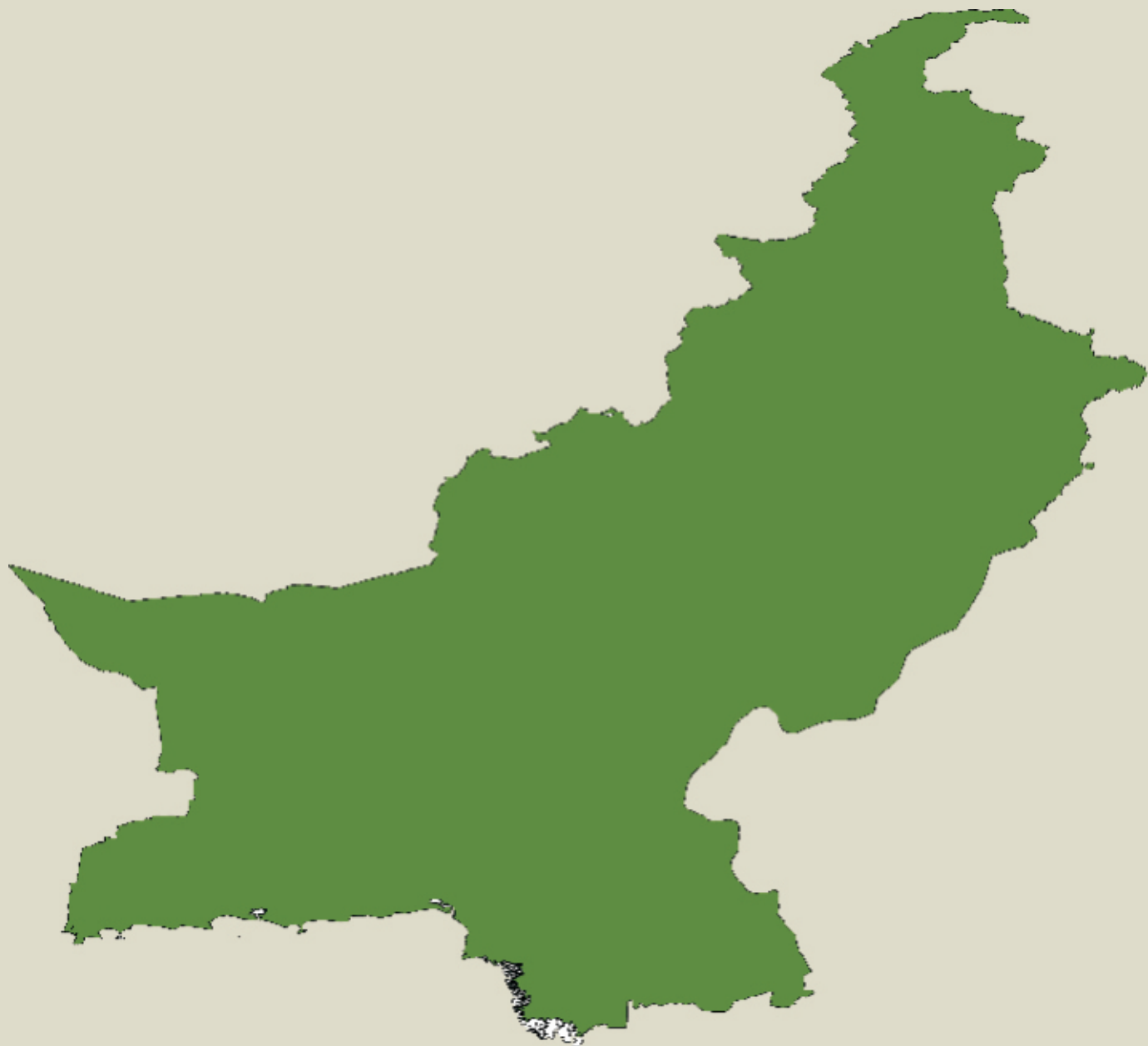


February 2025

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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POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Between the lines, Editorial, *The News*, 06 February¹

In keeping with its penchant for writing and reading letters (or ciphers), the PTI says that former prime minister Imran Khan has penned an open letter to Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir. *The letter apparently urges a review of policies and highlights what Imran sees as a growing chasm between the people and the military while also talking about alleged electoral rigging, judicial manipulation, media censorship, and the suppression of PTI members. Yet, while Imran frames his appeal as a call for unity, the letter seems to be more an attempt to once again woo the establishment – whether by gentle coaxing or less gentle pressure.* Imran claims that the February 8 elections were rigged in collusion with what he describes as "money launderers", and that judicial independence has been compromised through the 26th Amendment. The former PM has also expressed concern – rightly so – over the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) amendments. In keeping with the PTI's line, he has also criticised the judiciary for what he perceives as complicity in his continued imprisonment. *Whether the PTI letter is a genuine attempt at reconciliation, or an act of desperation from a leader running out of political options may not be revealed yet but it certainly seems to be part of a broader strategy to keep the party relevant and to force the powerful into reconsidering their stance.* Regardless of the intent, Imran's letter seems to say that true civilian supremacy remains elusive as of now.

