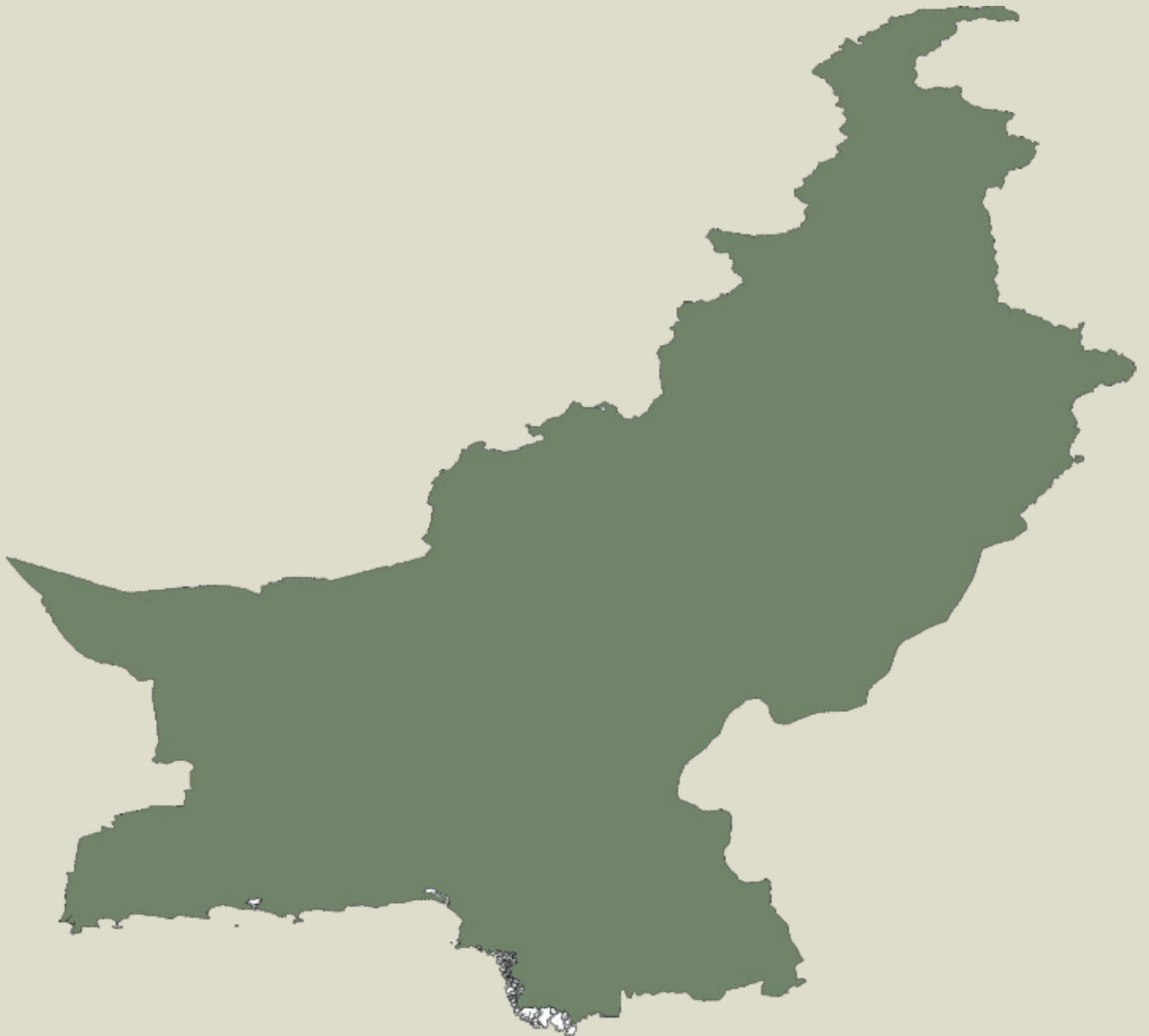


March 2014

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



*Prepared by
YaqoobulHassan
and Shreyas Deshmukh
(Interns, Pakistan Project, IDSA)*

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CONTENTS

ABBRIATIONS	2
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	4
PROVINCIAL POLITICS.....	4
OTHER DEVELOPMENTS	8
EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS.....	15
MILITARY AFFAIRS	21
ECONOMIC ISSUES	23
FISCAL ISSUES	23
TRADE	24
ENERGY.....	25
INVESTMENT	28
OTHER DEVELOPMENTS	29
EDITOROALS AND OPINIONS	32
SECURITY SITUATION	35
TERRORISM	35
KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AND FATA.....	35
BALOCHISTAN.....	36
SINDH.....	36
NATIONAL SECURITY	37
TALIBAN TALKS.....	39
EDITORIALS AND OPINION.....	46
RELATIONS WITH INDIA	51
EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS.....	51
STATISTICS	58
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES.....	58

ABBRIATIONS

BRP: Baloch Republican Party
AJKMC: All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference
ASWJ: AhleSunnatWalJamaat
BIT: Bilateral Investment Treaty
BoI: Board of Investment
CEC: Chief Election Commissioner
CID: Crime Investigation Department
CPI: Consumer Price Index
EAD: Economic Affairs Division
EFF: Extended Fund Facility
EPS: Earnings per Shares
FBR: Federal Board of Revenue
GHQ: General Head Quarters
IHC: Islamabad High Court
IHI: InsaniHuqooqIttehad
IMF: International Monetary Fund
JI: Jamaat-i-Islaami
JSHQ: Joint Services Head Quarters
JSM: Jeay Sindh MuttahidaMahaz
JuD: Jamat-us- Dawa
KP: Khyber Pakhthunkhwa
MFN: Most Favored Nation
MQM: MuttahidaQaumi Movement
MTBF: Medium Term Budgetary Framework
NBP: National Bank of Pakistan
NDMA: Non-Discriminatory Market Access
NISIP: National Internal Security Policy
NP: National Party
NPGA: Non-Project Grant Aid
NPMC: National Price Monitoring Committee
OGRA: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority
PBS: Pakistan Bureau Statistics
PDF: Pakistan Development Fund
PIMC: Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences
PML-N: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz
PPP: Pakistan People's Party
PTI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf
SBP: State Bank of Pakistan
SDPI: Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SSGC: Sui Southern Gas Company
TTP: Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

UAE: United Arab Emirates

VBMP: Voice for Baloch Missing Persons

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

PROVINCIAL POLITICS

PTI accuses Punjab govt of pre-poll rigging, Dawn, March³

The PTI has accused the Punjab government of committing pre-poll rigging in by-election for a provincial assembly seat of Jhang (PP-81). PTI Secretary General Jehangir Khan Tareen wrote letters to the acting CEC and inspector general of Punjab police, seeking appropriate measures to stop what he called blatant moves to rig the by-election for PP-81 (Jhang) constituency.

Fissures deepen in PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Dawn, March¹⁸

PPP may suffer from further division in KP if its central leadership fails to address the grievances of senior activists in different districts of the province. The PPP workers complain that central leadership has abandoned the party in the province. They say that leadership imposes office-bearers on them instead of giving weight to the views of local units of the party. Some senior workers are also not happy with the statements issued by PPP patron-in-chief Bilawal Bhutto Zardari against Taliban. They say that this policy can create serious threats for them, particularly during the next elections.

PML-N vows to form Hazara province, Express Tribune, March²⁴

Though the resolution for a separate Hazara province has divided opinion across the region, people from Hazara division have welcomed the step as a positive one. The former MNA Gohar Ayub Khan lauded the move and assured that the PML-N to which he belongs will get the resolution approved from the Senate and Lower House. To a question, he said the way the resolution was adopted did fulfill the requirements for the creation of a new province. He, however, claimed had Chief Minister Pervez Khattak voted in favour of it, it would have strengthened the case. Gohar maintained those calling for the demand of Hazara province on linguistic grounds were actually throwing a spanner in the works as Tahirkhelis, Mashwanis, Jadoons, Tareens, Swati Khankhels and Dilazaks were all Pukhtuns who had been living in Hazara for centuries. *“Even if they have forgotten their mother tongue, their ethnicity as Pukhtuns remains unchanged,”* he said.

¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090681/pti-accuses-punjab-govt-of-pre-poll-rigging>

²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093906/fissures-deepen-in-ppp-khyber-pakhtunkhwa>

³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686463/sticking-to-their-guns-pml-n-vows-to-materialise-dream-of-hazara-province/>

KP govt approves reshuffle in provincial cabinet, *Dawn*, March 28⁴

The leadership of the PTI has approved major changes in the KP government. The decisions were taken after the approval of party chief Imran Khan during a meeting of the PTI's core committee two days earlier. Announcing the decisions on Friday, KP information minister Shah Farman said that Mushtaq Ghani, Qalandar Khan Lodhi, Ikramullah Khan Gandapur and Ziaullah Afridi have been inducted into the provincial cabinet and would be assigned the portfolios later.

Baloch marchers seek recovery of missing persons, *Express Tribune*, March 6⁵

Participants of the long march from Balochistan have demanded recovery of missing persons. They vowed to continue their journey till the recovery of their relatives, expressing disappointment over the response of the government and the courts. The long march participants made this demand at a discussion jointly organised by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Insani Huqooq Ittehad (IHI) in Islamabad on March 5. Speaking on the occasion, Mama Qadeer Baloch, who started the long march under the VBMP banner from Quetta four months ago and reached Islamabad on March 1, revealed that they were being threatened to end their campaign. However, they have decided to continue their journey. The march also included people from Karachi and Hyderabad in search of their missing relatives.

Balochistan parties protest delay in local council polls, *Express Tribune*, March 14⁶

Balochistan's ruling coalition partners and opposition groups protested on March 13 against the extraordinary delay in the final phase of the local council polls whose first two phases were held more than three months ago. Balochistan National Party-Mengal, JUI-Nazariati, Hazara Democratic Party and Awami National Party voiced their concern over what they termed as 'unnecessary delays' in announcing the mayor, deputy mayors and chairman of district committees in the province. PML-N General Secretary Naseebullah Bazai warned that it would hold protests if the government failed to delay the final phase of the elections any further. "It is a deliberate delay and political parties will intensify their protest if the next phase is not initiated soon," he said.

⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096173/kp-govt-approves-reshuffle-in-provincial-cabinet>

⁵<http://tribune.com.pk/story/679418/balochistan-issue-marchers-seek-recovery-of-missing-persons/>

⁶<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682713/balochistan-parties-protest-delay-in-local-council-polls/>

Balochistan political crisis: PML-N cancels cabinet meeting, *Express Tribune*, March 18⁷

The political crisis in Balochistan deepened on March 17 after seven members of the provincial cabinet belonging to the PML-N refused to attend the scheduled cabinet meeting. Chief Minister Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, who was going to chair the meeting, cancelled it and rushed to the residence of PML-N provincial chief Sardar Sanaullah Zehri to address the latter's party grievances. PML-N's Balochistan chapter has been threatening to part ways with the ruling NP in protest against a host of issues, including alleged meddling by the chief minister in ministries and departments run by PML-N ministers and advisers.

Balochistan Assembly adopts four resolutions, *Dawn*, March 21⁸

The Balochistan Assembly adopted four resolutions on March 20, with its members discussing issues like job quota for locals in private companies. Deputy Speaker Mir Qaddus Bizenjo chaired the session. A joint resolution seeking allocation of 70 per cent job quota for local youths in private industrial units and other companies was tabled by Sardar Saleh Muhammad Bhootani. The quota would serve to ease the unemployment crisis in the province, said the resolution. In a resolution, Mufti Gulab Khan Kakar requested the government to direct the Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) to provide natural gas to Aghbarg, an area on the suburbs of Quetta. Speaking on the subject, the legislators said that Aghbarg was just a few kilometres from the main gas pipeline, while people of Dera Bugti, where gas was produced, totally lacked the facility. Syed Liaquat Agha tabled the third resolution which demanded of the government to enhance the promotion quota for personnel of the Levies Force to 60pc from the existing 20pc. It said the promotion quota for police department was 60pc. Therefore the quota for Levies should be raised to 60pc.

Famine-like situation in Thar after severe drought, *Dawn*, March 7⁹

Most areas of Sindh's Tharparkar district are facing a famine-like situation and at least 32 malnourished children are reported to have died. About 175,000 families are reported to have been affected and some of them have been forced to leave their homes and move to barrage areas.

⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684145/balochistan-political-crisis-pml-n-no-show-cancels-cabinet-meeting/>

⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094584/balochistan-assembly-adopts-four-resolutions>

⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091557/famine-like-situation-in-thar-after-severe-drought>

Sindh govt rejects Punjab's aid offer for famine-hit Tharparkar, Dawn, March⁸¹⁰

The Sindh government rejected an aid offer made by its Punjab counterpart for the famine-hit people of Tharparkar. Earlier on March 7 authorities had ordered a probe into the death of 41 children who reportedly died of pneumonia and malnutrition in a stretch of the Thar Desert. Media reports from Mithi, one of the least developed and most remote districts in southern Sindh province, had suggested that more than 100 people had died because of famine and malnutrition.

MQM worker's killing: SHC summons advocate general, Dawn, March¹²¹¹

A Sindh High Court bench on March 11 summoned the province's advocate general over a petition filed by the MQM against the alleged abduction and killing of its worker Muhammad Salman. During the hearing, Chief Justice of Sindh High Court, Justice Maqbool Baqar, in his remarks suggested the setting up of a judicial inquiry commission headed by district and sessions judge (west). The bench summoning Advocate General Sindh Abdul Fatah Malik adjourned the hearing of the case until March 12. Father of the MQM worker had filed a petition in the provincial high court on Feb 12 alleging that extrajudicial killings were being carried out in the garb of a targeted operation to rid the city of criminal elements.

Provincial, federal govts lock horns over appointment of new IG Sindh, Express Tribune, March¹⁶¹²

The provincial government locked horns with the federal government over who to appoint as the new Inspector General of Sindh. The position of the top cop in the province has been vacant for almost a month since former IG Sindh Shahid Nadeem Baloch retired from the post on February 20. Additional Inspector General of CID Iqbal Mehmood provisionally took over reigns of the Sindh IG after Baloch's retirement. The Sindh government suggested former Karachi police chief Iqbal Mehmood and former Sindh police chief Fayyaz Leghari for the post but the federal government said that DIG Farooq Ameen Qureshi and National Highways and Motorway Police Inspector General Zulfiqar Ahmed Cheema are being considered as Baloch's successors.

¹⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091816/sindh-govt-rejects-punjabs-aid-offer-for-famine-hit-tharparkar>

¹¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092448/mqm-workers-killing-shc-summons-advocate-general>

¹²<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683474/provincial-federal-govts-lock-horns-over-appointment-of-new-ig-sindh/>

Khurshid rules out MQM's joining Sindh govt, *The Nation*, March 23¹³

Leader of Opposition in National Assembly Syed Khurshid Shah, who is also a senior PPP leader, said Altaf Hussain was instigating undemocratic forces while his party was all out for democracy, adding there was no possibility of MQM's joining the Sindh government. Talking to media persons at the airport in Islamabad, Khurshid Shah said MQM Chief Altaf Hussain should understand that democracy in the country had come after a long struggle and his undemocratic statements would only worsen the situation. Shah said PPP and MQM were the parties having different ideologies.

PPP-MQM coalition to affect Karachi operation: Afaq, *The Nation*, March 31¹⁴

The ongoing Rangers-led operation in Karachi will receive a serious setback in case the MQM joined the Sindh coalition, MohajirQaumi Movement Chairman Afaq Ahmed says. With the MQM being part of the coalition, the police would not be in a position to proceed against any of its activists, no matter how serious the crime committed by them. Hence, he said while talking to *The Nation* in Karachi, the operation being carried out for the past several months would be reduced to an exercise in futility.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

'Iranians not allowed to conduct operation inside Pakistan', *Dawn*, March 5¹⁵

Home Secretary Balochistan AsadRehmanGilani has said if Iran provided information about the whereabouts of its kidnapped soldiers in Pakistani territory, only then would Pakistan security forces conduct operation for their recovery. "*Iranians are not allowed to conduct operation inside Pakistan*,". A Sunni militant group *JaishulAdl* (Party of Justice) claimed to have kidnapped five Iranian border guards on February 6 this year. The incident prompted the two neighboring countries, two weeks ago, to hold 17th joint border commission meeting in Quetta to ensure the safe recovery of the border guards. "*We will verify Iranian information and then Pakistani forces would conduct an operation*," Gilani explained.

