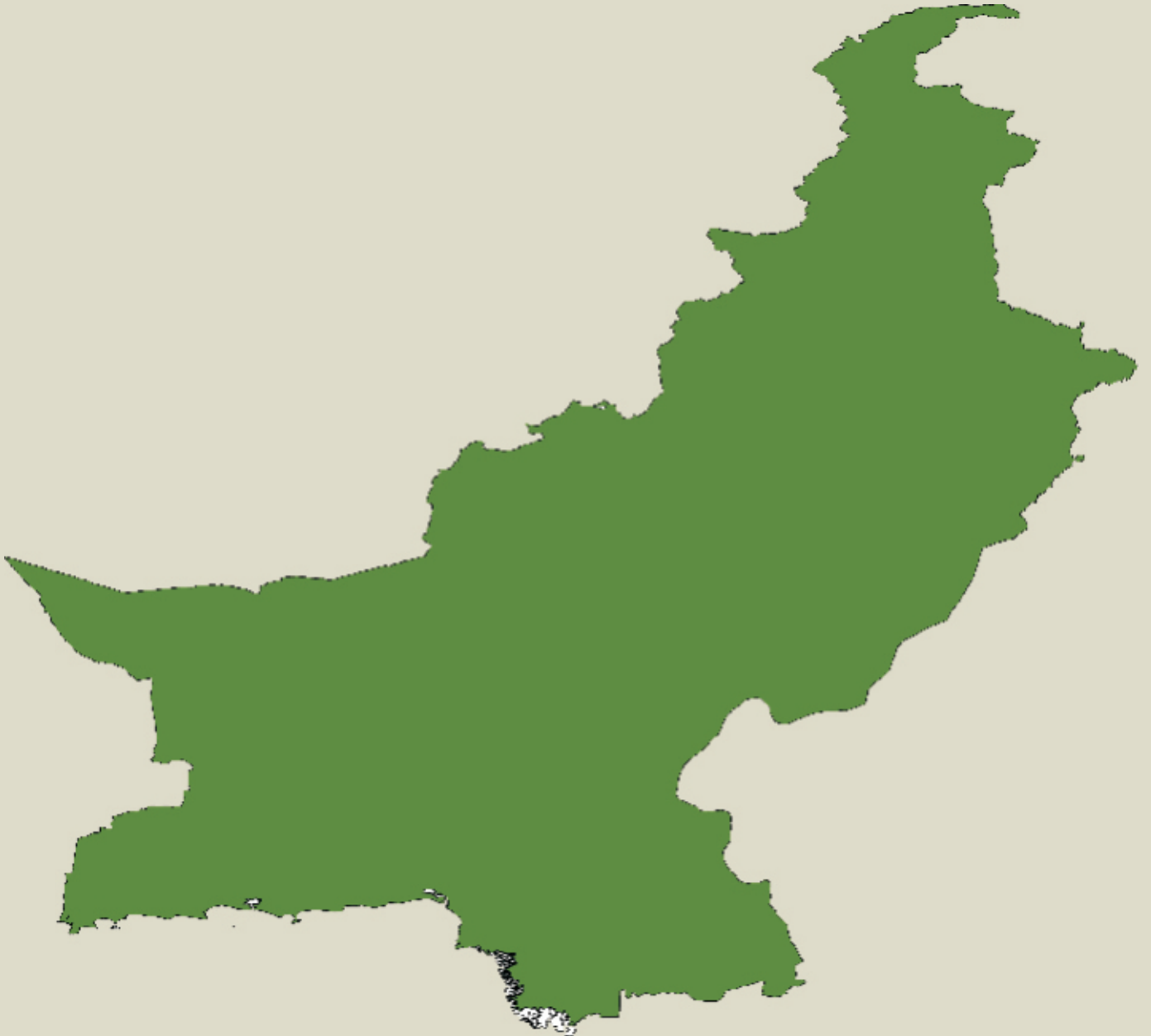


January 2023

# PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



*Prepared by*  
Dr. Zainab Akhter  
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir  
Mr Afroz Khan  
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PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, January 2023

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## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

**Why Pakistan needs to mend its ways!** Kamran Yousuf, *The Express Tribune*, 02 January<sup>1</sup>

The future looks bleak for Pakistan. Year 2023 is the election year, but that may just be an event and is unlikely to pull the country out of the current quagmire. How did we reach this stage? Of course, it has not happened overnight. The fact is that Pakistan since its independence has never had a clear plan. *Successive governments pursued short-term policies with no clear vision. For example our balance-of-payments problem is as old as Pakistan. But thanks to the Cold War and our alliance with the West, we did manage thus far. Our friends Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar and China have come to our rescue every time we were on the verge of default. Our friends helped us in the hope that their assistance would be used to address the chronic economic challenges.* However, as the time goes by, we have become habitual. Every new government used the same trick rushed to friends for a financial bailout package. Take for instance the previous three dispensations. When Nawaz Sharif became the PM for a record third time in 2013, Pakistan was facing a balance-of-payments crisis. Like in the past, Saudi Arabia came to Pakistan's help. When Imran Khan became the PM, his government too had to seek a financial bailout package from Saudi Arabia and the UAE. When Imran lost a vote of no-confidence, the coalition government led by PM Shehbaz Sharif did the same requested for more loans from friendly countries.

