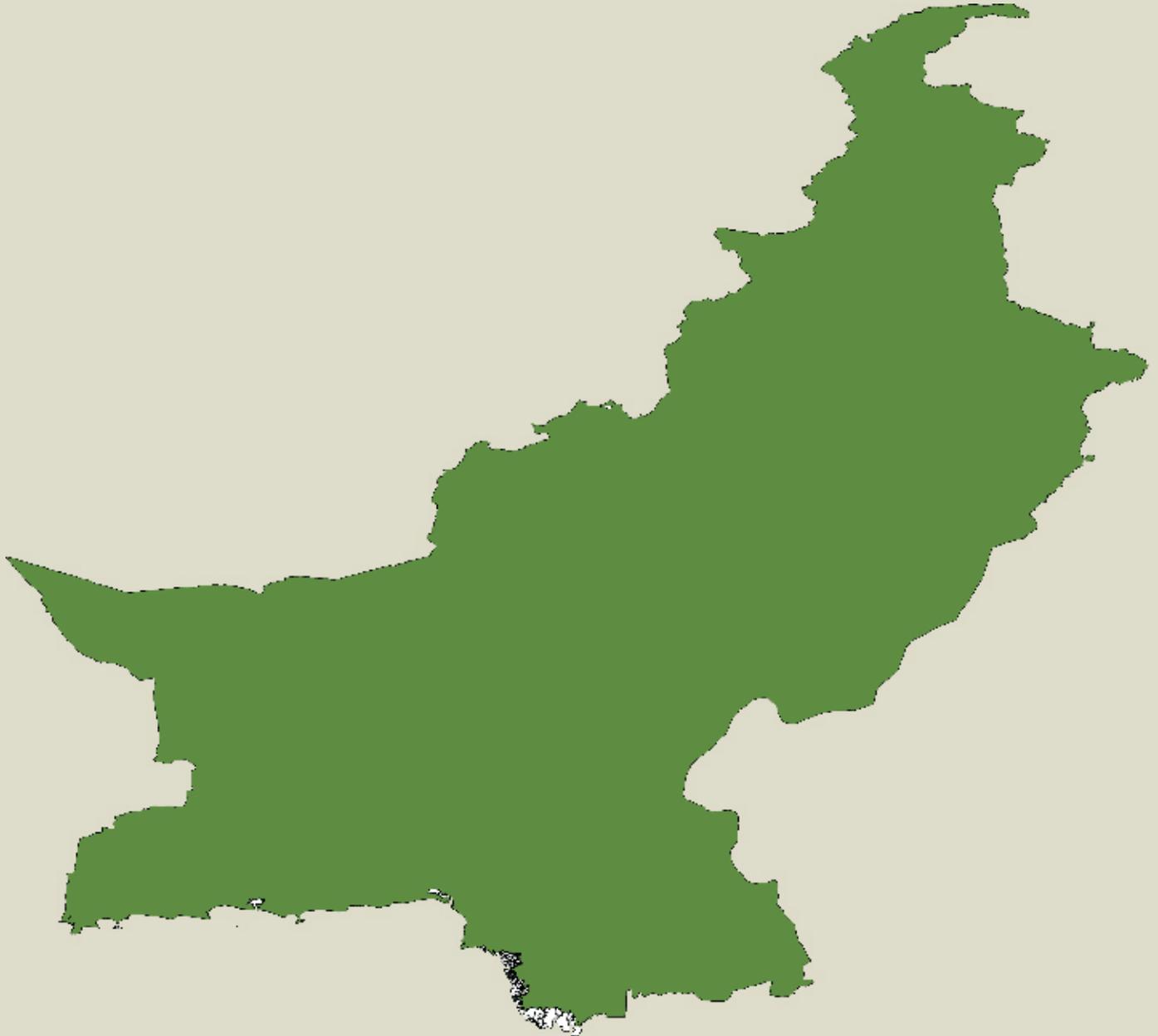


OCTOBER 2017

PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



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

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

PPP accuses PTI of creating divisions in opposition ranks, Dawn, 01 October¹

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Syed Khursheed Shah has blamed the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) for providing indirect support to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz government by creating division within the ranks of the opposition. Talking informally to a group of reporters at his official residence here on Saturday, Mr Shah alleged that the PTI had in the past too tried to divide the opposition, but this time it had caused a “major crack” and the government would definitely take advantage of the situation. He claimed that retired Justice Fakhruddin G. Ebrahim, who was appointed chief election commissioner (CEC) before the 2013 general elections, was the nominee of the PTI...