¹³<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/23-Mar-2014/khurshid-rules-out-mqm-s-joining-sindh-govt>

¹⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/31-Mar-2014/ppp-mqm-coalition-to-deal-a-blow-to-karachi-operation-afaq>

¹⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090985/iranians-not-allowed-to-conduct-operation-inside-pakistan>

RAW among suspects behind capital attack: PM, *The News*, March¹⁶

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said on March 5 that reports about the involvement of many groups, including the RAW of India, in the Islamabad District Courts firing and bomb attack had been pouring in and the investigation was going on in this regard. Expressing concern over the new wave of terrorism and emergence of new terrorist groups, during a meeting with a group of parliamentarians from the Gujranwala Division, *the prime minister said that on the one hand, the dialogue process was going on while on the other hand, new groups were coming to the fore, perpetrating terrorist activities with new names.* He said that security and intelligence agencies had been directed to investigate the matter. He said the government chose the path of dialogue according to the decision taken in the All Parties Conference and expressed the hope that the dialogue would bear fruit.

Pakistan having defence talks with China, S. Arabia, *Dawn*, March¹⁷

Pakistan shed on March 6 rare lights on its ongoing discussions with China and Saudi Arabia on defence cooperation. The government has been pursuing plans for a “*new era in strategic partnership*” with Saudi Arabia, which it wants to be anchored in time-tested defence relationship. Plans are also afoot for *expanded defence cooperation with China.* Foreign Office spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said at the weekly media briefing that the possibility of collaboration in defence production was discussed during the visit of Saudi Crown Prince Salman bin Abdelaziz last month. “*Nothing has yet been finalised... these discussions are continuing,*” she said.

Govt, opposition agree to appoint Rana Bhagwandas as CEC, *The News*, March¹⁸

The government and opposition have agreed to appoint retired Supreme Court judge Rana Bhagwandas as CEC, sources said on March 6. Sources said Finance Minister Ishaq Dar contacted Opposition Leader in the National Assembly and PPP stalwart Syed Khurshid Shah to take him on board regarding the appointment. Some amendments are expected to be presented in the National Assembly on Friday to remove legal hurdles to appoint Bhagwandas as CEC.

¹⁶<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-28950-RAW-among-suspects-behind-capital-attack-PM>

¹⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091555/pakistan-sheds-light-on-defence-talks-with-china-s-arabia>

¹⁸<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140151-Rana-Bhangwandas-to-be-appointed-CEC->

Nisar losing influence with Sharifs?, *Dawn*, March 9¹⁹

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, who appears to be losing influence in PML-N since the last year's general elections, is *in hot waters again, this time for his latest speech in the National Assembly*. There are fears within the party that the *minister's remarks*²⁰ *over terrorist attack on Islamabad district courts may land the government in trouble after the threat by lawyers to launch a full-fledge movement from next week*. A number of PML-N members and legislators said if the minister did not take any remedial step to control the damage, the government might be forced to have a direct confrontation with the lawyers' community. Lawyers have been demanding Chaudhry Nisar's resignation *over his claim about the number of terrorists involved in the attack and for his statement that District and Sessions Judge Rafiqat Awan had been killed in panic firing by one of his own bodyguards*.

CJ says nation's morale linked to good governance, *Dawn*, March 14²¹

Chief Justice Tassaduq Hussain Jilani has said that misgovernment rather than foreign invasion usually leads to collapse of nations. *"The heavy responsibility of defending the country is primarily on the shoulders of our valiant armed forces and in this endeavour the nation is fully behind them. But the morale of the nation is linked to people's welfare, good governance and the rule of law,"* the chief justice said while speaking to visiting officers of the PAF Air War College, Karachi, in the Supreme Court building on March 13. *"The concept of good governance and the rule of law are interrelated,"* he said and added that without fair and effective judiciary one could hardly imagine good governance.

FO criticises EU diplomats' meeting with Baloch marchers, *Dawn*, March 14²²

The Foreign Office criticised on March 13 that Islamabad-based European Union diplomats for unspecified violation of diplomatic norms. *"We expect ambassadors of the EU as well as others to abide by the norms of internationally-recognised diplomatic behaviour and not comment on our internal matters,"* FO spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said at a weekly media briefing. A source claimed that FO had taken a strong exception to EU diplomats meeting representatives of the Voice for Missing Baloch Persons (VMBP). The long march representatives had met the diplomats and later called on the EU Ambassador Lar-Gunnar Wigemark. *Mr Wigemark had in a separate statement,*

¹⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091957/nisar-losing-influence-with-sharifs>

²⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091556/islamabad-judge-killed-by-bodyguards-panic-firing>

²¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093015/cj-says-nations-morale-linked-to-good-governance>

²²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093032/fo-criticises-eu-diplomats-violation-of-diplomatic-norms>

unrelated to the VMBP long march, asked Pakistan to fulfil its pledge of fully implementing the 27 international conventions it had signed and ratified and made as part of the 'GSP+' commitments. The spokesperson's remarks did refer to those comments also, but without naming the EU Ambassador. MsAslam's contention was that *accession to the international conventions was not related to negotiations on 'GSP+' trade preferences, but for the sake of human rights in the country.*

Fighting for Pakistan's survival: Khwaja Asif, *The News*, March15²³

Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Asif says the government is fighting for the country's survival. Speaking at a function Khawaja Asif warned that *Pakistan was at great danger if talks with the Taliban failed and the economy did not improve.* Pakistan's talks with Taliban militants have entered into the second phase and a meeting between the government committee and Taliban shura is expected to take place soon.

Larkana: Hindu dharamshala set ablaze over 'burning of holy pages', *Dawn*, March16²⁴

Rangers and Police fired warning shots and resorted to tear gas as a frenzied mob set a Hindu Dharamshala on fire over alleged desecration of holy pages. Furious protesters attacked a Mandir and set the Dharmashala on fire while few of them surrounded the house of the Hindu man who was accused of burning the pages. Police and Rangers reached on the spot to protect the Mandir and imposed a curfew in different areas to bring the situation under control. The police claimed to have arrested the accused. *MQM Chief Altaf Hussain has said that attacks on the Mandir and properties of Hindu community were against Islam.*

ASWJ asks govt to free Baloch missing persons, *Express Tribune*, March16²⁵

The AhleSunnatWalJamaat (ASWJ) made a direct appeal to the prime minister on March 15 to secure the release of all Baloch missing persons in order to ensure peace in the province. The appeal was made by the group's leader Maulana Mohammed Ahmed Ludhianvi. *"The prime minister should personally seek apology from Baloch nationalists who have been deprived of their legitimate rights for decades,"* the ASWJ leader told a news conference at the Quetta Press Club. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, according to MaulanaLudhianvi, should devise a strategy and try holding talks with the Baloch nationalists just like it is doing with the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan.

²³<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141198-Fighting-for-Pakistans-survival:-Khwaja-Asif>

²⁴<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141254-Larkana:-Hindu-worship-place-set-ablaze-over-burning-of-holy-pages>

²⁵<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683418/quelling-unrest-aswj-asks-govt-to-free-baloch-missing-persons/>

Ludhianvistressed that the people of Balochistan have been denied their legitimate rights, which has forced them to turn to extremism.

Appointment of Irfan Siddiqui as special assistant to PM challenged in IHC, *The Nation*, March17²⁶

The appointment of Irfan Siddiqui as Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Affairs was challenged in the IHC by a petitioner, ShahidOrakzai, who said that Mr. Siddiqui was appointed on important and sensitive government positions without taking a constitutional oath. In the petition, he argued that the Prime Minister had not publicised the notification of appointment of Mr. Siddiqui. Justice Noor Qureshi also sought copy of the notification, before adjourning the case for two weeks. The petitioner said he would try to obtain copy of the notification in a given period of two weeks.

Pakistan, Bahrain ink seven accords, *The Nation*, March19²⁷

To streamline and further expand the existing bilateral trade relations with Bahrain, *Pakistan signed agreements for promotion and protection of investment with Bahrain besides signing six other agreements for further enhancing the trade relations* between the two brotherly Islamic states. Prime Minister Sharif said that Pakistan provided better investment environment and Bahraini investors should take this opportunity for best returns. *“We would welcome Bahraini investments in mega projects in the field of energy, downstream oil industry, port development, mining and minerals, infrastructure, banking and financial sectors”.*

King of Bahrain vows to enhance military cooperation at JSHQ, *Dawn*, March20²⁸

King Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa of Bahrain along with his delegation made an unprecedented visit to the Joint Services Headquarters (JSHQ) in Rawalpindi, said a press release issued by ISPR on March 19. The king is on a three-day official visit to Pakistan, leading a 21-member delegation which includes his top defence and internal security chiefs. *Pakistan has been looking at the visit as an opportunity for expanding trade and promoting investment links but Bahrain appears more interested in bolstering defence relationship.*

²⁶<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/17-Mar-2014/appointment-of-irfan-siddiqui-as-special-assistant-to-pm-challenged-in-ihc>

²⁷<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/19-Mar-2014/pakistan-bahrain-ink-seven-accords>

²⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094257/king-of-bahrain-vows-to-enhance-military-cooperation-at-jshq>

No Gulf duty for Pakistani troops: PM, *The Nation*, March 21²⁹

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on March 20 categorically said that *Pakistan was not sending its troops to other countries, dismissing impression that some countries had sought Pakistan's assistance to move its armed forces for operation at their land.* Talking to media persons after a ceremony to rename Mianwali Airbase as M M Alam Airbase after the legendary fighter pilot of 1965 war, the prime minister also said that Pakistan was not part of the arms race in the region but it would not be neglectful of its defence and sovereignty while pursuing the peace strategy.

Iran makes Rahdari permit invalid for travel to Sistan-Baluchestan province, *Express Tribune*, March 24³⁰

Iranian border guards have *deported dozens of Pakistani families from Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province even though they possess valid travelling documents.* The transit permit, known as Rahdari, had been issued by Deputy Commissioners under the 1956 agreement between Iran and Pakistan. According to the 1956 agreement between Iran and Pakistan, people who obtain the Rahdari or 'red pass' are allowed to travel to Iran to visit their relatives living on the other side of the border.

Third-party intervention on Kashmir a must: PM, *The Nation*, March 24³¹

Underlining the need to resolve the Kashmir issue, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on March 24 said India hesitated every time Pakistan approached it for talks. He was speaking to media persons after holding a meeting with US Secretary of State John Kerry on the sidelines of a two-day International Nuclear Summit in The Hague. *The premier proposed intervention by a third force over the Kashmir issue and said the matter could not be resolved without this.* Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said *the decision to grant MFN status to India was postponed for a lack of consensus. Sharif further said he had directed his team to talk to all stakeholders and develop a consensus on the matter.*

Govt wants 2 military officers tried under army act, SC told, *Dawn*, March 26³²

The Supreme Court was informed on 26 March that the federal government *wanted two serving military officers tried under the Pakistan Army Act (PAA) 1952 for their alleged involvement in enforced disappearances of Baloch people.* The

²⁹<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/21-Mar-2014/no-gulf-duty-for-pakistani-troops-pm>

³⁰<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686354/iran-makes-rahdari-permit-invalid-for-travel-to-sistan-baluchestan-province/>

³¹<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/25-Mar-2014/third-party-intervention-on-kashmir-a-must-pm>

³²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095593/govt-wants-2-military-officers-tried-under-army-act-sc-told>

officers accused by the witnesses or complainants of picking up Baloch people are Maj Moheen (Usama) and Maj Saif. They worked in the FC on deputation but later sent back to their parent department, the Military Intelligence.

Iran warns Pakistan after abducted border guard feared killed, *Dawn*, March 27³³

Tehran on March 26 issued a warning to Islamabad after reports emerged that an Iranian soldier abducted and taken across the border into Pakistan by the militants had been executed. President Hassan Rouhani in a telephone call with Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif demanded "serious and swift action" by Pakistan to secure the release of the soldiers. "We expect to hear good news in this regard," he said, while calling for "joint action by both countries against terrorists," the official IRNA news agency reported. For his part, Sharif said the issue was of "utmost importance" to his government and that he was "prepared to boost action to free the soldiers." Earlier, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed "grave concern" about the fate of Jamshid Danayifar, who was kidnapped along with four other border guards on February 6 by rebel group Jaish Al-Adl. "We did all we could to secure their release," Zarif told the state television after a cabinet meeting. "But it is disappointing that the Pakistani government has failed to secure its borders, and allows terrorists to operate on its soil."

Resolutions moved against threats to Bilawal, *Dawn*, March 28³⁴

Resolutions condemning the threatening letter received by chairman PPP from banned LJ and demanding action against those responsible were moved in the National and Sindh assemblies. PPP's Member of Provincial Assembly Abdul Sattar presented the resolution in the Sindh Assembly and it was unanimously passed.

SirajulHaq picked to head JI, *Express Tribune*, March 31³⁵

For the first time in the history of JI Pakistan a sitting Ameer (chief) failed to clinch a second term in office despite being in the race. Syed Munawar Hasan will be succeeded by SirajulHaq after JI's electoral college picked him on March 30 to head the party for the next five years. In all, there were three nominees: Syed Munawar Hasan, SirajulHaq and Liaquat Baloch. *SirajulHaq* polled the maximum number of votes and was declared the winner. The electoral college for the Ameer's election comprised 31,301 arakeen (members) of the party. Of

³³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095718/iran-warns-pakistan-after-abducted-border-guard-feared-killed>

³⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096170/resolutions-moved-against-threats-to-bilawal>

³⁵<http://tribune.com.pk/story/689396/changing-traditions-sirajul-haq-picked-to-head-ji/>

them, ballot papers were issued to 30,759. The election committee received 25,533 filled-out ballots and the overall voter turnout was 85 per cent.

Taliban, Lej, PML-N have covert agreement: Memon, *The Nation*, March 31³⁶

Minister for Information Sindh Sharjeel Memon has claimed that *a covert agreement exists between Taliban, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and PML-N and they are directly or indirectly together*. Talking to media outside Sindh Assembly session on March 31, the minister also said that centre was carrying out dialogue with terrorists in violation of the law and constitution.

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Pakistan's changing ideological profile, Talat Masood, *The Express Tribune*, March 12³⁷

[...] It is an ironic twist of history that while the *present military is fully supporting the democratic process and allowing the civilian leadership to regain its constitutional authority, the government, instead of purposefully curbing militancy, is succumbing to the dictates of radical elements.*

Bloodshed in Lyari, *The Express Tribune*, March 14³⁸

In a brutal reminder of the government's lack of writ over parts of Karachi, the volatile neighbourhood of Lyari bled once again. This time, violence took 19 lives — most of those killed were women and children who had gone shopping to Jhat Pat Market. The incredible death toll came a few hours after one of the brothers of notorious gangster Ghaffar Zikri was gunned down in an alleged encounter with law enforcers. This death toll also followed the brutal killings of three boxers and two of their family members earlier this week. [...] *If the government and the law enforcers are even remotely interested in resolving the crisis in Lyari, they must address the issue at its roots.*

A string of good news, Inayatullah, *The Nation*, March 15³⁹

At long last, Nawaz Sharif and Imran Khan have met, agreeing to speedily move ahead for peace talks with the Taliban. Imran has appreciated the efforts made by government to keep the dialogue process alive, countering a growing lobby to push for a military operation. ..According to Imran, *the government's initiative has already split the Taliban into two segments— those who want peace and others who are bent*

³⁶<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/31-Mar-2014/taliban-lej-pml-n-have-covert-agreement-memon>

³⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681523/pakistans-changing-ideological-profile/>

³⁸<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682403/bloodshed-in-lyari/>
<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/14-Mar-2014/criminal-politics-in-lyari>

³⁹www.nation.com.pk/columns/15-Mar-2014/a-string-of-good-news

upon perpetrating terrorist attacks. *The latter must be dealt with firmly and paid back in the same coin.*

Wrong side of history, Ummekulsum Imam, *Dawn*, March 18⁴⁰

[...] With Turkey, Qatar, and Iraq adopting divergent policy postures towards the Saudis and the latter two now publicly hostile, the regional sway held by the House of Saud seems to be slipping away. Pakistan, however, appears to be on the wrong side of history once again.. [and has] the misfortune of being the single Saudi foreign policy 'success' of recent times. Instead of acquiring energy and long-term economic security through implementing an accord with our gas rich neighbour, we have chosen the expedient and ultimately deleterious path of continued Saudi patronage. The direct correlation between deepening Saudi influence and an escalation in extremism in Pakistan that has disfigured the country's socio-economic landscape over the last three decades has been ignored in our obsession for finding a quick economic fix. Rather than working on improving economic fundamentals and investing in a progressive future, we appear eager to remain on the right side of an increasingly anachronistic regime, whose financial largesse over the years has carried punitive social costs.

