

November 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

Repatriation, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 01 November¹

As the deadline for voluntary repatriation of Afghan refugees ends today, Pakistan is walking a tightrope. *Over the month, or so, it had to face some critical challenges as it navigated its decision through thick and thin. Now the international agencies too are voicing their concern, and are apparently sceptical of treatment being meted out to these faceless aliens, and are calling for restraint.* The Foreign Office on Monday was seen doing some plain-talking as it informed the audience that the decision is in compliance with domestic laws, and applicable to international norms and principles. What necessitated this explanation has its roots in the reaction that Islamabad had to face from Kabul, and likewise from aid agencies, as they were not too receptive to it. The point is that Pakistan had been host to Afghans for more than four decades now, and had done everything possible in its meagre resources. Thus, the decision to shunt out around two million refugees who are now a burden on the economy and political fabric was a wise move, as the situation in the war-torn country is returning to normalcy, and new avenues of geo-economics are opening up for the landlocked state. *So there is no forcible return of Afghan nationals, as claimed by donor bodies, and there is no human rights catastrophe in the making. These undocumented Afghans now pose a threat to security as revulsion is widely noticed in the border areas, and non-state actors take refuge amidst such solitary souls.*

Finally, an election date, Editorial, *Dawn*, 03 November²

The agreement has come as a relief to those who believed that polls would not be held anytime soon. No doubt, it is very welcome news, even if it means that the ECP will once again be breaking its word as the date represents a slight delay from the 'end of January' timeline, which the electoral body gave in late September and affirmed last week. It also represents a 95-day violation of the deadline to hold elections according to the Constitution. The court, while hearing the matter, had rubbished the assertion of the law ministry and ECP that the president had no authority to give election dates. *Now that the fog has lifted, the ECP will be under constant scrutiny. It wilfully violated the Constitution on multiple occasions this year, justifying each violation*

¹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2444014/repatriation>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1786009/finally-a-date>

with the excuse that it was necessary in order to hold elections that could pass a high standard of fairness. If, after all these violations, the participating parties are still denied an equal opportunity to present their case to the public, then all of it will have been for nothing. It must, at the very least, demonstrate that it was acting in good faith. There is also talk about giving the delay in elections legal cover under Article 254. However, this should not mean that those who conspired to violate the Constitution are let off without penalty. The consequences must be severe and exemplary for all involved.

Election season, Editorial, Dawn, 06 November³

Now that the country is in election mode, the ECP should expect increased scrutiny of its actions. *The immense task of ensuring that the upcoming elections are free, fair, impartial and inclusive rests on its shoulders, and it needs to do much better if it wishes to be remembered for discharging its duty responsibly. There are several things that need immediate attention.* For instance, the caretaker government is reportedly attempting to undertake a large-scale reshuffle of officers at the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting despite the announcement of an election date. All such tinkering with the executive branch must be stopped forthwith. The state must be oriented towards one thing alone: assisting the ECP in delivering a credible election. Everything else is unnecessary at this point in time. *Secondly*, the ECP must start utilizing its considerable powers to ensure that the contest will be fair. The arrest of former National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser on corruption charges the day after elections were announced is not a good omen. The public perception is that the PTI and its people will continue to be harassed with arbitrary detentions and arrests on trumped-up charges for as long as they refuse to toe the establishment's line. There is little justification, legal or moral, for a political party to be treated in this manner, and it is up to the ECP to put a stop to the victimization. Other parties have also been complaining about being denied a level playing field. *They have accused the caretaker governments and other powerful forces of manipulating the state machinery to favour the PML-N. There is no point in asking the electorate to vote if a handful of people are going to overrule their choices anyway.* The Pakistani people must not be denied the right to choose their future themselves. The ECP should be wary of these sentiments and demonstrate it is working to counter them.