Balochistan turmoil, Editorial, *Dawn*, 04 February²

The unacceptable loss of at least 22 security men in two separate attacks between Friday and Saturday in Balochistan and KP underscore the need to address the problem of terrorism in both provinces with alacrity. In the first incident, at least 18 paramilitary troops were martyred as they were reportedly ambushed by terrorists in Kalat. *In the*

¹ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1279817-between-the-lines>

² <https://www.dawn.com/news/1889642/balochistan-turmoil>

second episode, four Levies personnel from Balochistan were martyred in KP's Dera Ismail Khan, near the border of both provinces. The Kalat atrocity has been claimed by the separatist BLA, and while no group has accepted responsibility for the D.I. Khan attack, the area is known to have a TTP presence. These abhorrent attacks illustrate the fact that the biggest terrorist threat Pakistan faces comes from two major actors: religiously inspired militants, and separatist forces. Though there is no evidence to suggest that the BLA and TTP coordinated these attacks, some experts have said that the latter may be courting the former to jointly fight the state. After KP, Balochistan is most affected by militancy. *As per one think tank, there were at least 24 terrorist attacks in the province last month, resulting in the loss of 11 security men and six civilians. The sophistication and frequency of attacks indicate that separatist forces may be getting help from external hostile actors.* Undoubtedly, the state's first priority should be to secure all of Balochistan, and ensure that its people are able to live in peace.

Peca 2025, Editorial, *The News*, 10 February³

The chorus of opposition elicited by the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) (Amendment) Act 2025 only seems to be getting louder. Journalists working in both legacy and new media have condemned the chilling effect the hastily-passed law is likely to have on free expression, marking yet another regrettable entry in the Pakistani state's love affair with censorship and authoritarianism disguised as safety and security. *The Peca law has always been the bane of those seeking to bring some truth and accountability to the country's media ecosystem and has done little to counter fake news and misinformation, the supposed original intent of the bill, since it first arrived back in 2016. Since then, new sets of amendments have only toughened the censorious nature of the bill, with the law becoming more and more hostile to free expression after each round.* This year, we have the introduction of Section 26A – penalizing individuals for spreading 'fake news' on social media – which has drawn particular ire. The law's broad and ambiguous language, critics argue, opens the door for arbitrary enforcement, potentially silencing anyone deemed critical of the government. Offenders face severe punishment, including up to three years in prison and a fine of up to

³ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1281080-peca-2025>

Rs2 million. This law is particularly threatening for journalists who have an independent presence online, which they use to air opinions and ideas that might otherwise be too controversial in a more ‘formal’ setting. That such changes were passed without any debate or discussion with journalists and civil society only exacerbates the sense of injustice.

Battle in the benches, Editorial, *The News*, 12 February⁴

Judicial independence, seniority and political influence – these issues seem to be coming up again and again and again ever since issues cropped up within the superior judiciary a couple of years back. *The ongoing saga these days is focused on the controversy surrounding the Islamabad High Court (IHC) and the transfer of Justice Sarfaraz Dogar – presumably paving the way for him to be the next chief justice of the IHC. For many within the judiciary, seniority is a sacred principle, one that ensures both continuity and institutional integrity and this way of reshuffling has sparked resentment.* Some judges have argued that transferred judges should take a fresh oath and have their seniority reset to ensure fairness in judicial appointments. In the estimation of legal experts too, a judge transferred from one high court to another to bypass the seniority principle and assume the top position is unwarranted and unjust. The five IHC judges who filed a representation against the elevation of Justice Dogar contend that allowing such a transfer could set a dangerous precedent, undermining both the principle of seniority and the independence of the judiciary. With the rejection of their contention, it seems Justice Dogar’s way to CJ-ship stands clear. But this latest measure has further fuelled the unrest within the judiciary. *Not only that, we now have lawyers taking to the streets in protest, particularly in light of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan’s (JCP) recent appointment of six new judges to the Supreme Court.* Legal experts and bar associations have expressed concerns that these appointments are politically motivated and designed to serve certain political interests.

⁴ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1281798-battle-in-the-benches>

Political quagmire, Editorial, *The News*, 21 February⁵

Pakistan's political quicksand seems to be pulling the entire political landscape into itself. Amid all the chaos also come different prescriptions by different politicians many of which are wildly contradictory and, more alarmingly, challenge the spirit and ethos of democracy. One politician has suggested that politicians should sit with the establishment to resolve political issues. *While other suggestions about a 'new charter of democracy', a consensus and a stronger parliament resonate with many observers who agree that Pakistan's fractured political system desperately needs a renewed commitment to democratic norms, the suggestion of inviting the establishment to the negotiating table is highly contentious. One school of thought argues that in Pakistan's hybrid political setup, it is pragmatic to include all stakeholders in discussions to define their roles clearly.* This argument hinges on the belief that formalizing this interventionist tendency might bring transparency and stability, rather than allowing shadowy backchannel interventions to continue unchecked. Amidst this political turmoil, PML-N chief Nawaz Sharif has spoken up uncharacteristically, one might add given that the former prime minister has chosen to keep a rather low profile of late accusing unnamed actors of fuelling unrest and condemning 'attempts at creating an artificial political crisis'. His remarks are perceived by many as referencing the PTI.