Hate violence in Sindh, *The Express Tribune*, March 18⁴¹

In an unfortunate turn of events, communal hysteria swept up Larkana on March 15 after a Hindu was accused of desecrating the Holy Quran. The religious sentiments that the incident whipped up among the mob of protesters led to an attack on a Dharamshala. Its furniture and other articles were set on fire. Not content with this vandalism, the crowd also damaged some statues of Hindu deities in an adjacent temple. They were baying for the blood of a youth from the minority community who, they alleged, had defiled pages of the Holy Quran. The man escaped their wrath by the timely arrival of the police and Rangers who took him into their custody.

Sartaj Aziz's reassurances, *Dawn*, March 19⁴²

Sartaj Aziz's reassurance to the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on Monday that Pakistan will not tilt to either side and will maintain a balance in relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia should serve to remove misunderstandings on this score. The senators' concerns were motivated by developments that gave an impression that Islamabad was rethinking some aspects of its foreign policy. In February, the joint statement issued at the end of the Saudi crown prince's visit called for the establishment of "a transitional

⁴⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093823/wrong-side-of-history>

⁴¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683901/hate-violence-in-sindh/>

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1093803/communalism-in-sindh>

⁴²<https://www.dawn.com/news/1094013/sartaj-azizs-reassurances>
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684366/generous-donation/>

government" in Syria. This implied Pakistan's support for moves to oust President Hafez al-Assad. The more recent development is related to a *Saudi grant of \$1.5bn to the Pakistan Development Fund*, which has led to speculations and demands for transparency. Mr Aziz insisted that the Saudi grant had no conditions attached. A governmental clarification was needed to scotch rumours that ranged from *two brigades of Pakistani soldiers being sent to Saudi Arabia, to the supply of Pakistan-manufactured arms to anti-Assad forces in Syria*. While the adviser on foreign and national security affairs *admitted that there indeed was a proposal for exporting arms to the kingdom, Islamabad*, he said, would ensure that weapons did not land in Arab conflict zones.

What's the deal?, Zahid Hussain, *Dawn*, March 19⁴³

Sharif's strong relations with the House of Saud are not a secret. It was the intervention of King Abdullah that got him out of prison and he was later hosted by the Saudi government for seven years. The Saudi government had also come to the help of the second Sharif government when Pakistan faced a serious foreign exchange crisis following the nuclear tests in 1998, by subsidising the oil supply. During the PPP government's tenure, relations between Riyadh and Islamabad hit a historical low. Then president Asif Zardari's closeness with Iran caused a further deterioration in ties. But things started to change with the return of Nawaz Sharif to power. *The visit of the Saudi crown prince underscored the emergence of a new strategic relationship between the two countries*. Another important factor giving impetus to this emerging Riyadh-Islamabad nexus is the easing of tension between Iran and the US.

No further delay, *Dawn*, March 20⁴⁴

The apex court ordered the centre and provinces on March 19 to complete all legislation related to the LG polls by November. Meanwhile on March 19 the SC directed the KP government to hold the polls within a month. The KP government has reportedly said delimitation is complete and it is ready for the elections. Since the KP administration has sent positive signals while the apex court has given Punjab and Sindh nearly eight months to sort out all legal and logistical issues that stand in the way of the LG polls, there should be no more delays.

⁴³<https://www.dawn.com/news/1094000/whats-the-deal>

⁴⁴<https://www.dawn.com/news/1094289/no-further-delay>

<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-239306-Will-it-ever-begin>

Bahrain monarch's visit, *The News*, March 22⁴⁵

The most significant part of Bahrain monarch Hamad bin Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa's three-day trip to Pakistan may have been *the unprecedented visit he took to the Joint Services Headquarters in Rawalpindi*. This is a privilege rarely accorded to foreign leaders for reasons of security and *tells us a lot about the military cooperation between the two countries*. Given the JSHQ visit, and the fact that King Hamad's visit was so close to that of the Saudi crown prince, *tongues are wagging about possible Pakistani involvement in the civil wars currently raging in Bahrain and Syria*. Thankfully, this impression was dispelled by PM Nawaz Sharif soon after King Hamad departed; *the PM confirmed that Pakistani troops would not be sent anywhere*. In fact, King Hamad struck a rare note of conciliation when he expressed the hope that *Pakistan would act as a moderating force in Bahrain's relations with other Muslim countries* – an obvious reference to Iran, whom Bahrain has accused of instigating the revolt against the monarchy.

Karachi politics, *The News*, March 23⁴⁶

All the political parties are to blame for the violence in Karachi but none will own it up. No matter what the problem, they will find a way to absolve themselves of blame and pass the buck to another actor. This tendency manifests itself most often when parties accuse rivals of harbouring criminals and patronising target killers and extortionists without looking in the mirror at themselves. But it has now afflicted every aspect of governance, as shown in the Supreme Court when the provincial and federal governments blamed each other for the month-long delay in naming a new IG in Sindh.

The seeds of insurgency, Rustam Shah Mohmand, *The Express Tribune*, March 24⁴⁷

Pakistan's tribal areas have their own indigenous institutions, steeped in the culture, norms and historic traditions of the tribes. *Respect for women, a strong system of retribution, institutionalised accountability and collective liability for offences that occur in the territory of a particular tribe are some of the famous hallmarks of the way of life in the tribal areas. Once the state intervenes and demolishes the institutional framework that has held an area together for centuries, it creates a dangerous administrative vacuum that is only filled by forces that have divisive and destructive tendencies, and which will polarise and fracture society, unleashing a cycle of violence that aggravates as more force is applied to curb the activities of the divisive forces, which, in turn, destroys the area's structures and cadres.*

⁴⁵<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-239630-Bahrain-visit>

⁴⁶<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-239833-Karachi-politics>

⁴⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686407/the-seeds-of-insurgency-2/>

Republic Day hijacked, *The Nation*, March 24⁴⁸

[...] *the official Republic Day parade in Pakistan was conspicuous by [its] absence, and [it was] instead replaced by multiple rallies arranged by the JamaatudDawa(JUD) in Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad. Hugely well publicised, and mysteriously resurgent, Hafiz Saeed's dubious charity group seems to be enjoying its day in the sun — or in this case rain, if considering Islamabad and Lahore. [...] there is a difference between F-16s flying over Blue Area, and JuDclaiming sectarian conflict is an international conspiracy against Pakistan, with MaulanaLudhianvi of the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi seated on the stage. In a farcical performance, the JuD's claim to be the protector of Pakistan's ideology, is in fact a refusal to acknowledge that it has functioned as the worst possible advocate for it.*

An avoidable crisis, Faisal Siddiqi, *Dawn*, March 25⁴⁹

[...] *conflict between the military and civilian institutions took a dangerous turn. For the first time in Pakistan's history, the defence minister, under his own signature, has registered an FIR against a member of the armed forces and unknown others for engaging in the practice of 'enforced disappearances'. The Supreme Court in the Muhabbat Shah case has labelled this a crime against humanity under international law. In other words, the defence minister has become a complainant against his own ministry of defence.*

Do unethical journalists deserve to die?, M Bilal Lakhani, *The Express Tribune*, March 27⁵⁰

[...] *Pakistani journalists ..find themselves increasingly under fire from militants and extremists. Remember the horrific Sialkot mob-lynching of two young men in broad daylight a few years back?... The worst part is that this isn't classic Pakistani indifference at play. When you ask people to condemn violence and threats against journalists, they respond by raising the issue of unethical journalists and 'money fueled' journalism. Pakistani journalists should take a hint: you're doing no one a favour by trying to report the truth. If you get shot in the process, most people are going to assume that you were an unethical reporter and deserved to die.*

Sindh's witness protection law, *The Express Tribune*, March 28⁵¹

[...] *Six months ago, the provincial lawmakers introduced the witness protection bill that aimed to provide security to the men and women who step up to testify against hardened criminals. In light of the Wali Babar case, in which all*

⁴⁸<http://www.nation.com.pk/editorials/24-Mar-2014/republic-day-hijacked>

⁴⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095470/an-avoidable-crisis>

⁵⁰<http://tribune.com.pk/story/687626/do-unethical-journalists-deserve-to-die/>
<http://tribune.com.pk/story/687169/media-safety-protocols/>

⁵¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688022/sindhs-witness-protection-law/>

witnesses were strategically gunned down ahead of the court hearings, the law aimed to allow witnesses to conceal their identities, testify over video conferencing, relocate to safer places and guarantee compensation for families in case a witness is killed during trial....Six months later, this law is nothing more than a piece of paper that allowed the Sindh government to bask in the limelight for a few days.

The Federally Abandoned Tribal Areas, Dr Mohammad Taqi, *Daily Times*, March 27⁵²

The KP provincial Assembly has sneakily passed a resolution asking the federation to vivisect the province.. [and carve]..out a Hazara province from the current boundaries of KP....Ironically, the PTI, PML-N and the JI, which were instrumental in bringing this resolution, want one section of the Pakistani population to have the right to self-determination, including a new province based purely on linguistic grounds, but seem hell-bent on throwing the Pashtuns of the FATA back not just by a few decades but all the way to the seventh century. The PTI, PML-N and JI are key players in the dialogue with the TTP, which, *if successful, could turn already forsaken FATA into the Federally Abandoned Tribal Areas.*

Iran-Pak Souring diplomacy, *The Express Tribune*, March 29⁵³

The reported killing of one of the five Iranian border guards abducted in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran last month has soured the mood in Tehran. ... While the episode indeed deserves unqualified denunciation and every effort must be made to get the young guards freed and the kidnappers hunted down, *it will scarcely help matters if Tehran goes overboard in exerting pressure on Islamabad.*

Taming of the lawyers, Amber Darr, *Dawn*, March 29⁵⁴

In recent years, *reports of lawyers taking the law into their own hands, harassing judges and going on strike for frivolous excuses* have become commonplace. Pakistan's superior judiciary has, however, maintained a somewhat stony silence on the subject as if these incidents did not merit its attention. This changed in recent days when the Supreme Court took notice of misconduct of a lawyer in Sheikhupura, and indicated its intention of reviewing the *Canons of Professional Conduct and Etiquette* prescribed for lawyers under the bar councils and Legal Practitioners Act 1973 in order to better regulate discipline amongst advocates.

⁵²<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/27-Mar-2014/the-federally-abandoned-tribal-areas>

⁵³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/688502/souring-diplomacy/>

⁵⁴<https://www.dawn.com/news/1096358/taming-of-the-lawyers>

The whole truth, Abbas Nasir, Dawn, March 29⁵⁵

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has warned that *if anything were to happen to him the Punjab government would be held responsible*, as he went public with a threat issued to him by the deadly Lashkar-i-Jhangvi. There can be no two opinions on the need to ensure BBZ's security. Although they may use a different nomenclature for operational reasons, *the coalition of terrorist groups in the country would have him at the top of its hit list as it did his slain mother. He speaks the same language about the terrorists his mother did.*

Freedom of expression, Mohammad Nafees, Daily Times, March 29⁵⁶

Cheering for the Pakistani cricket team in India by some Muslim students raised a serious question about freedom of expression in both countries, India and Pakistan. In India, the Muslim students who chanted in favour of the Pakistani team were initially charged with sedition, which was later dropped on the intervention of the chief minister of Indian-held Kashmir. [...] In Pakistan, the reaction was totally opposite..... Here, the news brought a feeling of joy for many people as it reflected a common religious bond that still keeps them together despite living apart from each for over 66 years. [...] The foreign office spokesperson, Tasneem Aslam, also found it an opportune time to make it known to the Kashmiri students that our doors are open for them if they elect to pursue their education in Pakistan. *Amid the show of these feelings of fraternity with Indian Muslims, some enthusiasts went ahead of others and took extremist actions against Indian outfits.* An internet hacker from Pakistan defaced the official website of Swami Vivekanand Subharti University as revenge against its decision of expelling the Muslim students from the university.

MILITARY AFFAIRS

Army chief leaves for UAE, Nation, March 5⁵⁷

Pakistan's military chief left for UAE on a two-day tour, his first in the present official capacity and second to an Arab country in less than a month. Conspicuously, *the visit takes place against the backdrop of the reports that Saudi Arabia has refused to purchase JF-17 Thunder fighter jets from Pakistan* after the oil rich Arab state was reported to have struck a \$60 billion defence deal with the United States that would allow the latter to sell its defence hardware to the former.

⁵⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1096357/the-whole-truth>

⁵⁶<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/29-Mar-2014/freedom-of-expression>
<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/27-Mar-2014/minorities-in-the-islamic-republic>

⁵⁷<http://www.nation.com.pk/editors-picks/05-Mar-2014/army-chief-leaves-for-uae>

Corps commanders meet, Dawn, March⁷⁵⁸

A meeting of the Army's Corps Commanders on March 7, chaired by COAS General Raheel Sharif, gave a *briefing on goals achieved for surgical strikes against militant hideouts in North Waziristan*. According to military sources, the meeting focused on the country's internal security issues as well as professional matters relating to the military. The meeting also discussed *the deployment of military representatives for negotiations with the TTP*, sources added. Gen Sharif also took the corps commanders into confidence over his visit to the United Arab Emirates.

Next defence budget may touch Rs750b, The Nation, March⁹⁵⁹

The government has decided to increase national defence budget for the upcoming financial year 2014-2015 after Army Chief Gen Raheel Sharif met with Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on March 8, who termed it a routine meeting and did not reveal level of increase to be made... The brief statement of finance ministry however said, *"The finance minister acknowledged the need to ensure fulfilment of the requirements of the defence in the light of current security situation."* Sources were of the view that government might increase the defence budget by 15-20 percent for the next financial year 2014-2015. Defence budget might go around to Rs700 to Rs750 billion for the upcoming fiscal year, against the Rs627 billion of the ongoing year, the said. However, these figures are speculative yet. The government cut the expenditure of all ministries by 30 percent last year but no reduction was made in the defence budget.

Army backs direct TTP talks, The Nation, March¹²⁶⁰

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on March 10 chaired a high-level meeting to review the overall security situation in the country, *with specific reference to the government's initiative to broker peace with militants through dialogue*. Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif and Interior Minister ChNisar Ali Khan briefed the prime minister on the overall security situation in the country and the measures being taken by the law-enforcement agencies to curb militancy and lawlessness. ..A report said *the military leadership provided assurance that decisions of the government would be implemented*.

Army ready to face challenges, says COAS, The Nation March¹⁶⁶¹

Chief of Army Staff Gen Raheel Sharif has said that high standard of training, professionalism and commitments to serve the motherland have been Army's

⁵⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091603/corps-commanders-meet>

⁵⁹<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/09-Mar-2014/next-defence-budget-may-touch-rs750b>

⁶⁰<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/12-Mar-2014/army-backs-direct-ttp-talks>

⁶¹<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/16-Mar-2014/army-ready-to-face-challenges-says-coas>

hallmark, says a press release issued on March 15. *“While we pay rich tributes to all our Shaheeds (martyrs) and Ghazis (alive), we have to remain prepared to face potential challenges,”* he made these remarks while talking to officers at Gujranwala Garrison, the press release added.

ISAF chief, COAS discuss border coordination, *The Nation*, March 21⁶²

General Joseph F. Dunford, Commander ISAF, called on General Raheel Sharif, at the General Headquarters on March 20. *In this coordination visit, matters of mutual interest with particular focus on Pakistan-Afghanistan Border coordination mechanism were discussed,* the press release added.