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1786847/election-season>

Elections and alliances, Editorial, *The News*, 08 November⁴

Sindh is not the only province seeing political back and forth. The Balochistan Awami party (BAP) has also elected its new president, a move that many see as a sign that it is here to stay for the time being – and may also be easily trotted out for ‘help’ in the centre whenever the need arises. *As with all politics, Pakistan’s politics too has been a master of the art of the possible – though in our case we seem to be banking on the miraculous or the impossible a lot more recently. Parties miraculously get formed and just as miraculously get disbanded. As do ‘politicians’. Which may be why the experience and sheer will that Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari bring to the table is both comforting for their supporters and perhaps frightening for their many many detractors.* Nawaz and Zardari are two of the oldest and more experienced leaders in the country and, while they may not see eye to eye on many issues, they have over the years not been averse to strategizing together. There were rumours that Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari spoke over the phone on Monday but both parties denied the news. Despite the denials, there have been instances in the past where not much news has come out after phone calls and even meetings between the two senior leaders. *In recent months, and especially after the May 9 incidents, the two political parties have grown apart despite being key members of the PDM-led government that ruled the country for 16 months. Now that elections are near, the PPP feels that the PML-N has been given a clear edge due to the ouster of Imran Khan from the political arena.* Regardless of the nitty-gritty of power plays in the country, on one thing the PPP is right: the elections should be free and fair, and a level-playing field should be given to all political parties.

Repatriating illegal aliens, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 10 November⁵

Pakistan has a right policy on Afghanistan. Its decision to send back illegal Afghan refugees is a step in the right direction. Increase in terror incidents over the last two years had pointed a finger at scot-free movement of men and material across the western borders, and the presence of Afghans had simply compounded the situation. Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar made a judicious assessment as he said that the deportation drive of illegal immigrants is linked with counter-terrorism

⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1126878-elections-and-alliances>

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2445491/repatriating-illegal-aliens>

actions. The statistics are horrifying to say the least: 60% increase in terror incidents since August 2021, and 500 percent rise in suicide attacks across the country. Moreover, around 2,267 innocent citizens lost their lives and many of those incidents were claimed by the outlawed TTP. The audacity of conducting cowardly attacks inside Pakistan by using Afghan soil has been a bone of contention between authorities in Islamabad and Kabul, but unfortunately there seemed to be no rational listeners in the Afghan capital. *The crackdown is only on illegal refugees and another 0.8 million Afghans issued with 'Proof of Residence' cards are not being deported. Thus, the hue and cry of discrimination is unfounded.*

'Fair' elections? Editorial, *The News*, 21 November⁶

All gloves are off now that election season has started – at least as far as the PPP is concerned. *The party's young leader has spared very few words when it comes to the PML-N, the past few days and weeks having seen statement after statement from Bilawal Bhutto Zardari very openly articulating his party's discomfort with what it says is an uneven playing field that has handed undue advantage to Nawaz Sharif's PML-N.* This is not entirely unexpected, given that many analysts had pointed out even when the PDM ministries were being formed that at some point the bonhomie was bound to come to an end and that the PPP would eventually find it convenient to let go of the friendly ally's status with the PML-N. This leaves us with the fate of the PTI. The chairman of the party is still in jail. There is little to suggest that will change any time soon. The party says it is ready to contest elections and that – per a recent interview of Zulfi Bukhari – their popularity is not only at an all-time high but they won't even need to campaign as much as other parties because of that. One may see the statement as the usual flexing by a political leader but there is little evidence to show that the PTI has lost its vote bank. *And if it hasn't, and it is kept out of the elections, whose mandate exactly will bring in the next government? Perhaps both the other parties need to think about this very seriously – especially the PML-N which, whether rightly or wrongly, is being called out as the new blue-eyed party of the powerful.* This is a tag the party had washed off after decades of politics. Do they really want it back?

⁶ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1130880-fair-elections>

ECONOMIC ISSUES

Monetary policy, Editorial, *Dawn*, 01 November⁷

The State Bank's decision to leave the policy rate unchanged at 22pc the second time in a row is in line with wider market expectations. Most analysts anticipated the continuation of a tighter monetary stance, despite the slight deceleration in inflation, the contraction in money supply growth and improvement in other macro indicators. *No doubt the current account deficit has narrowed, the exchange rate improved, the foreign exchange reserves position stabilized to some extent despite tepid external financing, and fiscal consolidation remains on track. But this recovery remains fragile and is unlikely to last without deep structural fiscal reforms and the realization of planned external inflows.* Recently, Goldman Sachs warned that gains in the rupee, which has been among the world's top performers in the past two months due to the crackdown on the illegal dollar trade, will be short-lived given its financing risks as Pakistan has only short-term IMF and bilateral financing to support the external balance. The reality is that Pakistan still needs \$20.2bn, including rollovers of \$12.3bn, to make foreign debt payments in the remaining eight months of the fiscal. Even a small external shock can wipe out the recent small gains quickly. It is, therefore, advisable to stay cautious rather than get swayed by momentary successes.

