

August 2023

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



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

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DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES
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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

An elusive election, Editorial, *The News*, 03 August¹

Will we have general elections this year? In a constitutional democracy, this really shouldn't be a tough one to answer but we seem to be grappling with the concepts of both democracy and the constitution. The government had just a short while back indicated that the election will be held in October or November – based on the last census. The reasoning: the new census Digital Census 2023 – had not even been approved and notified yet. Per the thinking then, notifying the new census and then conducting elections on its basis would have meant the election was delayed. Now, however, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has come out with a whole new plan it seems, saying that it only makes sense for the general elections to be held on the basis of the new census, and that the government will be calling a meeting of the Council of Common Interests as soon as the results are completed/compiled. Per the PM, this shouldn't mean a delay of the election. *Those within his own cabinet tend to see it somewhat differently, with Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal saying the 90-day deadline cannot be met if elections are held on the basis of the latest census results.* At the heart of it all seems to be a concerted effort to ensure power stays within the ruling coalition parties. The PTI's fate is being decided through a variety of measures: rushed-up legislation; hushed-down media and social media presence; and now an assurance that even if by some miracle the PTI does make it to the election, the odds remain in favour of the ruling coalition. *The calculations are cynical but perhaps the government and its allies are aware that the people are hardly going to protest a delayed election if they are constantly worried about how to put food on the table, commute to work, or get their kids to school in this back-breaking economic situation.*

The cipher again, Editorial, *The News*, 11 August²

For months, former Prime Minister Imran Khan had his supporters in the grip of a larger-than-life conspiracy theory: the US had plotted with the PDM and allies to get rid of the PTI government. *And yet here we are again: the cipher back in people's imagination, with a story being published by US-based news organization *The Intercept* that claims it has the text of the cipher that allegedly contains an account of a meeting between Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu and Pakistani envoy Asad Majeed Khan.* The fallout has been as expected: the PTI feels vindicated, the outgoing

¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1096670-an-elusive-election>

² <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1099018-the-cipher-again>

government feels outraged. The government has reacted as a government would, outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif saying that if the text is indeed that of a diplomatic cipher then the fact that it has been leaked amounts to a “massive crime”. Meanwhile, outgoing Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has demanded an investigation into the authenticity of the published document and has also said that if it is found that Imran Khan was somehow involved in leaking the cipher he ought to be tried under the Official Secrets Act. The US has said that any claims of it interfering in “internal decisions about the leadership of Pakistan are false...always been false, and they remain false”. *Political analysts have also pointed out that the PPP and PML-N had started mentioning a no-confidence motion against PM Khan as far back as December 2021 and there were statements by Bilawal Bhutto in January 2022 about a vote of no-confidence.*

Missing bill: ‘Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, 2022’, Editorial, *The News*, 16 August³

Pakistan’s politics can be frustrating and bizarre at the same time. But in a country where people go missing on a regular basis, perhaps one of the most bizarre things that seem to happen are missing pieces of legislation. From a missing persons bill going missing quite ironically to a prime minister somehow ‘losing’ a confidential cipher to now yet another case of a missing bill, one wonders how exactly the loftiest institution of the country parliament, as well as the executive can simply misplace legislation or important documents. *In the latest mystery of missing legislation, Senator Irfan Siddiqui of the PML-N has written to Speaker of the National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf about a bill titled ‘Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, 2022’ that he says has miraculously gone missing.* It had apparently been sent for presidential assent fourteen months ago after being approved by both houses of Parliament. Regardless of what the bill does or does not say, the fact is that the bill was approved by both houses of parliament. It was then sent to the president for approval. Had there been any reservations regarding the bill, why were they not raised during the law-making process? *The senator’s letter to the speaker also says that he had even raised this issue in parliament but nothing happened. He has now asked for a commission of inquiry to be made to look into the matter, terming the bill’s disappearance ‘a blatant insult’ to parliament.* What is most alarming is that a sitting parliamentarian can raise such an issue and the issue is still ignored – by parliamentarians and the executive both. What hope then for regular folks in the country?

³ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1100591-missing-bill>

Descent into darkness, Editorial, *The News*, 17 August⁴

Jaranwal is not the first such incident. And it may be cynical but true that it will not be the last if we continue as is, if the state forgets that Jaranwal ever happened -- just like it forgot Gojra or Joseph Colony or the Peshawar church attack or the Easter bombing in Lahore. The list is endless. Repeating it may make no difference to a state apathetic to the trauma its minority communities have carried over years. One wonders whether the sanctity of worship places of any religion is any less than that of any other state building. If swift action can be taken against perpetrators that are seen as 'anti-state', should such mob violence not be taken as if not more seriously and with the same level of urgency? *It is both ironic and tragic that this violence comes a few days after a film banned in Pakistan was forced to be placed on YouTube just because our authorities decided that its subject was taboo. The subject: religion being weaponized. Perhaps we need to rethink the term 'terror'.* What other word can possibly be used for what Jaranwala's Christian community has gone through yesterday? When the state demonstrates with its laws and actions that not every group is afforded the same rights, it creates space for the hateful rhetoric of militant groups. Our counterterrorism strategy, enshrined under the National Action Plan, was meant to be comprehensive in dealing with both the sanctuaries of militants and the ideology of their sympathizers. The latter plank of the NAP has been notable only for its absence.

ECP schedule, Editorial, *The News*, 18 August⁵

The ECP has pretty much confirmed what many had been saying: general elections will not be held this year. At least this seems to be the main takeaway from yesterday's announcement by the ECP regarding the schedule of new delimitations to be carried out as per the new census approved by the Council of Common Interest (CCI). *The new delimitation of constituencies across the country will be notified in December this year; the final publication will be on December 14. This obviously means that the elections will not take place on time within 90 days and will be delayed for sure. That the entire process of delimitations will take almost four months is not surprising.* This is exactly what the politicians and analysts across the board had predicted when it was decided that the upcoming general elections will take place as per the new census and not on the basis of the 2017 census. No date for the elections have been given by the ECP as of now. With the ECP's announcement of the delimitations' schedule and the delay an inevitability for sure, there is a split view about elections. Some analysts believe that now that the ECP has given

⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1100879-descent-into-darkness>

⁵ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1101232-ecp-schedule>

December as the final publication date, there is a high probability that elections will take place in February 2024. *This also makes sense, experts say, because ideally these elections should take place before the Senate elections in March 2024 so that the next government has a clear mandate. They believe that the IMF programme's scope is also such that a new government should renegotiate a new programme with them.* Some are also of the opinion that with the interim cabinet, it seems that the caretaker government will not go beyond the Senate elections as it has some names who will not agree to be part of a much longer caretaker setup ala the Bangladesh model.

SECURITY SITUATION

Bajaur bombing, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 01 August⁶

The suicide attack on a JUI-Fazl rally in Bajaur has removed any doubt that terrorists have regained the ability to conduct devastating attacks in Pakistan. It has also raised a massive question mark over the role of the Afghan government and should seriously force its sympathizers to rethink the situation. *For several years, 'experts', including top elected and unelected government figures, assured us that terrorism would end, or at least decline, once the Afghan Taliban took control of the country. Instead, the years since then have seen the resurgence of the TTP, and now, Daesh, which is believed to be behind the attack on the JUI-F rally.* While the TTP's rise has been explained away as the Afghan Taliban's unwillingness to crack down on a group that means it no harm some TTP and Taliban leaders are also reportedly quite friendly the Taliban consider Daesh to be their main rival, meaning the Afghans are supposedly trying to fight the group. The 'stable Afghanistan' argument always focused on how the Taliban regime would stop terrorism. Since this has proven to be patently false, Pakistan needs to put its foot down. Stability in Pakistan should be the priority. Kabul needs to be shown not just told that failure to stop cross-border terrorism will have consequences for the Taliban.