Nawaz Roars, Editorial, *The News*, 21 February⁶

Is Nawaz Sharif ready to step back into the limelight? Veiled albeit extremely hard-hitting references to PTI's plans to launch protests after Eid hint at a brewing storm. The former prime minister seems to have had enough of being a passive observer, expressing his discontent at the ongoing political theatrics. *"The groups unfamiliar with the core principles and values of politics and democracy would no longer be allowed to orchestrate long marches, sit-ins, or violent protests," he declared on Wednesday. Within the corridors of power in Punjab, whispers indicate that crucial meetings with Members of Parliament have taken place, laying the groundwork for what appears to be a reinvigorated PML-N strategy.* On one hand, PTI

⁵ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1284905-political-quagmire>

⁶ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/1267479/nawaz-roars/>

leaders wish the government to read into this period as calm before the storm with extreme caution. Since their unwillingness to compromise has shattered hopes for a pleasant chill in the political atmosphere, there appears a palpable shift in their attitude towards the government, as they remain oblivious to profound implications for the very fabric of governance and national stability. *While the PML-N's typical tit-for-tat rhetoric could be dismissed as commonplace, it is Sharif's direct assault on PTI's detrimental impact on the nation's socio-economic progress that signals a dramatic shift on the political chessboard.* His comments offer a glimpse into a future fraught with confrontation, rather than collaboration.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

The strategic reiteration, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 07 January⁷

President Asif Zardari's air-dash to Beijing and his rubbing of shoulders with his counterpart Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang made some new vibes, and the most appreciated of them was the unanimity of views between the two states to stand fast against terror incursions that are out to derail their time-tested relationship. *The affirmation that mutual support on core issues of interest shall continue, and the enduring partnership will scale new heights of success was a win-win proposition.* The visit has come in the midst of some misgivings in the media with reference to tilt towards Washington, and the spike in terror activities on Chinese engineers engaged in CPEC projects inside Pakistan. The common denominator of talks was to strengthen the multibillion dollar developmental projects, and not to be scared away from insecurity syndrome that has taken a toll. *Moreover, the accord to beef up intelligence sharing and buckling up the police force with modern equipment and technology was a step in the right direction.* The restive and backward province of

⁷ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2526937/the-strategic-reiteration>

Balochistan, a theatre of CPEC, is in dire need of buoying its local security profile and this decision will go a long way in scuttling the intrusion of disgruntled elements.

IMF scrutiny, Editorial, *Dawn*, 11 February⁸

The technical IMF mission, which is taking stock of Pakistan's economic governance structure and its vulnerability to corruption, is expected to widen the focus of the reform effort to a broader range of institutional restructuring for inclusive and sustained growth. *The mission will be in the capital for a week to scrutinize the "severity of corruption vulnerabilities" across six core state functions: fiscal governance, central bank governance and operations, financial sector oversight, market regulation, rule of law, and the AML/CFT regime.* It is expected to engage with numerous stakeholders, including the judicial, State Bank and SECP authorities, election bodies, finance and revenue officials, and others to review their processes. The review of the judicial and regulatory systems is part of the present loan programme Pakistan has committed to the Fund that it will strengthen its institutional capacities to fight corruption, support inclusive growth, and provide a level playing field for businesses and investment. Following the examination, the lender will share its 'Governance and Corruption Diagnostic Assessment' findings with the government by July as part of the \$7bn funding programme. *The assessment will analyse governance and corruption vulnerabilities, and identify priority structural reforms. It is expected to help the government take action to address corruption and strengthen integrity and governance to promote transparency. Pakistan's unfinished reform agenda has mostly focused on tax, trade, exchange, monetary policy, and other areas.* While these areas are crucial and in dire need of structural changes, our problems go much deeper.

Support from remittances, Editorial, *Dawn*, 13 February⁹

Data shows that monthly remittances have averaged \$3bn per month, a significant increase from the \$2.3-2.4bn monthly average seen in FY23 and the better part of FY24,

⁸ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1891209/imf-scrutiny>

⁹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1891593/support-from-remittances>

since March. Cumulatively, remittances soared to \$20.8bn in the first seven months of the current fiscal year up by nearly 32pc from a year ago. *The growth is led by an increase of 42pc in flows from the UAE and Saudi Arabia. A crackdown on the grey dollar trade, reduced political and economic volatility, a stable exchange rate, and forex market reforms are the major reasons for the robust remittance growth.* Last but not least, IT firms, along with IT professionals, relocating to Dubai and elsewhere, due to curbs on the internet, is another reason for the rising remittances. The State Bank expects the current fiscal year to close with a record \$35bn in remittances compared to last year's \$30.25bn, and the current account to end in a surplus that is 0.5pc of the size of the economy, thanks to overseas workers. However, overdependence on remittances for a longer period can prove risky for balance-of-payments stability. Such risks can be curtailed only through a rapid boost in export earnings to finance imports, rather than using inflows from remittances.