**A new MQM? Editorial, Dawn, 03 January<sup>2</sup>**

*The three factions are about to unite to form the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P). Call it political engineering or the need for more time to fight a shared foe known as the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI), Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori has been working day and night to reconcile the factions; he is branding himself in charge of the mission.* Tessori met with Pakistan Sarzameen Party's Mustafa Kamal and later with Dr Farooq Sattar, both once key MQM players who have consented to merge their parties and factions into the Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui-led MQM-Pakistan. Imran Khan, the chairman of the PTI, and the leaders of the Jamaat-i-Islami in Karachi have been outspoken in their criticism of the "political manoeuvring" around the leaders of the various MQM sections, who have chosen to bury the hatchet in order to reclaim the port city where their popularity is declining. This is,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2393751/why-pakistan-needs-to-mend-its-ways>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1729491>

however, in contrast to the suspiciously silent response of Sindh's ruling party, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP). Certain "key people" have undoubtedly been working behind the scenes for a long time to bring the various MQM groups under the MQM-Pakistan banner. Only time will tell if Dr Farooq Sattar-led faction and the electorally weak PSP and MQM-Haqeeqi will do any good to the MQM or not. *Electoral data, on the other hand, show that the fractured MQM was unable to stop the PTI's incursion in Karachi, where it defeated the "Urdu-speaking representatives" in the 2018 elections and later in several by-elections. Political parties change over time, much like a living organism does.*

### **GB protests, Editorial, Dawn, 09 January<sup>3</sup>**

Massive protests held across Gilgit-Baltistan over the past several days have united the region's geographically and religiously diverse communities, as well as supporters of different political parties. Moreover, traders' bodies in the northern region have also backed the demonstrations. *GB's people have taken to the streets in freezing temperatures for a raft of reasons, which include questions about land rights, taxation, extensive power cuts as well as a reduction in the amount of subsidized wheat the centre provides the region.* The fact is that GB's residents are protesting about many of the same things people in other parts of Pakistan also raise their voices against. However, GB's ambiguous constitutional status, as well as the lack of infrastructure compared to the rest of the country, makes this region's plight unique. *The protesters are not in favour of the GB Revenue Authority Bill, which was passed by the region's assembly last year, as they say it imposes additional taxes on the region without giving it any representation in the federation.* Moreover, the locals also have serious reservations about the state taking over land in the region that they say belongs to the people. The state has been acquiring land in GB for CPEC as well as other projects. While the state has a right to acquire land it feels is essential in the national interest, the people need to be taken on board and compensated accordingly, and no forced takeovers of land should take place. It is hoped that representatives of the government engage with the people of GB and resolve these issues in a democratic fashion.

### **SOS at Geneva, Editorial, The Express Tribune, 10 January<sup>4</sup>**

*The Geneva conference came as an apt opportunity for Pakistan to make a case on its destitution. The monsoon deluge has left behind a staggering bill to foot*

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1730696/gb-protests>

<sup>4</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2394951/sos-at-geneva>

*consisting of losses exceeding \$30 billion, roughly 8 per cent of Pakistan's GDP and more than 33 million people homeless.* The PM, meanwhile, was candid as he said his "country cannot go back to business as usual" amid the flood havoc. His note on calamity coincided with the slumping economic situation back home as forex reserves held by the central bank slump below \$5 billion, and the masses are seriously struggling at the hands of rising inflation and unemployment. Independent estimates say that around 9 million people are new additions to those living below the line of poverty pointing towards the combined effect of the economic meltdown and the flood devastation. While it's 'so far, so good' from the international community, the bigger task is of getting the pledges converted into concrete action. *The international community must not let a strategic country go down the drain. Pakistan has done its bit for peace and security, and is a responsible nuclear power.* It augurs well for geo-economics in the region and has been at the vanguard in promoting cooperation in an attempt to defeat terrorism. Keeping in view the tangibles, the world is expected to keep up its pledge to address Pakistan's woes and bail it out of the economic crunch it is in these days.

**Wheeling & dealing, Editorial, Dawn, 12 January<sup>5</sup>**

*Whenever general elections draw close, the nation's 'electables' and 'influentials' begin a frantic search for political platforms which they can attach themselves to, to ensure they get a share of power.* And often the invisible hands that play an oversized role in managing Pakistan's politics are at work 'guiding' these political nomads towards what are likely to be winning tickets. Though no schedule for the polls has been announced, these activities have begun in Balochistan, as well as in Karachi and south Punjab, as electables size up their prospects, and the establishment continues its efforts to mould outcomes. In Balochistan's case, the establishment's involvement has retarded political evolution in the province, adding to the people's alienation with the state. The electables that are herded together to run Balochistan have repeatedly failed to solve the province's myriad problems, leaving the common voter disillusioned with the system. Only by allowing the organic growth of the political system in Balochistan can stability come to this troubled province, and the healing process begin in earnest. *This also rings true for Karachi and the rest of Pakistan. Instead of manufacturing alliances, let all stakeholders primarily the political class and the military work to strengthen grassroots democracy.*

