in Punjab.

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²⁶ <http://ummat.net/2020/02/04/news.php?p=story2.gif>

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alliance together. He was looking into whether the promises made to the alliance parties were kept or not. The alliance parties have complained that the appointments in the constituencies of the elected party members were not according to their wishes. They are not also getting enough funds. *Imran Khan has warned the alliance parties. It is also said that he might break the alliance if pushed too much.* Imran has set up new committees to talk to the alliance. None of them has Jahangir. For Punjab the committee is headed by Governor of Punjab Chaudhry Sarwar and includes Usman Buzdar and Shafaqat Mehmood. *However, PML-Q has refused to talk to the committee. For MQM and NDA, the committee is headed by Asad Umar. For BNP, BAP, JWP, Pervez Khattak is convener of the committee. There are reports that some members within PTI are unhappy with Jahangir. They are telling Imran Khan that Jahangir who is provoking PML-Q because he is playing double-game.* Meanwhile, PNL-N has started to establish contacts with PML-Q. It is possible that Chaudhry Elahi may go to London to visit Nawaz Sharif and PTI loses power in Punjab.

Imran is right... Saleem Safi, *Jang*, 09 February²⁸

Let us talk about media mafia first. In Pakistan three kind of media mafia are active. *First is the group which owns media houses in Pakistan. Some of these have made money by commercializing media and others by concerning their black money into white. These people also influence policies of government.* They have undermined genuine journalism right from the creation of Pakistan. These people started new channels and newspapers to promote Imran Khan. These people are around Imran Khan. *Second is the media managers group. They have prompted corruption and commission culture in media. They are also supportive of Imran Khan. Third group is that of people who have made later entry in journalism, they come to Islamabad and establish some contacts and then enter in different political parties. 90 percent of this mafia is with Imran Khan.* There is a group of politicians in Pakistan that keeps changing its loyalty. These are landlords or businessmen and are present in every province. *80 percent of this mafia is with Imran Khan.* Then are sugar mafia, cigarette mafia, real estate mafia along with others. Many of them are with PTI. *Even 90 percent of sugar mafia is with Imran Kan.* One of the powerful mafias of Pakistan is bureaucracy and DMG in particular. The latter has been more powerful than before during the PTI regime. There is foreign lobby also. It has been active in Pakistan now-a-days unprecedentedly. *Though it's better to be close with China for Pakistan but this lobby pushes Islamabad towards Washington.* Mafias are in Imran Khan's party, in his government and around him, how would he work?

²⁸ https://e.jang.com.pk/02-09-2020/lahore/pic.asp?picname=10_007.png

Politics has become easy for the opposition, Editorial, Ummat, 21 February²⁹

People's Party of Pakistan (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto has said that if I could I would have brought down the Government in Islamabad now. But we want a democratic way to criticize the Government and not to violate the law or the Constitution. *Bilawal said that I am asked why am not acceptable to the establishment! Rather I should be asked whether I am acceptable to the people or not? He said that the economic crisis, undermining of democracy and restrictions on media push me to bring down the government.* Rather than focusing on how to bring down the Government in Islamabad, Bilawal should focus on re-building his party. His father has reduced the PPP, once the largest party in Pakistan, to number third. *Additionally, Bilawal is unable to connect with the people. He has been educated in the West and hardly knows his mother language Sindhi or national language Urdu.* He says that he would not support the establishment while his grandfather Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was a stooge of the establishment. *What was the role of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in the "Fall of Dhaka" and on whose behalf he was playing that role?* The people of Pakistan have already rejected the opposition parties because of their policies. *His statement that politics for the opposition has been made difficult is entirely wrong.* It has been made easy by the policies and failures of the Niazi Government. The opposition can use it if they talk about welfare of the people.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Think Tank with Syeda Ayesha Naaz, Pakistan's internal crisis, Dunya News, 2 February³⁰

In this episode the host raises the question that after one and seven months in power, who in the government is responsible for the deteriorating condition of economy and governance in the country. *The main points are, first, inflation, unemployment and economic crisis are the main challenges for the PTI government and they have not been able to tackle these issues at hand due to lack of coherent policies. Second, the PTI government has no plan and*

²⁹ <http://ummat.net/2020/02/21/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

³⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xzdY4TNGU9E>

have wasted their energy and time on one thing that is corruption and has overdone the whole thing. *Third*, why the PTI government is realising it now that the inflation is a burning issue for the common people and it affects them adversely. When they talk about less expenditure, it comes on the common people directly. *Fourth*, there is a sharp 900 arab short fall in the economy and where are the 50 lakh houses the government was talking about and what about the 1 crore jobs PTI was talking about. *Fifth*, government is not doing anything to control the prices and the mafias are gaining out of it. The biggest are the sugar mafias. *Sixth*, the PM is too engrossed at the international front to improve the image of Pakistan but is sidelining the internal crisis that is developing in the country.