SECURITY SITUATION

Terror troubles, Editorial, *The News*, 03 February¹⁰

We are barely a month into 2025 but terror seems to have followed on from last year – and it keeps getting worse. The night of Friday and Saturday saw a terrorist attack in Kalat, Balochistan that claimed the lives of at least 18 soldiers, in yet another grim reminder of the persistent security challenges in the region. *As security forces thwarted the attempt by militants, they also eliminated 23 terrorists in follow-up operations. Yet, while these tactical victories are commendable, they do not mask the underlying crisis in Balochistan – a crisis that requires more than just military responses. Balochistan has long been a battleground of insurgency, driven by complex political, economic and social grievances. Separatist militant groups like the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) have exploited these fault lines, engaging in violent attacks that claim innocent lives, including those of security personnel and civilians.* While their claims of injustice may stem from genuine grievances, their methods only

¹⁰ <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1278888-terror-troubles>

perpetuate the cycle of violence, leading to further alienation and suffering for the Baloch people. No legitimate cause can justify such bloodshed, and acts of terror must be unequivocally condemned. However, a purely militaristic approach – one that focuses solely on counterinsurgency without addressing the root causes – will only ensure that the flames of rebellion continue to smoulder.

Kurram fragility, Editorial, *Dawn*, 03 February¹¹

The Kurram imbroglio is complicated, where tribal disputes over land and water have become intertwined with long-running sectarian feuds. *There is also a geopolitical and security angle, as many of the Sunni militant groups active in the area are on good terms with the Afghan Taliban, while Shia militants linked to the Zainabiyoun Brigade maintain a strong presence in Kurram. Bloodletting has been continuing since last year, and matters exploded after a convoy was attacked in November. Since then, attacks and counterattacks have been frequent.* The state has made several some would say belated attempts to quell the violence, the most significant coming in the form of a peace deal hammered out on New Year's Day. But clearly, it will take full commitment by all state institutions, as well as the earnest cooperation of local tribes, to make the agreement work. A grand *Jirga* was held on Friday in Kohat to discuss the Kurram situation. At this gathering, the KP government spokesperson seemed upbeat about peace *prospects. While the state's efforts to contain bloodshed are appreciable, it will take more than words to bring lasting calm to Kurram. At the Kohat Jirga, the KP spokesman said it was essential that "miscreants" involved in troublemaking be handed over to the authorities.* He also said a relief package for Kurram was being finalized. Both these issues are important.

Counter-terrorism toll, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 03 February¹²

Blood shed is once again reported in the restive provinces of Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. The point of consolation, however, is that the security forces have fought

¹¹ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1889442/kurram-fragility>

¹² <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2526145/counter-terrorism-toll>

back with bravery, killing more than a dozen terrorists, as they embraced martyrdom of 18 personnel. *A couple of well-choreographed counter-terrorism operations in Kalat and Harnai districts saw unscrupulous elements take some battering, and their hideouts were dismantled.* However, in a similar sordid affair four levies, and a private driver, lost their lives as their convoy was ambushed in Dera Ismail Khan. At the same time, Pakistan is ripe with socio-political unrest and it has acted as a catalyst in furthering terrorism. The earlier an industrious effort is made to win over the locals and bring them into the national mainstream, the curse of militarism can be addressed in a better manner. *It goes without saying that disparity in development, and the denial of rights to the locals has been at the root of revulsion, and it can only be overcome through a political solution. While Balochistan and K-P, along with the merged districts, have seen a lot of military operations, it's time to orchestrate an indigenous approach and put the locals at the vanguard in decision-making. That will surely help securitize the regions in a better manner.*

Fragile Peace, Editorial, *The Nation*, 19 February¹³

The struggle to establish peace in Kurram was always going to be difficult, and the recent attacks on convoys delivering aid to the region only reinforce this reality. *However, these attacks also confirm what many had long suspected while the conflict initially began as a land dispute between two tribes, it was exploited, inflamed, and perhaps even orchestrated by hostile elements operating from Afghanistan's border regions near Parachinar and Kurram.* The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's decision to launch a fresh military operation against militants following the martyrdom of five security officials in multiple attacks on Monday is the right one. So far, the Frontier Corps, the Pakistan Army, the Air Force, and intelligence agencies, in coordination with the provincial government, have done commendable work in securing an otherwise volatile region. *However, the continued attacks highlight the immense challenge of ensuring security in such difficult terrain. A more extensive military surge, involving greater deployment of security forces, is now necessary to uproot the militants operating from Afghanistan and seeking to destabilize Pakistan.* The fragile peace

¹³ <https://www.nation.com.pk/19-Feb-2025/fragile-peace>

must be defended with greater force because those seeking to shatter it remain relentless. Pakistan must respond with even greater resolve.

