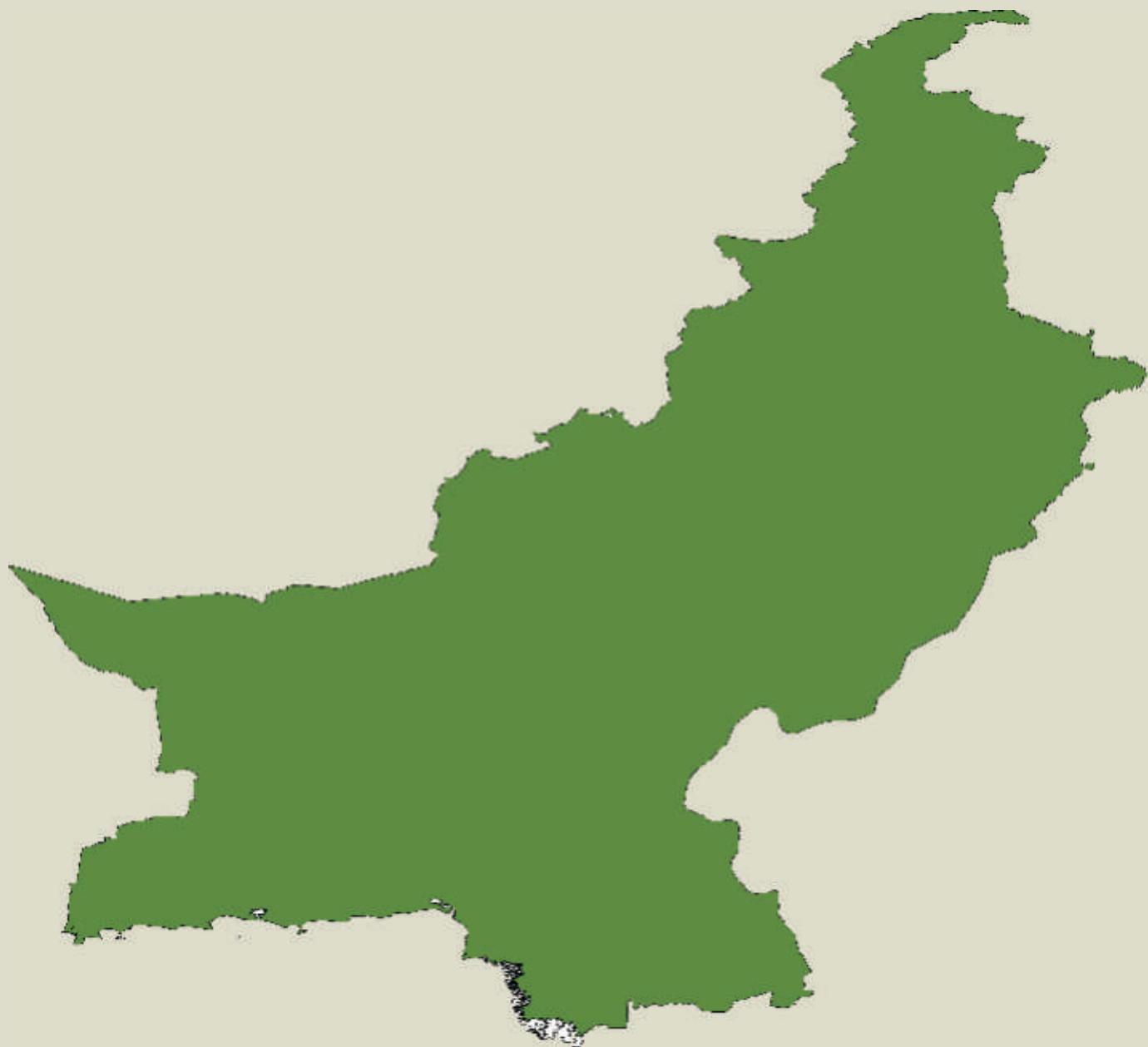


April 2025

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
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MANOHAR PARRIKAR INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE STUDIES AND
ANALYSES

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

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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Talks between Government & PTI, Editorial, *The News*, 04 April¹