PM Imran Khan Malaysia Visit, PM Imran Khan's Malaysia Visit, Najam Sethi Show, 04 February³¹

On this episode Najam Sethi Analysis PM Imran Khan's Malaysia visit and how will it affect Pakistan's relationship with Saudi Arabia. *The main points are, first*, during the trip Imran Khan praised Malaysia for raising the Kashmir issue during the last Kuala Lumpur Summit and repeatedly said that "I feel sad that I was not able to attend the Summit", mainly because some countries (indicating to Saudi Arabia) friendly to Pakistan felt that the Summit will divide the Muslim Ummah. He also added that he is looking forward to attend the next summit in Malaysia. *Second*, the host asks Najam Sethi, does this indicate that Pakistan has cleared Saudi Arabia doubts? He replies that Imran Khan and his team does not have a proper understanding of diplomacy and the things he should have conveyed privately, Imran Khan made it public and hence once again making Saudi angry which is a sad situation. PM does not even have note takers and the way he talks on sensitive matters is really problematic. *Third*, Sethi predicts that the Saudi Ambassador in Pakistan would have already taken note of PM's speech in Malaysia and written letter to Riyadh saying Saudi's name was taken in the wrong light by Imran Khan and that Imran blamed Saudi Arabia was his inability to attend the Kuala Lumpur Summit. It has to be noted that the Saudi ambassador in Pakistan earlier has already stated that 'Saudi has no role to play' in Imran Khan's not attending the Summit. *Fourth*, Najam Sethi underlines that although Turkey and Malaysia gives moral support to Pakistan, especially over the Kashmir issue but there is no monetary support. Saudi Arabia gives Pakistan everything and currently Saudi and USA are Pakistan's historic and real alliance and it should not hurt the interest of these

³¹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y9KkwFX0p_Y

two countries, adds Sethi. He underlines that only these two countries can help Pakistan to come out of the FATF greylist and prevent from blacklisting.

Think Tank with Syeda Ayesha Naaz, Media and Mafia: PTI Governments two Issues, *Dunya News*, 16 February³²

The host of the show points out that these days PM Imran Khan's speech always mention two words Mafia and Media. He has openly criticised media for the negative coverage of him as well as government policies and has asked people 'not to read newspapers or watch TV talk shows'. She stresses that in absence of a vocal opposition, the media is somehow playing the role of opposition. On this episode the host and analysts discuss the role of media in the current situation and governments policies. *The main points are, first* Ayaz Aamir is of the view that media management is an art and in no way the media is in war with the government. Media is doing its job of reflecting the issues of the society. But currently the media is under tremendous pressure, some are hidden and some visible. *Second*, Salman Ghani points out that when Imran Khan was in opposition, the media use to give him complete focus but now when his government is not able to deliver he is attacking the media and calling it biased. The opposition in our country is not giving any tough time to the government nor asking questions and therefore media is asking them. Since one month PM is saying he will expose the mafias but has not delivered any result. *Third*, Dr Hasan Askari underlines that although there is a need of editorial control but the media is completely diversified and cannot be controlled. PM should not concentrate on what the media is saying but should work and deliver the promises made to the people. *Fourth*, Kavar Khuman says that the PM should understand that he is the chief executive of the country and should not get involved in petty issues like media regulations and others. In an age of 24/7 social media coverage discussions will continue and there cannot be a complete blanket ban on media. The problem is that PM Imran Khan has always been darling of the media and he is use to positive reviews, be it as a cricketer, social worker and therefore he wishes that the media continues to give him positive coverage irrespective of his work and policy.

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lrnk3T-AXL8>

Sethi Se Sawal, Social Media Amendment and other developments, 24 News, 17 Feb³³

On this latest episode of Sethi se Sawal, Najam Sethi discuss in details about the important developments in Pakistan that includes, *amendment in the social media law, PM comment on Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman's Azadi march and imposing article six on him, Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Pakistan and ongoing FATF meeting in Paris.*

Q: *What is the new change in the social media law and what the government want to achieve through these changes and strict regulations?*

A: The government has brought out a notification overnight regarding the regulation of the social media law. It has to be noted that it's not a new law but they have changed certain rules of the old law called "electronic crime prevention". The problem is that there was no debate in the national assembly and the changes are bought with an intention to control the social media platforms. According to the new changes, all social media platforms including Instagram, Facebook, tiktok, google etc have to now open office in Pakistan for which the government has given them three months. Secondly, all data related to Pakistan should be kept within the country. They will appoint a national coordinator and whenever he wants the data it should be handed to him. *The government has added all kinds of words like hate speech, defamation, blasphemy and whenever the government feels someone falls under any of the above categories whole using social media he or she will be ordered to block to removed and these platforms has to follow. But* Najam Sethi adds that these platforms will not obey the government because in the age of new media we talk about ease of doing business this kind of control will not work. Freedom of expression is enshrined in our constitution and already the electronic media is under control of the government. The media's role is to bring out the issues and faults and the government's role is to work and take the criticism and work on it. He adds that it is such an irony that in the past Imran Khan talked about social media as a platform that gave his party a voice and now it want to control the same media.