URDU MEDIA

Protest and roadblock against disappearances of two Baloch youth in Kharan, *Daily Sangar*, 05 February¹⁴

Relatives of two brothers in Kharan, Balochistan, have staged a sit-in protest in the Red Zone against the enforced disappearance of two brothers by Pakistani forces. Mubarak Siyapad was abducted from a shop in Kharan on 4 February, while his younger brother Hafiz Ali Mir Ahmed was abducted from Quetta by the forces. Local sources say that Hafiz Ali Mir Ahmed had taken his ailing mother to Quetta for treatment and was staying in a hotel. According to information received by *Sangar* News Desk, a sit-in protest by relatives is ongoing in the Kharan Red Zone for the recovery of the two brothers. *In this regard, a press release issued by the Baloch Solidarity Committee (BYC) Kharan Zone said that security forces abducted Mubarak Baloch, from his shop on 4 February and his younger brother Hafiz Ali Mir was forcibly abducted from Quetta last night by secret agency officials. Against these disappearances a sit-in is going on in Kharan Red Zone for the recovery of both brothers.* The relatives have appealed to the people of Kharan to stand with our family in this difficult time for the recovery of both brothers.

PTI and government continue to fight in the name of talks, Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 04 February¹⁵

Although negotiations are being talked about, in reality, it is only a tussle of point scoring. Each party is telling their respective supporters that we are not afraid of anyone and will

¹⁴ <https://dailysangar.online/?p=57042>

¹⁵ <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/04-Feb-2025/1865361>

not bow down. *Look at the recent statement of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) President Junaid Akbar Khan and one gets an idea how wise our politicians are. Junaid said that let no one be under any misunderstanding, this time we will go to Islamabad with full preparation. If Imran Khan gives order, we will not disappoint him and the people.* He further said that if a PTI worker is imprisoned within the limits of a particular police station, party workers will reach the limits of that police station and will stage a sit-in. I only say what I can do. I will not tolerate such dramas anymore. *Meanwhile, Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Omar Ayub harshly criticized the government and its allies, saying that they cannot arrange a meeting with the founder of PTI Imran Khan. Why should we talk to it?* In a statement, Omar Ayub said that the imposed government has no power. He further said that the Punjab government is not allowing the PTI to hold a rally at Minar-e-Pakistan. Similarly, PTI Information Secretary Sheikh Waqas Akram has said that the protest on 8 February will be peaceful, constitutional and big. And Chief Organizer of PTI Punjab Alia Hamza met with the head of the opposition alliance Mahmood Khan Achakzai and consulted on the opposition protest in Punjab. Alia Hamza has said that the leadership and workers of Punjab will come out in full force on 8 February. *Before the above statements of PTI leaders, Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi had said on 1 February that the founder of PTI had not received a phone call from the US yet. If any phone call is received we will deal with it accordingly.* Ask PTI about the talks that they want. We will request PTI not to hold a rally on 8 February. If they do not accept our request then the same will happen as happened before. On the other hand, Speaker National Assembly Ayaz Sadiq, while announcing the continuation of the government and opposition negotiation committee, has said that the negotiation committee with PTI has not been dissolved. He said that the negotiation committees between PTI and the government will remain in place and it is hoped that these committees will once again be ready for negotiations. Apart from being the Speaker of the National Assembly, Ayaz Sadiq is also part of the senior leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-Nawaz). His decision not to dissolve the negotiation committee is certainly welcome. It is also a good sign that he is asking the parties to resolve the issues through negotiations, believing in reconciliation.

President Asif Ali Zardari is on an official visit to the People's Republic of China from 4 and 8 February. In the company of Foreign Minister and Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and other members of the delegation, Zardari's talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Prime Minister Li Keqiang and the signing of agreements worth \$300 million in energy, coal, and cement are the highlights of the visit. The two leaders agreed to further strengthen bilateral cooperation in counter-terrorism, defense, agriculture, IT and other sectors. Several memorandums of understanding were signed during the meeting between President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Li Keqiang, including an increase in cement production in Pakistan by 5,000 tons per day, coal gasification in Sindh, and setting up a urea production plant. They discussed promoting ties between the private sector and the business community to enhance economic cooperation. The two leaders reiterated their commitment to keeping the Pak-China friendship unwavering. It may be recalled that President Xi Jinping had expressed concern over Zardari's injury in a letter to the President three months ago, wishing him a speedy recovery and warmly inviting him to visit China. It is important to mention here that most Pakistani leaders have exchanged visits with Chinese leaders in the country's 77-year history. *Many ups and downs in global politics and any kind of pressure tactics could not affect the Pak-China friendship. Instead, the visit of each leadership became a means of creating a new dimension in mutual relations. Today, when the current government has completed one year, the visit of President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's June 2024 visit along with their delegations are going to be helpful in the implementation of new projects including CPEC.* The regular operation of Gwadar International Airport and the start of air travel in recent days are a link in this chain. Last week, the path was paved for the implementation of the Karachi-Peshawar railway line upgradation project under CPEC, for which a delegation of Chinese experts will visit Pakistan at the end of this month and the ML-1 project will be finalized. Under which the 1726-kilometer-long railway line will be made double-tracked from one end to the other.

