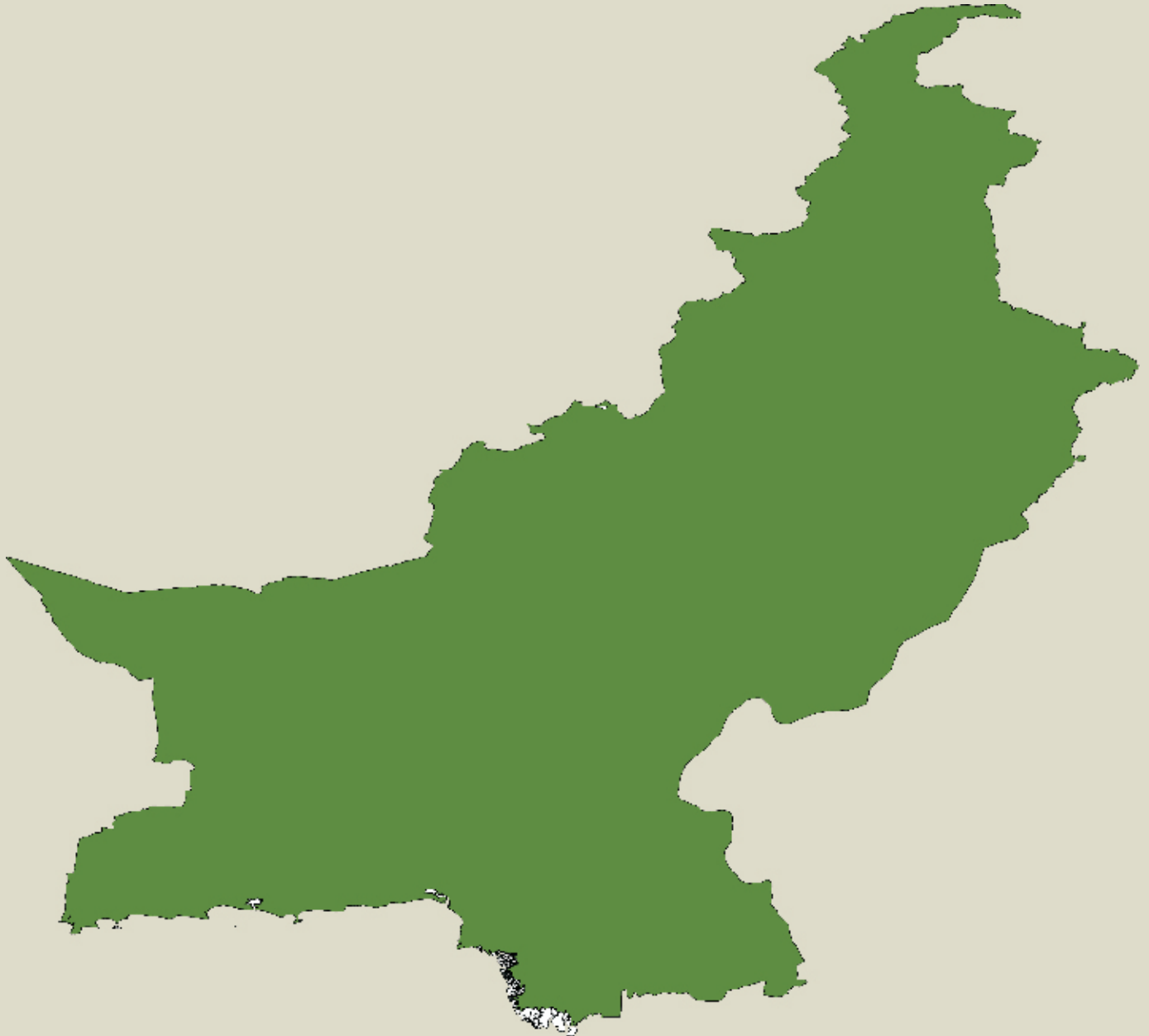


OCTOBER 2019

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



Prepared by
Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria

idsa
INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE
STUDIES & ANALYSES
रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

October 2019

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

Prepared by

*Dr. Zainab Akhter
Dr. Nazir Ahmad Mir
Dr. Mohammad Eisa
Dr. Ashok Behuria*



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND ANALYSES

1-Development Enclave, Near USI
Delhi Cantonment, New Delhi-110010

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST, October 2019

CONTENTS

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	03
ECONOMIC ISSUES	08
SECURITY SITUATION	10
PROVINCES &REGIONS	
Balochistan	12
URDU & ELECTRONIC MEDIA	
Urdu	13
Electronic.....	20
STATISTICS	
BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES.....	27

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Opposition Protest, Editorial, Dawn, 03 October¹

So far, the only thing that unites them is their desire to see Prime Minister Imran Khan pack up and go. The PPP and PML-N do not have a roadmap to accomplish this huge task. In fact, they have not unveiled any scheme to achieve even a smaller target than the overthrow of the PTI setup. *For instance, they have displayed little interest in tackling the government head-on over many of the unpopular measures that have contributed to the current price hike.* The JUI-F chief has implied that the protest will have the desired effect of unsettling the Khan government. *He appears to be relying on a 'tip-off' by commentators who say that there is a public sentiment against the government that an opposition movement of sufficient proportions could ignite.* But even if the PPP and PML-N are able to provide the numbers to back up the campaign, the leadership of the two parties has shown itself to be incapable of rising above their own interests and readily throwing their weight behind the Maulana. *While this may be a valid argument, the opposition, that is often advised to protest and debate in parliament in the interest of democracy, is right in pointing out the scant respect that the prime minister and PTI politicians have shown towards the legislature.* What option does it leave the opposition with, if not street protest?

The Chinese Model, Editorial, Dawn, 10 October²

During his Beijing visit, Prime Minister Imran Khan has been quoted as saying that this country would do well to follow China's example and put "500 corrupt people in Pakistan in jail". *Instead of filling the jails with the 'corrupt', or worse, hanging people in the streets, the leadership of the country should be talking about creating a viable system that punishes unscrupulous individuals in a transparent manner, and eliminates the scourge at the grass roots.* There are many things in the Chinese model that are worthy of emulation. But frequent executions and purges — the horrors of the Cultural Revolution should not be forgotten — should not be among them. However, there can be little argument with the fact that over the past seven decades, China has made huge strides in many fields. For Pakistan, there is much to learn from China —

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1508720/opposition-protest>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1510055/the-chinese-model>

perhaps the primary lesson should be that progress can only come through discipline, economic stability and socioeconomic uplift. *While the more violent episodes of modern Chinese history should not be replicated, the relationship between Islamabad and Beijing can mature and improve in a variety of sectors.*

Maulana's mandate, Najam Sethi, *The Friday Times*, 11 October³

This factual reference leads pundits to the conclusion that Maulana Fazal could not have threatened his long march without a wink or nod from the Miltabishment. But, in turn, that leads logically to another question: why would the Miltabishment do any such thing when it is constantly reminding everyone that it is on the "same page as the PTI government" and backs it wholeheartedly? Indeed, the confusion is compounded by the fact that the PMLN and PPP – without whose full throttled participation any long march aimed at overthrowing the PTI government cannot be successful – have not received a green light from the same Miltabishment. If they had, they would have happily led the long march instead of flapping about determining the nature, timing and extent of their participation. Logically, this would lead to the conclusion that the Miltabishment is only seeking to bring Imran Khan under some controlled pressure via Maulana Fazal in order to compel him to concede some of its demands and concerns – the two top ones being replacing Usman Buzdar as CM Punjab and giving an extension to the army chief – instead of getting rid of him altogether. This makes sense considering that the only politically popular and natural alternative to Imran Khan is Nawaz Sharif, who is anathema to the current leaders of the Miltabishment. The key word here is "controlled" pressure. A malleable Maulana in the lead can be "controlled" by the Miltabishment but a rigid Nawaz Sharif in the lead cannot be "controlled". That is why the Maulana must be the pivot of such pressure and the leader of the long march so that the limited goal of the Miltabishment can be achieved through the flexibility of its key player when the time comes to heed the Miltabishment tactical advice. Only two questions remain.