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1731214>

**Interim setups: PTI on the front foot, Muhammad Azhar Siddique, *The Express Tribune*, 24 January<sup>6</sup>**

By introducing caretaker setups in the country, the active participation of citizens in the electoral process was enhanced to ensure fair, free and impartial general elections, democratic institutions' development and the state functionaries' accountability. *After the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, a constitutional procedure is underway for the nomination of caretaker chief ministers in both provinces.* After the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and PML-Q had finalized three consensus candidates as their nominees for the appointment of a caretaker chief minister in Punjab. As PTI and PML-N could not reach a consensus on one of the nominees for the interim chief minister within the stipulated time, Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman last Wednesday directed Speaker Sibtain Khan to constitute a parliamentary committee for the purpose. *The PML-N had nominated an Adviser to the Prime Minister on Establishment Ahmad Cheema and senior journalist Mohsin Naqvi while PTI suggested Ahmad Nawaz Sukhera, Naseer Ahmed Khan and Nasir Mahmood Khosa for the slot of caretaker chief minister.* CM Pervaiz Elahi and Hamza had 10 pm till Tuesday to agree on a name for the caretaker chief minister but they failed to agree within the stipulated time frame in terms of Article 224(1A) of the Constitution.

**Caretaker CM, Editorial, *The News*, 23 January<sup>7</sup>**

*The ECP was asked to pick Punjab's caretaker chief minister after a deadlock between the PMLN and the PTI-PMLQ. In keeping with this constitutional role, the ECP on Sunday appointed Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi as Punjab's caretaker CM. Naqvi's name had been proposed by the PML-N.* For both the PTI and the PML-N, the main electoral battleground is Punjab. So far, the PTI's strategy has only been to cash in on its popularity wave and an aggressive approach against the PDM government and the former establishment. The PML-N's strategy on the other hand has largely been to be as missing in Action as possible. That may be about to change with reports that Mian Nawaz Sharif has decided to also use a similar strategy. For those who remember, in the past too – especially when the PDM was formed – Nawaz Sharif had gone all guns blazing for the judicial and military establishment of the time. If the PML-N really is serious about forming a narrative, it may want to start with a clear one regarding our dwindling economy. *There has been little to no strategy on how*

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nation.com.pk/24-Jan-2023/interim-setups-pti-on-the-front-foot>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1033242-caretaker-cm>

*to deal with the rising inflation, how to make a narrative about the economy, how to make a narrative about the PTI's performance – all because the main leadership, especially Nawaz Sharif, is sitting in London.* If the PML-N wants to contest elections, it should first ensure that Mian Nawaz Sharif and others are back as soon as possible. A leaderless party without a potent narrative can hardly contest elections.

## ECONOMIC ISSUES

### **Inflation misery, Editorial, Dawn, 04 January<sup>8</sup>**

*The PDM government's continuing inability to keep prices under control speaks volumes about the competency of its economic management team, currently led by a former finance minister who loves to make a great deal of his 'extensive experience'. It has thus far failed to show any spine as far as the protection of ordinary citizens' financial well-being is concerned.* As a result, the public has largely been left to fend for itself as the country undergoes a severe and painful reconfiguration, resulting from years of myopic and self-serving decisions. The average citizen has little choice but to cut consumption and curtail their dreams as out-of-control inflation decimates their household budget. With a sense of helplessness and hopelessness slowly descending on the country, those who are privileged are increasingly talking about moving abroad. The least the government could do in these difficult times is to leverage its administrative powers to ensure that unscrupulous players are not taking advantage of the prevailing instability in domestic markets to profiteer at the expense of the browbeaten citizenry. *Demonstrating to the nation that it is doing what it can despite challenges would greatly help in keeping the country together. However, it seems the finance minister is too caught up in his own worries and has little time for those whose future he has taken responsibility for.*

### **Dropping remittances, Editorial, Dawn, 16 January<sup>9</sup>**

One hopes the 19pc year-over-year decline in December remittances has given the resident 'wizard' in Q Block some pause. Amidst declining exports and immense pressure on what remains of the country's meagre foreign exchange reserves, the country needed those remittances to pad its books. Yet Pakistanis abroad sent less money home, thanks, in part, to our finance minister's

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<sup>8</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1729807/inflation-misery>

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1731874/dropping-remittances>



unhealthy obsession with controlling the exchange rate. *Market watchers said people have started giving preference to illegal hundi and hawala networks to remit money, as their operators shady and unsavory though they may be are still giving people better conversion rates than the farcical official exchange rate maintained by the State Bank.* That theory seems to be supported by the overall trend in remittances, which have posted a decline in each subsequent month for the past four months. But for whatever sums they do send, they cannot be expected to agree to get fewer rupees for their dollars than what the open market is willing to give them. It is for this reason that many exporters (of both goods and services, i.e. freelancers) are also keeping their dollars stashed abroad until they are sure they will get a better rate. By creating these distortions, Ishaq Dar's dollar peg is dealing long-lasting damage to the economy. *It is feared that if it collapses some say it is a question of not if, but when the release of the pressures that have built up due to it will deal another body blow to the already gasping economy.*

**Pakistan fast heading into economic meltdown, *The Express Tribune*, 24 January<sup>10</sup>**

With over 9,000 containers still stuck up at seaports threatening to break the supply chains of essential goods, concerns have reached their peak that Pakistan is fast heading towards economic meltdown and hyperinflation. *Experts have sounded alarm bells that the country is facing a deepening financial crisis with fears it could go bankrupt as inflation rises to record levels, food prices rocket and its coffers run dry. The mushrooming crisis will soon tip over into an ugly catastrophe striking households, offices and hospitals.* On one hand, importers are unable to get over 8,531 containers cleared due to a shortage of dollars. The shipping companies, on the other hand, are now threatening to suspend Pakistan's operations over the country's failure to make timely payments. This will hurt both imports and exports. There cannot be a worse situation than this as the central bank has a paltry \$4.4 billion in reserves barely enough for three weeks of imports – while the estimated needs to clear the containers and pending requests for opening more letters of credits stand in the range of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion, according to people in the industry and government sources.