¹⁶ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/844857%22>

BLF claims responsibility for multiple attacks on Pakistan forces, *Daily Sangar*, 11 February¹⁷

In a press release issued to the media, Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) spokesperson Major Gwahram Baloch accepted responsibility for attacks, seizure of weapons and blockades on Pakistani forces in Bolan, Kharan, Quetta, Awaran and Prom. *The spokesperson said that the Sarmachars carried out nine different successful operations in Bolan, Kharan, Quetta, Awaran and Prom, including attacks on forces, seizure of Levies weapons and blockades, while a state official, Nasir was arrested during the blockade.* Gwahram said that after receiving information about the travel of state official Nasir and his companions in Bolan, the Sarmachars blockaded two different areas on the Sibi-Quetta highway, Pir Haib and Bibi Nani, for six hours. During the blockade, the state official Nasir was arrested while his companions managed to escape. Nasir is being interrogated and will be brought to justice soon, he said. *The statement said that at the same time, the Sarmachars targeted the checkpoint of the occupying forces at Pir Gai'b Cross with rocket launchers and modern weapons, as a result of which two personnel were killed and several others were injured.* In another attack, the Sarmachars attacked the check post of the occupying forces at Bibi Nani with rocket launchers and modern weapons, in which two personnel were killed on the spot and one was injured. *The spokesperson said that in another attack last night, the Sarmachars attacked the Levies check post in an area of Awaran and seized all the weapons and other equipment. However, the Levies personnel were not harmed as they were Baloch.* The statement said that at 8:30 pm last night, the Sarmachars attacked the personnel posted at the gate of the Police Training College on Sibi Road in Quetta with a hand grenade, as a result of which two personnel were injured. In another attack Sarmachars fired several rockets at the main camp of the occupying Pakistani forces in Kharan city, which fell inside the camp. One officer was killed and three were injured in the attack.

¹⁷ <https://dailysangar.online/?p=57325>

There are some truths that are very painful to tell. Democracy and the constitution have become a joke in Pakistan. I do not feel any hesitation while talking about the supremacy of democracy and the constitution, but I am starting to feel ashamed. The people sitting in democratic and constitutional institutions know very well that they are becoming a symbol of hatred for the common Pakistani. But if you talk to them, they say that Imran Khan and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) are responsible for whatever is happening. If you talk to the PTI members, they put the responsibility of Pakistan's problems on Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz. *There is also a third school of thought that says that the real responsibility for the political instability that is currently spreading in Pakistan is not politicians but non-political people who sit back and control politics. Many important figures of the current government admit in private gatherings that nowadays there is a wave of hatred against the government among the people.* When you ask the government ministers that you used to call Imran Khan U-turn Khan, but now you are taking such a U-turn that Imran Khan has fallen far behind. What has happened to you people? The ministers say that in the beginning we started saying in the cabinet meetings that we should not make the mistakes that Imran Khan's government made. The result was that the Prime Minister said that the minister whose performance is not good will be dismissed. So we decided to work quietly. When the draft of the PECA Amendment Act 2025 came before us, we thought that the Prime Minister would order negotiations with the journalist organizations for some amendments and additions to it, but he was in a hurry to get this law passed. *The ministers kept asking each other in whispers that it is not the same law that Imran Khan's government had implemented through the Presidential Ordinance and that Shehbaz Sharif had opposed then? A minister even confirmed to me that this is the same law against which you filed a petition in the Islamabad High Court and then Maryam Aurangzeb announced to become a party to this case on behalf of the PML-N?* He said in a self-deprecating manner that he does not know what has happened to the PML-N? *The minister then he said that in fact, there is an undisclosed competition going on between the Prime Minister and the Chief Minister of Punjab. Last year, the Chief Minister had a similar law in*

¹⁸ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/847649>

the name of defamation passed in the provincial assembly without any debate and made someone happy. Now the Prime Minister also had to please someone, so he waited for the right time and when the operation clean-up in the judiciary was completed, he got ahead of his niece by raising the flag of the PECA Amendment Act 2025. Now the uncle and niece cannot say that Imran Khan is a big U-turn Khan. By making Imran Khan's law more dangerous, the PML-N has got it approved by the Parliament and has put the stain of implementing this black law on the Parliament.

Silent revolution in Balochistan, Mazhar Abbas, Jang, 19 February¹⁹

Imagine in today's digital era, a young Sameer sitting at the reception of a hotel in Gwadar, holding Mr. K.K. Aziz's book "Murder of History", his mobile phone was kept on the side. I gave him the room key and said goodbye, then he placed the book in front of me and said, "Sir, write something on it, I want your autograph." I apologized that this is not my book. He said, "Yes, I just want your autograph. I will buy your book from the book fair today, because you are leaving, so sign it." I took the book from him and wrote, I have great hope after seeing K.K. Aziz's book in the hands of this young man and seeing his attachment to the book, that this is no less than a revolution in this era. *After the three-day book fair in Gwadar, when it was revealed that books worth about Rs 2 million were purchased in this fair, I was not surprised that in 2023 in Turbat and in the first year in the Quetta Literature Festival, a large number of youth, including a large number of girls, were found buying books on literature, politics and various topics. That is why this fair has been held in Gwadar for about 10 years.* I have seen this same enthusiasm among the youth of other provinces, especially Sindhi youth, whether it is the Ayaz Mela, the Hyderabad Festival or the KLF and Arts Council in Karachi. *But in the situation that Balochistan is going through, the record sale of books has given rise to new hopes that where the sense of deprivation increases, there is suffocation, anger, and the paths to development are blocked, there are different forms of resistance, one form of which is literature Therefore, when news broke some time ago that some youth belonging to the Baloch Students Action Committee were caught at a book stall and their books were confiscated, it was not surprising that this was also being done*