The recent meeting between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, his Information Adviser Barrister Saif and PTI supremo Imran Khan at Adiala jail has reignited speculation regarding the PTI's potential and till now rather unsuccessful engagement with the establishment. Media reports suggest that Imran Khan has tasked Gandapur and Saif with negotiating on the PTI's behalf, though PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram has categorically denied these claims. Such rumours are not new though; similar speculations followed a January meeting between COAS General Asim Munir, PTI Chairman Barrister Gohar and KP CM Gandapur though security sources had clarified that the discussion was strictly limited to security matters. However, the broader issue remains unchanged: Pakistan's political instability stems not only from the undue influence of one or two institutions but also from the failure of political parties to resolve their differences independently. Time and again, political parties have sought intervention from unelected power centres rather than negotiating with each other. This cycle has severely weakened democracy. The Charter of Democracy (CoD), signed between the PPP and PML-N in 2006, was a crucial moment of political maturity that helped ensure relatively stable democratic transitions. Despite political missteps between 2008 and 2013, both parties refrained from undermining each other's governments, with the PPP even backing the PML-N during the PTI's 2014 sit-in. *Frustrated by this unity, the usual players ultimately facilitated Imran Khan's rise to power a mistake the PTI itself must now acknowledge. If the PTI is truly serious about political stability, it must abandon its reliance on the establishment and instead focus on rebuilding trust with other political parties.*

¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1297637-talks>

Settling differences, Editorial, *Dawn*, 08 April²

Something is stirring within the PTI. Some of its older hands are back in the limelight, ostensibly to make another attempt at securing a rapprochement with the establishment. Imran Khan is prepared to come to the negotiating table if the establishment is prepared to talk, PTI veteran Azam Khan Swati recently communicated through the media. It is unclear what has changed. Why now, and what different result is being expected? After all, ever since his ouster, Mr Khan has been quite open about his desire to negotiate only with the security establishment. *However, though he has been quite clear that he will talk to the generals and no one else, the same sentiment doesn't seem to have been reciprocated by the other side. Several attempts have been made to secure some kind of agreement between the two, but talks have ultimately broken down due to the rigid positions taken by them.* What makes the present situation more interesting is how it has triggered unease both within and without the party. The party's cadres are clearly not on the same page, but the PTI's rivals also seem unnaturally enthusiastic about celebrating the party's weaknesses. Undoubtedly, something is afoot that the masses are not privy to. There have been rumours about an 'international' attempt being made to contain the fallout of the PTI-establishment rift before things turn more toxic. It seems worth pointing out here that recent developments in the US have been suggesting a gathering geopolitical storm along with an international economic crisis. There's also the matter of a Pakistan-specific legislation that is slowly snaking its way through the American legislative system. An adverse outcome in case it's put to the vote could prove quite embarrassing.

Canal unrest in Sindh, Editorial, *Dawn*, 03 April³

AS unrest in Sindh increases over the Cholistan canal plan, the PPP seems unclear on how to cool public sentiments. There are strong concerns that the project will further disturb the ecological balance in the province and deprive it of its mandated water share, putting at risk the livelihoods of tens of thousands of people and displacing communities. *Many in*

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1902849/settling-differences>

³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1901765/canal-unrest>

Sindh believe that the PPP, especially President Asif Zardari, has tacitly lent its support to the controversial scheme to please the powers that be. This is in spite of the party's efforts to raise the issue in parliament and demand a meeting of the Council of Common Interests before the execution of the scheme. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah's recent media briefing was also an attempt to put at rest public concerns over the planned canal as he claimed that work on the scheme had yet not commenced. He seems to have drawn this conclusion on the basis of his information that Punjab has still not spent the funds it had allocated for the disputed canal in the budget for the present fiscal year. The growing opposition to the project calls for pausing its execution till a detailed data-based study is prepared by experts on its potential impact on Sindh's shrinking delta due to sea intrusion driven by reduced ecological flows below Kotri. Besides, the claims that the canal would be fed by floodwaters from Jhelum or Punjab's own share should be supported with data. *Boosting agricultural productivity for food security and exports is crucial for the country. But it should not come at the cost of interprovincial harmony and the federation or the displacement of communities and tenants.*

Reviving ties, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 09 April⁴

The Taliban's control over vast caches of advanced weaponry has been a ticking time bomb in the region, one that poses threats not only to South Asian stability but to global security. *That this issue became the basis for the maiden contact signals weariness on the far end of the divide, which is hoped to be curtailed through indirect means via Pakistan. In separate statements, the Foreign Office in Islamabad and the State Department in Washington acknowledged the need for expanded cooperation.* Minister Dar, who is also the Deputy Prime Minister, rightly stressed the need for stronger economic ties while highlighting Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts and sacrifices. With Trump running the country from an economic standpoint, this moment presents a unique opportunity for Pakistan to showcase viable investment avenues in sectors like minerals, tech and green energy. Pakistan must capitalise on this pivot and present itself not merely as a security partner but as a country open for business, with strategic assets and untapped potential. *If Pakistan can present a*

⁴ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2538700/reviving-ties>

coherent economic roadmap and a unified policy front, and if the US is willing to invest in long-term engagement rather than short-term gains, both countries stand to benefit. It is too early to celebrate but it is certainly the right time to reimagine what a 21st Century US-Pakistan partnership could look like.