³ <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/maulanas-mandate/>

The government joins religious bigots against Ahmadis, Rana Tanveer, *Daily Times*, 17 October⁴

So far, apparently politicians, people at the local level, and even some government officers in their personal capacity have been involved in using Ahmadis. From time to time, some rights activists and Ahmadis have been accusing the government of patronizing “hate campaigns” against them. However, the government never refuted such allegations. *Now the government, which is depending on populism only to complete its term, is openly spreading hatred against Ahmadis as well as attaching its opponents with them.* The present government seems to idealize General Zia ul Haq and put itself in his shoes in making the use of religion to prolong its tenure. *No one else, Ahmadis, are here to be used as bait to save it from the current financial and political crisis. On one side, there are skyrocketing prices of commodities along with Maulana Fazlur Rehman’s muscles-flexing brigade.* In this situation, the government is trying to kill two birds with one stone. On October 6, on Pakistan Television (state-owned television station), it ran a 30-second news item, comprising the statement of an Indian Sikh politician, which he issued in 2013 against Ahmadis. News anchors not only associated Ahmadis with terrorist activities in Pakistan and India. Language of the news was provocative and hateful seemed to aim at inciting violence against Ahmadis to divert the attention of the public from real issues. *The government, depending on populism only to complete its term, is openly spreading hatred against Ahmadis.*

More terms for Mian Sahib, Asha’ar Rehman, *Dawn*, 18 October⁵

For many months, many years in fact, an effort has been made to drive a wedge between the Sharif brothers, the long-time holders of the PML patent. Quite often, an agent working towards their split has emerged from the operation room, triumphantly waving at the expectant crowd ‘evidence’ of how that separation was imminent. *The operators have given the people the good news of the long-anticipated breakup of the most celebrated jori on the Pakistani stage time and again — but only for things to not quite live up to their lucid imagination.* Mian Sahib is in firm control of the PML-N ship, even if incarcerated and the signs are that it is going to stay like this in the foreseeable future. Indeed, one debate that the elder Sharif brother may be encouraged by pertains to the chances of him being rehabilitated in the country’s politics as a

⁴ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/484538/the-government-joins-religious-bigots-against-ahmadis/>

⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1511508/more-terms-for-mian-sahib>

challenger for power. *Although never formally called off, this discussion about Mian Nawaz Sharif's claim on power has been given a new lease of life by a minister who everyone believes wields considerable authority in the decision-making circles of the country.*

The religious card, Editorial, Dawn, 22 October⁶

Given the JUI-F's religio-political credentials, the main participants in the party's forthcoming march on Islamabad will comprise former or current students of madrassahs affiliated with the outfit. It is true that if all goes according to plan, the representatives and supporters of other parties will also take part. However, the religious color will be hard to miss, i.e., the focus will be on the JUI-F cadres. Commentator after commentator on television and in the print media has warned JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his followers against the dangers of raising faith-based slogans. *The interior ministry has already written to the cabinet, asking for a ban on the uniformed stick-wielding razakaar or voluntary force called Ansar-ul-Islam.* In fact, the government, right up to Prime Minister Imran Khan, has referred to the 'religious card' while discussing the JUI-F march, even if this mention has been limited to cautioning the organizers against resorting to any such option. Politicians supporting the Maulana in his anti-government crusade, such as Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, have also voiced their concern on this count. *The Maulana should know better than to allow his representatives to make remarks that can be construed as hate speech and to use religion for political gains.*

Pakistan's challenges and opportunities, Talat Masood, The Express Tribune, 23 October⁷

The unfortunate aspect is that at a time when we need unity of purpose and cooperation between political parties and harmonious relations between and within institutions, the situation is just the reverse. Opposition parties are generally united to bring the government down by using essentially street power. The business community and several other groups are also on a warpath against the government. All this is happening when our distressed economy is being sustained through IMF funding and loans from friendly countries. *It seems odd that Imran Khan visited the UN and several countries to solicit support for the Kashmiris but hardly consulted the opposition on it.* In Pakistan, the military has played a major role in nation building. This is not as unusual as the military in several countries has contributed to

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1512202/the-religious-card>

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2085105/6-pakistans-challenges-opportunities/>

nation-building activities. The problem arises when they seek political power and distort the constitution. Pakistan's geographic location is both its asset and liability. *So far it has proved to be more of a liability. It is worrisome that political instability and economic pressures continue to hold the country to ransom.*

Dealing with Nawaz Sharif, Editorial, Daily Times, 27 October⁸

Needless to say that Nawaz Sharif's health issue came at an awkward time for the government; when all its attention was turned towards garrisoning the capital in anticipation of Maulana Fazlur Rahman's imminent siege of Islamabad. *Since PML-N is a big part of the agitation, that too on Nawaz Sharif's personal insistence (even though Shahbaz was resistant), one can be sure that Nawaz's deteriorating health and the government's unimpressive way of dealing with it will come up, repeatedly, during the dharna.* Out on bail for the time being, should his health improve, Nawaz will once again cast a long shadow on the present phase of Pakistan's politics. PTI's case is not helped by the economic burden its policies have placed on the common man. With wages and jobs diminishing, prices constantly rising, and little chance of relief on the horizon, the job of a united opposition in terms of whipping up public sentiment against the government is made that much easier. Now there'll be more meat, as they say, in additional allegations of political victimization with Nawaz naturally paraded as the principal exhibit. Even convicted and apparently out of the picture for a long time, *Nawaz Sharif has managed to out maneuver the government in more ways than one. Surely those in power need a better understanding of dealing with political prisoners; regardless of the nature of their conviction.*

In Panic Mode, Editorial, Dawn, 29 October⁹

JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's Azadi march may not be as visible to Pakistanis in general as some other protest advances on Islamabad have been, but the government is quite aware of the approaching storm. Clearly, it doesn't like what it is seeing, and is panicking. In the last few days, it has taken steps that have betrayed serious concerns on its part. Two of the JUI-F chief's most prominent aides, Mufti Kifayatullah and Hafiz Hamidullah, have been forcibly removed from the chessboard just as the protesters were digging in their heels for what could turn out to be a tense war of nerves. *The challenger must be given his due. The Maulana, with all the reminders*

⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/490190/dealing-with-nawaz-sharif/>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1513507/in-panic-mode>

about his compromises for power from recent history heaped on him, looked quite composed at the far end of the campaign. But the same could not be said about the prime minister's team. Perhaps the government is driven by the ideals of maintaining a two-pronged strategy: keeping a firm front against the protesters even when a dialogue had been opened with the march's organizers. The way that policy has been applied speaks volumes for an administration that is wary and insecure.