Gas price hike, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 20 November⁸

The recent report of an annual short-term inflation rate exceeding 40%, driven primarily by a staggering 1,100% increase in gas charges, shows the precarious and uncertain nature of economic challenges that Pakistan is currently juggling. *This permeates through various aspects of daily life, affecting the prices of essential commodities and services. The overall cost of living rises, impacting citizens across different socio-economic strata.* The sudden economic shock may also dent investor confidence, necessitating a balanced approach to ensure fiscal sustainability while safeguarding citizens' well-being. While inflation is an intricate challenge influenced by various factors, the recent spike in gas prices, exacerbated by a substantial hike in natural gas rates by the caretaker government, demands immediate attention. The unprecedented surge in fixed monthly gas charges further burdens consumers,

⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1785463/monetary-policy>

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2447243/gas-price-hike-4>

signalling potential hardships ahead. In the face of this, it is crucial for policymakers to explore alternative measures that ensure stability without unduly burdening the citizens. *Reducing dependence altogether or easing the overall burden through sustainable alternatives can play a pivotal role in mitigating the adverse effects of inflation. The citizens of Pakistan deserve a stable economic environment that protects their purchasing power and ensures access to essential goods and services.*

Securing Additional Finance, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 23 November⁹

The pitch by the caretaker Finance Minister, Dr Shamshad Akhtar, for additional international finance support in the meetings of bilateral and multilateral lenders is a strategic step. *With the successful review of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this is the right time to secure funds that Pakistan urgently needs in climate finance. After going through a tough economic phase, it is crucial that the right policies are adopted at the right time to not slide back but move forward in economic recovery.* The support of these partners will also be essential in meeting climate finance targets. Since the IMF review started, Pakistan has showcased commitment to economic reforms. The review phase was not without difficulties and there are still some collective concerns of lenders that Pakistan needs to address. Project delays and lack of transparency becomes major deterrent for lenders. In the recent meetings with the Finance Minister, these points have been raised by these bodies. To ensure that the pitch is approved, Pakistan will have to commit to addressing the issue of delays in projects. More robust transparency mechanisms must be adopted. Various government ministries and sectors need to come together to complete the projects and carry out assessments of delays. This process of self-accountability will lead to an overall effective performance and delivery in projects' implementation and completion.

New tax reform panel, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 28 November¹⁰

Pakistan's failure to noticeably widen its tax base is one of the main reasons why the state has been under a mountain of debt and has been teetering on the edge of bankruptcy for several decades. The only reason we did not talk about it much before the last few years is that successive governments managed to push the can down the

⁹ <https://www.nation.com.pk/23-Nov-2023/securing-additional-finance>

¹⁰ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2448182/new-tax-reform-panel>

road without resolving the problem. Finding a balance that allows the FBR to add two million filers within a year without taking punitive action will be difficult. However, converting many of them into actual taxpayers will be even harder, since it remains relatively easy to game the system, and the FBR's own shortcomings such as its failure to fully enforce proper documentation of companies' revenue and payroll data have led to gaps that are ripe for exploitation. Meanwhile, the FBR continues to indulge in its favourite shortcut of squeezing existing taxpayers even more, most recently with its new windfall tax on banks' income from forex transactions, which could make the provision of such services loss-makers for banks, according to some experts. Detractors have also noted that it is probably not a coincidence that the committee was formed just a few days before the arrival of an IMF team that will analyse Pakistan's tax system. Given how broken the tax system is, one of the committee's unofficial goals will be to come into compliance — or at least make it easier to comply with the findings of the IMF team, which will be announced in about two months.