Nawaz's Balochistan outreach, Editorial, *The News*, 11 April⁵

In a positive development, former prime minister and PML-N President Mian Nawaz Sharif has told National Party (NP) chief and former chief minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch that he is ready to play an active role in addressing Balochistan's longstanding issues, including its political and security challenges. As protests erupt across Balochistan and Karachi over the arrests of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) activists and the state's heavy-handed crackdown in return, Nawaz Sharif's willingness to play an active role in resolving Balochistan's long-standing issues offers a rare moment of cautious hope. *This is not the first time Nawaz Sharif and Dr Malik Baloch have come together on the Balochistan question. Their collaboration in 2013, when Dr Malik served as chief minister during Nawaz's third term as prime minister, was marked by a level of political engagement that, while far from perfect, did give the province a fleeting sense of inclusion. But as Dr Malik has rightly pointed out, the situation today is drastically different.* What was once a matter of governance and economic neglect has now morphed into a far deeper crisis of alienation, enforced disappearances and worsening militarization. We have long maintained that almost most of Balochistan's problems are political at their core and demand political solutions. No amount of force can replace dialogue, dignity, and justice. *The current wave of unrest stems from a deep-seated perception of exclusion from the Pakistani mainstream — a perception that successive governments have done little to dispel. A Punjabi leader like Nawaz Sharif taking the lead on this issue is strategic and one hopes it sends a message that Balochistan's concerns are not peripheral but central to the federation's stability.*

⁵ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1300039-nawaz-s-balochistan-outreach>

A reset with the US! Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 16 April⁶

Washington is cognisant of Pakistan's strategic utility and President Donald Trump had himself praised Islamabad's role in countering terrorism. *This is apart from the telephonic calls from Secretary of State Marco Rubio and others at the helm, hinting at a broad-based cooperation in times to come. The flurry of visits that the US delegates had undertaken hints at the desire for resetting ties after an uneven graph of crests and troughs in the recent past.* Moreover, the renewed interest that US businessmen had elicited in Pakistan's mineral exploration potential could pitch bilateralism to new heights. In that spirit, Pakistan is also planning to send a high-powered delegation to the US to offset the impact of the 29% tariff slapped on its exports, and it is very likely that a middle ground will be reached to save the staggering \$6 billion trade. The mosaic of interaction, nonetheless, has some pinching realities to address and they cannot be wished away. The pro-democracy legislation introduced in the US Congress is a case in point that wants to ensure that excesses committed in the wake of the February 8, 2024 elections are undone, and political prisoners including former PM Imran Khan released. The recent visit of the US Congressmen to Islamabad, nonetheless, has raised hopes for a reset in ties because it was the first such hobnobbing in two years. *However, it seems there is an over-reading by both the government and the opposition, i.e. the PTI, in underscoring hopes in the delegation's air-dash.*

Rethinking the diaspora's role, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 April⁷

Overseas Pakistanis have long occupied a complicated place in the country's political and economic imagination. They are celebrated as the lifeblood of the economy, sending billions in remittances each year, but also viewed with increasing concern due to their political activism abroad often manifesting in disruptive and sometimes aggressive ways. From heckling politicians on foreign visits to orchestrated social media campaigns that malign Pakistan's image globally, segments of the diaspora have contributed to the worsening of Pakistan's

⁶ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2540090/a-reset-with-the-us>

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2540335/rethinking-the-diasporas-role>

already fractured political climate. These actions are not acts of democratic expression, but increasingly resemble a politicised diaspora acting on party lines rather than in the national interest. The recent Overseas Pakistanis Convention in Islamabad attempted to address this growing disconnect between the state and its citizens abroad. Organised by the government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the event brought together representatives of the diaspora, members of the federal cabinet, and, significantly, Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir. The messaging was clear: the state sees overseas Pakistanis as critical stakeholders and is ready to reset the relationship on terms that go beyond mere transnationalism. *The convention offered a range of incentives: reintroducing green channel airport facilities, creating dedicated judicial mechanisms to resolve disputes faced by non-resident Pakistanis, extending tax filer status, and prioritising them for NADRA and other public services.* These measures are certainly welcome, addressing longstanding grievances about systemic inefficiencies, red tape and legal challenges - particularly around property disputes. The promise of scholarships and skill-building initiatives also signals an intent to make diaspora engagement more holistic.