Troubling times, Adnan Rafiq, Dawn, 30 October¹⁰

The government has done itself no favours in its handling of politics as well. From the day it assumed power, it has kept a hostile posture towards even those opposition parties that it could have partnered with under a more inclusive approach. This has stalled legislation, leaving it with no option but to excessively use ordinances. The thwarted no-confidence motion in the Senate, despite the ruling party being in a minority, has left opposition parties with little to lose in the current parliament. Further, various government actions have alienated several key stakeholders. *The cases initiated against senior Supreme Court judges, for example, have estranged sections of the legal fraternity. The excessive use of Pemra to restrict unwanted content being aired on electronic media has disappointed even the most ardent of the government's advocates in the journalist community.* Thus, a disappointed middle-income support base, nervous industrial/business elites and growing unrest among the working classes has *created an opportunity for disgruntled political forces in the opposition camp to whip up a storm against the government.*

Pemra's absurd directive, Editorial, Dawn, 30 October¹¹

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority has declared that TV anchors could no longer offer their opinions on either their own talk shows or on other current affairs programmes as "subject matter experts". Their role, it said, must be limited to that of a "moderator" alone. However, procedures have fallen by the wayside in an environment where debate and dissent are being actively and unlawfully suppressed. *The arbitrary measures taken to straitjacket the media during the past year — some of them originating from 'unknown quarters' — include ordering channels to be taken off air, press conferences muted or not aired at all, interviews suspended, etc.* The government also floated the preposterous idea of media tribunals

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1513766/troubling-times>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1513763/pemras-absurd-directive>

which was fortunately shelved when it met with vociferous condemnation from the journalist community. *The ever-expanding strictures on press freedom are now beginning to throttle even the voice of those television anchors who earlier shrugged off allegations that the media in Pakistan is under sustained attack.* One may well ask whether Pemra's latest move is a response to the fact that talk show hosts have of late become a tad more critical of the government's performance, which some PTI legislators have found extremely irksome.

Maulana's march, Editorial, Dawn, 31 October¹²

The government granted permission to the JUI-F chief to hold his sit-in within the precincts of the city, and an expanse of land a few kilometers from Zero Point has been designated as the venue for the congregation. The march that commenced from Karachi has ballooned into sizable numbers as it travels north through Sindh into Punjab and onwards to Islamabad. Yet the real test begins as the marchers enter the capital and Maulana Fazlur Rehman unveils his plans for the dharna. Protest is his democratic right and as a citizen of Pakistan, he is fully within the ambit of the law in exercising his right. The dharna is also a test for the two main opposition parties that have lent him their support. The PPP and PML-N may have had their reservations, and possibly still do, but their key leaders will be sharing the dharna stage with the Maulana. *A key question would be whether this shared platform would cement unity within the combined opposition or turn out to be a temporary alignment of forces based on a shared interest.*

ECONOMIC ISSUES

State of the economy, Sakib Sherani, Dawn, 11 October¹³

The crisis has morphed from an external trade shock to a debt crisis, suggesting possible persistence. It is in this context that the overall conceptual design of the Fund programme is open to valid criticism as its size and back-loaded disbursement leaves the external account's vulnerability in place — rather than attacking it forcefully up front. A large part of the slowdown in the economy is a 'natural' outcome of the crisis and the ensuing stabilisation measures. *This time around, another element is adding to the uncertainty as well as negative sentiments of some economic agents — a concerted documentation drive by the*

¹² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1513980/maulan-as-march>

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1510216/state-of-the-economy>

authorities. Reform of an entrenched status quo is by definition always disruptive. Nevertheless, the implication of the severity of the crisis coupled with the serious effort at documentation is that Pakistan's economy is unlikely to see a quick 'V-shaped' recovery any time soon. Uncertainty among large segments of trade and industry prevails along with disruption to domestic supply chains and markets. *This is unlikely to dissipate significantly during the duration of the IMF programme.* Finally, the perennial missing link in this government's economic plans is strategic communication. It has to fashion a consistent and credible reform narrative — and then convincingly 'sell' it to investors and the markets.

Breaking the begging bowl, Jawaid Bokhari, Dawn, 14 October¹⁴

However, much of the problem lies with a weak policymaking process as well as the PTI's style of governance. A cursory look at its governance mode shows that the PTI's confrontationist approach has made bureaucratic support less forthcoming. Corporate leaders reportedly told General Bajwa they did not see light at the end of the tunnel and things would continue to worsen if nothing was done on an emergency basis. They complained that 90pc of the tax increase was collected from existing taxpayers and that was raising the cost of doing business. *Economic agents who keep the wheels of the economy moving are also allegedly being harassed by National Accountability Bureau officials lacking expertise or intricate knowledge of business activities.* Then there is a prevailing perception that prosperity is a function of the balance in security needs and economic growth. How this blends with the PTI's concept of welfare state is not clear. The federal cabinet is reported to be divided on the issue of privatisation. *Yet another cabinet reshuffle is reported to be on the cards. Critics say ad-hoc decisions will not work. There is a need to set the policy direction right.*

CPEC and the wages of mismanagement, Durdana Najam, The Express Tribune, 16 October¹⁵

Pakistan's lopsided economic relation with China was usually attributed to the lingering energy crisis, infrastructural and logistical problems, and corruption. Unless Pakistan has decided to become China's client state, CPEC alone should not be the only economic issue concerning Pakistan. It is too early to predict the effectiveness of the CPEC Authority in materializing the government's objective of executing the CPEC projects without hurdles. Not that it is the CPEC that has run into snags. Every developmental project in the country has faced bureaucratic, administrative and financial bottlenecks.

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1510786/breaking-the-begging-bowl>

¹⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2080269/6-cpec-wages-mismanagement/>

It is just not enough for Pakistan to make multiple visits to China for the restoration of faith and revival of enthusiasm on CPEC. The right way to follow through the progress path on CPEC is to revive and renew faith in the corridor at the home turf, among the vying domestic partners. *This corridor has a cost to it, which Pakistan will have to pay off. Already the accumulating debt has been a cause for concern and one of the major reasons for Pakistan's balance-of-payments crisis.*

FBR fear of traders, Editorial, Dawn, 27 October¹⁶

The traders do not want to pay income tax, sales tax or any other tax and have always resisted any effort that would help the government track their undeclared incomes and help document the economy. This is perhaps the only issue that unites the otherwise politically fragmented community. *Each time a government makes a move to tax them, they pull down their shutters and take to the streets to get a free pass. Several rounds of talks between the FBR and traders since the announcement of the budget have ended in a deadlock and the delayed enforcement of taxation proposals because of threats of a countrywide strike.* If the government thinks it can still persuade traders through negotiations to become part of the documented economy, or buy time to divide them, it is mistaken. And the rollback of the documentation effort is definitely not an option because it will jeopardize the government's plan to achieve the targeted tax revenues and document the economy, especially at a time when the country faces a real threat of a downgrade from FATF's 'grey' to 'black' list in February.

