

May 2024

# PAKISTAN NEWS DIGEST

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



*Prepared by*  
Dr. Zainab Akhter  
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## POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

### Wheat protests, Editorial, *Dawn*, 01 May<sup>1</sup>

The crackdown on farmers protesting in Lahore and several other cities against the government's 'flawed' wheat procurement policy and delays in the commencement of the grain's official purchases in Punjab is deplorable. Scores of farmers were manhandled and detained by police across the province on Monday, particularly in Lahore and south Punjab. *The protesters appeared to have taken to the streets as a last resort after the authorities ignored their calls for help. Wheat rates have plummeted in the market, and are much below the support price of Rs3, 900 per 40kg.* The recent rains have added to the farmers' woes. And yet, the government continues to play down the problem, with its spokesperson dismissing the protests as politically motivated. This is not how governments treat those who grow food for the entire country, and the ruling PML-N may, sooner or later, have to pay a big political price for neglecting the plight of farmers, especially smallholders, who have already announced plans to block highways with the opposition's support. *Indeed, the provincial administration has valid reasons for streamlining its wheat purchases through digitising the process, slashing the procurement target for the current harvest, and delaying official purchases far beyond the date announced earlier.* There are also no two opinions that the existing policy of excessive government intervention in the wheat market by fixing a minimum support price and procuring a larger portion of tradable surplus brought to the market by farmers each year has run its course and become a burden on the government budget. These interventions are ostensibly to support growers, and ensure price stability and food security.

### Media Under siege, Editorial, *Dawn*, 03 May<sup>2</sup>

In Pakistan the media has always been under siege. The battle is dual-fronted: the government and security establishment both assert control, looking to influence editorial policy. This suppression continues regardless of which party holds power. *A*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1830744/wheat-protests>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1831136>

*notable example is the implicit ‘ban’ on media channels from naming PTI founder Imran Khan.* This policy, initiated during Shehbaz Sharif’s last tenure as PM, persisted through the caretaker rule and remains sporadically enforced. Opposition parties, despite their cries for media freedom, often employ similarly suppressive tactics once in power. Whether through direct censorship, withholding advertising, or sinister measures such as harassment, legal intimidation and violence, the press in Pakistan navigates a hazardous terrain. Making matters worse is a troubling shift within segments of the media landscape, where the lofty ideals of journalism have been sidelined in favour of compliance. *Many media houses, once bastions of fearless reporting, now capitulate under the aforementioned twin pressures. This surrender is often motivated by financial incentives or coercive force, leading to journalism that panders rather than probes.* Powerful corporate entities are an additional pressure, some of whom throw money at media houses to campaign against specific outlets.

### **Reserved seats saga, Editorial, *The News*, 07 May<sup>3</sup>**

In a continuation of this seemingly never-ending saga, now a three-member Supreme Court bench headed by Justice Mansoor Ali Shah has suspended the Peshawar High Court’s verdict on reserved seats denied to the Sunni Ittehad Council-PTI combine. *There are two views at play here, depending which side of the political aisle one is standing on.* One view is: how could the PTI go with a party [SIC] that had not even submitted a reserved seats list in the first place? *This is the same reason PTI leaders had cited when going with the Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM): that it could create legal problems if no reserved seats list had been submitted by the party the PTI merged with.* There are those who say that the PTI knew what problems it could have faced and yet it decided to go with a party that didn’t even contest the election let alone submit a reserved seats list. Could it be, ask some, that the PTI was so used to being favoured by the courts and other institutions alike that it thought it could get away with forming an alliance with a party like the SIC and still get reserved seats? *The other point of view sees the PHC decision as weak because it did not rule on the SIC giving its reserved seats list in time but instead created confusion on the issue of ‘parliamentary party’ and ‘political party’.* Another thing

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1186166-reserved-seats-saga>

legal experts point out is that reserved seats that would have fallen to one party cannot be distributed among other parties, because the Election Rules of 2017 explicitly mandate that reserved seats be allocated on the basis of proportionality per their total seats won in the national or provincial assemblies.