Opposition in tatters, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 23 April⁸

Tehreek Tahaffuz Aayen-i-Pakistan is turning out to be a non-starter. The anti-government movement that was supposed to be spearheaded by the cornered PTI has been meted out a major blow – one that can knock the 'grand opposition alliance' out of its existence. *The JUI-F, arguably the weightiest component of the multi-party alliance in terms of street power, has distanced itself from the opposition grouping, apparently over the PTI allegedly pursuing the real powers wielders for a deal to secure release of their incarcerated leader, Imran Khan. The Maulana Fazlur Rehman party took exception to the reports of some PTI leaders trying to cozy up with the powers-that-be, and sought clarity from the party.* However, opposition leader Omar Ayub's recent remarks that they could not force the Maulana to join their alliance shows that the party, riven with infighting, is in no position to allay the reservations expressed. Without the JUI-F, the 'grand alliance' is not worth a headache to the incumbents, given that the PTI rank and file is already exhausted after the party's day to

⁸ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2541587/opposition-in-tatters>

day rallies and demos, and no other component – PkMAP, BNP, MWM, SIC, JI and GDA boasts capacity for mass mobilisation. Moreover, the absence of a broader nationalistic agenda as the movement seemingly focuses on the release of the PTI chairman as its ultimate goal leaves little appeal for the rest of the member parties to embark on a journey of defiance in all earnest.

Contentious canals, Editorial, *The News*, 23 April⁹

The simmering political fault lines between key federal coalition partners have floated right up – and it’s all about water. On Monday, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs Rana Sanaullah had assured Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Memon during a second telephonic conversation that all concerns regarding the controversial canals project would be addressed. *Coming two days after PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari’s threat to quit the ruling coalition if the federal government failed to resolve the matter, this is a much-needed – albeit belated – step towards defusing what could easily become a full-blown political and interprovincial crisis.* The main offending issue for Sindh is the federal government’s plan to construct six canals to divert water from the Indus River to irrigate the Cholistan desert in Punjab. The PPP and several Sindhi nationalist parties have vocally opposed the project, seeing it as a direct threat to Sindh’s already precarious water supply. To be fair, their fears are neither new nor unfounded. Water has long been a politically and emotionally charged issue in Sindh one that has fuelled nationalist movements and defined electoral battle lines for decades. *While some PML-N leaders have reportedly suggested that the PPP’s stance is a response to pressure from nationalist quarters, this reading ignores the historical context and political realities in Sindh.* Experts warn that this is not simply a Sindh-versus-Punjab issue. Punjab, too, faces water shortages. However, since opposition to the project is currently most vocally coming from Sindh, the project risks being perceived as an act of majoritarianism by the centre. More dangerously, such perceptions feed into the longstanding grievances of smaller provinces against federal overreach and inequitable resource distribution.

⁹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1304137-contentious-canals>

Canal consensus, Editorial, *Dawn*, 29 April¹⁰

Plans to build new canals on the Indus have been shelved till such time that all provinces can find themselves in agreement that they will serve the interests of the various claimants to the river's waters. *The Council of Common Interests finally convened yesterday evening, following months of demonstrations and protests in Sindh over canals that were proposed to be built in the Cholistan region, to formally endorse the federal government's policy, namely: "that no new canals will be built without mutual understanding from the CCI".* Thereafter, "It has been decided that the federal government will not move further until mutual understanding is evolved among the provinces". The PPP will take the decision back to Sindh as a major triumph for the province's people, many of whom had seen the proposed canal projects as a direct encroachment on their rights to a vital natural resource shared with another province, and had taken a strong position against the state's plans. According to the announcement, "the provisional Ecneec approval for construction of new canals and the Irsa water availability certificate [have been] returned. [The] Planning Division and Irsa are directed to ensure consultation with all stakeholders, in the interest of national cohesion and to address any and all concerns until mutual understanding is reached".

¹⁰ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1907304/canal-consensus>

SECURITY SITUATION

Countering terror, Editorial, *The News*, 08 April¹¹

Last week brought some welcome signs of progress in the country's fight against terrorism. Eight terrorists were killed as security forces successfully thwarted their bid to infiltrate through the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in North Waziristan. *This was followed by another success, with the security forces killing nine terrorists including a high-value target (HVT) ring leader in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in Dera Ismail Khan. The IBO was carried out on the terrorists' presence in the Takwara area on the night between April 6 and 7.* The North Waziristan operation, in particular, highlights the ongoing challenge of terrorists using Afghanistan as a safe haven to launch attacks against Pakistan and underscores the importance of engaging the Afghan Taliban government to prevent the use of their soil in this manner and counteract cross-border infiltration into Pakistan by militants. While the government remains engaged in this respect and it is heartening to see at least this attempt at infiltration being thwarted, it will take a concrete and sincere effort from the Afghan Taliban on their end to secure the 2500-kilometre-long porous western border. The vast majority of these terror attacks and deaths remain concentrated in the provinces that adjoin the western border: Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. *With both expert analysis and anecdotal evidence pointing in the same direction, it is clear that any permanent resolution to the terror problem will require Afghan cooperation. To that extent, a long-term solution to the terror problem will require more than just security operations from the Pakistan side.*