SECURITY SITUATION

Bill against forced conversion, Hassan Niazi, The Express Tribune, 15 October¹⁷

Last week, in a shameful capitulation to religious fanatics, the Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) rejected a proposed bill in the Sindh Assembly against forced conversions. Forced conversions are after all a part and parcel of the massive economic inequality that religious minorities face in Sindh and all over Pakistan. The families of victims have no wealth, no influence, and no power through which they can obtain justice. Try getting the police to do anything when you have none of those three. *Solutions lie not just in legal*

¹⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1513176/fbr-fear-of-traders>

¹⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2079363/6-bill-forced-conversion/>

mechanisms, but also in mechanisms to tackle the economic inequality that religious minorities in Pakistan face. Furthermore, an entire reworking of our criminal justice system is necessary. That starts with the police. *So many of our country's problems could be solved if the police did their job regardless of the economic and social status of the person coming to them.* This is not how a justice system works. You shouldn't need wealth, influence or power to get the basic features of the rule of law.

Communicating FATF progress, Editorial, Daily Times, 21 October¹⁸

But FATF is far too serious, and existential, a matter to play politics over. It is an even more urgent time bomb than the debt and very real chances of default; not the least *because if, worse come to worst, the country is blacklisted it will be simply written out of the international commercial and lending regimes. And that, let's understand this perfectly well, will mean more or less immediate default given Pakistan's precarious debt situation.* This is, in fact, the third time Pakistan has missed a deadline to do enough to have itself removed from the grey list. So now we've been given one last chance, to really make substantial progress on all 27 points or be put on the black list. Really there's very little, if anything, to celebrate in this outcome; but that's not the feeling you get when you hear the government's self-praise. Islamabad must also finally realize that this is not one of those moments when some sort of subtle lobbying by one or some of our friends can get us out of the firing line. So any time, and money, seeking diplomatic solutions is better spent on implementing all required corrective measures. *If we've only been able to 'largely' address concerns on five points in all this time, it will take a big effort to meet the February deadline. This is a moment of grave national importance and everybody, government and opposition, must understand its seriousness.*

Madressah reform, Editorial, Dawn, 23 October¹⁹

If the government were to succeed in bringing madressahs into the mainstream, specifically in overseeing their curriculum and ensuring their registration, it would be a feat worth appreciating. However, this is easier said than done. For example, there are no concrete figures about how many seminaries — registered and otherwise — exist in the country; estimates range from 30,000 to 60,000. Moreover, ensuring that all sects and sub-sects that run madressahs are on board is another challenge. What is more, there are relevant questions about what the students of madressahs will do after they graduate. Surely not all graduates can be absorbed as prayer leaders and Quran teachers. Therefore,

¹⁸ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/486646/communicating-fatf-progress/>

¹⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1512400/madressah-reform>

these youngsters need life skills along with their religious education that can help them find gainful employment upon completing their courses at seminaries. *Madressah reform efforts, therefore, must focus on two key areas: eliminating extremist and sectarian content from the syllabus, and giving seminarians training that will help them find jobs in a wide variety of fields.* But most of all, the state needs to reform the public education system so that the majority of parents can send their wards to school.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

Balochistan

Neglected Province, Editorial, *Dawn*, 03 October²⁰

Balochistan seems to have faded from the national narrative; only when it is the theatre of a terrorist attack does it surface, that too very briefly. *The HRCP's report from its fact-finding mission to the province — aptly titled Balochistan: Neglected Still — lays bare the deepening alienation among its people and their disillusionment with the state.* At the top of the list of grievances is the continuing practice of enforced abductions, which has reportedly expanded to include women victims from Awaran and Dera Bugti, a development bound to intensify the sense of humiliation and helplessness among the local population. The observations in the document, gleaned from interviews on the ground with representatives of political parties as well as civil society activists, including lawyers, members of labour unions and academia, etc., paint a picture of extreme repression and despondency. The right to security of person and rights to due process, freedom of speech, information, etc — all have evidently been sacrificed in the fight against separatist elements. *As though these problems were not grave enough, the latest HRCP report also highlights the growing resentment among the province's Pakhtun population at what they perceive to be the state's strong-arm tactics against PTM activists in Balochistan.* This is a new element in this cauldron of competing agendas and conflicting interests.

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1508896/neglected-province>

Time to address our internal weaknesses, M Alam Brohi, Daily Times, 22 October²¹

There is a simmering unrest in the smaller federating units of the country particularly in Balochistan and Sindh. The Baloch have been struggling to have ownership over the economic resources of their province since the very inception of the country. We have relied more on the use of force to subdue Baloch than on political dialogue with the leaders of the province in a bid to strengthen national unity. The trust-deficit between the federal authority and the Baloch has kept widening. The unrest in the territorial bounds of Balochistan has been excessively exploited by our adversaries to weaken the federal bonds in the country. The population balance in the province was disturbed by the huge influx of Afghan refugees deepening the political fissures there. Along with the use of force, we have followed the imperial policy of divide and rule. The situation in Sindh is not much different from Balochistan. The connivance between the landed gentry and the powerful establishment has so far succeeded in keeping the nationalist movements in check. The ethnic polarization sowed long years ago by dictator Zia has taken strong roots practically dividing the province into two parts. The rural and urban divide aggravated by the undue interference of the establishment has the potential of ripping Sindh apart. Political parties are hostage to their narrow political interests and have been fanning this ethnic divide between Pakhtun and Baloch in Balochistan and the Sindhi and Urdu speaking populations in Sindh to the peril of national unity. A country so deeply divided by economic and political interests cannot emerge as a powerful nation merely on the strength of its firepower.

URDU MEDIA

Business people's concern about economy, Editorial, Roznama Express, October 04²²

Pakistan's economy is going through worst crisis. Every now and then there are some rumours which cause worry to the business community. Issues like inflation, unemployment and crime are not recognized by the patrons of the current economic policy. *High prices of petrol, gas, electricity do not seem to have any impact on the government. It rather puts blame on the previous rulers*

²¹ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/487229/time-to-address-our-internal-weaknesses/>

²² https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/PoPupwindow.aspx?newsID=1106804405&Issue=NP_KHI&Date=20191004

for the crisis. Experts seem to not understand the situation either. The result is complete policy halt. People want some relief. The policies and agenda of the government should be clear to people. Inflation is high. Prices of basic commodities are unimaginable. The prices are increased every next months. More taxes are imposed. The burden falls on common man. ... These ground realities need to be discussed with the government and bureaucracy as these have created apprehensions in the business community. *According to media reports, business community raised their apprehensions and issues with the army chief Gen. Qamar Bajwa in a meeting and expressed their opposition to some of the policies of the government.* They said on the one hand the GDP has come down while on the other hand the taxes and revenues have seen an increase. Because of the inflation there are no buyers. They complained that to generate revenue, the business community is being squeezed. Gen. Bajwa listened to the business people and praised their role in the country. He assured them that the government would address their problems. He asked them not to support anti-government elements and cooperate. The need of the hour is that the government should announce relief-oriented policy. If there are no people-friendly measures, the problem will worsen.