#### **ISPR talk, Editorial, *The News*, 08 May<sup>4</sup>**

The DG of the ISPR also made it clear that there will be no talks with any political leader or group that was involved in attacks against its own army and which indulges in propaganda and that “the only way forward for the anarchists is to apologise sincerely [for their acts], abandon the politics of hate and indulge in constructive politics [instead]”. *This is something many political observers have pointed out before: that the PTI founder-chairman Imran Khan’s insistence that May 9 was a ‘false flag’ operation is contrary to what the military establishment believes and thus without any acknowledgement of responsibility and apology for what transpired last year on that day, the differences between the establishment and PTI will not be resolved.* From the tone and tenor of yesterday’s press conference, it is quite clear that there is no room – at least for now – for forgiveness for May 9. This is contrary to how in recent weeks, PTI leaders have been making statements that they will only talk to the establishment and not to the PML-N, PPP and MQM. As the ISPR DG rightly pointed out, a political dialogue is for political parties, and not institutions. *This is an important point because politics and political negotiations should be left with political parties and no institution has any business meddling in politics. That the PTI has so far stuck to its narrative and created a perception that February 8 elections results somehow negated what happened on May 9 was also countered by the DG ISPR.* Observers had pointed out after the elections that the people exercised their right to vote because they want a political solution and not a bloody revolution on the streets.

#### **May 9: one year on, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 09 May<sup>5</sup>**

At the same time, the PTI’s comical attempts to deflect responsibility have done the party no favours. No party leader of any influence has offered up anything more than watered

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/1186517-ispr-talk>

<sup>5</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2465762/may-9-one-year-on>

down condemnations of the violence, riddled with caveats trying to paint the events as a false flag. *Never mind that party leaders are on record making thinly veiled threats of violent uprisings. Everyone knows the protesters were PTI leaders, workers and supporters.* Even if the party is to be believed and the instigators in the crowd were bad actors pretending to be PTI supporters, it does not exonerate PTI's own leaders and workers who were riling up the crowd. While some political parties may still be willing to play ball with PTI and vice versa, these working relationships are situational. *If the party really hopes to mature into a party known for its governance, and not protest and resignation, they need to admit their own failings and work with others to fix the system for everyone, regardless of who is in power.* Whether or not we need a May 9 judicial commission, as the PTI demands, or an open investigation into the party's rise to power, as others have suggested, transparency around the events that brought us to where we stand today can only benefit the country.

**AJK's muddle**, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 14 May<sup>6</sup>

The protests across the AJK have literally brought the state to a standstill. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) that is spearheading the campaign is apolitical in essence but has cut across the party lines to make its presence felt. JAAC is primarily composed of traders and civil society groups. *Its demands are focused on the privileges of the autonomous state, and it seems to be unrelenting for a middle ground compromise. The demands range from concern over rising prices to a beleaguered economy, and from undue taxes to subsidies on wheat and electricity.* Perhaps, that is why a generous package of Rs23 billion announced by the federal government on Monday has made little impact in lowering down the soaring tensions, and the men on the streets are holding their fort. Their contention to enjoy subsidised tariff on electricity as the energy is generated from water reservoirs of the valley is worth acknowledging. *Moreover, what makes the movement popular is that people want an end to privileges of the elite class, especially the ruling dispensations, and long for an empowered local government system.* Last but not least, they are conscious of their political mandate and are unwilling to throw it to the wind. The change of government in AJK and the cabinet that was ushered in as a mark of

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<sup>6</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2466438/ajks-muddle>

political engineering has been at the root-cause of ills, and day to day issues such as misgovernance and wheat shortage had led to an unprecedented civil discord.