¹¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1298990-countering-terror>

TTP's propaganda has spread to social and political messaging, Report, Nawa-i-Waqt, 1 April¹²

The propaganda of Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to incite crime has spread to social and political messaging. *After a weak coalition, TTP transformed into a central force with 42 factions by 2024. Under the leadership of Noor Wali Mehsud since 2017, TTP has adopted a shadow government model with ministries and provinces, along with a strict code of conduct. The group's financial system is highly organised, relying on extortion (5 to 20 percent of income), smuggling, and abductions.* The propaganda to incite crime has expanded into social and political messaging, including magazines, podcasts, and video series. *The Afghan Taliban takeover of 2021 strengthened TTP, which now operates from Afghanistan but focuses on cross-border attacks into Pakistan. Peace talks (2021-2022) failed due to demands to reverse FATA's integration and reject the Durand Line, resulting in increased violence. TTP avoids separatist rhetoric but presents itself as an alternative governance model, aligned with Pashtun grievances and anti-state narratives.*

Despite military crackdowns, TTP is thriving by exploiting political instability, corruption, and weak border control. The fragmented factions united under Noor Wali Mehsud and transformed into a government-like structure, ensuring operational efficiency. A formal financial system sustains the group through illegal income, with strict Sharia laws preventing internal exploitation. TTP shifted its media strategy from militancy to political affiliation and presented itself as a viable alternative to Pakistan's government. Since 2021, TTP has avoided direct confrontation with Kabul's interests, using Afghanistan as a base and benefiting from the Afghan Taliban's support. Pakistan's peace efforts failed due to the TTP's unreasonable demands, pushing them further toward extremism. The group exploits ethnic, political, and economic

¹² <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/01-Apr-2025/1882726>

discontent to expand its influence. If the root causes are not addressed, TTP will continue to destabilise Pakistan-Afghanistan relations.

Investment in the mineral sector in Pakistan: Beginning of a new era, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 10 April¹³

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Army Chief General Asim Munir have invited international organisations and investors to invest in Pakistan. Speaking at the Minerals Investment Forum, the Prime Minister stated that Pakistan possesses mineral reserves worth trillions of dollars, which, if properly utilized, could help the country overcome its debt crisis and bid farewell to the IMF. The Army Chief assured that Pakistan would provide full security to international investors, adding that the country is poised to emerge as a leader in the global mineral economy. During the forum, various governmental and foreign companies signed Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and agreements for the exploration and development of mineral resources. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir, and provincial chief ministers attended the signing ceremony. The event hosted a large number of federal ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors, and business figures from countries including China, Arab states, the Gulf, the USA, Russia, and Europe. A high-level U. S. delegation, led by Eric Meyer, also participated in the two-day seminar. Organized under the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), the opening ceremony of the Pakistan Minerals Investment Forum took place at the Jinnah Convention Centre in Islamabad, with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif as the chief guest and Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir attending as the guest of honour. In his address, the Prime Minister warmly welcomed all local and foreign delegates and appreciated the international community's keen interest in Pakistan's mineral sector. A minerals exhibition was also held at the forum, showcasing high-quality mineral samples, which received high praise from foreign investors and delegates. The Prime Minister remarked that the successful organisation of the forum would boost confidence among local and foreign investors and lead to increased investment in the

¹³ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/lahore/2025-04-10/page-5>

mineral sector. He described the progress on the Reko Diq project as encouraging and emphasized that the mineral sector had long deserved greater national attention.

Nawaz Sharif back in the political arena, Editorial, Roznama Jang, 11 April¹⁴

Former Prime Minister and President of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Nawaz Sharif, appears to be re-entering the political arena after a period of seclusion lasting over a year. He is now prepared to address the issues of Balochistan and has devised a plan for public outreach through rallies and gatherings, beginning in Punjab. Nawaz Sharif is considered the most experienced and seasoned politician in the country, and many have pinned their hopes on him to once again play an active role in the country's development, prosperity, restoration of peace and stability, and resolution of political tensions. To address the ongoing unrest in Balochistan, the head of the National Party and former Chief Minister Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch met with Nawaz Sharif, accompanied by a delegation. During the meeting, they briefed him on the complex situation in Balochistan, which includes political and economic instability as well as other significant national and political issues. They urged him to take action in resolving these matters. Nawaz Sharif assured them that he would contribute politically and democratically to restore peace in Balochistan, emphasizing that the issue is political in nature and must be resolved through political means. He noted that the interruption in democratic processes has led to the current situation. Both Nawaz Sharif and Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch agreed that the matters in Balochistan are of serious concern and require immediate resolution. In response to Nawaz Sharif's assurance of involvement in provincial affairs, the Baloch leader thanked him and invited him to visit the province. It is worth mentioning that during Nawaz Sharif's tenure as Prime Minister and Dr. Abdul Malik's tenure as Chief Minister, Balochistan had embarked on the path of progress. Dr. Abdul Malik remains hopeful that, just like in 2013, Nawaz Sharif will once again play a significant role in resolving Balochistan's issues.