Hazara Express accident, Editorial, *The News*, 07 August⁷

With over 30 people killed and 80 injured, the train accident on Sunday is yet another reminder of the infrastructure issues with our train and transport system – whether commuter or long distance. According to reports, 10 bogies of Havelian-bound Hazara

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2428639/bajaur-bombing-1>

⁷ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1097842-hazara-express-accident>

Express derailed near the Sahara Railway Station in the Nawabshah district in Sindh on Sunday afternoon. *Over the years, the railways have been all but destroyed by a culture of corruption and inefficiency. The problem with Pakistan's rail and road infrastructure is systemic.* This is despite the fact that for so many years parties like the PML-N sold an infrastructure-oriented development approach for public consumption. Numerous road development projects are initiated every year without attention being paid to bridges and other connecting roads which are in a dangerous condition. With the government heavily committed to building hype around the improvements in transport that bilateral projects are expected to bring, Sunday's train accident is another reminder that the basic transport infrastructure of the country is in a poor state. *The Railways has been ignored more than other forms of transport with the privatization agenda meaning that no money has been put into re-laying its basic infrastructure. A digital system in the Pakistan Railways for example would significantly reduce the risk of accidents.* The train collapse on Sunday is likely to be the product of decades of neglect, not a one-off error or sabotage. The government needs to realize that, regardless of the country's economic situation, money should not be an issue when people's lives are at stake.

Countering terror, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 23 August⁸

It is a good omen that Afghanistan and Pakistan are on the same page in countering terrorism. Reports confirm that serious talks are underway between the two governments to chalk out a roadmap for curbing the tendency of infiltration across the borders. It is also quite relieving for Pakistan that Kabul now officially admits that there are rogue elements who operate inside Pakistan, and then slip on to take refuge in Afghanistan. This aspect is in need of being curbed with kinetic strength, and at the same time efforts to comb down the entire bordering areas and plough out sleeper cells as well as net their abettors. *Non-state actors, their patrons and sleeping cells are a common phenomenon now in the tribal areas of Pakistan bordering Afghanistan. The resolve to get them hits snags as they take refuge under ethnic and sectarian guise, and then go on to strike parallels with their compatriots on the other side of the divide.* This necessitates institutional coordination in counter-terrorism drills, and a sophisticated mechanism at work to apprehend the wicked souls. Beefing up intelligence and winning over the people residing in desolate areas by ushering them with development and civic amenities of life is the way to go. It is not merely a security drawdown but also a political failure that has led to marginalization of thoughts in these troublesome zones.

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2432002/countering-terror-1>

Thought-Provoking Address by Army Chief, Editorial, *Roznama Jang*, 03 August⁹

The Chief of Pakistan's Army, General Syed Asim Munir, addressed a special international conference held in Islamabad. In his speech, he emphasized that the country's mineral projects are essential for public development and invited foreign investors to participate in their exploration. He urged them to assist in discovering hidden treasures through collaborative efforts. He referred to the recently established Special Investment Facility by the Army, stating his determination to move forward and achieve success by overcoming obstacles and bureaucratic hurdles. General Asim Munir debunked the bitter reality that had been limiting the country's progress for the past 75 years, stating that the nation's mineral resources have not been fully utilized, despite external debts amounting to 55 billion dollars. The conference was chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and it saw participation from investors worldwide who discussed ways to utilize Pakistan's untapped mineral wealth. General Munir used the English language during his speech to ensure easy understanding for the international guests and cited Quranic verses with their English translations to emphasize the authenticity and truth of his position. He highlighted that Pakistan's national income from minerals is currently insufficient, but with significant reserves of precious metals and minerals found from the north of the country to Balochistan, modern technology and heavy investment are needed to extract the resources. Encouraging foreign investment in this regard, the Federal Ministry of Minerals hosted the conference titled "Development through Soil," and the Special Investment Facility Council played a crucial role in making it motivating and fruitful. He also stressed the importance of re-evaluating previous projects, which were shelved due to certain interests and addressing corruption, which is fuelled by a lack of advanced technology and proper mining laws in the country. General Munir pointed out that with the right resources and support, discoveries of valuable reserves, including oil and gas, are not far-fetched. Pakistan is known to possess 52 out of 92 types of minerals found worldwide. It seems that General Asim Munir's speech highlights Pakistan's potential in mineral resources and the need for international collaboration and investment to unlock its full potential for the country's development and prosperity.