ECONOMIC ISSUES

FISCAL ISSUES

Inflation: CPI stable at 7.9% for second consecutive month, *Express Tribune*, March 4⁶³

Amid a *tight fiscal policy*, prices in the country seemed to be stabilising as average consumer prices.....*allowing the government room to take measures to stimulate growth.* This is the second month in a row that the CPI – the main national indicator reflecting change in prices of basket of goods and services – clocked in at 7.9%. Earlier in January too, the CPI had remained at 7.9% *mainly because of a reduction in the prices of perishable food items due to their better availability in the market.*

Corporate results: NBP’s profits plummet to Rs5.5b, *Express Tribune*, March 4⁶⁴

NBP announced its financial results for calendar year 2013 (CY13) on March 3, showing a profit after tax of Rs5.5 billion, down from Rs14.94 billion in CY12. EarningPerShare (EPS) dropped by 63% to Rs2.59 in CY13 compared with Rs7.02 in CY12. The decline can be mainly attributed to a massive increase in provision for non-performing loans (NPLs). According to the financials released, provisions for NPLs rose by 77% in CY13 to Rs17.38 billion compared with Rs9.84 billion in CY12. According to Topline Securities, though nothing is confirmed on new NPLs accretions, *most of the provisions can be attributed to losses in overseas operations, reportedly in Bangladesh.*

⁶²<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/21-Mar-2014/isaf-chief-coas-discuss-border-coordination>

⁶³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678503/inflation-cpi-stable-at-7-9-for-second-consecutive-month/>

⁶⁴<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678506/corporate-results-nbps-profits-plummet-to-rs5-5b/>

Pakistan forex reserves rise to \$8.737 billion, Dawn, March⁹⁶⁵

Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves rose to \$8.737 billion in the week ending February 28 compared to \$8.654 billion in the previous week, the State Bank of Pakistan said. The increase in the central bank reserves is attributed to receipts of US\$74 million from multilateral, bilateral and other official sources.

Fiscal deficit contained at 3.2pc in July-Feb, Express Tribune, March⁹⁶⁶

The country's fiscal deficit in first eight months of this fiscal year amounted to Rs832 billion or 3.2 per cent of GDP, showing results of tight fiscal stance and reduced Public Sector Development Programme. This was disclosed at a meeting chaired by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar on Friday with his aides to set the stage for budget preparations for the next fiscal year.An official said the budget-makers were advised by the finance minister that the next year budget would remain on the same broad outline put in place last year and agreed to with the International Monetary Fund under the Extended Fund Facility. The government has projected fiscal deficit target at 6.3pc for 2013-14.

Price stability top priority: Dar, Dawn, March²⁶⁶⁷

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said on March 26 that price stability throughout the country was always the top priority of the government. Chairing the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) meeting, the minister said there were signs of improvement in the economy and the IMF in second review acknowledged that economic growth was picking up and inflation was coming down. "Almost all macroeconomic indicators are showing positive direction as remittances have increased by 11 per cent; revenues by 17pc, exports by 6pc and rupee appreciated by 7pc and foreign exchange reserve are also improving. The impact of rupee appreciation will be realised in the prices," he remarked.

TRADE

Japan's Non-Project Grant Aid, The Nation, March²¹⁶⁸

Japan on March 20 signed an agreement with Pakistan to provide Japanese hybrid vehicles worth \$4.93 million (equivalent to around Rs. 490 million). The notes to this effect were signed and exchanged between Hiroshi Inomata, Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan and Ms Nargis Sethi, Secretary of EAD in Islamabad. This assistance is provided in the form of Japan's Non-Project Grant Aid (NPGA), for promotion of socio-economic development efforts in developing countries by providing foreign currency for the import of necessary goods or commodities.

⁶⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091643/pakistan-forex-reserves-rise-to-8737-billion>

⁶⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091701/fiscal-deficit-contained-at-32pc-in-july-feb>

⁶⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095583/price-stability-top-priority-dar>

⁶⁸<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/21-Mar-2014/japan-inks-mou-to-provide-hybrid-vehicles-worth-4-93m>

Dar, Mosazai agree on boosting Pak-Afghan economic ties, *The Nation*, March23⁶⁹

Finance Minister Senator Ishaq Dar on March 22 said that Pakistan would support Kabul in holding of peaceful elections, as a stable, peaceful and strong Afghanistan would lead to greater economic cooperation between the two countries and beyond. He said this while talking to JananMosazai, Ambassador of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan who called on him at Finance Ministry.

ENERGY

Gas reserves sufficient only for 16 years, NA told, *Dawn*, March6⁷⁰

The present reserves of natural gas in the country are sufficient for only 16 years. This information was placed before the National Assembly by Federal Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources ShahidKhaqanAbbasi in reply to a question put by Shaikh RohaleAsghar of the PML-N. "The gap between demand and supply of gas is increasing day by day because of depleting gas fields and increasing demand," the minister said in a written reply to another question asked by Sheikh Salahuddin of the MQM.

Pakistan to ink initial deal on CASA power import project, *Express Tribune*, March7⁷¹

Pakistan and countries participating in the US-backed Casa-1,000 MW project are set to sign the initial deal in Istanbul, Turkey. Sources told that State Minister for Water and Power AbidSher Ali and additional secretary left for Istanbul on Thursday to ink the deal. "Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are to sign different agreements on financial, technical and legal matters," sources familiar with the development said. "This will be followed by a deal in Washington on the Casa-1,000MW power import project." According to sources in Tajik Embassy, the Casa-1,000MW power import project will help Pakistan get cheaper and cleaner energy to minimise electricity shortages and build close economic relations with neighbours Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. They said that the project was feasible despite the law and order situation in Afghanistan, and will help demonstrate its viability as a transit country linking the two regions.

Chinese firm to execute power projects in KP, *Dawn*, March17⁷²

The KP government will issue a 30-year operational licence to a Chinese company for executing power projects in the province. The survey team of the Chinese hydel power company Zhongnan Engineering Corporation would start its

⁶⁹<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/23-Mar-2014/dar-mosazai-agree-on-boosting-pak-afghan-economic-ties>

⁷⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091350/gas-reserves-sufficient-only-for-16-years-na-told>

⁷¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/679840/pakistan-to-ink-initial-deal-on-casa-power-import-project/>

⁷²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093677/chinese-firm-to-execute-power-projects-in-kp>

work from Shoghore, Chitral soon after receiving NOC, said a handout. It added that after collecting statistics of the flow of water in all four seasons of the year in the area the company would start construction of the power house from next year. In this connection a meeting was held on March 16, that was attended by Adviser to Chief Minister Razaqatullah Babar and representatives of Zhongnan Engineering Corporation and mineral company Tuny-Pak Minerals. Expressing interest in investment in hydel power and mineral sectors of the province, the Chinese companies requested for issuance of NOC.

Work on \$4.2b Dasu Dam to kick off this year, Express Tribune, March 20⁷³

Wapda Chairman Syed Raghیب Abbas on March 19 told the Senate Standing Committee on Water and Power that Dasu Dam would cost \$4.2 billion and work on the mega project would start this year. Abbas said four tunnels would be constructed and the project would be completed by 2019. The World Bank is financing the dam and it is the sole project for which the bank has provided funds for land acquisition. Germany will provide \$1 billion and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China will give \$2 billion for the project, which will generate 4,230 megawatts of cheap electricity. Abbas said work orders would be issued next month after the Pakistan Engineering Council established the categories of contractors. Of these, 70% foreign and 30% local contractors would be hired.

Portugal offers help in renewable energy, The Nation, March 25⁷⁴

Portugal is one of the leading wind energy producers and generating 61.7 per cent electricity through renewable energy sources while Pakistan should focus on enhancing cooperation with Portugal in energy sector to overcome its energy problems. This was said by Honorary Consul of Portugal and Dr. Mario Cabral, an economist from Portugal while addressing the business community at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

Pakistan, Poland sign MoU in energy and mineral sectors, The Nation, March 25⁷⁵

Pakistan on March 24 signed a MoU with Poland in energy and mineral resources sectors. Under the MoU, Poland will extend its cooperation in energy academics and scientific education fields.

⁷³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684900/work-on-4-2b-dasu-dam-to-kick-off-this-year/>

⁷⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/25-Mar-2014/portugal-offers-help-in-renewable-energy>

⁷⁵<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/25-Mar-2014/pakistan-poland-sign-mou-in-energy-and-mineral-sectors>

USAID initiatives to add 1400mw to national grid, *The Nation*, March 25⁷⁶

USAID has funded *renovations at Tarbela, Jamshoro, Mangla, Guddu, and Muzzafargharh power plants*, which are expected to add a cumulative total of 1400 megawatts to Pakistan's national power grid, by the end of 2014. *USAID has also aided the completion of GomalZam and Satpara dams*, and helped improve power distribution throughout Pakistan, as part of the US government energy sector assistance programme.

IMF likely to approve third tranche of \$550m for Pakistan, *The News*, March 16⁷⁷

IMF is likely to approve third tranche of \$550 million for Pakistan in its executive board meeting scheduled to be held on March 24. According to IMF official, the executive board would examine the economic performance of the country from October to December 2013. After the examination, the IMF executive board may approve third tranche of loan to Pakistan.

Militancy threatens Pakistan's growth, IMF warns, *Dawn*, March 28⁷⁸

The IMF said on March 28 that Pakistan's *key economic indicators were showing modest improvement but warned militancy and crime could threaten growth and investment*. The IMF warning came in its country report reviewing Pakistan's performance under a \$6.7 billion bailout loan package. *"For the fiscal year 2014-15, growth is forecast to accelerate to about 3.7 per cent, and will continue to accelerate in the medium term,"* the report said.

New bids to be invited for Neelum-Jhelum transmission line project, *Dawn*, March 31⁷⁹

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has decided *to invite fresh bids for the Neelum-Jhelum transmission line project* and also take it back to the National Transmission and Dispatch Company from the Water and Power Development Authority. According to sources, the prime minister took the decision to end a six-month controversy over corruption and mismanagement allegations relating to the Rs25 billion project and *ordered that the tendering process be made transparent. Mr Sharif, sources said, intervened because continued mishandling of the project by the ministry of water and power and Wapda threatened to become the first mega scandal for his government.*

⁷⁶<http://www.nation.com.pk/business/24-Mar-2014/usaid-initiatives-to-add-1400mw-to-national-grid>

⁷⁷[http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141237-IMF-likely-to-approve-third-tranche-of-\\$550m-for-Pakistan](http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141237-IMF-likely-to-approve-third-tranche-of-$550m-for-Pakistan)

⁷⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096189/militancy-threatens-pakistans-growth-imf-warns>

⁷⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096769/new-bids-to-be-invited-for-neelum-jhelum-transmission-line-project>

INVESTMENT

Govt withdraws Dasu project from ECNEC agenda, *Express Tribune*, March 7⁸⁰

The \$7.5 billion *Dasu hydropower project that is given preference even over the Diamer-Basha dam* is becoming a victim of bureaucratic wrangling, as the federal government withdrew it from the agenda of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec), just hours before the scheduled meeting, which was held on March 6 with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar as its chair.

US investment: Government to tread carefully on bilateral treaty, *Express Tribune*, March 16⁸¹

Unlike its predecessor, the ruling PML-N party *has decided to move cautiously on the proposed BIT after the United States introduced a new draft that carries stringent clauses with far reaching implications*. Pakistan is not in a hurry and will give a formal response to the US only after thoroughly studying the new template that Washington has recently shared, said Miftah Ismail, Special Assistant to Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Board of Investment (BoI) chairman. Both countries began negotiating the investment treaty about 10 years ago. *Talks have collapsed several times in the past due to the insistence of the US on inclusion of certain clauses that deal with investment in defence programmes and prior notification of changes being introduced to any law that could hurt US investments. There was also a difference of opinion on the mode of arbitration in case of a business dispute.*

China to invest \$4 billion in Pakistan Railways, *The Nation*, March 17⁸²

Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that the *Chinese investment and supply of coal will play a significant role in boosting performance of Pakistan Railways*. Addressing a news conference in Lahore he said China will invest 32 billion dollars in Pakistan. *Out of this amount, four billion dollars investment will be made in Pakistan Railways. He said no recommendations regarding privatization of the Railways are under consideration.*

⁸⁰<http://tribune.com.pk/story/679844/bureaucratic-wrangling-govt-withdraws-dasu-project-from-ecnec-agenda/>

⁸¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683275/us-investment-government-to-tread-carefully-on-bilateral-treaty/>

⁸²<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/17-Mar-2014/china-to-invest-4-billion-in-pakistan-railways>

Infrastructure development: Pakistan invites Bahrain to invest in Gwadar, energy, Express Tribune, March20⁸³

Pakistan has offered Bahrain an opportunity to invest in Gwadar Port and its energy and mining sectors, encouraging the Gulf monarchy to take advantage of the liberalised investment regime that in return will help Islamabad attract capital to boost its flagging economy. "Bahrain has expertise in oil and infrastructure projects and Gwadar Port and the energy sector may be attractive for the Gulf country," said Dr Musaddaq Malik, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS

Chinese firms to get army-backed security, Dawn, March3⁸⁴

The government has decided to provide army-backed security to Chinese companies with deep pockets coming into the country. The federal cabinet decided in principle to allay fears of investors from China by ensuring foolproof security, given that Chinese workers have on a number of occasions come under attack in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's areas bordering the tribal region. An aide to the prime minister told that security situation was the only hurdle in the way of foreign investment. "In every meeting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had with Chinese businessmen and companies in both the private and public sectors during his visit to China last July, serious concerns were expressed about the fragile security situation," he said.

Pakistan Development Fund: Another tranche of \$750m makes way into public purse, Express Tribune, March11⁸⁵

As the State Bank of Pakistan remains tight-lipped over the source and purpose of funding, Pakistan received another tranche of \$750 million in the newly-established Pakistan Development Fund (PDF), taking the total contribution to \$1.5 billion so far. Highly-placed sources told that friendly countries have injected this sum in the PDF – an account opened to channel money from abroad. The last tranche was received in February that stabilised the dwindling official foreign currency reserves.

War on Terror cost Pakistan \$80 bn, Reserves increase to \$9.52 bn, Dawn, March13⁸⁶

"Funding is no issue to get this nation, this country and the people out of this menace but we want to give peace a last chance. We cannot tolerate this (terrorism) to

⁸³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684897/infrastructure-development-pakistan-invites-bahrain-to-invest-in-gwadar-energy/>

⁸⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090694/chinese-firms-to-get-army-backed-security>

⁸⁵<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681263/pakistan-development-fund-another-tranche-of-750m-makes-way-into-public-purse/>

⁸⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092852/funding-for-military-operation-no-issue-dar>

continue,” Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said at a news conference held on March 12, apparently to celebrate almost 8 per cent appreciation of the rupee against the dollar in a few weeks. Dar also mentioned that *the country’s reserves increased to \$9.52bn on March 11— \$4.75bn of commercial banks and \$4.77bn of the State Bank of Pakistan.* He made it clear that a friendly country had made a contribution of \$1.5bn to the PDF, which had helped to improve reserves and the value of the rupee.

Responding to a question about the economic cost of the war on terror so far, the minister said *there were a lot of direct and indirect costs, including the loss of economic growth, unemployment, future and past gross domestic product, etc.,* and it was quite difficult to tag it exactly but some people had put it at \$80 billion which was not an exaggeration.

It was Saudi Arabia that loaned Pakistan \$1.5 billion, *Express Tribune, March 14*⁸⁷

“On a personal guarantee of the prime minister, Saudi Arabia has given \$1.5 billion, which has helped bail out the rupee,” one senior Pakistani government official close to the deal told Reuters, requesting anonymity. The *“friendly Muslim country”* that a beaming Ishaq Dar had referred to during his press conference on March 12 was thus revealed to be Saudi Arabia on March 13. The cash injection boosted reserve figures and helped the rupee rise to a nine-month high against the greenback of Rs97.40 from 105.40 against the dollar between March 4 and 12. This is the strongest rally of the rupee in 30 years.

Balochistan to receive big slice of Chinese funds, *Express Tribune, March 16*⁸⁸

After taking operational control of the strategically important deep-sea port of Gwadar, China is focusing on poverty and militancy-stricken province of Balochistan, which will get a major chunk of funds worth \$31 billion pledged by Beijing for energy and port expansion projects, sources say. ...*“Of the total investment, Lahore-Karachi motorway, Gwadar Port expansion and integrated development of Gwadar will attract an investment of \$11 billion,”* or 38% of the funds a source said. ..*In a meeting of the federal cabinet on February 25, it was announced that China had agreed to invest \$4.5 billion annually over the next seven years in Pakistan.* The premier described it as an unprecedented example where only one country, China, would invest \$31.5 billion. *“In the energy sector, 10 projects will be launched in Gadani, Balochistan and six coal projects in Thar, Sindh,”* he added.