**MQM-P infighting, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 15 May<sup>7</sup>**

The controversy surrounding the election of Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui as MQM-P chairman has highlighted the fragility of the once-mighty regional party. On Sunday, the MQM-P's ad hoc central committee "unanimously elected" Siddiqui as the party chairman, a move that some disgruntled leaders claim is a violation of the party's constitution. It is also notable that nobody else was elected by the committee, or at the very least, was considered worth mentioning the notification only spoke of Siddiqui. *The infighting may not have gotten serious attention even a few years ago, when it looked like the party was on the brink of collapse. But now, the MQM is technically the second-largest party in the federal treasury benches, making it a key ruling party ally. Internal upheaval could have national-level consequences.* We should also note that PTI leaders and supporters, in particular, will be watching closely how the ECP reacts to the MQM-P's infighting, considering the hoops they had to jump through due to their own questionable internal election practices. Compared to the MQM-P's internal restructuring, the PTI's rejected elections were positively transparent.

**CPEC upgradation, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 17 May<sup>8</sup>**

Pakistan and China did some course correction on CPEC, and resolved to take it to new heights. The unflinching understanding to make the project of connectivity and development a success was at the centre of parleys between the foreign ministers of the two countries. *Keeping in view the upheavals that they have faced at the hands of non-state actors, and a regressive mode that had incidentally set in, both the neighbours agreed to undo the irritants and ensure that the format of cordiality and collaboration lives on.* The \$60 billion mega investment is Pakistan's lifeline and at the same time an indispensable obsession for the emerging world power's outreach to five continents. Making it a success story is sine qua non for economic progression of more than 100 countries.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2466616/mqm-p-infighting>

<sup>8</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2466948/cpec-upgradation>



*Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi's nod to roll out an 'upgraded version' of CPEC hinted at its second and most important phase of cooperation.*

Having set in a vibrant logistical infrastructure and energy projects, the roadmap is to industrialise the zone. Thus, creating the nine proposed SEZs and furthering interaction in areas like industry, agriculture, mining, new energy and IT was vehemently underscored. The impetus was evident as they co-chaired the fifth round of China-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, and sent down a message that attempts to derail the all-weather friendship will be countered with full might.

**Bulldozed bill**, Editorial, *Dawn*, 22 May<sup>9</sup>

Why is the Punjab government so keen on imposing dangerous legislation that would be unacceptable to any self-respecting society? The forced passage of the Defamation Bill 2024 over the protestations of both journalists and opposition lawmakers in the Punjab Assembly on Monday is a troubling reminder of how the PML-N has abandoned its principles ever since it returned to power. Defamation is a societal problem, not something that concerns the Punjab government alone. *The journalists' community had merely asked the Punjab government for a week to reconsider the law and arrive at a consensus. Meanwhile, the opposition had suggested certain changes to the law, some of which, it seems, could have improved it considerably.* By involving these two stakeholders in its deliberations, the government in Lahore would have had the opportunity to make the law fairer and acceptable to everyone. That it chose to push them aside suggests a disinclination to honour the democratic principles of the legislative process and, instead, a tendency to impose its will on the people. *This disregard for the opposition and other dissenting voices now seen in multiple successive governments is the primary reason why the Pakistani political process seems unable to deliver.* The Punjab government must withdraw this dangerous bill and engage with other stakeholders. There is still time.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1834976>

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS

### **Growing wheat crisis, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 06 May<sup>10</sup>**

*The wheat crisis marked by delayed procurement, farmers' protests and disruptions in the supply chain continues to haunt the federal government.* The Punjab government's failure to procure wheat at a fixed rate of Rs3,900 per ton in a timely manner, despite earlier commitments, has left farmers without adequate compensation and eroded trust in government. The subsequent arrests and raids conducted by the Punjab police further exacerbate tensions and undermine democratic principles of free expression and assembly. Exacerbating the issue further, middlemen and mafias are exploiting farmers by purchasing wheat at Rs2, 900 per ton, only to later sell it at higher prices. *The root of the deepening wheat crisis lies in the import of the commodity by the caretakers, and more recently by the sitting government, amazingly without Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif knowing. This has resulted in a huge oversupply.* While Anwaar-ul Haq, the ex-caretaker PM, has laid blame on the provincial governments for overestimating the gap in demand and supply, the incumbent PM has suspended the secretary food security and ordered a probe – a customary practice unlikely to help the farmers who are compelled to gear up for protests. Nawaz Sharif, the ruling PML-N figurehead, has also taken notice of the issue, in what is being perceived as a populist move only to make his political presence felt.