⁹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/03-08-2023/page6>

Terrorism from Afghanistan? Editorial, Jang, 06 August¹⁰

For the past four decades, Pakistan has been continuously proving that it cares about peace and stability in Afghanistan by providing shelter to millions of Afghans and helping Afghanistan in many cases at various international forums. But *it is a bitter reality that from the Afghan side rarely goodwill is shown towards Pakistan. The involvement of Afghan citizens in terrorist activities in Pakistan and the use of Afghan soil is highly regrettable and condemnable.* Terming the suicide attack in the workers' convention of the Jamat-e-Uama Islami (JUI-F) in Bajaur as open terrorism against the state of Pakistan, JUI-F chief Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman said that terrorism in Pakistan comes from the Afghan territory. Therefore, the Afghan interim government should be demanded to act against these terrorists. A grand tribal jirga was held in Peshawar, in which political and tribal leaders of the Pashtun belt and members of the Awami National Party also participated. Leaders presented their views and expressed concern over the incidents of terrorism in various districts. *The Jirga expressed grief over the loss of life in the Bajaur blast and described it as a conspiracy to sabotage peace for dollars and to paralyze Pakistan economically, politically and internally under an organized international plan.* It was also emphasized in the Jirga to convene an all-party conference, adopt a joint strategy to prevent Pakistan-Afghanistan terrorism and fulfill the promises of providing basic facilities to the tribal people. *Unity of the nation is necessary for establishing peace. Stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan is what both countries need. In this regard, the Afghan government should take strict action against the terrorist elements in Pakistan.*

Way paved for political change! Editorial, Jang, 11 August¹¹

The President has dissolved the National Assembly under Article 158 (I) of the Constitution on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. After this coalition government of 13 political parties, including the Muslim League (N) and the Pakistan People's Party, was dismissed. However, Shehbaz Sharif will remain in his post till the formation of an interim government. *The consultation between Shehbaz Sharif and opposition leader Raja Riaz has started for the appointment of caretaker prime minister. Some names have come out for caretaker prime minister.* Some names are in secret. The consultation process is expected to last for three days to reach a consensus on the name of the caretaker prime minister. *The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) celebrated the day of dissolution of the PDM government as thanksgiving and criticized the performance of the outgoing government.* Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif addressed the last meeting of the

¹⁰ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/505071>

¹¹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/508740>

National Assembly and the Federal Cabinet separately and praised the achievements of his 16-month-old government. In his farewell address, *Shehbaz Sharif said that his short-lived government faced enormous challenges because of the failures of the PTI government on internal and external fronts. Describing the events of 9 May as the worst abuse of the country, the premier said that it was a rebellion against the state, the army and the army chief. Shehbaz accused the PTI led government of inviting TTP terrorists to return to Pakistan, which led to a new wave of terrorism in the country.* Shehbaz said that his government took the path of saving the state instead of politics. *It is noteworthy that the country's economy is currently running on the instructions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) as it is giving loans to Pakistan. It has sought a guarantee of implementation of its terms for the next three months.* However, due to plans of holding elections according to the new census, the caretaker government is likely to remain in place for more than the stipulated three months. *The IMF has agreed to its conditions that means that the economic development process initiated by the current government would continue.* Along with the establishment of the caretaker government in the federal government, the caretaker provincial governments would also be established in Sindh and Balochistan, for which consultations have also started.