SECURITY SITUATION

Gruesome killings, Editorial, Dawn, 02 November¹¹

While the separatist insurgency in Balochistan may be in a low phase, the gruesome murders of four workers and a policeman in Kech district, early on Tuesday, comes as a grim reminder that the situation in Pakistan's largest province is far from normal. Unidentified gunmen stormed a police station in the Nasirabad area near Turbat and opened indiscriminate fire, mowing down four labourers originally hailing from Punjab, as well as a police officer. *The current Baloch insurgency is nearly two decades old, and while levels of violence have fluctuated, the state has failed to adopt a strategy to end the violence. There are superficial offers made now and then inviting the 'angry' Baloch to the table; a similar offer was made last week by the province's caretaker home minister.* Yet none of these endeavours gets off the ground, perhaps because there is a 'democratic deficit' in the province. It is no secret that political and administrative activities in Balochistan are tightly controlled by the powers that be. Unless this changes and leaders freely chosen by the people are allowed to steer the ship, matters will remain the same. Moreover, unless the fruits of development fully

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1785724/gruesome-killings>

reach the people of Balochistan, such atrocious crimes will continue to take place, as the state struggles to react.

Jirga troubles, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 29 November¹²

The alleged killing of a young girl in the Barsharyal village of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, orchestrated by her own family on the directives of a local Jirga, presents a disconcerting clash between traditional practices and the established laws of the land. *The girl's crime was a video that went viral on social media in which she was seen dancing with other girls and boys. According to some reports, the video appears to have been edited.* The Jirga has deep cultural roots in the region. However, its coexistence with the formal legal apparatus poses significant questions about justice, accountability and the protection of fundamental rights. It is heart-wrenching to learn that a young life was cut short under the shadow of a Jirga decree. The coexistence of the Jirga system and the formal legal framework demands careful navigation to ensure that justice is served and the truth is reached. *It is an opportune moment for lawmakers and legal experts to collaborate in forging a path that respects cultural traditions without compromising the fundamental rights and dignity of individuals.* But even before this, it must be ascertained if it is even possible to reconcile two justice systems within a similar land domain.

URDU MEDIA

Illegal refugees and unfound apprehensions, Editorial, *Ummat*, 01 November¹³

The deadline that was given by the caretaker government of Pakistan to the illegal refugees to leave the country has ended. A large number of illegal refugees could not leave Pakistan. It has mainly two reasons: one, those who wanted to go but could not; second those who did not want to go. For such illegal refugees, the government and the administration have designed a strategy. The government had set a 31 October deadline for the illegal refugees to leave Pakistan. Action would be taken against those who missed the deadline. Provincial and federal governments will take action and try

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2448302/jirga-troubles>

¹³ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/11/01/&p=idr.gif>

to facilitate the deportation of these refugees. Final preparations are being readied to facilitate the return of the Afghan refugees. *It is reported that in the second phase, search operations would be carried out against those illegal Afghan refugees who are hiding in some places. Not only these illegal refugees will be arrested but their accomplices will also face legal actions. That means those hiding will also be sent back to their country.* Pakistan has been hosting Afghan refugees for the last 40 years. Even now it continues to host them. Pakistan is sending back only illegal refugees. Those who are registered will not face any action. Therefore, those who try to use this issue against Pakistan within and outside the country should be careful. Reports are showing the involvement of illegal Afghan refugees in criminal activities in Pakistan which has created law and order issues in the country. *Therefore, the government and the country have every right to take such actions against illegal Afghan refugees. The Foreign Office of Pakistan has said that the decision to deport illegal refugees was taken according to international law.*

PTI's political and electoral future, Salman Abid, Roznama Express, 03 November¹⁴

Pakistan is moving towards a new general election in 2024. According to the Election Commission, the general election will take place in February. In this regard, the Election Commission has also announced the date for conducting the general elections in the Supreme Court. Pakistan's general elections have always been a source of controversy. The party that loses often accuses the winner of fraud or engineered elections, while the winner claims transparency in the results. This political culture is not conducive to democracy because it not only disputes electoral outcomes but also weakens democracy and parliament. *In today's political environment, a significant question arises: What will be the political future of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the upcoming general elections? Firstly, the PTI, whose leadership and some members are under scrutiny, has been observed making efforts to hold rallies, but they have encountered obstacles along the way. Does this mean the end of PTI's politics? Secondly, will the PTI's electoral symbol be a cricket bat in the general elections? Third, is it possible for Chairman Tehreek-e-Insaf to be released? Fourth, will the electoral results not be in favour of PTI? Fifth, can powerful candidates participate in the elections from PTI's platform?* A significant political backlash has emerged