Bajwa meets Ghani, offers support to Afghanistan, Dawn, 03 October²

Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani in Kabul to discuss matters of regional security and issues of common interest. During the Kabul meetings, issues related to a long-term peace, cooperation against the common threats, coordination between respective counterterrorism campaigns to restrict space for non-state actors, intelligence sharing, trade and commerce, and people-to-people contacts also came under discussion. Gen Bajwa offered Pakistan’s complete support to Afghanistan in achieving shared interests in the war against terrorism, including training and capacity building of the Afghan security forces.

Forgone conclusion: Sharif elected PML-N president ‘unopposed’, Sardar Sikander, Express Tribune, 03 October³

A little over two months after he had been disqualified by the top court from holding a public office, Nawaz Sharif returned on Tuesday as chief of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), thanks to the election reforms passed by parliament a day earlier. It was the second time in 12 months that the PML-N elected Sharif as its president. On Oct 18 last year, Sharif, then the prime minister, had been voted to head the ruling party in

¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361191/ppp-accuses-pti-of-creating-division-in-opposition-ranks>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361348/bajwa-meets-ghani-offers-support-to-afghanistan>

³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1522074/ousted-pm-nawaz-sharif-back-full-force-party-chief/>

the intra-party elections. Following the July 28 Supreme Court ruling in the Panamagate case, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had asked the PML-N on August 7 to elect a new president because a disqualified person [in this case Sharif] could not hold any office in a political party.

US voices concern about stability of Pakistan government, Anwar Iqbal, Dawn, 05 October⁴

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said after a meeting with Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif that he believed the United States had a reliable partner in Pakistan. While the secretary's remarks about the future of US and Pakistan's relationship came as a pleasant surprise for Pakistan observers in Washington, his comments on stability of the government in Islamabad alarmed many. This marks the first time a US official has publicly addressed the political conflict in Islamabad, clearly backing the political setup. When asked if the meeting with Pakistan's foreign minister had convinced him that the United States had a reliable partner in Pakistan, Secretary Tillerson responded: "Yes, I believe we do."

Asif to US: Don't treat us as 'whipping boy', Express Tribune, 05 October⁵

Speaking at the US Institute of Peace, a Washington-based think-tank, the foreign minister OF Pakistan Khawaja Asif said the "relationship with India is at a lowest ebb at the moment". Responding to a question on India, he said, "Sadly, India did not respond" to Pakistani efforts to improve relationship. "What is going on in [Indian Occupied] Kashmir is the biggest roadblock to normalization to talks," Asif said. The foreign minister asked the US not to treat his country as a 'whipping boy' and said Washington has already lost the war in Afghanistan and is only trying to salvage the situation in the war-torn nation.

'Paradise Papers' expose ex-PM Shaukat Aziz's offshore holdings, Hassan Belal Zaidi, Dawn, 06 November⁶

Nearly a year and a half after the Panama Papers leaks, another leak dubbed as Paradise Papers names of 135 Pakistanis figure in the leaked document. The most prominent Pakistani name that emerged from the fresh leaks was that of Shaukat Aziz, the Musharraf-era finance minister who also remained prime minister from 2004 to 2007. Mr Aziz worked for Citibank before

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361819/us-voices-concern-about-stability-of-pakistan-government>

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1523801/islamabad-washington-need-play-active-role-regional-peace-asif/>

⁶ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1368650/paradise-papers-expose-ex-pm-shaukat-azizs-offshore-holdings>

entering politics and was “one of the shareholders and directors of the Bahamas-registered Cititrust Limited from 1997 to 1999, along with other executives of the bank”.

Justice Naved Iqbal new NAB chief, *The Express Tribune*, 08 October⁷

Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal of the Supreme Court has been appointed Chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) as the government and opposition agreed on his appointment on Sunday after several rounds of deliberations. *“In exercise of the powers... the President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan is pleased to appoint Justice (retd) Javed Iqbal, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, as Chairman, NAB, after consultation with the Leader of the House (Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi) and Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly (Syed Khursheed Shah) for a non-extendable period of four years,”* reads a notification issued by the government on Sunday evening...