### **Fund's concern, Editorial, *The Express Tribune*, 13 May<sup>11</sup>**

The easy-going with the IMF has apparently hit snags. The vocal concern expressed by the Washington-based lender citing incapacity of the ruling dispensation to overcome odds and go ahead with agreed reforms is worrisome. *The Fund has clearly noted that "downside risks remain exceptionally high" and are marred with "high political uncertainty and resurgence of social tensions."* This is tantamount to an SOS to the government to do something out of the box, if it wants to see economic stabilisation. In other words, the prime

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<sup>10</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2465322/growing-wheat-crisis>

<sup>11</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2466300/funds-concern>

donor, with which the lifeline of economy hangs, has stated that the homework is inward-oriented and politics cannot be differentiated from economics. Some of the reservations are, however, on the mark. Pakistan for the last few weeks has once again slipped into a chaotic situation wherein political confrontation is at its peak, and the country has also seen the return of terror in restive areas. *Likewise, the surge in sense of marginalization has dipped the faith of local businesses who also keep their fingers crossed at the highhandedness of the IMF in slapping more taxes.* The recent prescription of the Fund to further milk the salaried class and come down hard on small businesses and retailers has set in scepticism. Perhaps, this is why the lender sees a delay in implementation of reforms.

### **IMF's unease, Editorial, Dawn, 24 May<sup>12</sup>**

The first round of 'engagement' between Pakistan and the IMF over the former's request for a larger and longer programme appears to have concluded with some bumps still visible. Both sides are believed to have reached an understanding on the reform measures that Islamabad must include in the budget for the next financial year and get approved by parliament before an agreement on a new bailout facility is signed. *A report in this paper has quoted a government official as saying that the IMF mission is leaving the country without announcing a formal staff-level agreement, because the "Fund wants a stamp of approval from parliament for the reforms and policy actions [to be implemented as 'prior actions' for the new programme] given the unpredictable political environment".* This is not a new condition in Pakistan's context, nor is it surprising, considering the endless political instability roiling the country. The IMF had recently noted that high political uncertainty and the resurgence of social tensions could undermine economic stabilisation. *"Downside risks remain exceptionally high. While the new government has indicated its intention to continue the [Stand-by Arrangement's] policies, political uncertainty remains significant," the IMF had said in its staff report on the conclusion of the second and final review of the \$3bn SBA.* It added that "the resurgence in social tensions reflecting the complex political scene and high cost of living could weigh on policy and reform implementation".

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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.dawn.com/news/1835349/imfs-unease>

### **A new era in Pak-Saudi Relations, Editorial, Jang, 01 May<sup>13</sup>**

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who participated in the special meeting of the World Economic Forum held in Riyadh, the Saudi capital, had an important meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the sidelines of the conference. During the meeting various measures were agreed upon to increase economic cooperation between the two countries. Progress on matters decided during the last meeting in Makkah was reviewed as well. *The Prime Minister thanked the Saudi Crown Prince for sending more Saudi delegations for the Comprehensive Saudi Investment Program in Pakistan and invited the Crown Prince to visit Pakistan. On the instructions of the Crown Prince, the Saudi Ministers of Energy, Commerce, Economic Affairs and Environment held separate meetings with the Prime Minister in which they resolved to increase cooperation between the two countries in various fields.* Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said on this occasion that the relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have entered a new era. The Prime Minister discussed the situation in the Middle East with the Saudi Crown Prince and emphasized that international efforts should be made to end Israeli atrocities in Palestine. In particular, deep concern was expressed over the genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. The Prime Minister also met the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim and discussed matters of mutual interest between the two countries, including the desire to increase cooperation in the fields of education, science and technology, livestock and trade. Global billionaire Bill Gates met the Prime Minister and discussed the polio eradication campaign in Pakistan. The Prime Minister has gone to Saudi Arabia for the second time in a month, where he was supposed to attend the meeting of the World Economic Forum. Taking advantage of the opportunity, he also met with the Saudi crown prince and important ministers to increase mutual cooperation between two countries.