¹⁴https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/Index.aspx?Issue=NP_ISB&Page=Editorial_PageC006&Date=20231103&Pageno=6

against PTI based on the events of May 9th. PTI's political campaign and the practical wisdom of May 9th have not only weakened their party but have also closed political paths or doors for them. Therefore, PTI's incorrect political wisdom or political adventurism at the political level has rendered it weak and caused substantial damage to it. *PTI needs to adopt a reconciliatory policy. However, this reconciliatory policy cannot be one-sided; it should be a two-way process. The confrontation serves no one's interest. Understanding each other and acting wisely in the face of circumstances and events will benefit everyone. Those who believe that PTI or its leadership can be sidelined to achieve political and economic stability are mistaken.*

Another terror attack in KP, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 08 November¹⁵

Terror incidents are increasing rapidly in various cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan. They imply that subversive elements are once again getting out of control. In the latest terror attack in KP, 43-year-old Lt. Col. Muhammad Hassan Haider and 3 soldiers were martyred in an exchange of fire with terrorists in Wadi Tirah district. In this incident, three terrorists were also killed and 3 more were injured. *According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), on the night of 6 November, security forces conducted an operation in Tirah Valley on a tip-off about the presence of terrorists, during which one Lt. Col and 3 other soldiers were killed.* An operation is underway to wipe out the remaining terrorists in the area. *In a statement, ISPR said that our security forces are committed to eradicating the menace of terrorism. The sacrifices of brave young men make this determination even stronger.* According to the statement of the Prime Minister's Office, the caretaker prime minister said that he would continue the war against terrorism until the complete elimination of terrorism from Pakistan. In a related statement, caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has said that the eternal sacrifices of the martyrs would not be allowed to go in vain. With the power of unity, we will throw away the unholy load of terrorists from the free land, he added. *Pakistan is witnessing a new wave of terrorism. The situation is alarming as the election activities are about to start in the next few weeks which will lead to public meetings/gatherings across the country. If these increasing incidents of terrorism are not controlled, it is feared that they will adversely affect election activities.* The security forces have been trying to control terrorism. Now through the IIC, the scholars of all religious schools have also presented their position. It is necessary that

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/08-Nov-2023/1745045>

the leadership of all political parties also take a blunt stand in this regard. Terrorism needs to be made part of the national debate on this occasion and make people realize that terrorists are enemies of both Pakistan and Islam.

Army Chief's solid indication of strengthening of state authority, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 19 November¹⁶

Chief of Army Staff Gen. Syed Asim Munir has said that Pakistan belongs to all Pakistanis, irrespective of their religious beliefs, provincial, tribal, linguistic, ethnic, communal or any other distinction. No other organization than the state is allowed to use force. According to ISPR, the spokesperson of the Pakistan Army, scholars of all schools of thought met the Army Chief at GHQ Rawalpindi on 17 November. The scholars unanimously condemned extremism, terrorism and sectarianism. They expressed their determination to continue their full support to the state and security forces to bring peace and stability. They said that Islam is a religion of peace and harmony. However, some elements are doing wrong interpretations for their interests. *Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir appreciated the fatwa of religious scholars to end the misleading propaganda spread by extremists and terrorists. He urged the Ulemas to remedy such misleading propaganda and remove internal differences.* He urged Afghanistan to take serious steps to remove the reservations. *The internal and external challenges that the country is facing require national unity and solidarity with complete harmony in the institutional, political-religious and all other spheres of life.* Unfortunately, the ideal atmosphere of political stability could not be created in the country. The main role for this is to be played by the national political leaders, but they continued to advance the politics of mutual confrontation and sought their interests. Because of all this, democracy continued to deteriorate and the people. During the last six years, *the politics of hatred reached a peak and even the state institutions could not remain without being affected by it. This deterioration arose due to the strategy of bringing PTI Chairman Imran Khan to power by making him a ladla, who based his politics on the abusive culture.* Even when Imran was in opposition, he continued his misbehaviour and attacked the national state institutions. After coming to power, he further promoted “misbehaviour culture” while the economic and financial policies of his government resulted in poverty,

¹⁶ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/19-Nov-2023/1747057>

inflation, and unemployment in the country. Finally, the opposition united against Imran and removed his government by a no-confidence motion.