**A devastating hike, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 30 January<sup>11</sup>**

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<sup>10</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2397421/pakistan-fast-heading-into-economic-meltdown>

<sup>11</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2398325/a-devastating-hike>

*The economy is surely on the edges. Jacking up of petroleum prices by Rs35 per litre on Sunday has sent shocks all around. It is bound to have an adverse impact on inflation that is hovering over 35%, with the US dollar now unavailable even for Rs270.* This is a moment of serious introspection as all claims of the coalition government to stabilise the economy, and provide relief to the masses have bitten dust. The ruling dispensation, nonetheless, seems either unmindful or is prepared for a disaster. It is blindly following the dictates of the international lenders hoping that it would ease the situation a few months down the line. What political capital it will cost is not hard to guess as the mood on the street is disgusting. *The government's endeavour to stay afloat and avoid an indispensable default are understandable, but the modus operandi is seriously under debate as such piecemeal gimmicks in the past have not led to desired results.* The IMF's major demands include: market-based exchange rate; increase in electricity and gas rates by about Rs7 per kw-hour and Rs750 per MMBtu respectively; raise in the prices of petroleum products with a hike in levy and imposition of sales tax; and additional taxes of Rs100 to Rs225 billion to make up for revenue slippages. This is tantamount to a mini-budget, and taking into account periodic hikes all these months, the masses are literally in a crisis of their own. The government must reflect squarely as it deliberates with the Fund, and tell them frankly that lifting of the cap on the exchange rate has led to a hole in its coffers. Thus, it should not be singled out, if it starts dealing with multiple currencies. Pakistan cannot toe the lenders line all the way.

## SECURITY SITUATION

**Antiterrorism fatwa, Editorial, Dawn, 11 January<sup>12</sup>**

To augment antiterrorism efforts on the battlefield, the religious argument is now being used with apparent backing from the state to take the wind out of the militants' sails. In this regard, 16 scholars representing religious institutions in KP issued a fatwa on Monday declaring that only the head of an Islamic country had the right to call for jihad, while also urging the faithful to follow the leadership and the Constitution. While the fatwa's signatories represent all major Muslim denominations, most of them seem to be from the Deobandi and Ahle Hadith schools, including some of the most influential seminaries in KP. *Undoubtedly a scholarly and religious argument is needed to counter the*

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1730981/antiterrorism-fatwa>

*inflammatory rhetoric of violent extremists. But two major questions emerge: firstly, does this represent an indirect admission of the past mistake of arming and training Afghan Mujahideen and other religious groups, and secondly, will the militants listen to the voice of reason? If the state has sought to forever close the doors on religious militancy, it would be a welcome sign. Yet, as stated above, will violent extremist outfits listen to scholars and lay down their arms? There are slim chances of this happening. After all, in the past several attempts have been made both in Pakistan and abroad involving Ulema to delegitimize terrorism. But hardened fighters have shunned these as efforts by state-backed clerics to prevent the spread of 'jihad'. The latest fatwa may prevent further radicalisation, but it will do little to dissuade hard-core ideological fighters from abandoning their violent ways. The state made the mistake of itself promoting radicalism and misusing faith to forward geopolitical aims. It will take time and effort to counter these narratives.*

### **Crackdown on HDT, Editorial, Dawn, 16 January<sup>13</sup>**

It is unfortunate that rather than engaging with Balochistan's Haq Do Tehreek politically, the state is cracking down on its leadership. *The movement has for over a year been highlighting what it says is an injustice with Makran, with Maulana Hidayatur Rehman serving as the HDT's face.* The Maulana and his movement were catapulted to the national stage in 2021 when he led a massive protest in Gwadar over various issues, including the presence of illegal trawlers off the Balochistan coast, obstacles in border trade with Iran and lack of civic facilities in what is supposed to be a key node in the CPEC network. The HDT's supporters were back on the streets of Gwadar last year due to what they said were the state's unfulfilled promises. *After talks with the government broke down in late December, the administration and demonstrators faced off in a violent confrontation. A policeman was killed during the melee, resulting in the state going after the HDT leadership.* On Friday, Mr. Rehman was arrested from court in Gwadar in connection with the killing as well as other cases.

### **Dealing with TTP? Editorial, The Express Tribune, 23 January<sup>14</sup>**

*Non-state actors have always been a nuisance and misery. Likewise, dealing with the fugitive TTP is becoming a policy mystery. The fact is that the government and the state hold divisive briefs while dealing with the terrorists and, of late, have publicly clashed over their respective perceptions.* It is no secret that the coalition government is too obscure when it comes to dealing with Afghanistan, and especially the unscrupulous elements who are once

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<sup>13</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1731873/crackdown-on-hdt>

<sup>14</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2397141/dealing-with-ttp-1>

again amassing and regrouping inside Pakistan. Some quarters call for a dialogue whereas the civil strata under the Foreign Office has other ideas to sell. This has literally emboldened the TTP cadres who now feel free to operate on both sides of the divide as the non-inclusive Taliban government in Kabul feels too weak to assert itself. The powerful quarters in the establishment had tried their luck by talking to TTP, and even coming close to a deal wherein it was hoped that Pakistan would walk the Ireland way to overcome the terror fissure. *But the adamant attitude on the part of TTP, which demanded concessions that compromise national sovereignty and deface the constitutional spirit, has burnt fingers. This is why Bilawal's contention that there won't be any more talks with the Taliban sounds logical.* That hands-off approach, nonetheless, would not solve the tirade and the need of the hour is to reach out to Kabul and iron out the odds in a state-centric perspective. Will the FM fly into Kabul to do the needful?