People cannot be always fooled, Editorial, Ummat, 10 October²³

Prime Imran Khan is on an official visit to China. Mr. Khan is admirer of China and keeps showering praise on that country. China was nowhere where it is today seven decades ago. *It got leaders like Mao and Chaoi Ellai who made the China what it is today. Imran Khan said that first China learned from Pakistan and now Pakistan needs to learn from china. He said like President Jinping has put over 500 corrupt people in jail, he wish he could do same in Pakistan.* However, before and after the 2018 elections, the allegations that Imran used to throw at the opposition have all become ineffective now. *He should realize by now that he has provided refuge to those people who he was standing against earlier. Despite talking about the state of Medina, he is unable to come out of Bani Gala. Imran is now being disrespectful to the prophet by saying that the Prophet did not build state of Median in one day.* Imran should realize that there is visible change in Pakistan in last 13 months. ... In China's revolutions, millions of people died. Only then the country could prosper. *Is Imran ready to sacrifice his luxuries and companions for Pakistan? Of course not.* He will try to mislead people in remaining time. But now he should realize that the people are not ready to be fooled anymore. Especially by the government that has given them nothing but troubles and pain. *Imran claims that he has the support of China and other Muslim countries to bring Pakistan out of current economic crisis. But reality is that no country supports other without pursuing its own interests. And if a country*

²³ <http://ummat.net/2019/10/10/news.php?p=idr1.gif>

will have deal with a government like that of Imran Khan, chances of support are further less.

To Jail someone is not Prime Ministers Task, Editorial, *Jasarat*, 10 October²⁴

It looks like Prime Minister Imran Khan is still living in his pre-government days. *Now again he expressed his desire to send 500 corrupt people to jail.* Imran Khan announced he will establish an authority that will work towards preventing minister's interference in CPEC. *There is a concern among citizens in Pakistan that whenever Prime Minister Imran Khan travel abroad he calls Pakistanis thief, corrupt and dishonest.* If Prime Minister wishes he should arrest his ministers and people around ministers. But Prime Minister has adverse attitude when it corruption comes hunting his party men and workers. *Whosoever joins his PTI or group, corruption charges are dropped against them. A long list of such charged people are there which include Dr. Firdos Ashiq Awan and so many others. But cases are against only peoples associated with PML-N and PPP.* Prime Minister must note two things. **First**, to send someone jail is not prime minister's duty. Judiciary and other institutions are there for this purpose. The **second** thing he should bear in mind and avoid such foul language against his countryman abroad. Mr. Captain behave like prime minister or leave it. Both Imran Khan and NAB chairman should remember these things happen in dictatorships not in countries where law and constitution run the country.

Pakistan not to be in FATF black list, Editorial, *Nawai-i-Waqt*, 16 October²⁵

Pakistan has submitted its report in the FATF's ongoing Paris session. *There are rare chances of Pakistan being put in blacklist. New Delhi is trying hard to put Pakistan in the blacklist.* But Pakistan has met *all* the conditions set by FATF. There is a possibility of Pakistan's name being removed from the grey list as well. *Islamabad's efforts against extremism and money laundering have been considered satisfactory. Only 4 FATF goals/conditions remain to be acted on.* One of them is to improve prosecution system in Pakistan; there has be better coordination between the centre and provincial level on money-laundering. According to the group report, Pakistan has acted on 36 demands out of 40. *The report has asked for close watch on assets of banned groups and businesses involved in money-laundering; steps to be taken against money-laundering and support of terrorism; improving legal system and making more data on consumers available. These are not too difficult to be met.* Many countries, China, Malaysia and Turkey have appreciated Pakistan's efforts. If

²⁴ <https://www.jasarat.com/2019/10/10/191010-03-5/>

²⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2019-10-16/page-10/detail-1>

the work continues on other aspects of National Plan of Action, soon Pakistan will be removed from the grey list as well.

Party-leaders bypassing him, Maulana disturbed, Report, Ummat, 17 October²⁶

Back-door talks continue to stop Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman's 'Azadi March'. *The government has announced a committee, headed by Defence Minister Pervez Khattak that would represent the government. However, Maulana has rejected any offer of talks and asked Prime Minister Imran Khan to resign first.* According to a source, Maulana agreed with his party leaders that they would better positioned to talk only after reaching Islamabad. The government by then would be under pressure, an argument supported by other parties also. Meanwhile, Maulana was angered by attempts made by the government to reach out the JUI-F leaders directly. *Over half-a-dozen party leaders have come forward saying that they were approached by the government. They were either tried to be bought or coerced to stay away from the protest.* Maulana has now announced that talks would happen only after the march. JUI-F central and provincial leaders have been asked that if they are contacted by the government, they should immediately inform the central command. *On the other hand, Imran Khan, while fearing because of inflation and unemployment many people may join the march, has set the committee to talk to Maulana and ask him to stop the march.* The government fears that controlling a large crowd would be difficult. That is why it has decided to talk finally. JUI-F is trying to make it sure that Maulana is not arrested before the protest. Meanwhile, Islamabad High Court has allowed JUI-F to hold the protest saying that it is right of citizens of the country. The decision came as a blow for the government.

Country's biggest anti-government alliance, Report, Ummat, 18 October²⁷

Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman has succeeded in forming biggest opposition alliance against government in Pakistan's history. *Ten opposition parties including JUI, PML-N, PPP, among others have lent their support the Azadi March.* Earlier, in two major opposition alliances, Pakistan National Alliance and Movement for Restoration of Democracy, 9 parties had supported each. Some sources from the JUI are trying to give credit to Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman for bringing the opposition parties on one page. *Some sections in Islamabad see it as an outcome of 'invisible help'. Otherwise why would the 'forces' that made the alliance at the time of Senate Chairman Elections and after could not stop the*

²⁶ <http://ummat.net/2019/10/17/news.php?p=idr2.gif>

²⁷ <http://ummat.net/2019/10/18/news.php?p=story1.gif>

formation of the opposition alliance? The source said when the opposition movement against the government was being decided, in the first meeting in July there were many difference between the parties. There were differences on the Senate chairmanship also. Even ANP was not in support of any movement. *But now Asfandyar Wali has said that if Maulana is arrested, he would lead the movement. ... Inputs from the sessions of individuals imply that every opposition party is in support of the march. But there is no consensus on dharna.* PML-N, PPP, and ANP have suggested Maulana not to call his protest *dharna* or lockdown because the name has acquired negative connotations since PTI 2013 protests. Then the protest was called as 'Azadi March'. The source said that since they have not got any message from the top about any change, preparations are made according to the old order. *There would be makeshift arrangements for nemaz and reciting the Quran, unlike PTI dharna where music and songs were played. A meeting between Maulana and Shehbaz Sharif is expected soon.* According to the sources, not only JUI-F prefers sitting in Islamabad till the demands are met but also ANP and PkMAP.