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<sup>13</sup> <http://e.jang.com.pk/details/676642>

## **Farmers' protest, Editorial, Roznama Jasarat, 03 May<sup>14</sup>**

A manifestation of the contradiction between words and deeds in our national character is that even today, on the government level, May Day is celebrated as a holiday. The leaders of the two parties that formed the government with the help of the establishment celebrated May Day with special arrangements. *Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif announced that he would spend his entire day in Lahore walking alongside labourers, claiming to understand their issues first-hand. The government will take every step to relieve labourers in the upcoming budget.* At the same time, the Pakistan People's Party chairman, Bilawal Zardari, addressed the May Day ceremony in Karachi and opposed the government's policy of denial. May Day is a symbolic day of struggle for workers and peasants against the exploitative capitalist system. *In Pakistan, May Day was observed in a situation where Punjab's farmers are protesting on the streets of Lahore, facing baton charges and arrests because the wheat crop is ready, but small farmers who grow the staple food wheat are not getting the price for their crop. The reason for this is that just a few days before the preparation of the wheat crop, the government allowed private-sector capitalists to import wheat, which led the Punjab government to refuse to purchase wheat.* On one hand, the common man is forced to buy flour and bread at high prices because fertilizers, pesticides, and diesel for running tube wells are all available at expensive rates, increasing the production cost for farmers. Small farmers are not even getting the mandatory price for wheat, and the common man is deprived of cheap bread. *The Agriculture Minister of Punjab, while speaking in the provincial assembly, said that permission was granted during the previous caretaker government to import wheat. The current situation is that the abundance of wheat in the country has turned into a crisis.* Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif and his government have unnecessarily held the previous negligent government responsible for purchasing wheat. *Prime Minister Mian Shehbaz Sharif has appointed Mian Mushtaq, a member of the Federal Public Service Commission, as the Inquiry Officer. He said that the country has suffered a loss of 300 billion rupees due to the additional import of wheat.*

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<sup>14</sup> <https://islamabad.jasarat.com/2024/05/03/islamabad/2>

### **Saudi investment in Pakistan! Editorial, *Nawa-i-Waqt*, 06 May<sup>15</sup>**

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar met with Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud. The meeting took place on the occasion of the fifteenth Islamic Summit in Banjul, Gambia. *During the meeting, Ishaq Dar mentioned the importance of long-standing strategic and economic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Ishaq Dar and the Saudi Foreign Minister reiterated their commitment to further increase economic cooperation and Saudi investment in Pakistan.* Both leaders expressed deep concern over the recent developments in the Middle East. In order to overcome the serious economic problems that Pakistan is going through at the moment, it is important that Pakistan gets the support from friendly countries and international organizations that really want the country to get on the path of development and on its feet in terms of economy. In this regard, Saudi Arabia has proved on various occasions that it is a friend of Pakistan that can be relied upon in difficult situations. During the visit of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Saudi Arabia last month, an agreement was signed with Saudi Arabia to invest \$5 billion in Pakistan. *On 5 May a delegation of investors under the leadership of Saudi Arabia's Deputy Minister of Finance for Foreign Affairs Riyadh bin Muhammad Al Kharif reached Pakistan.* The delegation includes more than 30 heads of major companies like IT, Marine, Mining, Oil and Gas Exploration, Pharmaceuticals, and Aviation. Among others. American patronage in the region has upset the balance of power because of India. Not only Pakistan, other countries in the region also need to make themselves economically strong so that they can compete with a rogue country like India.