**Peshawar blast, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 31 January<sup>15</sup>**

*Pakistan continues to bleed at the hands of terrorists strategically aided by hostile foreign conspirators.* The agenda is to push the country already reeling from a serious economic crisis further down the morass of terrorism, extremism and lawlessness. The latest in the nefarious plan to cripple the country in multiple ways has come in the form of a suicide blast inside a mosque in Peshawar's Police Lines neighbourhood. The terrorist attack claimed by the outlawed TTP has rendered at least 32 people, including security personnel, dead and nearly 157 injured. Since many of the injured are in a critical condition, the death toll is feared to rise. The recent terror timeline suggests that the TTP insurgents have been on a rampage, especially after November last year when they announced the end of the ceasefire they had agreed with the government in June last year. The months of December and January have seen around a dozen serious terrorist attacks, causing the deaths of at least 27 security personnel alone. These attacks are apart from a number of those that resulted in lesser consequences. *The state has tried its best to tame the terrorists through talks under the aegis of the Afghan Taliban. It about time to bury the policy of appeasement for good, and take action. There is need to first build a consensus against the terrorists like the one we had in the wake of the APS attack and then operate against them with full force of the state until the dismantling of the terror infrastructure from the country.*

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<sup>15</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2398452/peshawar-blast-1>

### **Pivot of national security, Editorial, Daily Dunya, 03 January<sup>16</sup>**

*The second round of the National Security Committee was held the other day in which important decisions on the security and economy were taken. In the earlier meeting it was said that at no cost national interests would be compromised. It was the various proposals proposed in the meeting that needed a second round of the national Security Committee to make a decision. In the second meeting, it was said that economic stability is the pivot for national security. It was said that without having economic freedom state sovereignty comes under pressure. It was decided that food security will be ensured and employment created for the unemployed in the country. Agriculture production and manufacturing will increase. All these points raised in the meeting are a positive development for the country's economy. Now it is necessary to implement these measures without any delay. The NSC itself said that economic stability and national security are linked. The pages of the daily have time and again written that the situation that Pakistan is facing is not suitable for the country's status and location. The country is rich in natural resources and has a young talented manpower. But they have not been used. Why did that happen? The answer lies in the history of the country. In fact one year is enough to evaluate the situation. In the last one year many issues were created: political instability, social uncertainty and economic crisis. In such a context rumors spread fast in a society. When Pakistan was engaged in these tussles, other regional countries were busy reviving their economies after the Covid-19 impact. The impact of Covid-19 was less on Pakistan as compared to other countries. But when the time came to revive the economy after the pandemic, the preferences of the political elite in Pakistan were different. Consequently the economy worsened further. Now the situation is that Pakistan is in a serious economic crisis. It is necessary to introspect and take careful and honest measures to revive the economy. Linking the economy with national security is a valid point. It is the time to act on this point that without economic freedom the country's sovereignty remains under stress.*

### **Take the nation into confidence on economy, Editorial, Jang, 09 January<sup>17</sup>**

*The biggest issue for Pakistan is ineluctably the economic crisis. It seems to have reached its worst. The main causes of the situation is the flawed*

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<sup>16</sup>[https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2023-01-03&edition=LHR&id=6545499\\_98310930](https://e.dunya.com.pk/detail.php?date=2023-01-03&edition=LHR&id=6545499_98310930)

<sup>17</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/338745>

performance of the previous regime led by Imran Khan, the Covid-19 pandemic and then the August 2022 floods in the country. Given the situation, loans from the IMF on the harsh conditions have become necessary. This has led to huge inflation and the lower income strata of the society are finding it hard to meet daily needs. *Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has assured the IMF head while on a visit to Pakistan that Islamabad would abide by all the conditions set by the IMF. Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has said in this regard that the conditions would further increase the troubles of the people.* However, the issue is that without taking the loan from the IMF, other friendly countries would not help either. Sanaullah said that the government was trying everything to avoid bankruptcy of the country; however the PTI is trying hard to get the country bankrupt. According to the latest reports, after the two banks from the UAA took back their loans worth \$100 billion, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has just \$4 billion which is not enough for even one month. However, the finance minister has said that \$6 billion that is with the commercial banks also belong to the government; thus the total \$10.5 billion are still in Pakistan. He said while talking to Geo News that Pakistan was paying back due loans and soon the country's foreign reserves would stabilize again.