Q: *Can Imran Khan impose article 6 on Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman for talking about a deal during his long march?*

A: The PM has given this statement in a hurry and it seems that he has knowledge about this article. Only when someone abrogate the constitution or commits treason, as in cases of Musharraf, article 6 is applicable. For protesting or talking about a deal is not the right reason for someone to be brought under the fold of this article.

Q: *Will Pakistan come out of the FATF greylist?*

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YSgks5dIpTA>

A: Pakistan is claiming that it has taken action in 14 cases out of the 27 points enlisted by the FATF. The conviction of Hafiz Saeed is one of the major action taken by Pakistan to ensure it is not put in the black list. But the underlying fact is that his conviction is according to a plan in order to show that action has been taken. It has to be mentioned that Pakistan has been able to bring Turkey, Malaysia, Iran, Saudi and US on its side and it will definitely help Pakistan in the FATF meeting currently taking place in Paris. He adds that according to him, Pakistan will be kept in greylist this time and within the next six months if it works on other points it will come down to white.

Q: *What is the relevance of Erdogan's Pakistan visit?*

A: It has to be noted that Nawaz Sharif played a vital role in improving the relations with Turkey. Shabaz Sharif has visited Turkey 6 to 7 times and all of them were business visit. Turkey, Iran and Pakistan has signed a regional cooperation development in 1960's when all three of them were allies of US and NATO members. Now equations have changed and Iran and Turkey are against US. But the fact of the matter is that Turkey talks about Kashmir in words and it cannot do anything practical regarding the issue.

Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Former PM out on Bail, Geo News, 27 February³⁴

After spending seven months behind bars former PM and senior leader of PML-N Shahid Khaqan Abbasi is out on bail. It has to be noted that The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) filed a reference against nine suspects including Abbasi in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import contract case in an Islamabad's accountability court and later was arrested in Lahore. ***On this episode the host interviews Abbasi about the case and his time spend in jail.***

Q: *Tell us about the LNG case and why were you reluctant to apply for bail initially?*

A: Before the arrest, NAB starting sending me a number of Performa forms asking me about various issues varying from LNG to purchase of helicopter. I cooperated with them and went for questions whenever I was called. Strangely when I was out of country, the government decided to put my name on the Exit Control List (ECL), I came back soon so that people does not point fingers that I have already left the country. I have given 20 years off documented data to NAB which was not legally required. But then no questions were asked after my documentation. I was not ready to apply for bail because I was confident that I have done nothing wrong and I wanted the NAB to fill reference within 30 days and go for trail.

Q: *After the arrest how the investigation did took place?*

³⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sLjhBVAVq7M>

A: According to NAB rules they have to file reference and go for trial in 30 days, but they failed to do the same miserably. Since the arrest for three four days I was kept in B class cell where inmates jailed for life and on trial for hanging are kept and was shifted to a normal cell. After spending 4 months in solitary confinement they shifted me to adiala jail. During the whole trail there was no questioning about my case, they kept asking about irrelevant things. But the one important question they never asked me was, have you paid your taxes? If they have arrested me for corruption, this is the most important question.

Q: *What do you have to say about the way you were treated, kept in solitary and B class cell?*

A: The way they behaved with me shows the ill thinking and policies of the government and have shown the World that this is how a former PM is treated in Pakistan. I was reluctant for the bail and still challenge the government to put me on trial and broadcast the proceeding of the NAB trail to the people of the country, so that they come to know the truth about the case. I messaged all my colleagues who worked with me to save themselves and not to worry about the reactions from me. Although the government tried to talk me down through third parties but they never had the guts to offer me a deal from front as they knew I will reject it.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
FATA				
Dera Ismail Khan ³⁵	18/02/2020	1 policeman martyred, 2 injured in IED blast near police van in DI Khan	01	02
Sindh				
Quetta ³⁶	17/02/2020	Pakistan: At least 10 killed	10	12

³⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1535223/1-policeman-martyred-2-injured-in-ied-blast-near-police-van-in-di-khan>

³⁶ <https://news.sky.com/story/pakistan-at-least-10-killed-in-suicide-bombing-in-pakistan-11936638>

Karachi ³⁷	16/02/2020	in suicide bombing in Pakistan Five dead, dozens sickened by toxic gas leak in Karachi's Keamari area	05	00
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³⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1534852/five-dead-dozens-sickened-by-toxic-gas-leak-in-karachis-keamari-area>