Police failed to control situation in Jaranwal, Report, Ummat, 17 August¹²

Police failed to control the situation in Jaranwala. Rangers were deployed in the area. The alleged news of committing blasphemy had spread by 7am on 16 August after which announcements were made in local mosques that gathered a large public. *At 10am the protestors blocked the Cinema Chowk in Jaranwala and forced markets to close. A large crowd was also present near a local church and a Christian colony nearby. From 7am to 10am the administration neglected the situation* (. No case of blasphemy was registered till the crowd increased. *Then local religious leader Mufti Muhammad Younus Rizvi reached the spot along with local SSP. SSP Bilal Sulehri addressed the public claiming that the accused blasphemers would be arrested in 10 to 15 minutes. ... The SSP also said that we are with you and as much pain you have felt by the blasphemous act we have felt more than that. He said that we would arrest the accused and also file a case but sentencing them is the job of the courts. On this the crowd raised the slogan "We will punish them". After the situation went out of control.* According to some media reports, the armed mob first set fire to Salvation Army Church which is the oldest church in the area. *After attacking other churches, the mob attacked the nearby Christian colony. Local people accuse that the police was being a silent spectator. But given the size of the crowd*

¹² <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/08/17/&p=story2.gif>

it seems it would not have been possible for the police to control the situation. That was the reason that the rangers were summoned to restore peace and stability. After the attack on the Christian colony many Christians fled to save their lives. They were mostly hosted by Muslims mostly and assured them safety till the situation improved. The caretaker Prime Minister and all major political parties and religious groups have condemned the violence in Jaranwala. They have said that Islam does not allow attacking or disrespecting places or books of other religions. To punish culprits is the job of the judiciary. *Slogans of "Labaik" (Yes) can be heard from the attackers on the Churches and Christian houses on social media posts. However, a video of an official of the Tehreek-e-Labaik is also being circulated on social media in which he is saying that "Tehreek-e-Labaik follows Islam. It does not allow burning on non-Muslim worship places or their property.* Nor is this the agenda of the Tehreek-e-Labaik. As far as the blasphemers are concerned the Tehreek would work to punish them."

Why are minorities unsafe? Muzammil Suhrawardy, *Roznama Express*, 23 August¹³

The situation of minorities in Pakistan is not good at the moment. In Pakistani society, where political intolerance has increased, religious intolerance has also risen. Just as political groups are spreading hatred, religious animosity has also escalated in society. Just as we are not willing to tolerate each other in politics, similarly we are not willing to tolerate each other on religious grounds as well. It's a situation where the major sects among Muslims are making life difficult for smaller sects within their own community. Similarly, we are making life difficult for religious minorities in Pakistan. Religious extremism has eradicated religious tolerance. As a society, we are deeply saddened by this insensitivity. You might say that after the incident in Jaranwala, I am emotionally writing all this. But the Jaranwala incident is not the first event where we are saying that an incident has occurred and we are presenting it in an exaggerated manner. Have such incidents not happened in Pakistan before? I am not against the blasphemy laws but I am against taking the law into one's own hands. I am against the use of religion for political, personal, or group interests. I am against those who exploit the sanctity of places of worship for their gains. I am against viewing minorities with hatred. I am not specifically stating this in response to the Jaranwala incident; rather, this is a general observation. *Can you tell me if the Hindus living in Sindh are safe? Don't the Hindus complain to us that in Sindh, influential elders and landlords provide shelter to those who abduct their underage girls? Have Sikh shopkeepers not murdered in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa? Are religious minorities truly safe in Pakistan? Aren't the streets of our society prone to ideological extremism?* In

¹³https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/Index.aspx?Issue=NP_ISB&Page=Editorial_PageC006&Date=20230823&PageNo=6

Pakistan, gathering crowds under the guise of religion is not a difficult task, police and other law enforcement agencies remain silent in front of angry crowds gathered on religious issues. Here, disputes arise over the burial of the deceased in cemeteries. Men are being removed from graves, and their sanctity is being violated. What is all this? Can states coexist with this culture? *The silence of our religious and moderate political groups encourages such elements. The question is, what kind of society are we becoming? Will the outcome of this approach be positive? The government of Pakistan may not be encouraging such incidents. However, the response of the Pakistani government and the enforcing institutions is also weak.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Why further increase in Petrol Prices? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 01 August¹⁴