**The challenge of extremism, Salman Abid, Roznama Express, 10 January<sup>18</sup>**

*Extremism and its resulting terrorism or extremist tendencies are a major challenge to our national security and integrity. It is not an ordinary challenge, we need extraordinary political, social, administrative, legal and military measures to deal with such extraordinary situations.* Our tragedy is linked to emotional strategies at the national level. An important meeting of the National Security Committee was held recently. The political and military leadership continued to ponder over recent terrorism or security-related issues. This twenty-point National Action Plan was released in 2014 with the mutual consent of the political and military leadership. *This National Action Plan was proposed by our political and military leadership with a "national curriculum". It was said that this agreement will play a key role in preventing extremism and terrorism.... Along with the formulation of the National Action Plan, we have also prepared a "message of Pakistan" i.e. a charter consisting of the consensus of scholars of all schools of thought.* The aim was to curb communal or extremist tendencies in the country. Similarly, there was also a plan called "Dukhtaran Pakistan" at the national level to ensure the participation of women. Unfortunately, the lack of priorities of the political leadership,

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<sup>18</sup>[https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/index.aspx?Issue=NP\\_ISB&Page=Editorial\\_PageC006&Date=20230110&PageNo=6&View=1](https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/index.aspx?Issue=NP_ISB&Page=Editorial_PageC006&Date=20230110&PageNo=6&View=1)

political confrontation and the tendency to compete politically with each other, the game of forming and subverting or destroying governments, has pushed us back from important issues of sensitive nature, including security, extremism or terrorism. The question is, what mistakes have we made in the cases of dealing with extremism and terrorism or negligence in security matters that we are facing serious security problems again? The presence of the Taliban government in Afghanistan, their assurances that their soil will not be used for anti-Pakistan activities, lack of success in dealing with TTP and where we have made mistakes on other issues should be analysed. Extremists or those with a terrorist agenda take advantage of our weaknesses. *The real issue is the writ of the state, whoever challenges it should be dealt with ferociously, and there should be no compromise with it. The important thing is that this war is not anyone's war, but our national war. Whatever shortcomings or political compromises we have made in the past have to be removed.* The political leadership, the educated sections of this country, opinion makers and institutions will have to take responsibility for this war. Because this strategy can make the country safe.

**CPEC destroyed by Imran Khan, Assadullah Ghalib, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 12 January<sup>19</sup>**

*Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said while speaking at the inauguration of the Hazara Electric Supply Company (HAZECO) on 6 January that Imran Khan had destroyed relations with friendly countries.* Imran made these country angry because of which Pakistan was in crisis today. Shehbaz said that he had no idea that Imran had damaged the country's relations so much. He further said that Imran destroyed the CPEC. He leveled baseless allegations of corruption against Chinese companies. A country that was spending \$30 billion in the country and Imran instead of thanking them blamed them for corruption. The premier said that he was trying to restore relations with China and other countries. *The government of Imran Khan destroyed Pakistan's economy as well as on the foreign front it made friendly countries angry that led to isolation of Pakistan at the international level. After joining the Imran's cabinet Abdul Razak Dawood immediately targeted the CPEC saying that all CPEC agreements would be reassessed and appropriate changes would be made after discussions. China got angry over the statement. People believe that the minister gave the statement to harm the CPEC. During his four years of rule, Imran Khan never talked about CPEC.* Imran created the CPEC Authority just to show. Gen. Asim Bajwa was made its chairman. Soon Gen. Asim was removed from the chairmanship and the CPEC Authority was also shelved once for all. Everyone knows how important CPEC is for the country. It is

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gujranwala/2023-01-12/page-5/detail-4>

through this project that China would reach Gwadar via the Silk Road. CPEC is part of China's larger vision in which it aims to connect three continents.

### **Threats to Pakistan, Editorial, *Nawwa-i-Waqt*, 15 January<sup>20</sup>**

The World Economic forum (WEF) has identified 10 big threats for Pakistan in the coming two years. *According to the report issued by the forum, the Global Risk Report, the threats that Pakistan face include 1) Digital power concentration and monopolies, 2) Failure of cybersecurity measures (including loss of privacy, data fraud or theft, cyber espionage), 3) Rapid and/or sustained inflation, 4) Debt crises, 5) State collapse, 6) Lack of widespread digital services and digital inequality, 7) Interstate conflict, 8) Terrestrial biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse, 9) Terrorist attacks, 10) Employment and livelihood crisis.* On the issues of the economy and security, the security institutions are already working on them. These institutions are closely watching cyber-crime, inter-state tensions and other such matters. As far as the inflation, loan crisis, destruction of eco-system and employment are concerned, they are the responsibilities of the government. To address the matters political stability the country is necessary which has not been achieved so far. *In the context of the WEF report, it is responsibility of the security institutions and the government to consult all stake holders to frame a comprehensive policy to address the threats identified by the report. So that peace will prevail in the country and the people feel secure.* Free from terrorism Pakistan can build an image for itself at the global level. Also the world can trust Pakistan only when there is peace. Foreign investors can invest without any fear. This can lead to development and welfare in the country.