⁸⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/682409/reavealed-it-was-saudi-arabia-that-loaned-pakistan-1-5-billion-to-shore-up-reserves/>

⁸⁸<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683281/balochistan-to-receive-big-slice-of-chinese-funds/>

\$1.5 million loan from Saudi Arabia is a gift: Sartaj Aziz, *The Nation*, March17⁸⁹

On March 16, adviser to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz informed the Senate's Foreign Affairs committee that Saudi Arabia had gifted \$1.5 billion to Pakistan and *added that Pakistan would not send arms to Syria or to any other country undergoing a civil war. Aziz said the donation by Saudi Arabia was a "gift for the people of Pakistan which was deposited in the Friends of Pakistan fund".* While giving details of the Saudi sum received by Pakistan the adviser said, *"The grant given by Saudi Arabia is unconditional and in return Pakistan is not supposed to give anything to kingdom."*

Iran project hit by sanctions: minister, *Dawn*, March20⁹⁰

Except for the issue of international sanctions, *the government is not under any other pressure against the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project,* Minister for Petroleum and Natural Resources ShahidKhaqanAbbasi has said. Talking to reporters on March 19 after a technical workshop on energy issues, he said it was unfortunate that a technically and economically viable project had been hit by sanctions. *"We have the capacity to complete the project in 36 months after the sanctions are lifted,"* he said.

US cuts Pak aid by \$10 million to help Ukraine, *Express Tribune*, March27⁹¹

The United States *cut \$10 million in aid given to Pakistan under the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill and diverted it to Ukraine. Under the KLBbill Pakistan receives \$1.5 billion in US aid. The \$10 million will be used to initiate radio programming in local languages used in Ukraine.* According to Congressman Alan Grayson, *the aid cut will come from funds allocated towards broadcasting projects in Pakistan.*

Donors pledge \$1 billion to Pakistan for education, *The News*, March30⁹²

Former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown says *international donors have pledged to provide Pakistan with about a billion dollar over the next three years to help it provide education to millions of out-of-school children.* Now a United Nations special envoy on global education, Brown said on March 29 in Islamabad that the global community will partner with Pakistan in *financing the biggest education expansion in the country's history. Pakistan recently doubled its education budget, from two to four percent of its GDP.* Brown says *the goal is to*

⁸⁹<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/17-Mar-2014/1-5-million-loan-from-saudi-arabia-is-a-gift-sartaj-aziz>

⁹⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094310/iran-project-hit-by-sanctions-minister>

⁹¹[http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142502-Pakistans-US-aid-cut-by-\\$10-mln-to-help-Ukraine-](http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142502-Pakistans-US-aid-cut-by-$10-mln-to-help-Ukraine-)

⁹²[http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142905-Donors-pledge-\\$1-billion-to-Pakistan-for-education](http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142905-Donors-pledge-$1-billion-to-Pakistan-for-education)

provide education to more than 55 million people over ten years old who are illiterate in Pakistan.

EDITOROALS AND OPINIONS

Energy sector reform, Dawn, March 5⁹³

The ADB has prepared a new Country Operations Business Plan under which *it will lend Pakistan \$3.25bn in the next three years. A significant amount from this money will be spent on energy sector reforms “both through investments and policy reforms”*. The planned interventions are expected to improve the efficiency of public power plants, cut transmission and distribution losses of the Discos and increase bill collection....The ADB lending is apparently linked to the government’s commitment to restructuring the energy sector as well as other public businesses before giving them in the hands of private investors as agreed under the \$6.7bn IMF loan.

State of the economy, Dr Kamal Monnoo, The Nation, March 12⁹⁴

We are being told [by] no other than the Finance Minister himself that *Pakistan’s economy is on the mend*. The previous quarterly figures yield a rather rosy picture where the *GDP’s growth rate has been in excess of 5%*, textile exports have risen by more than 8%, large scale manufacturing has grown by over 13%, home remittances have registered a growth of 9.50% and last but not least the stock market is booming like never before. As a result the budget deficit has been reduced to a mere 2.20% and the Pak Rupee is also gaining in value at present. *Now, one can surely punch holes in these figures cum official claims, however, the fact remains that even if the above numbers are slightly exaggerated there is indeed a sort of buoyancy in the Pak economy.*

Interest rate retained, Dawn, March 17⁹⁵

It seems that the State Bank of Pakistan considers the recent improvements in various headline economic variables insufficient to lower its key policy rate from 10pc, at least for now. *Even a significant drop in consumer prices and a strong rally by the rupee have failed to convince the bank to take the risk of cutting the interest rate*. Whether the bank has acted cautiously or its decision is influenced by the harsh conditions of the \$6.7bn IMF loan, it must have upset the business community, particularly textile exporters...who have lost billions of dollars [on account of appreciating rupee].

⁹³<https://www.dawn.com/news/1091107/energy-sector-reform>

⁹⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/12-Mar-2014/state-of-the-economy>

⁹⁵<https://www.dawn.com/news/1093683/interest-rate-retained>

Its master's voice, Dr Muhammad Yaqub, *The News*, March 19⁹⁶

[...] It is easy to dispose of the IMF endorsement because *it is pursuing its own agenda of recovering its outstanding loan rather than helping the country undertake structural reforms for sustained economic development and relative price stability. The IMF has in fact indulged in a dubious exercise that is usually undertaken by a commercial bank faced with a non-performing or defaulting loan and, therefore, the IMF endorsement carries no credibility...The State Bank of Pakistan.....has [also wrongly] begun to play the role of a cheer leader for the finance ministry....The SBP has indeed become its master's voice and its contradictory economic statements and reports can no more be taken seriously.*

In the pipeline, *The Nation*, March 20⁹⁷

The PPP government [had] signed a binding contract with Iran and *the PML-N vowed that they would hold to the contractual obligations and see the pipeline finished by the stipulated deadline of the 1st of January, 2015. A failure to complete it within this time- frame would have resulted in a daily penalty of \$1 million, but Iran realised that the expectation would only be met with failure and waived the amount. Nine months remain, and the government is doing nothing but shifting its feet and making convoluted statements [...]* Iran has not given up hope though. *Time and again, the country [Iran] has relaxed its policies against Pakistan, even when it is not bound to do so.*

Economic recovery, Malik Muhammad Ashraf, *The Nation*, March 21⁹⁸

When the present government was voted into power, the economy was on the verge of collapse and the country was in the grip of a severe energy crisis. Economic growth stood at 3%, national debt liability was around Rs.14,800 billion, inflation was in the double digits, interest rates were high, the budget deficit hovered around 8.8% of GDP, investments were low, foreign currency reserves were depleted and the country faced a default on IMF loans. [...] After assuming charge...the government has made considerable progress. ...Revenue collection has gone up by 16%, remittances have increased by 9% and exports have recorded an increase of 5%. *Prospects of foreign investment are also very encouraging. China has indicated interest in investing US\$ 22 billion in the mega power projects in the country.*

⁹⁶www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-239086-Its-masters-voice

⁹⁷<http://www.nation.com.pk/editorials/20-Mar-2014/in-the-pipeline>

⁹⁸<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/21-Mar-2014/economic-recovery>

Rising costs at Gwadar Port, *TheExpress Tribune*, March 24⁹⁹

[...] the ballooning of costs of Gwadar Port, from Rs8 billion six years ago to Rs100 billion today, raises very serious questions about both the planning and execution of the project. There are two possibilities: either the initial planning process was flawed and produced an unrealistically low number for the costs, or the project is being bungled to the point where costs have skyrocketed.... On the first front, the government's consistent inability to plan for the long run is by now a running theme of the state. Even more disappointing is the complete lack of seriousness with which the planning process is taken in most government departments.

With the flow, *The News*, March 25¹⁰⁰

[...] The case over the Kishanganga project and its design, which has been continuing for years, should perhaps have been argued with greater vigour and conviction. The views from environmentalists on what the project in India could do to Azad Kashmir in particular are terrifying. There have been studies that suggest that the Neelum, which runs through the picturesque valley, could virtually dry up into a stream, turning fertile lands and forests around it into barren wastelands and threatening the welfare of the people who live there. This would be an enormous tragedy. For now, however, the matter appears to have been settled. Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power has assured the National Assembly that under the agreement reached [with India], there will be no change in the volume of water reaching us.

Inspid IMF, Dr Muhammad Yaqub, *The News*, March 29¹⁰¹

On March 24, the IMF executive board released a statement on the state of the economy on the completion of the second review of the government's policy performance supported by an arrangement under the EFF. [...] The two central objectives of the IMF programme were to build up net foreign exchange reserves of the SBP and to stop the government from borrowing from the SBP. Having made the decision to keep the programme alive, it accepted higher government borrowing from the SBP and gave waiver of critical programme conditionality.

⁹⁹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686406/rising-costs-at-gwadar-port/>
<https://www.dawn.com/news/1093253/slow-progress-on-gwadar>

¹⁰⁰<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-240136-With-the-flow>

¹⁰¹<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-240937-Inspid-IMF>
<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-240141-Are-we-ready-to-grow>

SECURITY SITUATION

TERRORISM

KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA AND FATA

'39 militant outfits operating in KP', *Dawn*, March 4¹⁰²

Parliamentary party leaders of the treasury and opposition benches in the KP Assembly put their heads together in a closed-door meeting on March 3 and discussed prevailing security situation in the province. Sources said senior officials briefed parliamentary party leaders about the law and order situation and said *39 militant outfits were operating in the province, while 20 other groups functioning in the garb of Pakistani Taliban were involved in extortion, kidnapping for ransom and other criminal activities.*

Taliban incursion to threaten Kalash people impossible, SC told, *Dawn*, March 13¹⁰³

The KP government informed the Supreme Court that *any Taliban incursion into Pakistani territory from the Afghan province of Nooristan to force the Kalash in Chitral to convert to Islam was almost impossible* because the Pakistan Army was regularly patrolling the border. In reply to a suo motu notice taken by the apex court on Feb 20, KP Advocate General Abdul Latif Yousufzai submitted a two-page report explaining that the army and other law enforcement agencies were regularly keeping a strict vigil through 16 checkpoints from Arandu to Lutkoh areas. They were ready to counter any attempt by the Taliban, the report said. *Moreover, the border with Nooristan is inaccessible and presently snowbound. The Malakand commissioner visited Chitral district on Feb 21 and held a meeting with the Kalash community in Bumburet Valley, the report said, adding that the threat issued by the Taliban was nothing new.*

At least 18 tribesmen abducted from Peshawar outskirts, *Dawn*, March 15¹⁰⁴

At least 18 tribesmen were kidnapped by armed gunmen from Badhber area on the outskirts of Peshawar, the capital of restive KP province. The incident took place on March 15. Official sources said that about 60 to 70 armed gunmen raided Faqeer Kalley in Mashokhel area of Badhber, some one kilometre away from the main city and kidnapped 18 people from the village. The local people and the police said the kidnapped people belonged to the Shinwari tribe of Khyber agency. Badhber police have registered a case against three commanders of *the banned religious outfit Lashkar-e-Islam* for kidnapping of

¹⁰²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090918/39-militant-outfits-operating-in-kp>

¹⁰³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092871/taliban-incursion-to-threaten-kalash-people-impossible-sc-told>

¹⁰⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093320/at-least-18-tribesmen-abducted-from-peshawar-outskirts>

eleven tribesmen. Commanders *Khalid, Sherkhel and Izzat* have been nominated in the FIR.

BALUCHISTAN

BRA accepts responsibility for blowing up gas pipeline, *The News*, March 9¹⁰⁵

Repair work on the 18-inch diameter gas pipeline blown up on March 8 near Tangwani started on March 9. *The 18-inch diameter gas transmission pipeline from Sui to Karachi was damaged at Goth Makhi in Tehsil Tangwani of district Kashmore*, suspending gas supply to different areas in the province of Sindh. The defunct Baloch Republican Army has claimed responsibility of damaging the pipeline.

Militant attack at Pasni radar-post kills one in Baluchistan, *Dawn*, March 29¹⁰⁶

An armed militant attack at Pasni Radar-Post in Baluchistan's volatile Mekran belt near Pakistan's port city of Gwadar left one personnel dead, a senior official said on March 29. The militants fled the site but only after destroying some technical equipment and planting a bomb at the air traffic control post. Pasni is considered to be one of the sensitive areas of Baluchistan. *Militants in the area have been targeting security forces, vital national installations and pro-government personalities for last more than seven years.* There has been no claim of responsibility for the attack.

SINDH

Country must unite against terrorism: Altaf, *Dawn*, March 9¹⁰⁷

MQM chief Altaf Hussain on March 9 said that the entire country had to unite on a common front to fight terrorism. Speaking via telephone to the *Sufiya-e-Kiram Conference organised by his party in Lahore*, the MQM chief said that if terrorism is not tackled then the future of the country would be bleak.... "We do not want the Sharia of people who blow up places of worship.... What kind of Sharia allows the bombing of people who are offering their prayers," he said.

Uzair Baloch, Baba Ladla groups agree to ceasefire, *The News*, March 15¹⁰⁸

Quami Awami Tehreek President, Ayaz Latif Palejo claimed that *Uzair Jaan Baloch and Baba Ladla groups have agreed to a ceasefire in Lyari.* Addressing a

¹⁰⁵<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140439-BRA-accepts-responsibility-of-blowing-up-gas-pipeline>

¹⁰⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096410/militant-attack-at-pasni-radar-post-kills-one-in-baluchistan>

¹⁰⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092042/country-must-unite-against-terrorism-altaf>

¹⁰⁸<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141196-Uzair-Baloch,-Baba-Ladla-groups-agree-to-ceasefire>

press conference along with delegations of Baba Ladla and Uzair Baloch groups at his residence on 15 March, Palejo issued a 9-point joint communiqué. ..Palejo said *LyariIttehad Committee* has also been formed for peace in the area...headed by Palejo. Sania Baloch and Abdul Majeed Sarhari have been nominated by Uzair Baloch and Baba Ladla, respectively. *He said, in case any misunderstanding, both groups would approach the committee.*

DG Rangers lists Karachi's main problems, *Express Tribune*, March 19¹⁰⁹

Certain elements demand that army should be called in to handle the situation in Karachi but the crucial thing is to rectify the system DG Rangers Major General Rizwan Akhtar held on March 19, while speaking to the media after the inauguration of a new Command and Control Centre in Karachi. He ..highlighted the major problems in the metropolis and said *mismanagement of immigrants, uncontrolled urban expansion, continued patronage of land mafia, illegal hydrant business and smuggling* are the main causes of unrest in Karachi.

Politician-criminal nexus behind Karachi unrest: ISI, *Express Tribune*, March 26¹¹⁰

The premier intelligence agency of the country, ISI, has informed National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence on March 25 that the nexus of political parties and criminal organisations is responsible for the volatile law and order situation in Karachi. The parliamentary panel headed by Sheikh Rohail Asghar of PML-N held an in-camera briefing where *the officials revealed that the influence of TTP in the metropolis has also increased that needs attention and a strategy needs to be formulated to deal with the group* in case the peace talks with the outfit are not successful.

NATIONAL SECURITY

Pakistan's new security policy aims to reform madrassas, *Dawn*, March 3¹¹¹

The first "*National Internal Security Policy*", a copy of which was obtained by AFP on March 2, says that some of the country's 22,000 madrassas are responsible for spreading extremism. On the topic of religious schools, the document says: "*It is important to mention upfront that not all madrassas are a problem and therefore these must not be viewed negatively as a whole. "However, there were problems within some madrassas which have spread extremism,"*" it adds, noting "*financing from unidentified sources*" and the "*publication and distribution*

¹⁰⁹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684643/law-and-order-dg-rangers-lists-karachis-main-problems/>

¹¹⁰<http://tribune.com.pk/story/687352/briefing-on-security-political-criminal-nexus-behind-karachi-unrest-isi-tells-lawmakers/>

¹¹¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090547/pakistans-new-security-policy-aims-to-reform-madrassas>

of hate material". The vast majority of madrassas in Pakistan fall outside government control.

Question mark over capital security after attack: Khursheed Shah, Dawn, March4¹¹²

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah said that *attack on March 3 in Islamabad had put a question mark on the capital city's security*. Speaking to media representatives outside the Pakistan Institute of Medical Science (PIMC) after visiting the injured victims of the attack in the federal capital, Shah said....the opposition was neither demanding the resignation of Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan nor was it engaging in point-scoring but *it was important to underscore that the public should be granted protection*.