¹⁹ <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/850860>

by our state elite. While coming from Gwadar to Karachi, I kept thinking all the way, what is the thinking that did not let the public mandate to be respected? What is the solution for Balochistan? This matter is not that difficult, you just have to give it to the one who has the right to it first, whether it is gas or other minerals. The democratic path is the only way out. Talk to those who hold books, not those who take up arms. After all, a young man like Sameer who is reading "Murder of History". Don't let the book go from their hands. This is the case of Balochistan

ELECTRONIC MEDIA

PTI's Politics in KP: Division within the PTI in KP, Khabar Muhammad Malick Kay Saath, ARY News, 06 February²⁰

In this latest episode the host discusses the politics of PTI, especially in the KP Province. Recently PTI MNA Junaid Akbar has been chosen by party founder Imran Khan to replace Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur as the party's president in KP. This move made lots of noise and became an issue as after Imran Khan Ali Amin was seen as the second person in PTI as he is the CM of KP. The host asked why the change came at this point of time? KP government is notifying (*notices issues*) all its workers and government employees that if they join protests action will be taken, while the fact is that the protest (*Swabi*) is of the party PTI? **Guest:** Junaid Akbar-PTI MNA **Junaid Akbar** informed that he has received the notices from the KP government and that he will look into the same, and added there can be elements that do not want Ali Amin Gandapur and him to be close or be on one page. But he added that whoever want to join the protest will come in the same of Imran Khan and no one else. It is true that the law and order in KP is important and Ali Amin should take care of the same and he should be equipped. When asked will there be changes in the KP government, he pointed out that Imran Khan will decide on the same, it is true that there is corruption in KP and it is visible. He added that

²⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NJSdygUlr0>

he has given 26 years of his life to PTI to do clean politics and stand against corruption. Talking about Imran Khan's choosing him as President of PTI in KP he pointed out that he had no communication with Ali Amin Gandapur and that Imran Khan might have contacted him and told him about the change. When talking about he not visiting CM house in KP he said that he has asked CM to meet at a third place to talk about the issues. He added that as an MNA he has done his duty towards PTI and he has not taken part in the protests so far and if Imran Khan directs he underlined that he will follow the instruction. Talking about the possibility of removal of Ali Amin from CM chair he added that this will be the decision of Imran Khan and despite of the issues with him he added that he has never said any negative thing about him in social media or otherwise.

Oppositions Grand Alliance: Will it be a Reality? Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 12 February²¹

Hamid Mir informed that the opposition is speeding up things to form a grand alliance and not only PTI and JUI-F, many other opposition parties joined the grand dinner of the opposition in Islamabad which was called to discuss the grand alliance and its strategy. An alliance of opposition parties, on Tuesday 11 February 2025, resolved to increase coordination in order to give the government a tough time. a dinner, hosted by *Tehreek-i-Tahaffuz-i-Ayeen-i-Pakistan* chief Mehmood Khan Achakzai, opposition leaders Fazlur Reh-man, Asad Qaiser, Omar Ayub, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Sardar Latif Khosa, Arif Khan, Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar and others agreed to hold a multi-party conference. They say the one of the aim is to begin the process of new elections. The host asked what the main purpose of the grand alliance is. **Guests:** Tariq Fazal Chaudhry-PML-N & Malik Aamir Dogar-PTI.

Tariq Fazal Chaudhry talking about the formation of the grand opposition alliance added that the PTI should definitely form alliance with other opposition parties because it can learn from them how to do politics. They do not use terror in politics, like the PTI and this is good news for us that PTI is joining them. About the elections, it will take place after

²¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VK6AdBjoENo>

four years. They should act as a responsible opposition and not indulge in illegal activities. Talking about the chief election commissioner and why the seat is still empty, he added the PTI is playing the blame game and asked what Imran Khan has done for the country in real sense, there is no hope from him for the future. Pakistan was on the point of default during the term of Imran Khan. *Malik Aamir Dogar* there is no denying that the government came into power by rigging elections, and now we are making an alliance with the opposition parties and talk about the issues as an alliance. Talking about the IMF delegate visiting the judge in the Supreme Court, he underlined that in which country these kind of meeting take place. This government is not at all formed with the support of the public but by rigging. There is no sense of the 26th Amendment and is to politically victimize the PTI, this amendment is not for the public but to stop Imran Khan and to keep him behind the jail. The PTI is bearing all the brunt but the other institutions are collateral damage in the whole process, the courts and the tying of hands of judges literally in the courts is an example. There is a reason why there is no chief election commission in the country, because they are looking for their person to be appointed on the post.