### **An example of political failure, Editorial, *Daily Duynna*, 23 January<sup>21</sup>**

Speaking at a function in Quetta former finance minister Miftah Ismail said that the inflation was all time high, the government institutions are causing damages of billions of rupees and in the last 20 years no salvation of the economy had taken place. Speaking at the function, former Prime Minister Khaqan Abbasi said that the system does not have solutions to the existing problems. *The issues identified by Mr. Ismail and Mr. Abbasi are consequences of the decisions taken by the past governments which have become dangerous today.* If at the right time the right decisions were taken the situation would have gone this bad. *The issues that the economy is facing are not a fault of the system. These are the fault of the makers of the system. If instead of accepting the failure of the decision making the blame is put on the system then the real*

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Gawadar/2023-01-15/page-4/detail-9>

<sup>21</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/350487>



*responsible people are being overlooked. This may help in hiding national flaws but cannot correct them. To address the issue one needs to be realistic and accept the flaws. For that the responsibility lies with the allies partners of the ruling government. One of the biggest problems of the ruling elite has been that despite the financial deficit and increasing foreign debt the governments have failed to reduce the expenditure bill. Even today the government expenditures are too high. The same condition is that of the government run businesses. ...* Then there is the issue of decision making. The latter was clear in the talks and decision making with the IMF. At one point the finance minister was not ready to bring in the IMF and now the offer is that all conditions would be accepted but the IMF should come to help. The condition that Pakistan is in today is a result of the past mistakes and lack of vision. Instead of increasing productions in the country, imports were the focus. Instead of increasing the country's revenue, foreign loans were sought. Despite being an agricultural country there is no food in Pakistan. About 70 percent of the country's population is youth but they cannot get proper employment. *Such a grave situation does not emerge in one day nor does it get away suddenly. However, if the right direction is set, then foundations may be laid for some betterment.*

**IMF sets its rein on the government, Editorial, Ummat, 30 January<sup>22</sup>**

*Before the arrival of the International Monetary Fund's (MF) delegation in Pakistan, the government has increased prices and dropped a "bomb" on the people. By increasing the process of the petroleum products the finance ministry has made the people cry under the burden of inflation. The prices of petrol have been increased by 35 PKR and that of high speed diesel and kerosene by 18 PKR each. Finance minister while announcing the increase said clearly that the hike was made under the dictates of the IMF. He even said that it was being said that the hike might be 50 PKR; but the government tried to put less burden on the public. This statement of Ishaq Dar was funny: he on the one hand is in the group of those who believe in exploiting people and on the other he tends to count himself among those who sympathy towards the poor. The hike of PKR 35 rupees has entirely different value for the poor section of the country. Ishaq Dar said that the government had not raised the prices of the petroleum products for the last four months. In fact the prices were reduced. He said that despite the increase of the price in the international market the price increase was kept minimum. It seems that the minister was saying that the government has done a favor to the people by raising the prices just by PKR 35. Or it could have been worse. It is expected after the IMF delegation's arrival, talks with the officials in Pakistan the price will rise again in February*

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.ummat.net/2023/01/30/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

*and March.* The economic situation of Pakistan is so bad that the people are struggling to meet their basic food requirements. Instead of finding a solution every government has adopted the policy to blame the previous regime for the situation. Shehbaz Sharif had taken the responsibility by making big promises but has done nothing so far, apart from the fact that the PDM has secured its vote bank and the leaders have saved themselves from accountability.

**Pakistan under attack, Editorial, Ummat, 31 January<sup>23</sup>**

*It seems Pakistan is under attack from its enemies from all sides. On the one hand the country's economy is hamstrung; on the other is the momentum in new wave of terrorism.* The attack in Peshawar on 30 January came was carried out at a time when the IMF is imposing harsh conditions on Pakistan to exploit the weak economic situation of Pakistan which in no way can produce positive results. *In fact some economy experts expect such a bad inflation that it may create instability in the country.* In this background the Peshawar attack can create further instability in Pakistan. *Daesh has claimed the attack. Daesh is in contact with enemies of Pakistan is no longer a secret.* Few days ago the religious leaders in Pakistan had asked the TTP to stop armed conflict in Pakistan. Pakistan is an Islamic state and it is forbidden to pick up arms against it. However, *the runners of the TTP have no connection with Islam no they pay any heed to the fatwas or instructions of these religious scholars.* Islam demands respect for non-Muslim worship places; but here even mosques are not spared. No human being, let alone a Muslim, can even think of killing innocent people that too when they offer prayers. *It may be that the new wave of terrorism is a plan to keep Pakistan engaged at various fronts, weaken it economically and make it weak.* Pakistan's economy is so bad that it is now being compared with the economic crisis of Sri Lanka. Over 50 people have been martyred in Peshawar (latest reports go upto 92). *The masjid in which the attack was carried is located in a sensitive area where the office of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) is also located. After the latest increase in terror attacks, it was claimed that security has been beefed up but they seem all unfounded claims, like in the past.*

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.ummat.net/2023/01/31/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

**Jirga with Saleem Safi, Exclusive Interview of Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori: MQM uniting? Geo News, 31 December<sup>24</sup>**