Clerics stand united: Wafaq takes dim view of security policy, Express Tribune, March18¹¹³

A key federation of the country's religious schools declared on March 17 its opposition to the National Security Policy *over fears that the government would meddle in the affairs of madrassas and change their curricula for the worst*. "We will not tolerate any interference in the curricula of seminaries. We believe in full autonomy and are free in devising our own curricula," Maulana Anwarul Haq, the central vice president of Wafaqul Madaris Al Arabia Pakistan told.

PM adds punch to force, The Nation, March19¹¹⁴

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has ordered establishment of National Intelligence Directorate under the National Counterterrorism Authority besides giving affirmative nod to establish rapid response forces at the federal and provincial levels. The premier passed these orders while chairing a high-level meeting on the national security including top military officials at Prime Minister's House on March 18. The chief secretaries and IGs of the provinces and other government officials were also among the participants.

Some madressahs spread disinformation about security policy, Dawn, March23¹¹⁵

Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan has said that with a view to gaining 'political advantages' some madressahs are spreading false information

¹¹²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090962/question-mark-over-capital-security-after-attack-khursheed-shah>

¹¹³<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684109/clerics-stand-united-wafaq-takes-dim-view-of-security-policy/>

¹¹⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/19-Mar-2014/pm-adds-punch-to-force-hope-to-talks>

¹¹⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094999/some-madressahs-spread-disinformation-about-security-policy-says-nisar>

about the National Security Policy...He assured Muhammad Rafi Usmani, the grand mufti of Pakistan and vice-president of WifaqulMadaris Al Arabiyathat the government was not planning to launch any operation against madressahs.

TALIBAN TALKS

Anti-talks Taliban 'to face armed Imran', Dawn, March3¹¹⁶

On March 2, Imran told the maiden meeting of the PTI Punjab Council "If the Taliban groups not in favour of talks continue their terror hits to derail the peace process, they'll find me armed standing by the armed forces". Reiterating his opposition to army operation in North Waziristan, he said it would badly hurt 700,000 innocent tribesmen, *expressing fear that the victims would also take up arms and become Taliban.*

Taliban be assigned to nail saboteurs, says Imran, The Nation, March4¹¹⁷

PTI chairman Imran Khan condemned the terrorist attack on courts in the heart of Islamabad, and urged the government not to abandon peace efforts. Speaking to reporters at Islamabad airport, the PTI chief said Pakistan cannot afford a full-fledged military action in North Waziristan.

TTP, govt committees meeting in AkoraKhattak, Dawn, March5¹¹⁸

The negotiators from the government and the TTP nominated committees met in AkoraKhattak on March 5. The members were consulting on the dissolution of the existing committee and the formation of a new committee to carry forward peace talks.

Khursheed Shah opposes army's role in negotiations, Dawn, March5¹¹⁹

Talking to media representatives the senior leader of the PPP, and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly SyedKhursheed Shah said on March 5 that including the Pakistan Army in the dialogue process with militants was dangerous adding that *the role of the armed forces was neither to hold negotiations nor make deals.* He demanded the government should hold talks on its own without involving the army.

PM advised to hold direct talks with TTP, Nation, March5¹²⁰

The government intermediaaries on March 4 advised Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to initiate the process for framing strategy to hold direct talks with the

¹¹⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090651/anti-talks-taliban-to-face-armed-imran>

¹¹⁷<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/04-Mar-2014/taliban-be-assigned-to-nail-talks-saboteurs-says-imran>

¹¹⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091183/ttp-govt-committees-meeting-in-akora-khattak>

¹¹⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091179/khursheed-shah-opposes-armys-role-in-negotiations>

¹²⁰<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/05-Mar-2014/pm-advised-to-hold-direct-talks-with-ttp>

Taliban militants and presented their recommendations for possible steps in future.

Peace talks enter 'new decisive phase', *Express Tribune*, March 6¹²¹

After the ceasefire announcement by the Taliban and suspension of surgical air strikes by the government, peace negotiators from two sides met for the first time in AkoraKhattak on March 5 in what was described as the start of the 'second and decisive phase of the peace process'. The meeting between the government's four-member negotiating team and Taliban intermediary committee at DarulUloomHaqqania lasted for three-and-a-half hours....Irfan Siddiqui, the coordinator of the government committee told reporters: "We have entered a new phase, where we have to take some important decisions". The Taliban intermediaries have requested a meeting with the premier and the government negotiators would facilitate in arranging the meeting, he added.

TTP frustrated at 'defiance' over ceasefire, *Dawn*, March 6¹²²

While there are growing demands for a full-scale military operation following the post-ceasefire terrorist attacks, some experts are urging the government to better understand the militant mindset and use that to the state's advantage. "Our society is polarised along the superficial 'only talks' and 'only military operation' lines. What we need to do is TO understand the thought process of the militants, their differences with each other and use these differences to pit them against each other," said an official from the security establishment, speaking on condition of anonymity. Recently a new group calling itself Ahrarul Hind (liberators of India) has surfaced and is claiming to be a splinter of the banned TTP.

Fazl wants scope of dialogue widened in FATA, *The News*, March 7¹²³

JUI-F Chief, MaulanaFazl-ur-Rehman stressed that scope of the ongoing peace talks be broadened to cover all the armed groups present in FATA. Speaking on the Internal Security Policy from the floor of lower house of the parliament, Fazl said that it was a travesty that the Taliban had been given the status of a state. "We have seen the consequence of engaging in dialogue with an organization in the shape of an incident in Islamabad", he added.

Splinter groups threaten peace talks, *Express Tribune*, March 9¹²⁴

The government has hailed progress in peace talks with the TTP, but attacks claimed by mysterious splinter factions are threatening to undermine the

¹²¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/679532/dialogue-process-peace-talks-enter-new-decisive-phase/>

¹²²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091342/ttp-frustrated-at-defiance-over-ceasefire>

¹²³<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140156-Fazl-ur-Rehman-wants-scope-of-dialogue-widened-in-FATA>

¹²⁴<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680732/splinter-groups-threaten-peace-talks/>

process. The TTP declared a one-month ceasefire last weekend, but that was swiftly followed by a major attack in Islamabad and a bloody roadside bombing targeting security forces – both claimed by dissident groups. A written statement from the group sent to the media on February 9 and seen by AFP said it will not take part in peace talks and will carry on attacking cities, even if the government and TTP reach a peace deal.

Imran, Nisar discuss peace dialogues with Taliban, *The News*, March 9¹²⁵

According to the spokesman of Imran Khan, the PTI chief and interior minister exchanged views, over telephone on March 9, on the situation which emerged after the attack on F-8 Kachehri Islamabad. The spokesman said Imran Khan and Ch. Nisar were in regular contact with each other over the past one month. Both the leaders also held a meeting last week.

PTI nominates Gulzar Khan to the govt committee, *Express Tribune*, March 11¹²⁶

A day after the PTI expressed its willingness to be a part of the new talks committee, on Monday it conveyed to the government the name of Gulzar Khan as their nominee. PTI officials told that the name of Gulzar Khan, a member of the National Assembly from Peshawar, has been conveyed to the government. The government on March 6 decided to form a new committee that will hold direct talks with the TTP in a bid to accelerate the peace process.

Govt rules out TTP office, *Express Tribune*, March 12¹²⁷

The federal government ruled out the possibility of the TTP opening an office in the country quashing speculation that it had received such a request from the group. The government made its stance known following a call attention notice by ANP lawmakers during the Senate session. The lawmakers had questioned the government's stance over *an offer made by KP Health Minister Shaukat Yousufzai to set up an office for the Taliban in Peshawar*. Responding to questions, State Minister for Education Muhammad Baleegh Rehman informed the house that *the government had not been contacted to set up an office for the Taliban and that no such offer was on the cards*.

Ceasefire will not be violated: TTP Mohmand, *The News*, March 12¹²⁸

The head of the TTP Mohmand Agency, Omar Khorasani in a statement said that *the ceasefire agreement with the government will not be violated*. The TTP

¹²⁵<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140464-Imran,-Nisar-discuss-peace-dialogues-with-Taliban>

¹²⁶<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681084/peace-talks-pti-nominates-gulzar-khan-for-new-government-committee/>

¹²⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681750/senate-session-govt-rules-out-ttp-office/>

¹²⁸<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140740-Ceasefire-will-not-be-violated:-TTP-Mohmand->

Mohmand head added that, *no one including former President General (ret'd) Pervez Musharraf will be targeted during the ceasefire.*

Talks to get succeeded at all cost: Yousuf Shah, *The News*, March12¹²⁹

Taliban Committee coordinator, Maulana Yousaf Shah has emphasised that peace talks will be successful at costs, adding that a military operation would not take place. Addressing a *press conference along with the petrol pump owners of North Waziristan*, Maulana Yousuf Shah said the government continued to suspend supply of petrol and diesel to North Waziristan since February 25. *He demanded of the government to immediately restore the supply of petrol and diesel to the restive region.*

Willing to give more than office to Taliban: KP CM, *The News*, March12¹³⁰

Chief Minister KP, Pervez Khattak said the provincial government was willing to give more than an office to the TTP.

Imran Khan says dialogue divided Taliban in 2 groups, *The News*, March13¹³¹

Lauding the government's move to initiate peace talks, PTI Chairman Imran Khan said on March 12 that the process has divided the Taliban in two groups. Talking to media persons after holding a meeting Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Imran said he assured of extending unconditional support to the government for making the peace process a success.

Habib leads new govt team, *The Nation*, March13¹³²

Government sources said the new government committee is being led by Secretary Ports and Shipping Habibullah Khan Khattak and includes Additional Secretary to PM Fawad Hassan Fawad, Rustam Shah Mohmand and Fata Additional Secretary Arbab Arif as its members.

Ahrarul Hind claims responsibility for Peshawar, Quetta blasts, *The Nation*, March15¹³³

An increasingly active Taliban splinter group, Ahrarul Hind claimed responsibility for the Quetta and Peshawar blasts. On March 13, attacks in Peshawar and Quetta killed a total of 19 people. In Peshawar, a suicide

¹²⁹<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140718-Talks-to-get-succeeded-at-all-cost:-Yousuf-Shah>

¹³⁰<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140748-KP-govt-willing-to-give-more-than-an-office-to-Taliban:-Khattak->

¹³¹<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140859-Imran-Khan-says-dialogue-divided-Taliban-in-2-groups>

¹³²<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/13-Mar-2014/habib-leads-new-govt-team>

¹³³<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/15-Mar-2014/ahrarul-hind-claims-responsibility-for-peshawar-quetta-blasts>

bomber blew himself up in front of a police vehicle, killing at least nine bystanders including a woman and a child, police said. In Quetta, at least 10 people were killed when a motorcycle laden with explosives exploded near a college in the city center, police said. *"We claim both Peshawar and Quetta attacks,"* chief of Ahrarul Hind Umar Qasmi told a foreign news agency. *"We don't abide by these peace talks and will continue to stage attacks."*

Venue hitch delays direct talks, *The Nation*, March 16¹³⁴

The efforts for direct talks between the government and Taliban hit a snag over the venue issue as TTP wanted the meeting to take place in South Waziristan while government wished it to be held in the settled areas. ...Sources informed *The Nation* that TTP Shura had proposed a meeting point in the outskirts of Wana, while government wanted the meeting in the peripheries of South Waziristan, somewhere around Bannu, where government writ is relatively stronger.

'Taliban seek release of children and women', *Dawn*, March 17¹³⁵

On March 16, Professor Mohammad Ibrahim Khan, a member of the committee instituted by the banned TTP for talks with the government said that the TTP Shura handed a list of people including women, children and elderly people, whom it wanted the government to release from its custody. Prof Ibrahim and Maulana Yousaf Shah went to Miramshah for consultations with members of the TTP Shura....The Inter-Services Public Relations, the mouthpiece of the military, however denied that women and children were in its custody. Prof Ibrahim said the Taliban wanted to meet the government committee in an area of the Mehsud tribe in South Waziristan.

PM reiterates talks to be held according to constitution, *The Nation*, March 18¹³⁶

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the current progress on talks with Taliban and has reiterated that talks with the Taliban should be held in accordance with the Constitution. According to sources he expressed these views while presiding over a high-level meeting and holding consultation with his cabinet and the military leadership on various issues of national security including the ongoing negotiation with Taliban militants. The meeting was attended by chief ministers of all four provinces, Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif, and DG ISI Lt. General Zaheer-ul-Islam, in addition to the cabinet members.

¹³⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/16-Mar-2014/venue-hitch-delays-direct-talks>

¹³⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093655/taliban-seek-release-of-children-and-women>

¹³⁶<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/18-Mar-2014/pm-reiterates-talks-with-taliban-should-be-held-in-accordance-to-constitution>

TTP wants 'free peace zone' for talks, Dawn, March18¹³⁷

The banned TTP has asked the government to earmark a "free peace zone" where militant leaders could come without any fear for holding peace talks with the government committee.

Govt finalises plan for direct talks with TTP, Dawn, March20¹³⁸

The government has finalised a plan for holding direct talks with the outlawed TTP. The new committee formed by the government to hold talks with the TTP Shura called on Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and gave final touches to the plan for taking the peace process forward. The meeting was informed that the Taliban had promised to dissociate themselves from the groups which did not follow the ceasefire. It was told that the TTP was trying to identify such groups and committed to taking action against them.

Committees agree on venue for direct talks with TTP, Dawn, March22¹³⁹

Committees representing the government and Taliban met on March 22 for a two-hour long session to finalise the date and venue for the next phase of peace talks. Member of the Taliban committee MaulanaSamiulHaqtold reporters following the meeting also attended by the Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan: "The process of talking directly to the Taliban will start in two to three days, both sides have agreed on the venue". MaulanaSamiulHaq, however, stopped short of specifying if the negotiations would be taking place in Bannu.

TTP accuses govt of stepping up attacks in tribal areas, Dawn, March23¹⁴⁰

TTP spokesman ShahidullahShahid told media personnel by phone on March 22 that instead of reciprocating his group's goodwill gesture with a befitting move the authorities had intensified activities against the militants. He said the government did not seem to be sincere towards dialogue with the TTP. It seemed that the government wanted the militants to resume carrying out attacks across the country, the TTP spokesman added.

¹³⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093856/ttp-wants-free-peace-zone-for-talks>

¹³⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094301/govt-finalises-plan-for-direct-talks-with-ttp>

¹³⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094855/committees-agree-on-venue-for-direct-talks-with-ttp>

¹⁴⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095008/ttp-accuses-govt-of-stepping-up-attacks-in-tribal-areas>

Govt to propose release of sons of Gilani, Taseer to TTP shura, *Express Tribune*, March 24¹⁴¹

Government negotiators will propose the release of *the sons of former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani and late Governor Punjab Salmaan Taseer to the TTP political Shura* (advisory council) during their first face-to-face meeting.

Pact on release of non-combatants, ceasefire extension: TTP, *The News*, March 27¹⁴²

Spokesman of the proscribed TTP said on March 26 that maiden round of talks between the government negotiation committee and the members of Taliban central Shura were held in a pleasant atmosphere. TTP spokesman Shahidullah Shahid said that an *agreement has been reached on release of non-combatant detainees and extension in ceasefire*. However, he demanded of the government to *discontinue the patrolling conducted by the army troops in Waziristan on weekly basis with a view to allow free movement in the area*.

TTP does not want to enforce Shariah at gunpoint, says Imran, *Dawn*, March 27¹⁴³

PTI chairman Imran Khan said on March 27 that *Taliban did not want to enforce Shariah in the country at gunpoint but wanted to liberate it from the US war*. Khan underscored that *tribal people should have been given priority for inclusion in the government's committee for peace talks*, adding that they held the key to dialogue.

Talks deadlocked; TTP rigidity blamed, *Dawn*, March 28¹⁴⁴

Despite a degree of optimism and feel-good impression generated by the militant-handpicked committee, insiders believe the *first direct face-to-face interaction with militants has hit a stalemate* and unless some quick decisions are taken, it will be difficult to prolong the ceasefire. The ceasefire is to expire on March 31. According to an insider, the militants have set two conditions for continuation of the peace talks. *One*, the creation of a demilitarised peace zone in mountainous Shakto, South Waziristan, to allow freedom of movement and *two*, the release of non-combatants....*"We said 'let bygones be bygones, let's bury the hatchet and make a new beginning',"* the insider said. *"Nothing seemed to appeal to them. I have come back really disappointed. The chances of success and continuation are not terribly bright. This is a non-starter,"* said one insider.