Afghan ministers stopped from anti-Pakistan statements, Muhammad Qasim, Ummat, 23 November¹⁷

The emir of the Afghan Taliban Moulvi Haibatullah Akhundzada has stopped the Afghan minister from issuing anti-Pakistan statements. Akhundzada has asked that the genuine demands of Pakistan should be looked into. He also said that the resettlement of the refugees coming from Pakistan should be made sure. *Speaking at the Afghan ministers meeting in the Governor House the other day Moulvi Haibatullah Akhundzada said that Afghanistan's relations with its neighbouring and other countries should be improved and efforts should be made to resolve the problems of some neighbouring countries.* In fact, a committee should be set up under the Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi to resolve these issues. On receiving a report about the Afghan refugees returning from Pakistan, Akhundzada asked all the ministers to take constructive steps to resettle these refugees. A minister sitting in the meeting told *Ummat* that the Emir of the Taliban called the efforts made to impose Sharia in Afghanistan incomplete and demanded more efforts need to be made in that regard. *According to a source, the issue of Tehreek-i-Taliban (TTP) was discussed in the meeting and Akhundzada said that the demands of Pakistan need to be taken into consideration. It was said that the message was not given to Akhundzada that the TTP was using the Afghan territory to carry out attacks in Pakistan which was forcing the latter to take some measures, including closing of borders.*

FBR declared to be defunct, Editorial, Roznama Jasarat, 29 November¹⁸

It is reported in Tuesday's newspapers that a team from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has arrived in Pakistan to increase tax net and revenue. The country's institution has become so inefficient that the basic framework for the scheme for retailers by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) will also be formulated in collaboration with a foreign delegation. Measures will also be taken to increase the Tax-to-GDP ratio by up to 15%. It has been expressed that the determination has been made to bring more than ten lakh people into the tax net, increasing the number of taxpayers to 60 lakh. It has also been clarified that the team has no connection with

¹⁷ <https://ummat.net/epaper/news.php?date=2023/11/23/&p=story5.gif>

¹⁸ <https://islamabad.jasarat.com/2023/11/29/islamabad/2>

the loan program. This news conveys to the nation that the institution considered to understand the backbone of the country's economy, the FBR, is not only ineffective but also lacks the capability to formulate policies or the basic framework for Pakistani retailers. For this purpose, a foreign delegation has been invited. There is a vast difference in the mentality of taxpayers in other countries and Pakistani taxpayers. Those foreign entities responsible for formulating the basic framework are unaware of the mindset of Pakistani taxpayers. *The optimistic statement that the number of taxpayers will be increased to 60 lakh also needs to be evaluated. Although the number of tax net and taxpayers is increasing based on the collected tax amount, the percentage in terms of the number of taxpayers is decreasing. The biggest flaw comes from the FBR itself. Its officers impose hefty fines on various taxpayers, appeals are filed against them, and until the appeal decisions are made, these fines are considered as income and included in the budget. Later, when the fines are waived in the appeal, the treasury incurs heavy losses.*

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Taliban ready to take back Afghan refugees? Dunya Kamran Khan Kay Sath, *Dunya News*, 31 October¹⁹

The caretaker government is all geared up to send back the illegal immigrants from Afghanistan and has said after the set deadline they will deport the rest of the Afghans who are staying in the country without proper paper work. The host *Kamran Khan* pointed out that although a large number of Afghans have left the country, but according to the government there are still a large number of them who came to Pakistan after Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. He added that now the Taliban government is ready to handle them) and through geo mapping they will figure out the rest of them and deport them soon after the deadline, and there is no plan to extend the deadline. Journalist *Ahsan Tippu Masood* informed that the Afghan government has realized that they have to accept these refugees as they are their own people after initially condemning the move by Pakistan. *They have even formed a special commission for refugees and are gearing up to handle the inflow of Afghans.* They have temporary tents set up near borders and have plans to later settle them in other

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VMOJiYSp5Uc>

parts. They have also sent two thousand military trucks to receive them and take them to camps. Not only Pashtuns, many other tribes from Afghans had settled in Pakistan and now the Taliban is working to resettle them in different parts of the country. He added that Afghans who were living in camps in Pakistan has mostly gone back because they were undocumented and without cards but there is a population of Afghans who are living in Pakistan from 40 years and have made illegal papers. He added it will take more time to send them back and the whole process cannot be completed in one month.