Current political crisis needs peaceful solution, Editorial, Jang, 21 October²⁸

It appears that political thinking in Pakistan is in crisis. *It is not wrong to say that if the current situation is not controlled soon, there may be severe crisis.* To resolve differences peacefully, the government and the opposition need to think rather than acting rashly. The government has set up 7-member committee headed by Defence Minister Pervez Khattak for the purpose to reach out to the opposition. *Khattak said the other day that the presence of serious and sensible people in the committee shows that the government was serious about talks.* On the other hand, General Secretary of JUI-F Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari said that his party has not closed the doors for talks but it seems that the government was not serious. He said that the committee should come up with agenda and then we would decide whether talks can happen on those matters or not. However, for time being there seems no chance of talks. In an interaction with some religious scholars, Imran Khan used rude language against Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman. *If Imran accuses the opposition of corruption, he should also know that many members of his party and the cabinet are also accused of being involved in such activities. Even the PTI is facing a case of foreign funding. Similarly, the opposition should not ask Prime Minister's resignation and say only then they would talk. If he resigns, whom will they talk to! Both the parties need explore different options and select best ones that re in national interests.* The soon the current crisis is resolved, better it is for the country.

²⁸ https://e.jang.com.pk/10-21-2019/lahore/pic.asp?picname=06_001.png

Long march and possibility of confrontation, Assadullah Ghalib, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, October 24²⁹

There is a possibility of confrontation between the participants of the 'long march' and one state institution, said Defence Minister Pervez Khattak. *He made this statement in the backdrop of a video in which Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman is seen saying that if martial law will be imposed during the march, we will take the other side.* Rumours about possible military rule in Pakistan keep cropping up. It was there when Nawaz Sharif was Prime Minister. It was assumed that if that happens, like in Turkey in 2016, people would come on roads and would stop the army from taking over. Neither the army imposed martial law nor did people come on roads when Nawaz Sharif was removed as Prime Minister. *Given the fact that Nawaz Sharif himself was a supported by military in his early days, it was strange to see him criticizing role of military in politics. Similarly, Maulana Fazl-ur Rehman headed the MMA in 2002 elections. It was said that MMA was B-team of the martial law. Maulana's party formed government in KP and completed its five year term. Now all of sudden he has become champion of democracy.* To challenge the army and to imply there would be confrontation is not desirable at the moment. Kashmir is under siege for over 80 days. Indian forces are violating ceasefire along the LoC and then New Delhi claims it carried out surgical strikes against Pakistan. *In such background, any political instability and confrontation with the army will only help India. ... Army Chief Qamar Bajwa is keen to restore political stability and economy of the country. The army and the civilian leaderships are on the same page. And still the army is criticized. It is not right way.* Army is fighting for the nation and Kashmiri. It needs to be given its due respect.

Maulana is backed by outside forces? Column, Naved Masood Hashmi, *Ausaf*, 25 October³⁰

PM Imran Says he is not going to resign and that outside forces are backing Fazlur Rehman. *He added that India is happy with Maulana's agenda of protesting against the government and derailing the Kashmir issue from focus.* On the other hand, Maulana in a press conference in Sikhar terms government as illegal and sees voicing against illegal government rights of democratic forces. **He appealed government not to blackmail him in the name of Indian support as Imran himself is a foreign agent.** The writer says that statements of Imran Khan and Maulana confuse common people, who to trust and not.

²⁹ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2019-10-24/page-4/detail-3>

³⁰ https://www.dailyausaf.com/epaper/popup.php?newssrc=issues/2019-10-25/94571/p10_02.gif

But let me remind Imran Khan as he is no longer a captain of cricket team but being a Prime Minister of Islamic republic of Pakistan he should submit evidence of Maulana getting backed by foreign forces to court. If those evidences prove to be true then Maulana will be in jail and government will get freedom from Maulana's freedom march. As a citizen it is my right to ask government is it not equivalent to risk national security by granting a conditional permission for March and forming team to engage with Maulana after information that Maulana has foreign support. Further I would like to ask Imran Khan that if he is unable to arrest an agent of foreign forces despite being Prime Minister then who is running the country? Prices of every commodities are sky rocketing? Who is responsible for prices of consumables and lifesaving medicines? Prime Minister should arrest Maulana and tell the nation that government is capable to arrest agents of foreign powers.

Pakistan at the crossroads, Editorial, Ummat, 28 October³¹

Kashmir issue is now discussed in every part of the world. On 27 October, the Kashmir Day, not only the Muslims across the world but whole world irrespective of caste and creed protested against India's atrocities in Kashmir. *On this occasion the Government in Pakistan issued just statements and has been doing nothing practical about the Kashmir issue. It is failure on the diplomatic front that Saudi Arabia, UAE and even Palestine are honoring Narendra Modi.* The UN on its part, instead of taking any major step to implement its own resolutions, continues to ask India and Pakistan to resolve the issue bilaterally. Imran Khan is happy that President Trump met him and said that he would like to arbitrate. *Second issue is that the Niazi government is facing protests by the opposition as Azadi March seems to have caused some worry in the government which now says that it has the support of the army.* While on the one hand the government has started talks with the opposition, on the other hand it has allowed limited protests to go on. At the same time it has blocked roads leading protesting places. It also canceled the citizenship of JIF-F senator Hafiz Hamidullah. *One thing that gives the Niazi government some relief is that the judiciary and the NAB are after Sharif and Zardari families. The government is content with that as if these are the main problems of the country. People increasingly are realizing that the NAB actions are against particular people while the fact is that many people in the government are facing similar charges.* Some even go to the extent that Nawaz Sharif's illness is an excuses to further NRO to stop some people from doing politics. Next important issue is of economy which is being destroyed by the current government. It is strange the most important posts in financial affairs are occupied by the IMF people. Now the people from this interest-based

³¹ <http://ummat.net/2019/10/28/news.php?p=story1.gif>

institution, IMF, are coming to Pakistan to see how its conditions are acted upon. The Kashmir issue, the protests, use of law and justice and IMF: Pakistan is standing at the crossroads at the moment.

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

Report Card, Maulana Fazl-ul-Rehman's proposed long march, Geo News, 03 October³²

On this episode of Report Card the panel discuss about Maulana Fazl-ul-Rehman's proposed long march for which he has announced the date as 27 October. The main points that comes out of this discussion are: *first* there is so much confusion and division among the opposition, especially PML-N & PPP whether to join the long march or not. *Second*, within PML-N there is division between Shabaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif camp, while the earlier is against joining the protest all together whereas Nawaz Sharif is in favour of joining the protest. *Third*, with announcement of the final date by Maulana for the protest the division within PML-N will come out in the open. *Fourth* PPP is also in confusion and has said they will give moral and political support to the Maulana, but Mazhar Abbas one of the panelist asks what they mean by political support if the party does not believe in using the religious card for politics, at the same time announcing support for a religious party protest. *Fifth*, the Maulana has no political stake right now and therefore he will go ahead with the protest. Even if the protest fails to bring down the PTI government, it will not affect his political career. *Also*, the JUI-F chief has realized that PPP and PML-N will keep dodging on the question of their support and therefore he announced the dates.