¹⁴ <https://e.jang.com.pk/karachi/11-04-2025/page6>

U.S. Weapons Left Behind in Afghanistan Highlighted in Washington Post Report, Editorial, Roznama92 News, 16 April¹⁵

According to a report by the American newspaper The Washington Post, the terrorists who attacked the Jaffar Express train in Balochistan last month used weapons left behind by U.S. forces following their withdrawal from Afghanistan. This report confirms Pakistan's longstanding concerns about the insecurity of American weapons abandoned in Afghanistan. The Washington Post report states that an "M4A1 Carbine Rifle" manufactured by the American company Colt was recovered from the scene of the attack. The rifle's serial number indicates that it was part of the billions of dollars' worth of weapons sent to U.S. forces in Afghanistan. The newspaper wrote that many of these weapons have ended up across the border in Pakistan, in arms markets and in the hands of militants. According to the report, Pakistan is trying to control terrorism in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, where militants are now equipped with U.S. weapons and gear. The original purpose of American rifles, machine guns, and night vision goggles was to help stabilise Afghanistan, but they are now being used by the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other groups to carry out attacks. Pakistan has repeatedly pointed out the threat to its security posed by unsecured U.S. weapons in Afghanistan. Now that these facts have come to light through the American newspaper's report, Pakistani authorities should engage with the U.S. to develop a new strategy, aiming to bring the unfinished war against terrorism to a peaceful conclusion.

Real challenge in Balochistan not militancy but narrative of Punjabi intellectuals, Bugti, Daily Sangar, 20 April ¹⁶

The puppet Chief Minister of Balochistan, Sarfaraz Bugti, has said that the forces will deal with the militants in Balochistan; the real challenge for us is not separatists but the narrative. *Addressing a seminar organized by Mir Khalilur Rehman Memorial Society in Lahore on 19 April, Sarfaraz Bugti said that our forces will deal with the militants, this is not a big problem: The term angry Baloch is not ours but that of the confused intellectuals of Punjab. Bugti said that*

¹⁵ <https://www.roznama92news.com/epaper/published/2025-04-16/station/>

¹⁶ <https://dailysangar.online/?p=60274>

the militants want to spread chaos and disorder: Islam has nothing to do with TTP and TTP has nothing to do with Islam. I stand with those women whose sons and husbands were taken off buses and killed, I will not stand with a woman who follows a specific agenda in the guise of human rights (. Sarfaraz Bugti said that whenever the militants are given a chance, they will regroup. They want to break Pakistan with the force of guns. The fight was started by them, not by the state, he said. The solution to the Balochistan problem is to provide resources to the young generation; we are providing jobs to the youth on merit. *Later, while talking to Geo News, Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti said that the Army Chief has spoken from the heart about suppressing militants in Balochistan. They want to break two or three percent of the country in Balochistan, which is not possible. He said that there is no need for a large-scale military operation in Balochistan, an operation based on intelligence is needed and it is ongoing.*

Why Maulana did not form an alliance, Muzammil Suhrawardy, Roznama Express, 23 April¹⁷

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has faced yet another political setback. Maulana Fazlur Rehman and his party, Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F), have announced that they will not form any kind of political alliance with PTI for now. With this announcement, the dream of PTI and its founder to create a grand opposition alliance has also been shattered. If we analyse this development, Maulana's refusal has inflicted irreparable damage to PTI's politics. It will reduce PTI's political weight and increase its political isolation. We'll discuss the political damage to PTI later. First, let's consider what could have happened if the grand opposition alliance had been formed. What if PTI and JUI-F had established a political alliance? That would have marked a major shift in Pakistan's political landscape. PTI's political weight would have significantly increased. The opposition would have been much stronger in comparison to the government. I'm not even talking about street protests at the moment, even in parliamentary politics, PTI has suffered from the alliance not materialising. The opposition will remain divided. Take the example of the National Security Committee meeting. Maulana attended it. According to the government, the opposition was