The current political scenario in Pakistan? On the Front with Kamran Shahid, Dunya News, 07 November²⁰

The host underlined that the field for elections and making allies is open and MQM and PML-N has yet again decided to come together for the next election. PTI and Imran Khan look completely side-lined, the party has requested to keep his trail open and let the public watch it. *The host asked will the election be fair and why Imran Khan and PTI is saying that the elections will not be fair when is party is totally out of place. H underlined that the PML-N is getting ready to fight elections against a party, PTI which is nowhere. Atta Ullah Tarar of the PML-N pointed out that cases are still pending against Nawaz Sharif and other leaders and the PTI is crying for Imran Khan. PML-N will fight its elections and PPP will fight on its own, they are saying they will take clean sweep, so why are they talking about level playing field. PPP is doing political point scoring at this point of time to fool the public. They already know that PTI is side-lined and therefore targeting the PML-N. Firdous Ashiq Awan of the newly formed Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party pointed out that PML-N is building a perception that everything is in their favour and giving vibes that they will win the elections but reality is something different. If they are so confident they would to have joined hands with MQM, and they also have the feeling that the people are also not happy with the PML-N and especially the PDM government and their anti-people policy.* Defending the perception that the new party IPP is also created to support the PML-N and Nawaz Sharif as a PM. Analyst *Irshad Bhatti* underlined that Karachi has become a battlefield of gang wars, waste material and now PML-N is pointed out that it will clean Karachi. About MQM they always change their stand and can join any party. He added that if the PML-N wants to face the opposition and PTI then they should also bring out Imran Khan from jail, just like the time they use to demand the

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8U8Zgwb5NiQ>

release of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif when they were behind jails. Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari can save the country if they do not talk on the phone over any issues, they are coming together not to save the country but their politics.

On The Front with Kamran Shahid, The question of credibility in the 2024 elections?
*Dunya News, 20 November*²¹

The host underlined that the political atmosphere is the same as was in 2018, there was question on credibility that time and right now it is the same. The only difference is that that time it was PML-N and Nawaz Sharif that was facing the music and this time it is the PTI and Imran Khan that are the target and are questioning the credibility of the elections. The host pointed out that Imran Khan has no right to question this time because he has come to power in the same faulty process and Nawaz Sharif if he comes to power will also will be managed to bring him at the top. Senior Analyst **Amir Ilyas Rana** pointed out that it is true that Nawaz Sharif is been propped and managed to be brought at the top but he added the first steps to bring him back was taken by PPP and PTI. If that perception is been created then why should not Nawaz Sharif talk about it and this perception is not good for the credentials of democracy of the country. The politicians of the country never learns from their mistakes. He asked how the judges are appointed in this country, it should be made public and fair. They come into power by making agreements with the establishment and then give one sided judgments. **Musadik Malik** of the PML-N pointed out that elections should be neutral but he asked what Nawaz Sharif has done to give this message that he will come back to power after coming back to the country. He asked if the PTI is not able to organize corner meeting, then what has it to do with Nawaz Sharif. They should take this case to the caretaker government or the election commissioner. When Nawaz Sharif was thrown out of the country and not allowed to take part in election, no one has talked about level playing field. **Ahmed Awais** of the PTI pointed out that 9th May was a black day and whoever was involved should be put behind jail but the point is that there is no judicial process to the event. Until and unless an individual be it Imran Khan or Nawaz Sharif thinks that they are more powerful than the institution, things will not change. The PML-N is saying that nothing is proved in the case of property against Nawaz Sharif but they should read the detailed judgment of the Supreme Court.

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SrbhoFcJEoY>

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Will Chairman PTI will be disqualified before the election? *Geo News*, 22 November²²