¹⁴¹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/686621/govt-to-propose-release-of-sons-of-gilani-taseer-to-ttp-shura/>

¹⁴²<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142517-Pact-on-release-of-non-combatants,-ceasefire-extension:-TTP>

¹⁴³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095926/ttp-does-not-want-to-enforce-shariah-at-gunpoint-says-imran>

¹⁴⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096105/talks-deadlocked-ttp-rigidity-blamed>

Govt, TTP agree to extend truce, Dawn, March30¹⁴⁵

The committees representing the government and the Taliban agreed on March 29 to extend the ceasefire and take measures to speed up the dialogue process. At a joint meeting, presided over by Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan and attended by members of the committees of the government and the outlawed TTP, the two parties agreed to carry forward the peace process. Talking to reporters after the meeting, the head of the TTP committee, MaulanaSamiulHaq, confirmed that the ceasefire would continue beyond March 31, the date set by them. But he did not say whether the ceasefire was still “temporary” or “permanent”.

Taliban hint at releasing ‘high-profile people’: Ibrahim, Dawn, March31¹⁴⁶

Talking to reporters after a training session for JI workers on March 30, Prof Ibrahim did not rule out release of Ali Musa Gilani, ShahbazTaseer and Dr Prof Ajmal Khan, the former vice chancellor of Islamia College University, Peshawar.

EDITORIALS AND OPINION

Pakistan’s new friends, Amir Zia, The News, March 10¹⁴⁷

The interior minister believes that the Taliban are ‘not anti-Pakistan’. Then should we say that the pro-Pakistan Taliban executed all the bombings and suicide attacks, killing thousands of men, women and children? *If this is not Orwellian double talk, then how else can it be described?*

Meaningless ceasefire, Dawn, March16¹⁴⁸

If a splinter group with national reach is implausible enough, *the modus operandi of the Ahrarul Hind-claimed attacks has all the hallmarks of a TTP hit*. Why then should the TTP’s claim that it has nothing to do with the attack be accepted without any proof? At the very least, given that even the TTP is not denying that the elements that constitute the Ahrarul Hind today were at some point a part of the TTP network, *the militant group should be in a position to explain who this group is, how it operates and where its members are*.

¹⁴⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096588/govt-ttp-agree-to-extend-truce>

¹⁴⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096761/taliban-hint-at-releasing-high-profile-people-ibrahim>

¹⁴⁷<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-237419-Pakistan%E2%80%99s-new-friends>

¹⁴⁸<https://www.dawn.com/news/1093470/meaningless-ceasefire>

<http://www.nation.com.pk/editorials/16-Mar-2014/peace-process-under-attack>

Pakistan: Reorganisation of intelligence infrastructure, Musa Khan Jalalzai, *Daily Times*, March 25¹⁴⁹

During the Zia military regime, the process of radicalisation began in military barracks, and a major change occurred when General ZiaulHaq instructed military and intelligence units to take on combatant mullahs with them to the frontline. Soldiers and officers were also required to attend TablighiJamaat classes. The purpose was to indoctrinate young officers. The intelligence community of Pakistan faces numerous challenges, including a widespread lack of civilian support, confidence, sectarian affiliations, the war in Waziristan, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Balochistan.

Facts about first direct talks, *Daily Times*, March 28¹⁵⁰

After toing and froing and a seesaw, hesitant beginning, not to mention the recasting of the negotiating teams on both sides, the government negotiating team has finally met face to face the Taliban *shura* (leadership council) in a remote village, Balandkhel, near the boundary between North Waziristan and Orakzai Agency. *The government's reconstituted team comprises former ambassador Rustam Shah Mohmand, former ISI officer Major Amir (these two the survivors from the government's earlier team), bureaucrats Arbab Arif, Habibullah Khattak and Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister Fawad Hasan Fawad. The 13-member Taliban team was headed by Qari Shakeel, a militant leader from Mohmand Agency, and included Sajjad Mohmand, Azam Tariq, Maulvi Noor Said, Maulvi Asmatullah, Maulvi Bashir and Maulvi Zakir.* The talks lasted for two sessions and spanned seven hours.

No policy clarity, Munir Akram, *Dawn*, March 31¹⁵¹

At present, the pervasive characteristic of Pakistan's security policies regarding the TTP, Afghanistan and India is *reactive incoherence*. Despite the TTP's escalated violence, the government has persisted in its preference for 'talks'. The objectives sought to be achieved are unclear. Obviously, the government cannot accommodate any of the main demands of the TTP without compromising Pakistan's Constitution and the country's progress and prosperity. *What is required in essence is the TTP's surrender. Can this be achieved through talks and at this time?....It is obviously a tactical imperative for Pakistan to ease tensions with its eastern neighbour, particularly while it is preoccupied with internal security challenges and the difficult situation on its*

¹⁴⁹<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/opinion/25-Mar-2014/pakistan-reorganisation-of-intelligence-infrastructure>

¹⁵⁰<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/editorial/28-Mar-2014/first-direct-talks>

¹⁵¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096603/no-policy-clarity>

western border. *But the gestures made to India need to be calculated and well-timed. Above all, these should not compromise Pakistan's vital interests or positions.*

RELATIONS WITH INDIA

Carefully treading trade with India, Express Tribune, March9¹⁵²

With talks of liberalising trade with India doing the rounds, it would be timely to review the present situation. India gave Pakistan the MFN status in 1996. Yet Pakistan's exports to India have been pitiful, around \$300 million, while Indian exports have been 5 times higher, clocking in at \$1.6 billion. This has happened despite Pakistan not giving India the MFN status. Now we want to give Non-Discriminatory Market Access (NDMA) to India and yet say that exports would rise. *Not at least till India removes the non-tariff and technical barriers to trade. Let's be clear that Pakistan is clearing the road for Indian imports and not, in the true sense, bilateral trade. Why should Pakistan want that?.*

Senate calls for taking up water disputes with India, Dawn, March11¹⁵³

The Senate unanimously passed a resolution moved by Senator Sughra Imam of the PPP on March 10 urging the government to formally include water disputes in the agenda for talks with India. Interestingly, the members insisted that the resolution should be passed despite the announcement by Leader of the House Raja ZafarulHaq that the government had already made water issues a part of the agenda of the dialogue with India.

No plan to renegotiate Indus Water Treaty: FO, The Nation, March15¹⁵⁴

Pakistan has no plan to renegotiate historic Indus Water Treaty with India and instead considers getting the water dispute included in the composite dialogue process. *"There is no proposal under consideration to seek renegotiation on IWT,"* Foreign Office Spokesperson TasnimAslam told *The Nation* on March14. Instead, the government is seriously considering making outstanding water dispute with India as part of the composite dialogue process, she added.

¹⁵²<http://tribune.com.pk/story/680750/carefully-treading-trade-with-india/>

¹⁵³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092380/senate-calls-for-taking-up-water-disputes-with-india>

¹⁵⁴<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/15-Mar-2014/no-plan-to-renegotiate-indus-water-treaty-fo>

'India ready to lift restrictions on Pakistani textile products', *The News*, March16¹⁵⁵

India is ready to remove restrictions on Pakistani textiles products, a move which will increase Pakistani exports to New Delhi three folds, said Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's Assistant Maftah Ismael on March15. He said that India will ease ban on 160 Pakistani products and it had agreed to grant access to Pakistani items to local market. Maftah said that Pakistan had demanded of India not to impose duty on 160 items.

Nawaz govt failed to deliver on Kashmir issue: Attique, *The Nation*, March16¹⁵⁶

SardarAttique Ahmad Khan, president AJKMC and former PM of 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir', has said on March 15 that the federal government has failed to deliver on Kashmir issue. Instead, Sharif is promoting trade with India. He added that trade with India would further damage national industry with Indian products domination. *He alleged that Nawaz and his team were marketing their own business of iron and cement. He also said "India also plans opening of banks in Pakistan in order to make the country's economy dependent on it. So Pakistan should closely watch this conspiracy and devise an effective trade policy by linking it with the Kashmir issue resolution". He said that whether it was backdoor diplomacy or traditional diplomacy, what Musharraf did for Kashmir cause was remarkable.*

Pakistan calls for release of fishermen, *Express Tribune*, March17¹⁵⁷

Pakistan on March 17 lodged a formal protest with India over the capture of its 13 fishermen by India, and called for their immediate release. The Indian Deputy High Commissioner in Islamabad was called to the Foreign Office on on March 16 where the Director General South Asia and SAARC registered a formal protest. Pakistan's Fishermen Cooperative Society claimed that the fishermen along with their boat were well within Pakistan's territorial waters, at Khajar Creek, when they were captured by Indian authorities.

Pakistan all set to import electricity from India, *Express Tribune*, March20¹⁵⁸

As the World Bank has offered to finance the feasibility study and transmission line to import 1,200 MW of power from India, Pakistan has sent the draft of the initial power trade deal to its eastern neighbour despite opposition from

¹⁵⁵<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-141251-India-ready-to-lift-restrictions-on-Pakistani-textile-products>

¹⁵⁶<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/16-Mar-2014/nawaz-govt-failed-to-deliver-on-kashmir-issue-attique>

¹⁵⁷<http://tribune.com.pk/story/683907/pakistan-summons-indian-deputy-high-commissioner-calls-for-immediate-release-of-fishermen/>

¹⁵⁸<http://tribune.com.pk/story/685056/pakistan-all-set-to-import-electricity-from-india/>

various quarters. Sources told that a pre-feasibility study was completed to identify the routes for electricity import. A draft of MoU has been handed over to Indian authorities in a recent meeting held in New Delhi.

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Crimea votes, but not Kashmir, M ANiazi, *The Nation*, March 21¹⁵⁹

Russia has intervened in Crimea saying it was upholding the right of national self-determination, which is something it has not supported in Kashmir, where it has backed the illegal occupation by India...even though it has the backing of the UN Security Council resolutions. *One major difference between the Crimean and Kashmiri cases is that the former did not even have a UN resolution backing this right to self-determination.*

Regional stability, K. Iqbal, *The Nation*, March 24¹⁶⁰

In any pursuit of peace between India and Pakistan, arms control and arms reductions will be one of the main challenges. Over previous years, Pakistan has been forwarding viable proposals and in this regard a Strategic Restraint Regime is still on the table. Despite raising the bogey of China for international consumption, over 80 percent of Indian weapon systems and around 90 percent of military command and control structures are Pakistan specific. India has no application of its huge inventory of armour, short legged aircraft and tactical missiles in the context of China. Arms build-up in the India-Pakistan scenario is no longer a bilateral issue because India maintains that its main military threat emanates from China. However, India has bilateral trade of US\$ 80 billion with China, and so this is paradoxical. Besides creating other perceptual distortions, this position has made any arms control or arms reduction initiative unworkable, and has made it a trilateral matter.

Afraid of trade?, Nadir Hassan, *The News*, March 27¹⁶¹

Nawaz Sharif was *either fooling us or himself* when he said at The Hague that Pakistan wouldn't give MFN trading status to India because he didn't want to give a leg up to any party in the run-up to general elections in that country. *If any agreement we reach with the government of the day in that virulently anti-Pakistan country would impact the polls it would surely be in favour of the opposing party.* The prime minister was slightly more honest when he said that *another reason for the delay was the lack of consensus on the issue at home, which is true enough if consensus is defined as receiving a seal of approval from the military.*

¹⁵⁹<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/21-Mar-2014/crimea-votes-but-not-kashmir>

¹⁶⁰<http://www.nation.com.pk/columns/24-Mar-2014/regional-stability>

¹⁶¹<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-240536-Afraid-of-trade>

The MFN circus, *The News*, March 28¹⁶²

Strengthened economic ties with India, in the form of granting them MFN status, has often been touted *as a magic bullet that would not only improve the economic wellbeing of both countries but also finally lead to peace between them.* For those committed to this notion Nawaz Sharif's decision not to grant India either the MFN or Non-Discriminatory Market Access will be a bitter pill to swallow..... *The real worry is that the next government will be formed by the BJP with Narendra Modi as prime minister. Modi's anti-Pakistan rhetoric and general attitude towards Muslims is going to make it hard for Pakistan to deal with him and could kill off any chance of further trade.*

FROM URDU MEDIA

EDITORIALS AND OPINIONS

Talks: Season Second, by Dr.AamirLiaqat Hussain, *Daily Jang*, March 3¹⁶³

What happened to those huge pledges that you (TTP) had made that you would not talk under the parameters of the Pakistani constitution? Now you have declared a ceasefire. *It is a pity that those who talk about waging jihad capitulate when they confront a strong enemy. That is not the way Jihad is waged.....* Targeting civilians and the military in secret attacks is not a big deal. You always mix the sacred names of Allah and Prophet's name with these heinous attacks. Now when you came close to defeat you started talking of dialogue and hurling the white flag...The state should have either eliminated them completely or disarmed them and presented them before the people, and let them decide as to what should be done to them. Possibly, the people who have seen thousands of their dear ones dead may still forgive them. But before such an eventuality would materialise, the opportunists have started a new propaganda, i.e., "Talks". It would be apt to call it season no 2 for these terrorists.....*Whatever is happening now on this front, was quite expected from Nawaz Sharif.* And what can one say about Chaudhury Nisar? He has done a great justice to his name "Nisar", which means to sacrifice. I got a good smell of this when he offered a cricket match to TTP. This was a perfect tribute to those civilians and military personnel who have sacrificed their lives for this nation.

¹⁶²<http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-8-240706-The-MFN-circus>
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096031/off-track-again>

¹⁶³<http://jang.com.pk/jang/mar2014-daily03-03-2014/col4.htm>

Dialogue with whom and why?, Editorial, *Daily Ummat*, March 4.¹⁶⁴

The suicide attack on the district sessions court in Islamabad on March 3, 2014, in which 11 people were killed, *should force the patriotic religious and political forces to contemplate seriously about which group they should talk to and which group they should not*, so that the issue of terrorism can be handled effectively. The Taliban have declared one-month ceasefire and the government has responded by stopping aerial bombings. *However, there are both internal and external factors that will try to sabotage the peace talks*. Hence, it is too early to say that the talks would succeed. Ahrarul Hind, which took responsibility for the Islamabad court attack has stated that *they are not the part of TTP and will not abide by the ceasefire agreement*. The literal meaning of Ahrarul Hind is 'the free people of Hindustan'. *Now we should ask the question whether these forces want to liberate India or to destroy Pakistan by aligning with the free Indian people*.

The attack has once again proved that talks with two to three groups will not yield results. *If the government wants talks to succeed, it should start talks with their actual bosses in Afghanistan*. The government should talk to TTP only after a successful dialogue with Mullah Umar. *Those who go against Mullah Umar should be declared as terrorists*. Mullah Umar and his friends have always reiterated that those who are killing innocent people, attacking places of worship and markets are not Muslims. It would be easy for Pakistani government to isolate such forces and confront them.

Can talks and terror go together?, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, March 7.¹⁶⁵

According to media reports, the Taliban are now involved in direct talks with the government committee. *If only the terrorist incidents cease, it will help the process of engagement...*In order to give another chance to peace, the government is repeating the same mantra again and again. How long shall this process last? The cliché that talks and terrorism cannot go together is being repeated a number of times. *Terrorism has not stopped and terrorists are targeting security forces as usual*. In response to big attacks, the government hardens its approach, but after a few days it talks about dialogue with the Taliban again. The government has put the lives of common people in danger by repeating this mantra. Now this should be the final chance for talks. *In between, if any terrorist incidents happen, the doors for talks should be closed and the decision which was taken earlier by the government and the military behind the closed doors should be followed*.

¹⁶⁴<http://ummatpublication.com/2014/03/04/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

¹⁶⁵<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/editorials/07-Mar-2014/286631>

Generate Electricity with Chinese Help Rather than Indian, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, March 9.¹⁶⁶

There is no denying the fact that Pakistan is facing the worst possible energy crises. There is a dire need of electricity. But the people of Pakistan are not willing to buy electricity from India. Right now the government is in the process of generating 32,000MW electricity with Chinese help. We need only 18,000 to 20,000 MW. *So what is the need of forming technical, commercial and regulatory committees for buying electricity from India?* The government should start generating electricity with the help of China and Turkey and *should shun the dream of buying 500MW electricity from India.* India is stopping our water and thus the electricity we could generate from it. *It is time to talk India about Kashmir. If Kashmir issue is resolved, other issues will be resolved automatically.* India is desperate for trade but is not willing to resolve the Kashmir issue according to the UN resolutions. Sartaj Aziz was right when he said that talks on trade are not useful without resolving other issues.