¹⁷https://www.express.com.pk/epaper/index.aspx?Issue=NP_ISB&Page=Editorial_PageC006&Date=20250423&Pageno=6&View=1

represented. PTI's boycott didn't have the same impact that a joint boycott would have had. Similarly, the credibility of the 26th Constitutional Amendment was strengthened when the opposition also voted for it, even if it was just Maulana. That's why, in my opinion, Maulana's decision not to ally has caused considerable damage to PTI's parliamentary politics. PTI, too, will be weakened. It's another matter that the Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly had already been announcing for several days that this alliance would not happen. He repeatedly stated that if Maulana doesn't want an alliance, then so be it; it makes no difference to us. Such statements can even derail potential alliances. *I believe that within PTI, while one faction was trying to form the alliance, another faction within the party was actively trying to prevent it. If Asad Qaiser was making efforts to build the alliance, Ali Amin Gandapur and Omar Ayyub were not in favour of it.* JUI-F consistently demanded a clarification from Asad Qaiser, stating that only he could provide an acceptable explanation. Kamran Murtaza kept issuing statements asking for clarification. But Asad Qaiser remained silent, and he didn't even return from London. And aside from him, no one else from PTI even attempted to reach out to JUI-F. In such a situation, what options were left for JUI-F? What decision could they make, other than announcing they wouldn't go ahead with the alliance? *The faction within PTI that wants reconciliation with the establishment appeared to be the main obstacle to the formation of the alliance. The same faction that is currently in power in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) didn't seem supportive of the alliance either. Omar Ayub, too, didn't seem very enthusiastic. All of this was plainly visible. With this alliance falling through, PTI's dream of launching street protests has also been shattered. PTI has concluded that it no longer has the strength to take to the streets. In Punjab, the capacity for resistance has been exhausted. Divisions are increasing in KP as well. That's why, had Maulana joined forces and a protest movement been launched, it would have been much stronger.* Maulana's workers are more powerful. Even today, Maulana's ability to lead protest politics is stronger than that of PTI. But one must also acknowledge that if Maulana is to mobilise his workers, there needs to be some agreement with PTI. JUI-F's workers aren't "for hire," and they can't just be handed over to PTI like rental protesters. *I believe that perhaps the establishment couldn't have stopped Maulana from forming this alliance, but instead, it used PTI to prevent the alliance from forming. PTI didn't even clearly define the structure or outlines of this proposed alliance.*

PML-N vs PPP in Sindh over Canal Issue , Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, Geo News, 08 April¹⁸

PPP is a part of the federal government led by PML-N but right now the two parties have locked horn on the issue of the new canals in Sindh. Bilawal Bhutto has said that new canals are not suitable for the people of Sindh and the PPP does not support the formation of new canals. On the other hand the governor of Sindh and Mayor are attacking each other in the media. Hamid Mir pointed out that even in the KPK the PTI leaders are attacking each other in the media and looks divided after Ali Amin met Imran Khan behind the jail. He added even the things are not good in Balochistan and in Punjab, the farmers in Punjab are talking against the government about corporate farming. Hamid Mir added all the four provinces are facing many challenges and issues, where are these provinces boiling and what is the future? **Guests:** Shahid Khattak-PTI, Bilal Azhar Kayani- State Minister for Railways & Jam Khan Shoro- Minister for Irrigation of Sindh. **Bilal Azhar Kayani** pointed out that the issues are there and the point is that all is not bad. He added there is no fight between Sindh and the Federal government. Sindh high court has put stay order on the water ministry order but the solution of this issue is political. We have a mature political connection with the PPP and we will take issue forward with the consensus of the PPP. We will also do the needful technical discussion and there is no point to fight, we will reach out to the PPP and resolve the issue. The council of common interest meeting will be called soon, we have meetings with the PPP on all levels. Talking about the issues of farmers in Punjab, we will resolve the issue and there will be no protest in Punjab. **Shahid Khattak** pointed out that the PML-N and PPP has always attacked each other in the past but in reality the two parties are one from inside and destroying the country together. When FATA was merged with KP, funds were promised but the question is how much money they gave to the province and what other option is there but to protest. Talking about the PML-N and PPP he added these are family parties and their only work is to defend them in Pakistan and added no one can become CM or PM when Maryam Nawaz and Bilawal

¹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RPJi00NjqxI>

Bhutto and others are in line. When asked about the issues within the PTI he added it is our internal politics. We believe in Imran Khan as the party works on his name, right now he is in jail but the collective decision will be from Khan and it is all binding on us. ***Jam Khan Shoro*** there was a petition in the Sindh high court about the appointment of the federal representation that should be of Sindh domicile that is why the stay. The federal representative this time is not from Sindh and that is why the stay by the Sindh High Court. The Federal government is supported by the PPP to resolve the issues on terrorism and the PML-N should not push to the wall and force us to leave the government. They should take out a solution. Talking about the PPP and its family politics he added we have so many other leaders that does not belong to the Bhutto family. They say that this new canal will be flood canal but there is rarely any flood in Sindh. He added that the dams of Pakistan are empty and there is no water so how will these canals work.