US send high-level delegation in move to repair relations, Iftikhar A. Khan, *Dawn*, 13 October⁸

A high-level US delegation visited Pakistan for the first time after US President Donald Trump unveiled a Afghanistan. Reiterating Pakistan’s stance for a politically negotiated settlement owned and led by the Afghans, the Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Tehmina Janjua reaffirmed Pakistan’s constructive participation in all regional and bilateral mechanisms aimed at pursuing a peaceful solution to the Afghan conflict. Highlighting Pakistan’s ongoing law enforcement and counterterrorism campaign, the foreign secretary appraised the US delegation of Pakistan’s efforts in eliminating terrorism from the country’s soil. Pakistan’s concerns on continued attacks from across the border were also shared.

Nawaz bigger threat to country than Altaf: Qadri, *Express Tribune*, 14 October⁹

Pakistan Awami Tahreek (PAT) chief Dr. Tahirul Qadri has said deposed premier Nawaz Sharif was a “bigger threat to the national integrity” than Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) founder Altaf Hussain. Expressing his reaction over Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supporters and lawyers’ hooliganism at an accountability court yesterday, PAT chief said

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1526045/govt-opposition-agreed-justice-r-javed-iqbal-heading-nab-khursheed-shah/>

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1363481/us-sends-high-level-delegation-in-move-to-repair-relations>

⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1530751/nawaz-bigger-threat-country-altaf-qadri/>

the rowdy behaviour of PML-N workers has made it clear as to why the ruling party has opposed deployment of Rangers at accountability courts for security. “The so-called accountability is underway but it will be impossible to make ruling elite accountable under this law even in 20 years. The ruling elite neither believe in the Constitution of Pakistan nor respect the Supreme Court of Pakistan,” he remarked.

SC intends to thrash out sadiq and ameen provision, Nasir Iqbal, Dawn, 20 October¹⁰

Hearing of a disqualification case against the top Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf leadership suggested that the Supreme Court intended to find out the true meaning of words like dishonesty, sadiq or ameen mentioned in Article 62(1)(f) of the Constitution. This became evident when Chief Justice Mian Saqib Nisar inquired from Advocate Sikandar Bashir Mohmand, representing PTI secretary General Jahangir Khan Tareen, whether vices like cheating or committing fraud, deceit or depriving someone of his due right, fell under the definition of dishonesty and whether honesty was hermetically linked with corruption committed by a public office-holder.

US, Pakistan re-engage in diplomatic, defence talks, Anwar Iqbal, Dawn, 23, October¹¹

The United States and Pakistan deepen their engagement with talks between both civil and military officials as Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Gen Zubair Mahmood Hayat arrives in the US capital to attend an international conference on counterterrorism. US policymakers believe that direct talks with Pakistani defence officials are necessary to address their main concern: seeking Pakistan’s assistance in the fight against militants along the Pak-Afghan border.

Tillerson talks tough to 'incredibly important' Pakistan, Kamran Yousaf, Express Tribune 24 October¹²

On his maiden visit to Islamabad, Secretary Tillerson – while renewing the US demand seeking action against Afghan Taliban and the Haqqani network – said many of the solutions to the regional challenges have to be found in Pakistan in a statement that underlines the importance of Islamabad in the Trump administration’s new strategy for Afghanistan and South Asia. “Pakistan has an incredibly important role in that South Asia strategy. The country is very important to us. The security, the stability of the country is very important to us,” the secretary of state remarked while interacting with

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1364932/sc-intends-to-thrash-out-sadiq-and-ameen-provision>

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1365609/us-pakistan-re-engage-in-diplomatic-defence-talks>

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1540159/1-tillerson-arrives-islamabad-high-level-talks/>

the US Embassy staff before talks with Pakistani authorities. While Tillerson reiterated the demand from Pakistan to do more, he attempted to placate Islamabad by suggesting that “the US share common interests in establishing a stable, peaceful Afghanistan, defeating ISIS in South Asia, and eliminating terrorist groups that threaten both Pakistan and the US.”

Shrinking political space for minorities, Sarwar Bari, *Express Tribune*, 26 October¹³

While reserved seats for women in legislative bodies continue to rise, the representation of minorities has declined drastically. Even as concentration of political power continues to deepen in a few dynasties, the political and social space for minorities is shrinking. This would seem almost deliberate. History and data uncover the truth. In 1985, ten seats (or 2.4%) were reserved for minorities in the National Assembly of 237. It dropped to 2.9% in 2002 when the military government of General Musharraf increased National Assembly seats to 342. While he should be appreciated for replacing the ‘separate electorate’ with the ‘joint electorate’ system, the method of their election turned into a selection and reportedly ‘it turned minority MPs into toadies’ and it further strengthened the stranglehold of party leaders.