Talks or Operation: Need for Consensus, Editorial: *Daily Ausaf*, March 9.¹⁶⁷

The suggestion put forth by the government appointed committee to include military in direct talks with Taliban occupied the centre-stage in the corps commander's conference convened by the Pakistan Army Chief. *The military has the right to offer every possible suggestion but it does not mean that it would sit on the table with killers and murderers...* There should be no confusion on this point that those who are challenging the writ of the state should be firmly dealt with. *But before going to take any decision in this regard there is a need for generating a consensus because the state is facing both internal and external challenges.* The external powers have hired a few people among us and are using them against us. So the need of the hour is to bring people from every section on the same table and let military know who are the ones acting against our interests.

So far as the military is concerned, it should talk to the terrorists in their own language. Talks should be held with those who want to talk. And those who challenge the writ of the state should be dealt according to the constitution. Both the government and the military have shown a lot of patience. *If terrorist attacks do not stop, military should take everything possible into their hands to deal with the forces of terror.*

¹⁶⁶<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/editorials/09-Mar-2014/287141>

¹⁶⁷http://www.ausaf.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014-03-09/p14_01.jpg

Decision to Increase Defense Budget, Editorial: *Daily Express*, March 10.¹⁶⁸

The Chief of Army Staff, Gen Raheel Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar met in GHQ where 15 to 20 percent increase in the defence budget for the financial year 2014-15 was decided. A total of 700\$billion has been earmarked for defence against The revised estimates of \$627 billion for the financial year of 2013-14. So there is an increase of \$73 billion, year on year.

There is no doubt that government is giving preference to national security. Without strong defence it is very difficult to defend national integrity. The challenges Pakistan is facing both on internal and external fronts make it necessary to increase the defence budget. Right from its inception, Pakistan has had a problem with India on its eastern border. So Pakistan has been forced to spend more on defence, whereas other areas got little attention. Three wars have been fought between Pakistan and India on Kashmir. But still the issue remain unresolved as the bone of contention between the two neighbours.

What Pakistan needs to do is that, it should spend more on research and development (R&D) and focus on manufacturing of indigenous weapons. Like the US and Europe, Pakistan can also sell them in the world market and can release the pressure on the national treasury. Right now, people are sacrificing their basic needs but they are spending more on defence in order to safeguard national security. However, it is very difficult to increase the defence budget every year.

GB CM's Investment Lollypop, Editorial, *Bang-e-Sahar*, March 11.¹⁶⁹

On his recent visit to Germany, the Chief Minister of GilgitBaltistan said that investment in GilgitBaltistan on hydro-power projects can address Pakistan's energy needs. Cheap electricity can be generated in GilgitBaltistan. *He assured the investors of providing full security to them.* He further said that GilgitBaltistan is safe for tourists. The terrorists who were involved in Nanga Parbat had been arrested.

There is no denying the fact that GiggitBaltistan is a rich in natural resources. *But the Chief Minister is saying the same thing for the last five years.* According to him GigitBaltistan has a potential of generating 50,000 MW of electricity so national and international investors should come and invest here. *But no one gives him any heed. Does he know anything about investment?* There are some fundamentals which are necessary for the investment. First and foremost is peace— if there is no peace in the region, the investors will not bring their

¹⁶⁸http://express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1102120427&Issue=NP_LHE&Date=2014310

¹⁶⁹http://www.bangesahar.net/popup.php?r_date=03-11-2014&img=03-11-2014page-2-1

money for investment. *The internal security condition in Pakistan today is very bad; the investors thus prefer to invest in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Malaysia and Britain. Every second day we have curfew and shutdown and markets remain closed for days, so how can the businessmen invest here?* Our chief minister Mehdi Shah should take notice of this issue.

Is this the last chance for peace? Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, March 14.¹⁷⁰

The new government committee for talks has been formed....Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called on PTI chief Imran Khan at his residence. *Nawaz Sharif reiterated that peace would return without even shedding a single drop of blood....the military [also] backs the government on its ongoing talks with the TTP. Every time it is the TTP which has violated the ceasefire in its earlier agreements with the government.* The Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar said that if talks fail there would be no other option except a military operation. Government should take this talk as the last chance and try to make it successful.

No end of India's war mongering, Editorial: *Daily Ummat*, March 19.¹⁷¹

According to the report from an international institute, India is the largest importer of weapons in the world. Since last five years, India has imported arms five times more than China and Pakistan in order to satisfy its war mongering zeal. According to a report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute(SIPRI), India has imported 14 percent of the world total weapons imported between 2009 and 2013. In comparison, both Pakistan and China have imported 5.5 per cent each. India's growing war mongering is the biggest challenge Pakistan is facing today and the threat is rising day by day. Over the years, India has become the storehouse of deadly missiles. It is an irony that the so called biggest democracy of the world has the largest number of people living below the poverty line. Its people are struggling to get a decent meal every day. Millions of its people are living in slums. But the Indian rulers have no time to provide food, shelter, education and basic needs to their people. Instead, they are spending so much on weapons so that they can fulfill their dream of establishing India as a regional power.

Need to Maintain a Balance between Iran and Saudi Arabia, by Nusrat Mirza, *Daily Jang*, March 24.¹⁷²

Pakistan's atomic weapons are for its own national defence but they have an impact on the Arab world. *If Pakistan would have helped Iran when the latter was having a difficult time, Iran, like Turkey, would have been our best friend.* In the past, both Iran and Pakistan helped each other to a great extent. During our

¹⁷⁰<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/editorials/14-Mar-2014/288351>

¹⁷¹<http://ummatpublication.com/2014/03/19/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

¹⁷²<http://jang.com.pk/jang/mar2014-daily/24-03-2014/col11.htm>

wars with India in 1965 and 1971, Iran helped us. Pakistan also helped Iran in Iraq-Iran war in so many ways. But this relationship got spoilt when Iran revealed the name of Pakistan as the source of its nuclear weapons designer. That time Pakistan was out in a difficult situation. Pakistan had only two alternatives— take responsibility or blame it on a single person. It had to choose the latter and A. Q Khan was made a scapegoat and had to go through many punishments.

Now high level delegations from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain have visited Pakistan. They are showing great interest in Pakistan for multiple reasons. They have been requested to invest in energy and port developments. It is a big challenge for Pakistan now to maintain a balance between Iran and Saudi Arabia. One way is to bring Iran and Saudi Arabia on the table. Pakistan can play an intermediary role. It has played it in the past and it can do it again now. Second, Pakistan should take Iran into confidence that relationship with Arab countries will never be used against its interests. Pakistan should stop Jaish-ul-Adl from attacking Iran from its soil. Iran-Pakistan gas pipe line has to materialize.

Pakistan Should Raise Water Issue with India, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, March 14.¹⁷³

The sudden release of water by India, and continuous rain have created a flood-like situation at the Marala Barrage, where the water level has increased above the danger mark. While the leader of the AamAdmi Party (AAP) has stated that talks should be started on Kashmir with Pakistan, India has created many dams on various rivers carrying water into Pakistan. India diverts water into its dams which would otherwise flow into Pakistan. Whenever it rains and the Indian dams are full with water, it lets the excess water flow into Pakistani rivers which causes floods and destroys residential areas of Pakistan. Recently famine in Thar was due to lack of water. The situation in Cholistan is also similar to that of Thar. Pakistan should sternly raise the water issue with India so that we do not suffer for lack of water. AAP has talked about the resolution of the Kashmir issue and Pakistan should use this opportunity to resolve the issue.

Why are we in a hurry to trade with India?, Editorial, *Daily Ummat*, March 24.¹⁷⁴

The Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid said recently that *Pakistani military is not opposing the government's move to grant India MFN status*. Every institution is working in tandem with the government. He has stated that when the military does not have any problem of having trade relations with other countries, why should it oppose trade with India, who is our neighbour? On

¹⁷³<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/editorials/14-Mar-2014/288350>

¹⁷⁴<http://ummatpublication.com/2014/03/24/news.php?idr1.gif>

Pakistan-Iran gas pipe line, he said that the government is not under pressure from any other country.

The present foreign policy of Pakistan looks more legitimate and acceptable. Its impact is being felt on Pakistan's economy. *However, in spite of improvement in economy and strengthening of rupee vs. dollar, the overall development and the living conditions of the people have not changed. More importantly, unnecessary importance is being given to trade with India.* It is understandable that India wants to normalize relationship with Pakistan through trade because it wants to convince the world that there is a complete harmony with Pakistan at all levels. *This is a tactical move by India to push Kashmir issue to the back burner. Except the issues of Kashmir and water terrorism with India, Pakistan does not have any problem with any other county.* Strengthening trade relations with India without resolving Kashmir issue is like adding salt to the injuries of the Kashmiris. *India is committed to attacking Pakistan both diplomatically and economically. When friends like China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia and EU have shown trade preference for Pakistan what is the need to give India MFN status and what is the reason to be in a desperate hurry to have trade with India?*

Why is there discrimination against Pakistan?, Editorial, *Daily Express*, March 27.¹⁷⁵

During his visit to Europe, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that the world should cooperate with Pakistan in its peaceful nuclear programme and shun its discriminatory policy vis-à-vis Pakistan. [...] In order to have nuclear energy, ensuring safety of nuclear plants is compulsory. *Pakistan has suffered a lot in the global war on terror, so the international community should compensate Pakistan for its efforts with a civilian nuclear deal.* While talking to media, Nawaz reiterated that it was unjust to stop Pakistan from using its right to produce nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Iran should refrain from issuing provocative statements, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, March 30.¹⁷⁶

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said that terrorists are trying to ruin the relationship between two countries. He has asked Pakistan to ensure the release of five Iranian border guards who were kidnapped by terrorists and taken to Pakistan. *Although Pakistan has nothing to do with it, it has offered a joint commission to look into the kidnapping episode.* JaishulAdl has taken responsibility for the kidnapping, however, Iran has blamed Pakistan for the incident. If

¹⁷⁵http://express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1102136399&Issue=NP_LHE&Date=20140327

¹⁷⁶<http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/editoroals/30-Mar-2014/291967>

America which shares no border with Arab countries tries to resolve issues through talks, why can't we? *We are Muslim states, but still we threaten each other. Iran should apprehend those who provide sanctuaries to these elements within Iran.* If Iran has any intelligence regarding this matter it should share it with Pakistan. Once information is shared Pakistan can deal with it. But one thing should be made clear to Iran; it should refrain from using provocative statements.

STATISTICS

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
DeraBugti ¹⁷⁷	9/3/2014	Landmine explosion kills child in DeraBugti.	1	0
Khuzdar ¹⁷⁸	9/3/2014	BNP local leader killed in Khuzdar, two persons killed in Quetta.	3	0
Quetta ¹⁷⁹	11/3/2014	Two killed, three injured in Turbat firing.	2	3
Turbat ¹⁸⁰	22/3/2014	Five militants killed in Turbat: official.	5	0
Baluchistan ¹⁸¹	27/3/2014	Attack on polio team kills policeman in Balochistan.	1	0
Baluchistan ¹⁸²	28/3/2014	Nato oil tanker torched, driver killed in Balochistan.	1	0
Quetta ¹⁸³	29/3/2014	Minor girl killed, 15 injured in Quetta explosion.	1	15

¹⁷⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092029/landmine-explosion-kills-child-in-dera-bugti>

¹⁷⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092040/bnp-local-leader-killed-in-khuzdar-two-persons-killed-in-quetta>

¹⁷⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092450/two-killed-three-injured-in-turbat-firing>

¹⁸⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094846/five-militants-killed-in-turbat-official>

¹⁸¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095928/attack-on-polio-team-kills-policeman-in-balochistan>

¹⁸²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096187/nato-oil-tanker-torched-driver-killed-in-balochistan>

¹⁸³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096398/minor-girl-killed-15-injured-in-quetta-explosion>

FATA				
Bannu ¹⁸⁴	11/3/2014	Two, including FC man, killed in Bannu firing	2	0
North Waziristan ¹⁸⁵	19/3/2014	Blasts in K-P, FATA leave 6 dead, 5 injured.	6	5
North Waziristan ¹⁸⁶	23/3/2014	N. Waziristan attack leaves two dead.	2	2
Tank ¹⁸⁷	30/3/2014	Firing incident kills two, injures three in Tank.	2	3
Punjab				
Islamabad ¹⁸⁸	3/3/2014	Judge, 10 others killed in Islamabad blasts, firing.	11	25
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Landikotal ¹⁸⁹	3/3/2014	Blast in Landikotal kills 2 FC personnel.	2	0
Jamrud ¹⁹⁰	4/3/2014	Two killed as gunmen attack Nato trucks in Jamrud.	2	0
Hangu ¹⁹¹	5/3/2014	Six FC personnel killed in Hangu explosion.	6	0
Quetta ¹⁹²	10/3/2014	Quetta: Two cops gunned down in 24 hours.	2	0
Peshawar ¹⁹³	11/3/2014	Cops escorting polio team shot dead in D I Khan.	2	0
Jamrud ¹⁹⁴	13/3/2014	Woman, four kids injured in Jamrud blast.	0	5
Quetta ¹⁹⁵	14/3/2014	Blast in Quetta kills at least 10: rescue officials.	10	20
Peshawar ¹⁹⁶	14/3/2014	Blast targeting police kills nine in Peshawar.	9	44
Khyber Agency ¹⁹⁷	24/3/2014	Blast in Khyber Agency injures three.	0	4
Peshawar ¹⁹⁸	31/3/2014	Blasts in KP leave nineteen	0	19

¹⁸⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092663/two-including-fc-man-killed-in-bannu-firing>

¹⁸⁵<http://tribune.com.pk/story/684591/blasts-in-k-p-fata-leave-6-dead-5-injured/>

¹⁸⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1095001/n-waziristan-attack-leaves-two-dead>

¹⁸⁷<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096622/firing-incident-kills-two-injures-three-in-tank>

¹⁸⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090737/judge-10-others-killed-in-islamabad-blasts-firing>

		injured.		
Sindh				
Karachi ¹⁹⁹	3/3/2014	Five killed in Karachi violence.	5	2
Lyari ²⁰⁰	6/3/2014	Two killed, three hurt in Lyari firing, grenade attacks.	2	3
Karachi ²⁰¹	9/3/2014	Violence in Karachi kills three, wounds two others.	3	2
Karachi ²⁰²	12/3/2014	Attack on Karachi school injures 3.	0	3
Karachi ²⁰³	23/3/2014	NAB officer shot dead in Karachi.	1	0
Karachi ²⁰⁴	25/3/2014	Karachi firing, violence kill 2 including woman.	2	0

¹⁸⁹<http://tribune.com.pk/story/678270/blast-and-firing-in-landikotal-kills-2-fc-personnel/>

¹⁹⁰<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090967/two-killed-as-gunmen-attack-nato-trucks-in-jamrud>

¹⁹¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1091169/six-fc-personnel-killed-in-hangu-explosion>

¹⁹²<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092250/quetta-two-cops-gunned-down-in-24-hours>

¹⁹³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092456/cops-escorting-polio-team-shot-dead-in-d-i-khan>

¹⁹⁴<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092909/woman-four-kids-injured-in-jamrud-blast>

¹⁹⁵<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093104/blast-in-quetta-kills-at-least-10-rescue-officials>

¹⁹⁶<http://www.dawn.com/news/1093091/blast-targeting-police-kills-nine-in-peshawar>

¹⁹⁷<http://www.nation.com.pk/national/24-Mar-2014/blast-in-khyber-agency-injures-three>

¹⁹⁸<http://www.dawn.com/news/1096641/blasts-in-kp-leave-nineteen-injured>

¹⁹⁹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1090542/five-killed-in-karachi-violence>

²⁰⁰<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-140098-Two-killed,-three-hurt-in-Lyari-firing,-grenade-attacks>

²⁰¹<http://www.dawn.com/news/1092039/violence-in-karachi-kills-three-wounds-two-others>

²⁰²<http://tribune.com.pk/story/681861/attack-on-karachi-school-injures-3/>

²⁰³<http://www.dawn.com/news/1094989/nab-officer-shot-dead-in-karachi>

²⁰⁴<http://www.thenews.com.pk/article-142307-Karachi-firing,-violence-kill-2-including-woman>