Ali Amin Gandapur meets Imran Khan in Jail , *Imran Riaz Khan Exclusive*, 02 April¹⁹

The host pointed out that the PTI is putting pressure on Imran Khan to talk to the establishment and is saying that Khan should give the mandate to the party to take these talks forward. But Imran Khan is standing on his own demands and is not ready to bent, the establishment has a fear that Khan who is now in jail is not bending and if they release him he could become more powerful with the support of the people (*Agar Imran Khan Bahar aaye gat u establishment pe bari pade ga*). On the other hand there is a pressure from the US delegation of Senators that when they come to Pakistan they will also meet Imran Khan. He added that we have to see what comes out of the meeting of Ali Amin Gandapur and Imran Khan. Before that Barrister Saif also met Imran Khan behind the jail, it shows that people who have good connections with army are easily allowed to meet Imran Khan. On the other hand many leaders of PTI whose name is submitted to meet Imran Khan are still in the waiting list. He also talked about the messages of Imran Khan which is not allowed to come out of the jail. Imran Khan says that the army has done a false flag operation on him and the 9th May event has been misused to keep him behind jail. He also added that there is an attempt to re-launch Nawaz Sharif, and it has been attempted many times in the

¹⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CJIcu7li44w>

past. He added that unless Nawaz Sharif apologizes to Yasmeen Rashid and return her seat, he is only suited to polish his shoes. But if that happens his image will come down and these court case to take the seat is very dangerous for Nawaz Sharif.

PTI and the Divide within: Azam Swati to talk to establishment? KHABAR Muhammad Malick Kay Saath, *ARY News*, 10 April²⁰

The host pointed out that the divide within PTI is very prominent and is visible, the divide on the mineral bill is also visible, and Aleema Khan has said that this bill cannot be passed in KPK until Imran Khan is out of jail. On one side there are hawks Salman Akram Ranjha and Aleema Khan and on the other side is the group who says there should be talks like Gohar Khan and Ali Amin Gandapur. Azam Swati's pre-recorded interview has created some more news, he has said that he is going to meet some important people in the coming days. The host asked has the PTI gone desperate. Azam Swati in the interview has said that Imran Khan has asked him to meet the establishment and negotiate in the next meeting we will see if the door opens and if we are able to take our message to the other party. Barrister Gohar has also said that Imran Khan has said that the door to talks with establishment is not closed and it is for the rule of law. Second Khan said that whatever is happening in US is their issue and that we have nothing to do with that. **Guests:** Nusrat Javed, Muneeb Farooq & Mazhar Abbas-Senior media analysts. **Nusrat Javed** pointed out that the statement of Bushra Bibi about Khan's message he added that he said this will not work. He asked is Azam Swati in a position to meet any important people from the side of the establishment. The question is that we have to see if it is in the pay grade of Azam Swati to talk to anyone. Swati has said that PTI should talk to the people who are in power but he is not articulate enough to make things clear in the media. Ali Amin Gandapur on the other side has the right to meet people in power and to meet Imran Khan behind jail. **Muneeb Farooq** pointed out that it is a wise political move if the PTI is taking two steps back. He added that the relationship of Khan with institution (*establishment*) is said to be without repair. There is an institutional hatred against Imran Khan and it is quit visible and is direct and obvious. There is a soft deviation of PTI right now and it is tilted to the favour of talks.

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5jAf64kFfis>

Salman Akram Ranjha is the only one who has taken a hard stance and is effectively using aggression against establishment, rest are trying to balance out. If he is removed from the post then the other group will increase the influence in the PTI. **Mazhar Abbas** asked what the problem of the PTI is right now is that it is not able to run a movement or protest. These are the ways to put pressure on the streets or there is no international pressure. The government looks very comfortable and it goes in the favour of establishment. The question of Imran Khan behind jail is the biggest for the establishment and what has to be done with it, and how to reduce the support base of Imran Khan. He added that the other leaders in the PTI does not matter for the establishment, the only one that matters is Imran Khan. He added that the PTI workers are desperate for the release of Imran Khan but some party leaders are busy shining their leadership in the party and they do not want Khan to come out of the jail.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Balochistan				
Mastung ²¹	16/04/2025	Three personnel martyred, 20 hurt in Mastung blast	03	20
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
N. Waziristan ²²	28/04/2025	17 more terrorists 'backed by Indian masters' killed at Pak-Afghan border: ISPR	17	00

²¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1904493/three-personnel-martyred-20-hurt-in-mastung-blast>

²² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2542786/17-more-terrorists-backed-by-indian-masters-killed-at-pak-afghan-border-i>