The host informed that the Muthihida Qaumi Party (MQM) that has faced a setback and has broken down in factions is about to be reunited and one man who is playing central role in this effort is Governor Sindh Kamran Tessori. Saleem Safi asked are all factions of the MQM uniting. **Q: How you became governor? A:** Sindh is lacking behind in all sectors, especially economically. Basis needs like gas and electricity is lacking. Sindh is becoming poor by the passing day and even having resources the people are suffering. My notification as a governor was done on a great religious day and this indicate that god want me to work for the betterment of the people. **Q: There are rumours that you have used to grab this post as governor? What about missing persons in Sindh? A:** I am a middle class man and there is no money used, my party MQM has nominated me as the governor of Sindh. We have worked with interior minister Rana Sana Ullah as guest to work on the case of missing persons where he met the people who have been effected by this issue. We are continuously been working to resolve this issue. **Q: Are factions of MQM about to unite? Are you taking this initiative? A:** I am doing this because this is the requirement of time because of the economic crisis. The results of the by elections are out there to see. Karachi has disowned and rejected in PTI and Imran Khan and the voter is angry because there is no work done. That is the reason there is a need of talk between different factions for the betterment of the city of Karachi and overall Sindh. MQM will work together and try to respect each other in the future. **There is only one faction, to agree on one MQM whose symbol is kite, there can no longer be any rift and we have agreed to work together.** The question is not about who will be the chief of MQM among the three factions. **Q: Is the establishment with MQM? What about Altaf Hussain? A:** I don't know about the old regime but I don't agree with the old regime who snatched the mandate of MQM and gave it to PTI. I am not forcing the three factions of the MQM to unite but I only requested all to work together. I have never met Altaf Hussain but I will ask should he play a role in Pakistan politics. We are standing with the state and if we feel if someone is working against Pakistan we will want to have no link with them and Altaf Hussain has issues with the state, he is charged with anti-nation activities.

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<sup>24</sup> : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gw6TSAibIPQ>

**Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Electricity breakdown in Pakistan & Pakistan-Russia gas pipeline deal? *Geo News*, 24 January<sup>25</sup>**

Pakistan suffered a huge power cut early on Monday 23 January 2023 following a breakdown in its national grid, leaving millions of people without electricity. *Power was out in all major centers, including the biggest city, Karachi, and the capital, Islamabad, as well as Lahore and Peshawar.* Hamid Mir enquired why there is a electricity breakdown every year and also probed about the Pakistan Russia agreement on gas-pipeline and crude oil? **Guests:** Senator Musadiq Malick-PML-N, Dr. Zubair Khan-economist & Hamid Khan- Imran Khan's Lawyer. **Musadiq Malick** pointed out that the power breakdown is due to the weak infrastructure in the power sector, there is a need to strengthening this sector. He informed that *Pakistan and Russia has decided on to address all technical issues insurance, transportation and payment mechanism and signed an agreement that will be mature by late March this year for the supply of Russian oil and other petroleum products at discounted rates.* The PTI want to come back to the assembly to sabotage the assembly that is why the speaker in the Punjab assembly accepted the resignation letters of the MNA's. **Zubair Khan** informed that In line with the government's decision to meet IMF demands to cut the fiscal deficit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has constituted *a 15-member committee on austerity measures for better utilization of public money amid a substantial increase in the burden on people through an upcoming hike in electricity and gas rates and additional taxation measures.* He informed that I was put in the committee without asking me and they want to tag me along with them and in the bad economic decisions. They have taken Pakistan to the edge of bankruptcy and I don't want to be associated with them any time soon. There is a *political tamasha* in Pakistan. *To take economic decisions in Pakistan we need a professional team (professional economist) and not a small team to take austerity measures like the one formed by the PM.* He asked if the ports to Pakistan are closed even the cheap oil from Russia cannot reach Pakistan. **Hamid Khan** underlined that the government is playing a political game in Punjab and that is why suddenly accepting the resignation letters of the Speaker. Point is that why the speaker is accepting the resignations now? Now that the PTI MNA's want to come back to assembly why they are not accepting them back. *Earlier the PML-N and PDM use to underline that the PTI leaders should not boycott the assembly and join it back but now it is the other way round. The election commission should now intervene and announce elections in KP and Punjab.*

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<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iyqowULx2fA>

**Analysis by Rauf Klasra, Terror Revisits Pakistan: Peshawar Mosque Blast, 30 January<sup>26</sup>**

Rauf Klasra pointed out that the Peshawar mosque blast is a huge setback for Pakistan and has shaken the people spreading new wave of terror in the country. The question now arises how the government will combat with the **revival of terrorism**? Who is responsible for the comeback of terror in the country? Pakistan was just going through economic crisis and the government was failing to review it and suddenly after the blast a new wave of terrorism has again jolted the country and added to the problems of the government and people. Pakistan tried its best to bring Taliban into power in Afghanistan and Imran Khan spoke high of the Taliban and hoped that western border will be secure. Even the establishment was not behind and supported the Taliban government and the new setup. *Pakistan was blamed for the Fall of Kabul and Pakistan happily agreed. But at that point Pakistan forgot that the Taliban in Afghanistan means strengthening of Taliban in our tribal areas.* And the revival of terrorism has started from that point of time and Pakistan celebrated Taliban government in Afghanistan too soon. Pakistan Taliban naturally took inspiration and strength from the Taliban in Afghanistan. Pakistan was not in a position to fight terrorism in KP and therefore USA mediated and brought its drones to eliminate terrorists and its hideouts in tribal areas. But after *Taliban came into power in Afghanistan Pakistan disagreed to allow US to use its soil for drone attacks against Taliban, this was the reason the terror units regrouped in the tribal areas very comfortably.* He underlined that without improving relations with Afghanistan and **India** there cannot be peace and stability in Pakistan. Instead of collecting dollar from different parts of the World in the name of war on terrorism, Pakistan should have done the same for peace. The new COAS is said to be against the Taliban and now it has to be seen how he fights them, will he invite the American drones yet again?

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<sup>26</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=faYLnUC3LAQ>

## BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

*(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)*

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
<b>Punjab</b>				
<b>Khyber Pakhtunkhwa</b>				
Peshawar	30/01/2023	59 killed, 157 injured in blast at Peshawar Police Lines mosque	59	157