¹³ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1541428/6-shrinking-political-space-minorities/>

ECONOMIC ISSUES

The CPEC plan for Pakistan's digital future, Jahanzaib Haque, *Dawn*, 03 October¹⁴

The most critical component is a new, upgraded fibre optic cable network which spans Pakistan and crosses the border to connect directly with China. As outlined in the master plan, the cross-border fibre optic cable will address multiple challenges faced by China and Pakistan. Firstly, it says it will handle the anticipated increase in communication between the two countries. With “deepening comprehensive strategic cooperation” comes the need to establish fast, reliable connectivity – and perhaps most critically – communication that is not routed through Europe, the United States or India. If actualized according to the LTP, the new network will be beneficial to Pakistan by improving internet penetration and increasing speed, especially in Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan, regions where internet connectivity has ranged from poor to non-existent. It should also reduce the cost of internet connections. The existing fibre optic network through which Pakistan connects to the world has been developed by a consortium that has Indian companies either as partners or shareholders.

Muddled World Bank report: Pakistan 'needs' \$31b this year to stay afloat, Shahbaz Rana, *Express Tribune*, 10 October¹⁵

A World Bank report warns that Pakistan's external sector situation could become unsustainable due to a lack of policy actions. The report, however, appears to exaggerate the problem due to the claim that Islamabad needs \$31 billion this year to meet foreign financial obligations. In its twice-a-year South Asia Economic Focus (SAEF) report, released the bank said that external account pressure has persisted in the fiscal year 2017-18. “The current external situation can become unsustainable in absence of adequate policy response,” warned the global lender. It added that the official foreign currency reserve coverage for current account deficit, external debt payments, and portfolio investment has also declined.

¹⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1361176/exclusive-the-cpec-plan-for-pakistans-digital-future>

¹⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1526999/muddled-world-bank-report-pakistan-needs-31b-year-stay-afloat/>

SECURITY SITUATION

Has Pakistan changed tack on the Haqqanis? Kamran Yousaf, *Express Tribune*, 11 October¹⁶

The Afghan Taliban-affiliated Haqqani Network has been a major source of friction between Pakistan and the United States for years. Washington is far from convinced that Islamabad has abandoned its support to the insurgent group, despite Pakistan taking full control of North Waziristan Agency (NWA), which was once considered the headquarters of the Haqqani Network. In order to substantiate Pakistan's claim that it is not playing a 'double game', Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif disclosed that Pakistan had offered the US an option to carry out joint operations against the Haqqanis if any of their 'sanctuaries' were found on Pakistani soil. The development is seen as significant as Pakistan has long maintained that it cannot allow foreign boots on its soil and that it would never allow the Afghan war to be fought within its frontiers.

US-Canadian couple, three children freed from terrorist custody in Kohat, Zulfiqar Ali, *Dawn*, 13 October¹⁷

Security forces, with the support of US intelligence, freed an American woman, her Canadian husband and their three children from terrorists' captivity. The foreigners were recovered from Nawe Kali, a remote area about 15 kilometres southwest of Kohat town following a joint operation by security forces and intelligence agencies, officials said. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement that the five foreign hostages had been recovered from terrorists during an operation based on intelligence shared by the United States. "US intelligence agencies had been tracking them and shared their shifting across to Pakistan on Oct 11, 2017, through the Kurram Agency border," said the statement.

UK army chief acknowledges Pakistan's role in fight against terrorism, *Dawn*, 14 October¹⁸

Gen Sir Nicholas Patrick Carter, Chief of General Staff (CGS) of the UK Army, on Friday acknowledged the Pakistan Army's achievements in the fight against terrorism and continued efforts for peace and stability in the region. During his meeting with Chief of the Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa

¹⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1528050/pakistan-changed-tack-haqqanis/>

¹⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1363483/us-canadian-couple-three-children-freed-from-terrorist-custody-in-kohat>

¹⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1363755/uk-army-chief-acknowledges-pakistans-role-in-fight-against-terrorism>

at the General Headquarters, the UK general — who has arrived here on a two-day official visit — said that his country greatly appreciated Pakistan’s sacrifices as a frontline state against war on terror.

Tillerson asks Islamabad to step up fight against terrorists, Baqir Sajjad Syed, *Dawn*, 25 October¹⁹

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson urged Pakistani leadership on Tuesday to step up their fight against terrorist groups on their soil and facilitate the Afghan reconciliation process. Mr. Tillerson’s message appeared significantly toned down as compared to the usual American rhetoric on alleged terrorist sanctuaries on Pakistani soil, although in essence there was little difference in the messaging. In an attempt to allay Pakistan’s concerns, the secretary on multiple occasions during his few hours in Islamabad stressed Pakistan’s importance for America’s policy in this region and attainment of the goals set under President Trump’s South Asia strategy. “Pakistan is important regionally to our joint goals of providing peace and security to the region and providing opportunity for greater economic relationship as well,” Mr Tillerson said before the start of the talks.