Erdogan's Visit to Pakistan: Implications for Pak-Turkey Relations, Sethi Se Sawal, Samaa News, 14 February²²

The host pointed out that the visit of President of Turkey to Pakistan is very significant because it is happening after five years. He was welcomed by President Asif Ali Zardari and he also met the COAS. More than 24 Memorandum of Understandings (MOU's) were signed. But more than that this meeting is more significant on an international level as the meeting of two Islamic countries. She asked why Erdogan said he will not let another Nakba happen or repeat in the Middle East. Najam Sethi informed that MOU's are what we see in the news, it is just the front but the real talks happen behind the locked doors, this is what exactly happened during Erdogan's visit to Pakistan. Sethi reminded us that Erdogan visited Pakistan five years back during Imran Khan's rule, and that he along with Pakistan and Malaysia wanted to form a new Islamic block. Saudi and MBS (Mohammad Bin Salman) was not happy with this and he showed his discomfort on this

²² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cddSsqtdSuE>

issue and asked questions because he was the leader of OIC (Organization of Islamic Council). MBS called up Bajwa at that point of time and asked him to stop this process and do not let Imran Khan travel to Malaysia at all costs. The visit to Malaysia by Imran Khan was cancelled and even the proposal of a new Islamic channel was shelved because of the intervention of MBS and Saudi Arabia. Sethi pointed out that Erdogan has not given up his dream of becoming the ultimate leader of the Islamic World and he has now taken an anti-Israel stance. In the past Israel and Turkey had good relations but Erdogan changed the policy, he also had regional interest in Syria for Example. He also wants to emerge as a regional leader, in which he is successful. Turkey cannot sit with China but he is turning head towards Pakistan and Indonesia. Erdogan wants the support of Pakistan and not Saudi because it knows that Saudi can't live without US, and Turkey can't live with US that is why Pakistan is crucial. This visit he want to neutralize Pakistan and preparing it for future support. Another important aspect is that Turkey is also a major supplier of sophisticated weapon system to Pakistan, All drone technology is coming from Turkey. More than 11% of military import to Pakistan is coming from Turkey, even now clothes are imported from Turkey.

The Festering Issue of Balochistan: Interview of CM Sarfraz Bugti, KHABAR Muhammad Malick Kay Saath, ARY News, 08 February²³

The host informed that JUI-F chief Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman has raised many red flags in the national assembly regarding Balochistan. He pointed out that the situation in Balochistan is very critical and if these states in the region want to become independent even UN will intervene and listen to these voices. Muhammad Malick pointed out that Balochistan is a serious and festering issue from long time. There are four main issues in Balochistan according to him, disappearances, poverty, and unemployment and under development, out of which disappearance is the biggest issue. **Guest:** Mir Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti-CM Balochistan.

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

Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti pointed out that Maulana Fazl Rehman has misled by his party JUI-F but the truth is that the militants in Balochistan has no power, they are all pushed to the periphery. The statement of Fazl should be condemned and there is no situation like that in Balochistan. There is an appeasement policy to TTP by government in the region but the appeasement will not work in the long run. There is no political solution as it is not a political issue, the TTP want to break the region into many parts. This is a separatist movement by BLA, and they are using violence and creating problems. It is not under development but un parallel development which is in all parts of Pakistan. The current insurgency started in 2000's but there is lots of difference in the time and now. Talking about BAP party he asked who are the members, JUI-F has Pashtun members, then there is the nationalist party, one other is the federalist who are electables and have been winning form long, they always go with the government and winners that is the BAP party. It is true that popular narrative is not of the state n Balochistan, there are different cells in all parts of the world to keep Balochistan boiling, social media is used by these elements in a very great manner. Mahrang Baloch always burns the flag of Pakistan and try to side with the separatist movement. We still have backdoor talks with the separatists and Mahrang Baloch, we need an environment for talks with them. There is a surge in violence in Balochistan especially after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan. There is a black market for the war machines that are left in Afghanistan which is now used in Balochistan. The social media is misused to spread propaganda in the region. He pointed out that we are ready to have dialogue with all stakeholders but will never sit with elements that are just dreaming to cut Balochistan into many parts. There should be debate on Balochistan in all TV channels as it is the need of the hour. There is right for any person to do buy land anywhere in Pakistan, even in Gwadar and pointed out that development and security should go hand in hand. There are also positive things that should be highlighted at the same time. If there is political issues, we have to talk to nationalists, but the problem is that the issue has gone from them to the violent groups (*terrorists*). If the terrorists are also ready to talk to the government, we are ready to talk and the door is open for surrender and there is a surrender policy. The big people who are running these violent groups are living luxurious life in the foreign countries.

BOMBINGS, SHOOTINGS AND DISAPPEARANCES

(Select incidents culled out from the Pakistan media)

Place	Date	Description	Killed	Injured
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa				
Peshawar ²⁴	28/002/2025	Suicide bomber kills senior cleric at pro-Taliban seminary in northwest Pakistan on eve of Ramadan.	08	20

²⁴<https://apnews.com/article/pakistan-mosque-bombing-jamia-haqqania-ramadan-seminary-783af89928a9c2e3920f8f8383bb262b>