The host informed that the outgoing government of Shehbaz Sharif has increased the price of petrol so much so that the common public is shocked and asking what happened to the oil tanks from Russia, why it has not reached the public. This government is organising big events like the mineral Summit just before finishing its term, and also welcoming foreign delegates, the host underlined that an outgoing government does not organised such big events, neither do big deals. He asked is this government is really going or its coming back in power? *Guests:* Musadiq Malik-Petroleum Minister; Faisal Vawda-senior leader; Shoiab & Shaheen-PTI. *Musadiq Malik* informed that the price of petrol depends on global prices of oil and also on the exchange price of dollar and rupee. *When we have to buy oil we have to do in dollars but the collection of money in Pakistan is in Rupees.* The point is that we have collection of rupees but no dollar to buy the oil. About the deal with Russia we are still negotiating and will come soon to India. The PTI has only problem with general Bajwa and it seems like that they have not forgotten the 9th May event. There is no ban on anything, anyone can take the name of Imran Khan on media. He also informed that the Mineral Summit is very important as we have reports and estimates of mineral all around Pakistan. *Faisal Vawda* pointed out that the government, its allies and even opposition is cheating the public and it is a complete failure. The question is how does the establishment has a vision for Pakistan and not the political parties who rules and ruled the country. There will be three political battles one between PML-N and PPP and it will be difficult to pass these kinds of bill. Under these conditions there will be no progress. Most probably there will be a hung parliament and the elections depend on when the charter plan will

¹⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p-lZSAnuQdA>

come from London. *Shoaib Shaheen* underlined that the establishment should not be equated to the word *siphe salar*, it is a big historical name in Muslim religion and we should be careful using this word with the army. The question is if the establishment has to do all the political work then what will these political parties, especially the government. *The civilian supremacy should be maintained and power should not be transferred to the army.* But the constitution and democracy is under threat, and the way they have increased the petrol price it looks like that they are not going to organised elections on time. There are so many cases against Imran Khan that we cannot appeal against all in on go. And the government is using the FIA according to their whims and fancies. The question is why the government is behind Imran Khan?

Who will be Caretaker PM? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 10 August¹⁵

After the dissolution of the PDM government the next question is who will be the caretaker PM. The Outgoing PM has already had general consultations with the opposition leader to discuss and make a final decision on the caretaker PM. In this show Hamid Mir questions Shehbaz Sharif on various issues including caretaker PM, elections and his government's achievements. **Guests:** Shehbaz Sharif (Prime Minister of Pakistan). **Q: Who will be the caretaker governments? When will be it announced?** **A:** Already we had a meeting with leader of opposition Raja Riaz and he had a list of names and we also had a list. So we have to make a final decision. We will also consult our allies and Nawaz Sharif too and if we are not able to take a decision, this will be referred to the election commission. **Q: Will elections take place in ninety days?** **A:** We are handing over the government to caretaker government as we promised and hopefully the elections will take place on time. The council of common interest will have to *take into account the new census* and this will have to decide by the election commission (ECP should answer this question). According to his personal view elections should take place as soon as possible. *When the caretaker setup comes, I will travel to London and make further plans with Nawaz Sharif. He will hopefully come back next month and face the court.* **Q: What are the achievements of the PDM government?** **A:** Even after having different manifestos and 13 different allies, we came together and put together a smooth government. The most work we did was during the floods where we worked hard to help the people affected by the flood. We also reconnected with the IMF and saved Pakistan from defaulting. The economic policy was all in a mess during Imran Khans rule and isolated itself from friendly countries like Saudi Arabia. He added that Saudi has always been a friend to Pakistan and has helped us financially during tough times. **Q: Why there was an economic policy shift from west (US) to Russia?** **A:** We tried to normalize the relations with the US and have met many

¹⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uB7OSexI8s>

important personalities, Bilawal Bhutto travelled to US and met his counterpart. If we were an imported government then why we had to go to Russia for help, there is no proof. Thankfully China has second round of CPEC investments in Pakistan. We should take our friends on board and if some country is not helping us we should not either distance them.