PROVINCES & REGIONS

FO rejects India’s move to name interlocutor for Kashmir, *Azfar-ul-Ashfaq, Dawn*, 25 October²⁰

Pakistan rejected an Indian government decision to appoint an interlocutor to initiate dialogue with all stakeholders in India-held Kashmir, saying no interaction or dialogue would carry any weight without participation of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) leadership. In a bid to reboot its Kashmir policy, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government named ex-intelligence chief Dineshwar Sharma as interlocutor for India-held Kashmir with “complete freedom” to initiate “interaction and dialogue to understand legitimate aspirations of people in J&K”.

¹⁹<https://www.dawn.com/news/1366133/tillerson-asks-islamabad-to-step-up-fight-against-terrorists>

²⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1366131/fo-rejects-indias-move-to-name-interlocutor-for-kashmir>

RELATIONSHIP WITH INDIA

Indian political role in Afghanistan 'is a red line'; Pakistan tells Washington, Kamran Yousaf, *Express Tribune*, 16 October²¹

Pakistan won rare praise from top US leadership including President Donald Trump for its security forces' swift action to rescue American Caitlin Coleman and her Canadian husband, along with their children. In fact, the US delegation, comprising officials from the White House, State Department, and the Defense Department, was in Pakistan on the day the news of the couple's rescue was officially confirmed by the Pakistan Army. The official disclosed that Pakistan conveyed to the United States that its cooperation on Afghanistan would depend on how the Trump Administration "addresses Pakistan's genuine concerns on the Indian role in Afghanistan." The US side was told in clear terms that Pakistan would not extend any cooperation on the issue of Afghanistan if India was given any political role in the war-torn country. "We have told them in clear terms that this is our red line," the official added.

Modi climbdown, Editorial, *Express Tribune*, 25 October²²

It was quite a climbdown for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to agree to hold negotiations with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference. The move is a welcome gesture so long as it helps lower simmering tensions in Jammu and Kashmir. However, the appointment of the interlocutor a former director of India's Intelligence Bureau – has generated its share of controversy as well. Given that the problem in the Valley is a political one, most observers feel that the interlocutor (Dineshwar Sharma) is not well versed enough in diplomatic and political negotiations to resolve protracted disputes as New Delhi's special representative. The appointment also shows that Modi is willing to look at Kashmir through the prism of security only. New Delhi's haste in naming its interlocutor for dialogue with the Hurriyat indicates that Modi is more interested in showing to the world his keenness to bring down Kashmir tensions than actually doing so.

²¹<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1532237/indian-political-role-afghanistan-red-line-pakistan-tells-washington/>

²² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1540377/6-modi-climbdown/>

STATISTICS

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
FATA				
Parachinar ²³	17/10/2017	Five killed in US drone strike near Pak-Afghan border	05	0
Parachinar ²⁴	18/10/2017	TTP militants' among six killed in US drone strike in Paktia	06	0
Waziristan ²⁵	31/10/2017	FC soldier martyred in South Waziristan blast	01	01
Sindh				
Quetta ²⁶	05/10/2017	Sickening violence: Bloodbath at Sufi shrine	18	24
Quetta ²⁷	08/10/2017	15 killed in accident on Quetta-Sibi highway	15	29
Quetta ²⁸			03	01

²³<https://www.dawn.com/news/1364314/five-killed-in-us-drone-strike-near-pak-afghan-border>

²⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1364510/ttp-militants-among-six-killed-in-us-drone-strike-in-paktia>

²⁵ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1367423/fc-soldier-martyred-in-south-waziristan-blast>

²⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1523631/least-7-killed-balochistan-shrine-blast/>

²⁷ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362414/15-killed-in-accident-on-quetta-sibi-highway>

Quetta ²⁹	10/10/2017	Three Shia Hazaras among five dead in Quetta gun attack	08	22
	19/10/2017	Seven policemen, passer-by killed in Quetta suicide blast		

²⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1362792/three-shia-hazaras-among-five-dead-in-quetta-gun-attack>

²⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1364755/seven-policemen-passer-by-killed-in-quetta-suicide-blast>