Think Tank, why the Maulana decided to walk against the government on October 27? Dunya News, 06 October³³

In this episode of think tank the panel discuss on the why the Maulana decided to walk against the government on October 27? The main points from this discussion are: *first*, with the announcement of the date of the march by Maulana, the test for the government and opposition has started. *Second*, there might be some issues between the PML-N, PPP and other opposition parties over the issue of the use of religious card for the march. *Third*, Both PML-N

³² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4m6n7C5PdIU>

³³ <http://video.dunyaNews.tv/index.php/en/pv/Think-Tank/17373#.XZ1wctIzbcS>

and PPP are coming up with the decision to support the march for one day, but are against any sort of protest that can lead to violence. *Fourth*, within PML-N Shabaz Sharif is not at all in favour of any sort of March or protest against the government. *Fifth*, the fact that TV channels are debating over the issue of the march by Maulana more than the current governments work is a proof that there is problem of governance in Pakistan. *Sixth*, the Maulana will go ahead with the March come what may. *Seventh*, although the government has announced that they know the strategy to contain the march but there is a concern in the country that it is not a good time for a march by the opposition, as Pakistan is fighting with its weakening economy and other issues. Therefore, if this march turns violent, it will give a bad image to the country at this crucial point. *Eight*, Maulana condemned the statement of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmood Khan that JUI-F activists would not be allowed to proceed to Islamabad to participate in the march.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, PTI Governments approach towards economy, Geo News, 10 October³⁴

In this episode the guests from the three political parties, PTI, PML-N and JUI-F discuss over governments approach towards the economy and the protest by small businesses and traders yesterday in Islamabad against the complexities in taxes created by the PTI government. The main pointers in the discussion are: *First*, the traders and businessman were protesting against the complexities in documentation through the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) after failed attempts to negotiate with the government. *Second*, the traders are demanding either to do away with the documentation or simplify the steps for documentation in taxation. *Third*, 80% traders are small business enterprises and cannot afford to hire lawyers to go through legal process of tax return files and therefore they are protesting. *Fourth*, the street level agitations by the traders are due to the fact that Imran Khan is not focusing on these small issues. When he came to power he promised to give relief to the common people but now his government is collecting tax from the poor public. *Fifth*, the cost of production for the farmers is so high, so the question is where he will sell his products. *Sixth*, the people are demanding transparency in the FBR. *Seventh*, questions are asked if these protests are prelude to Maulana's march to be held on 27 October, or if the Maulana will be taken into protective custody before he start the march.

Aaj Shazeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Geo News, 10 October³⁵

³⁴ <https://www.geo.tv/shows/capital-talk/250662-capital-talk-9th-october-2019>

³⁵ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0hLhmthUbnU>

In this episode the host and guest discuss about PML-N's confusion whether to take part in Maulana Fazl-ur-Rehman's Azadi March/Long March in Islamabad on 27 October or not. The main points from the discussion are as: *first*, the differences between Nawaz Sharif and Shahbaz Sharif are increasing each passing day over the issue of if the PML-N should or not take part in the march. *Second*, it is clear that Shahbaz Sharif is against the march and wants to avoid any confrontation with the government which can be harmful for the PML-N party. *Third*, on the other hand Nawaz Sharif is in favour of the march and has allegedly written a letter to the Maulana from jail encouraging him for the march. *Fourth*, Even after meetings and consultations within the party, the PML-N has not clearly announced about their decision to join the march. *Fifth*, Shahbaz Sharif was supposed to meet Nawaz in jail for a final decision but this meeting could not happen due to ill health of Shahbaz Sharif, but questions are raised is it a delaying tactic by Shahbaz? *Sixth*, the Maulana is mostly criticised for the use of the religious card in the march, but the opposition is counter-questioning Imran Khan is the use of Madina ke Riyasat (kindgom of Madina) not use of religious card in politics. *Seventh*, Shahbaz is scared of the government's action against him, and if he joins the march cases against him might reopen or he might even be arrested.

Jirga with Saleem Safi, Geo News, Discussion on the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), 13 October³⁶

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government led by Chief Minister Mahmood Khan of the PTI had earlier announced dates for completion of the BRT corridor in Peshawar but during his last briefing he disagreed to give any dates for final completion. In this episode Saleem Safi discusses the issues and concerns related to the BRT. *First*, Peshawar is in the news not only for the protest of doctors against the privatization of hospitals by the KP government but also due to the incompleteness of the BRT corridor. *Second*, Justice Ibrahim of the Peshawar high court has started asking questions about the irregularities in the BRT. *Third*, the KP government has so far disagreed to give any date of final completion but has ordered for 360 buses from China to be used on the route. While on the other hand the 250 buses, from China meant to run on the BRT route are lying in the stops unused and getting wasted and not useable. *Fourth*, the opposition has formed a Qaumi Jirga to question the government but so far nothing has been achieved. *Fifth*, it is been said that there are many factions in the PTI who are against the BRT and its plan and realize that the PTI set an unrealistic time frame for completion. *Sixth, a report submitted by a fact finding committee in March 2019 underlined that the corridor is not properly*

³⁶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QVu0gGZa98k>

designed and aligned. **Seventh**, the team had found that the route was constructed without feasibility, geotechnical, sewerage, traffic and water supply studies, among other reports, being undertaken before construction of the route. *The route, according to officials privy to the report, has eaten away at an average of 40 per cent of available roadways on either side of the entire BRT route from its starting point to the end point.* **Eight**, critics are of the view that if the same amount has been spent in hospitals it could have been of some use and believe that PTI used the BRT for political scoring and announced it without giving proper thought. **Ninth**, the CM of KPK was not available to take part in this show but he was approached many times.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Governments Strategy to Tackle the March, Geo News, 21 October³⁷

In this episode of Capital talk the discussion is on how the PTI is planning to tackle the JUI-F's march towards opposition, and is the opposition united to protest against the government? The main pointer are: **First**, the government is arguing that given the situation on the borders, increasing tensions with India the Maulana and the opposition parties should come to the negotiating table and open a dialogue with the committee formed by PTI. **Second**, it also blames the Maulana and opposition for shifting the focus from Kashmir by talking about anti-government march and protests. **Third**, the government has already started to block the roads to Islamabad and are unloading containers from trucks to use it to block the highway's to stop the march towards Islamabad. **Fourth**, A photo of Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman with Ajit Doval of India is doing the rounds on social media and it's said the government is trying to establish that Maulana is being supported by India for the protests. **Fifth**, Maulana Atta ul Rehman of the JUI-F on this episode has labelled it as a propaganda by the PTI government and reveals that even a letter is doing rounds that the Ahmadiyya community is also supporting the march. **Sixth**, when asked about the difference between Imran Khan's protest against the government in 2014 and now, Javid Latif of PTI underlines that JUI-F has no stake and is not capable to form a government. It is fighting the fight for the PML-N and PPP.

Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Nawaz Sharif's health deteriorates amid low platelet count, Geo News, 23 October³⁸

The host discuss the latest development in Pakistan regarding Nawaz Sharif's deteriorating health. The information till now are, *first* Nawaz Sharif has been admitted to hospital as his blood platelet count has reduced to 2000 from 10,

³⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX9aXcN3Hho>

³⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mmrSVaXkTzQ>

000. *Second*, the Imran Khan government is saying that Nawaz Sharif uses a blood thinner to prevent blood clotting related to his cardio-vascular disease and are blaming his lifestyle choices at this age (76) and blames the reduction in platelets to this. *Third*, the doctors are saying that the blood thinner does not cause this and this rare reaction to Nawaz Sharif is due to some other medicine. *Fourth*, Maryam Nawaz who was presented to the court for the Chaudary Sugar mill case under NAB requested the judge to allow her to meet her father for an hour on payroll. She was allowed to make one phone call initially to Nawaz Sharif during which she broke down and cried in the court. *Fifth*, later due to pressure, when the health of Nawaz Sharif begin to become worst and taken to hospital, the Imran Khan government allowed Maryam to meet her father on a payroll for 24 hours. *Sixth*, Nawaz Sharif supporters also gathered outside the hospital and prayed for his speedy recovery. *Seventh*, PML-N is blaming the government for negligence and saying that everything is happening on the directions of Imran Khan and that he is responsible for the lack of medical care for Nawaz. *Eight*, the PTI government announced that any person investigated under NAB for corruption, above five crore irrespective of if the case is at investigation, trial or enquiry stage will be send to C class jails (which will not have TVs and ACs etc).