A caretaker PM from Balochistan: Not a solution for Balochistan issue? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 15 August¹⁶

Hamid Mir pointed out that usually the caretaker set up in Pakistan comes with the intention to conduct elections within the stipulated ninety days. This new caretaker setup who has not yet announced its cabinet does not seem to have the same intention as *there is a buzz that they will take more than ninety days for the same and also it has been argued that the responsibility for conducting elections is that of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP)* and that the new set up will not interfere in the same. He also informed that the dollar has reached 300 rupees in open market weakening the rupees. He asked in this episode, does the new PM has a *formula to control the dollar?* Is the ECP of Pakistan stronger than the caretaker PM? Also he mentioned that as the *new caretaker PM comes from Balochistan, will he be able to solve the issue of missing persons* and do something about the *missing person's bill?* **Guests:** Senator Irfan Siddiqui-PML-N, Senator Kamran Murtaza-JUI & Senator Safiullah Abro-PTI. **Irfan Siddiqui** pointed out that he had presented a bill to stop the judicial powers of the executives of the government, it was revived with positive spirit in the senate. The bill titled "*Code of Criminal Procedure Amendment Act, 2022*" was thoroughly discussed and was to be passed from the senate and was sent to President for signature. This bill has to pass the PM house and there is no clue where this bill has stuck. The President has cleared that the bill has not reached their house. The judicial powers given to the executives are from the British times, and if it is removed it clips the powers of the district administration. He claimed that the bill miraculously has gone missing. It had apparently been sent for presidential assent fourteen months ago after being approved by both houses of Parliament. **Safiullah Abro** informed that there was so much bill during the PDM government that this bill was lost in the rush. May be the caretaker PM will try to search the bill, it will take time to search the bill and the elections will go behind by months. Caretaker PM cannot sign the bills, we will have to wait for the new government. Going to a person's house to arrest him without any warrant is a crime, the way the current government is arresting PTI workers is unimaginable. When we talk about missing persons, it is not only in Balochistan people are kidnapped even from other parts of the country. Local police and Bureaucracy in Sindh purely works for the region of Sindh. I think this bill of the executive has been taken by outgoing PM Shehbaz Sharif and

¹⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hRbzFGa3WU4>

he has stopped the bill. *Kamran Murtaza* underlined that when the bill is passed then and only it has to be sent to the Presidents house. When the document is forwarded a message is sent to the person who introduce the bill. He also added that the state of Pakistan does not want to solve the issue of missing person and until the government open this Pandora box, it will not be able to solve the issue of Balochistan. We in Pakistan think that just bringing someone from Balochistan and making him PM will resolve the issues of the region. They think that it's not there headache to resolve the issue of Balochistan, the people of the region does not matter. The missing person's bill will not see the light of the day.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Bajaur ¹⁷	06/08/2023	Suicide bomber attacks FC vehicle in Bajaur, 1 injured	00	01
North Waziristan ¹⁸	20/08/2023	Suspected IED attack kills 11 labourers in Pakistan's North Waziristan	11	00
Jani Khel ¹⁹	31/08/2023	Suicide attack on military convoy leaves nine soldiers martyred in Jani Khel	09	00

¹⁷ <https://www.aajenglish.tv/news/30330058>

¹⁸ <https://www.aljazeera.com/amp/news/2023/8/20/suspected-ied-attack-kills-11-labourers-in-pakistans-north-waziristan>

¹⁹<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/08/31/suicide-attack-on-military-convoy-leaves-nine-soldiers-martyred-in-jani-khel/>

Balochistan				
Quetta ²⁰	01/08/2023	Two cops martyred in attack on polio vaccination team in Quetta	02	02
Kech ²¹	11/08/2023	Nine killed in multiple bombings in Pakistan	09	00
Quetta ²²	07/08/2023	Suicide bomber prematurely detonates explosives in Pakistan, killing couple	02	00

²⁰ <https://www.geo.tv/latest/502634-two-cops-killed-in-attack-on-polio-vaccination-team-in-quetta>

²¹ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/7/nine-killed-in-multiple-bombings-in-pakistan>

²² <https://abcnews.go.com/International/wireStory/suicide-bomber-prematurely-detonates-explosives-northwest-pakistan-killing-102064540>