The host pointed out that as the country march forward towards elections, the politics around electable is also speeding up, they have started gauging the wind and getting ready to be part of the winning side. Also, the host asked has all the legal troubles for Nawaz Sharif has been brushed aside so pave way for his entry into the elections? Also, will Imran Khan be able to come out of his legal troubles or the rope is getting tighter around his neck and he won't be able to take part in the elections? Legal expert and PML-N member *Attaullah Tarar* informed that the disqualification of Nawaz Sharif will be removed through an act which will be passed by the parliament. His other two cases will be heard in the court soon, and therefore there will not be so much difficulty in his way and he will be cleared soon. The change in election act that no person can be disqualified for more than five years will be passed soon. The avenue field case has been opened and the merit of the case has been discussed by NAB, after a thorough evaluation NAB has freed Maryam Nawaz Sharif in this case and there will not be any issue, the judicial order is there. Nawaz Sharif's trail has to be completed in four weeks and the SC court should take the lead. Legal expert and PTI member *Naeem Haider Panjutha* underlined that Nawaz Sharif is disqualified for life and it was passed by Supreme Court. He added that just by making changes in the election act will not remove his life-time disqualification. There is no way his disqualification will be removed by if Nawaz Sharif uses other channels and some elements want to clear his image in 24 hours then that is not the legal procedure. There was no procedure adopted in case of Imran Khan, during Shehbaz Sharif's tenure the case of Cypher was filed against him wrongfully. All they want is to convict Imran Khan in some cases and keep him away from taking part in the elections. The target is only Imran Khan, there are more than 200 cases against him and he has been politically victimized. Senior leader of PPP *Qadir Mandokhail* pointed out that the caretaker cannot resolve the issues of Balochistan and the current issue if its students. There should be a centralized system to keep tab on missing persons and wherever there are arrests they should be legally presented in the court or magistrates office. But unfortunately there are no mechanisms to resolve the issues of missing persons and Balochistan is facing the brunt of this lawlessness. He added that Bilawal Bhutto is right when he says that youth should be given chance in the future politics and the

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vKJbQ-G-MRs>

old politicians should retire and make way for young people. What will be the youth think of Nawaz Sharif and the favourable treatment given to him? Whenever he is charged with a case, he exit the country and go to Saudi or London and then one day return back, take bail and clear everything under a deal.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, PTI in trouble? They might lose its party symbol, otherwise, Geo News, 27 November²³

The host underlined that the PTI is going to face another serious blow as the election commission of Pakistan has directed them to conduct an intra-party poll within 20 days, failing to which their party symbol can be taken back. On the other hand the PTI has challenged that no one can take away their party symbol and they will go to polls on the same symbol. On the other hand a strong mixed party opposition is coming up in Sindh against the PPP. Also Nawaz Sharif in his latest address to public in Sialkot talked about people who were responsible for throwing him away when he was PM and was replaced by Imran Khan. **Barrister Gohar Khan**, translator PTI while talking about Nawaz Sharif pointed out that it has been one month since he is back in the country, and now that he has seen the public is not listening to him, he is talking like this so that there can be delay in the elections. He added no matter what Nawaz Sharif says he will not get the votes and therefore now he is talking about the invisibles who throw him out as PM and replaced by Imran Khan. The order of the ECP to convene meeting and do internal election is not sustainable. They asked to submit officer bearer's name. This order is one of its kind and we will consult with Imran Khan and prepare to challenge this in the court. **Shahnawaz Ranjha** of the PML-N underlined that whoever is talking against Nawaz Sharif are people who have been involved in 9th May events. He added that Nawaz Sharif was talking about these people who were involved in the 9th May event and he is right in saying that Imran Khan was the greatest beneficiary when Nawaz Sharif was thrown out as PM. We always invited Imran Khan to sit and talk with the opposition but he never came to sit with the opposition and always disagreed to sit on the table for dialogue. When talking about PTI he underlined that the symbol of the party will remain but the level playing field they are asking, they should compete with all parties and work hard on the ground. **Senator Taj Haider** senior leader of PPP underlined that we need to learn the lessons from the past and think about solutions rather than talking about the past.

²³ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4_nXPvBLYA

Alliance of five parties in Sindh is not a threat for the PPP, we are not taking the elections lightly and we have started the campaigns. He added that the voters of the party are loyal and they will not vote for a new party and added INP is a liberal party and it joining the new alliance is unexpected.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Dera Ismail Khan ²⁴	03/11/2023	At least six killed in blast targeting police in Dera Ismail Khan.	06	12
Mianwali ²⁵	04/11/2023	9 terrorists killed as operation to clear PAF's Mianwali air base concludes: ISPR.	17	24
DI Khan ²⁶	07/11/2023	Two policemen martyred, 3 injured in another terrorist attack in DI Khan	01	02
			02	03
Balochistan				
Gwadar ²⁷	03/11/2023	14 servicemen martyred in Gwadar ambush	20	00

²⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2444460/bomb-blast-targeting-police-kills-5-in-dera-ismail-khan-officials>

²⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1786340>

²⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1787232>

²⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2444492/14-servicemen-martyred-in-gwadar-ambush>