Sethi Se Sawal, Najam Sethi Official, 26 October³⁹

Q: Why Imran Khan is afraid of Fazl ul Rehman's long march?

A: Imran Khan is sacred because he knows how PTI has formed the government, how he has become PM. Also he also knows that his popularity graph is decreasing with each day, and Pakistan's internal crisis is also increasing. Earlier when he thought that this march will not take place, he jokingly has said that you are welcome to Islamabad to protest, our government will provide food and shelter. Now that it has become a reality, he is panicking and he has taken yet another U-turn by stating that the march will not be allowed to enter Islamabad. The establishment is also worried.

Q: It looks like the Maulana is not backing off? Can this give him more popularity?

A: The JUI-F chief is in no mood to back out, despite of all the efforts by PTI to blow off his long march. This has obviously made him more popular as the media is fixed on him from quite some time. Another important thing is that this time the Maulana is not using the religious card, and making this march all about politics. Additionally till now his use to play along with PML-N and PPP but this time he is playing on the front foot and has gained a new political respect. At a time, when Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari are behind bars,

³⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bz_vAuTJGck

and his party worker confused, Maulana has taken the front stage and is challenging the PTI government solely. As a religious leader he is famous and now his popularity as a political leader is also increasing.

Q: Can Imran Khan play a role of a mediator between Iran and Saudi Arabia?

A: No there is no role Imran Khan can play to mediate between Iran and Saudi. The truth is Saudi does not require Pakistan's mediation and Iran does not trust Pakistan. Iran looks at Pakistan as a 'Trojan horse' who works on the behest of the US. When Imran Khan after the US visit declared that the Saudi Princess has asked him to mediate, the Saudi princess later said that he has not put up any such request to the PM of Pakistan. Iran will start asking about the India-Pakistan-Iran pipeline and why Pakistan is putting hurdles to complete this pipeline project.

Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, New Regulations on Media, Geo News, 29 October⁴⁰

On this episode Hamid Mir invites leaders from the three political parties, PML-N, JUI-F and PTI to discuss important issues related to the media regulation by the government and the opposition's Azadi March which has started in Karachi and now is moving towards Islamabad. The main points of the discussion are, *first*, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has issued a notice directing the TV anchors not to go as analyst on other TV programmes and only stick to their own programmes and TV channels. It further said that only subject experts can talk about an issue. *Second*, there was lots of opposition from the anchors and the anchors association resisted this notice to ban them from participating in other programmes. Even Ministers in the PTI government like Sharien Mazari and Asad Umar have objected to this notice of PEMRA. *Third*, after facing stiff resistance, PEMRA has now said that it is an advisory. *Fourth*, the PTI government is saying they are not aware of any such directives. *Fifth*, the opposition leaders of PML-N and JUI-F on this episode criticised the government and said that the PTI is now scared of the anchors and do not want them to tell the truth and hence the ban. *Sixth*, Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman's interview on Geo was interrupted and asked to stop earlier, but later Imran Khan said there is no such restrictions. If that is so why there is a complete blackout of the Azadi march by opposition in the media, the JUI-F leader Mohd Jalal Uddin asks? *Seventh*, on October 26 the opposition and government sealed a deal that the Azadi march will not enter red zone in Islamabad and they will camp at Peshawar mod. Even after this deal, the nationality of Hafiz Hamidullah, senator and JUI-F leader was cancelled and Mufti Kifiat ullah

⁴⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k3VRNTrUWXs>

MPA, KPK assembly (JUI-F) was arrested. *Eight*, in such a situation question is will the deal stand? *Ninth*, the PTI leader Ali Mohd Khan blames the opposition for doing politics and said that they are coming to Islamabad for power and nothing else, on this the JUI-F leader asked then why the doctors and traders are protesting and coming to Islamabad? *Tenth*, the opposition leaders blame that the assembly and senate is closed and locked by government and when there is no debate there, the people has to come on roads to protest.

Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, Maulana's March in Islamabad, Geo News, 31 October⁴¹

In this episode the anchor discuss about Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman's march which will reach Islamabad today. Akram Durrani who is heading the oppositions Rehbar Committee, Asad Umar of the PTI and Saleem Safi are the guests on this show. The main observations from this discussion are, *first*, The PML-N and PPP are supporting the march and has arranged tents for the convoy in different stops like Karachi, Lahore, Gujranwala, Islamabad etc, but their workers are not marching along the convoy of the Maulana. *Second*, JUI-F leaders and its workers are marching towards Islamabad in full strength and they are aware of the reason that it is a march against the government's failure to solve domestic issues. They have travelled from all parts of Pakistan and are ready to follow any orders of the JUI-F chief. *Third*, the Imran Khan government is also set to deal with the march, as it has sealed the red zone in Islamabad with containers. They are saying they can protest in the Peshawar *mor* ground as long as they want unless they break any laws and in case they do so, law will take its course and deal with it. *Fourth*, Akram Durrani said that we have three basic demands, Imran Khan's resignation, reelections and no military interference in the re lections. Asked it does not seem like Imran Khan will give resignation in such a scenario what will the course of action, Durrani replies then the protest will go on for long and it won't be a one day event. *Fifth*, Durrani also blames the government for the media blackout and no coverage of the march, he informs that even they have directed to ban the internet so that the march gets least publicity. *Sixth*, Asad Umar of the PTI reveals that the PTI government will not react emotionally to anything and act wisely. It has kept the political channels open and the negotiating team headed by Pervez Khattak will talk to the opposition. *Seventh*, Salim Safi is of the view that both the government and opposition has underestimated the Maulana. At a time when the boats of PPP and PML-N are sinking, the Maulana came out and is challenging the Imran khan government. He adds that the test of PTI government has begun and also this is a real test for the Maulana that is why

⁴¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=23huwzHwDco>

he is not showing his cards openly. *Eight*, Safi is of the view that the PML-N and PPP are playing on a back foot for the time as they want to negotiate a good package with the government and if they get it, they will stay silent and if not they will also openly join the protest of the Maulana.

STATISTICS

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
Quetta ⁴²	16/10//2019	One dead ten injured in Quetta blast	01	10
Quetta ⁴³	21/10/2019	4 injured in second blast targeting police in a week in Quetta	00	04

⁴² <https://dailytimes.com.pk/484231/one-dead-10-injured-in-quetta-blast-2/>

⁴³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1512127/4-injured-in-second-blast-targeting-police-in-a-week-in-quetta>

Punjab				
Lahore ⁴⁴	31/10/2019	Tezgam train inferno death toll reaches 70	70	40

⁴⁴<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2090405/1-13-killed-fire-engulfs-train-travelling-karachi-rawalpindi/>