### **May 9: Press conference by military spokesperson, Editorial, *Jang*, 09 May<sup>16</sup>**

*Spokesman of Pakistan Army, Major General Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, held a press conference in Rawalpindi on 7 May. The message was clear that the elements involved in the events of 9 May 2023 in any way will be punished according to the constitution. He said that if the planners of 9 May are not brought to justice, we may have to face another 9 May.* If any

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/06-May-2024/1787738>

<sup>16</sup> <https://e.jang.com.pk/detail/681348>

political thought, leader or group attacks his own army, mocks the martyrs, then no one will have a dialogue with him. There is only one way for such a political anarchist group to sincerely apologize to the nation and promise to participate in constructive politics instead of hatred. According to the spokesman, when the facts regarding the 9 May incident came out the false flag operation was propagated to make the perpetrators as victims. The military spokesman, however, repeated all the things that the general public is well aware of. But it is also a fact that there are certain events and moments in the life of nations which cannot be forgotten and should not be allowed to disappear from the eyes of the nation. For the American people, 9/11 is a history that cannot be forgotten, and nor any attempt is made to forget it. The armed forces are the iron walls that are the effective means of protecting the homeland from enemy attacks. The jawans and officers on our international borders sacrifice comfort and their lives to ensure undisturbed sleep for our countrymen while keeping an eye on the activities of foreign intruders and bringing them to hell. *In every country of the world, their armed forces are respected, the memorials of their martyrs are considered as national assets and military and national properties are protected. 9 May will always remind us that we respect our military and security agencies.*

### **Demonstration against state fencing measures in Gwadar, *Daily Sangar*, 13 May<sup>17</sup>**

On 6 May, the Baloch Solidarity Committee (BYC) held a protest and rally against the fencing in Balochistan's coastal city and CPEC center Gwadar. A large number of men and women participated in the rally. *In Gwadar, a protest rally was organized by the BYC from Javed Complex to Shaheed-e-Jiwani Chowk against the fencing around Gwadar. The participants of the rally patrolled the Syed Zahoor Shah Hashmi Avenue and took the form of a rally after reaching the Shaheed-e-Jiwani Chowk.* The central leader of BYC, Sibghat-ul-Haq aka Shahji, Central Secretary General of BNP Awami, Advocate Saeed Faiz and other leaders addressed the participants. *Criticizing the construction of fencing around Gwadar, the speakers said that it would harm the people of Gwadar. Movement of common citizens will be affected and they will feel like they are in a prison which will be a violation of human freedom. They said that fencing Gwadar from all sides is not acceptable in any*

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<sup>17</sup> <https://dailysangar.online/?p=46710>



*way (Inhoon ne klaha ki Gwadar ko charoon taraf se baad'h lagaana humein kisi tur per bhi qabool nhi hai).* Huge barricades have been erected from Jionni Cross to Washin Door and around the airport and the movement of people is being blocked from various routes and places. They said that the government of Balochistan should stop its interference and arbitrariness in Gwadar. The speakers said that a new political force has developed in Balochistan and that force will raise its voice against all imperialist schemes in Gwadar. This is not today's struggle of Baloch nation but this movement has been going on for centuries. The people of Gwadar will now have to break their silence as Dr. Mahrang Baloch and Dr. Kahoor Khan took this struggle forward.

### **Wheat Import Investigation Report, Editorial, Roznama Dunya, 22 May<sup>18</sup>**

*In the investigation of the wheat import scandal, the inquiry committee has given a clean chit to the caretaker government of any wrongdoing and placed the entire responsibility for this unusual scandal on four officers from the Ministry of Food Security, recommending their suspension.* Late last month, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had ordered a four-member committee, headed by the Cabinet Secretary, to investigate the continuation of wheat imports after February and to identify those responsible for the wheat imports and opening of LCs, demanding a report within a week. Subsequently, the committee's terms of reference were also expanded to ensure a comprehensive investigation. *The inquiry committee was supposed to submit its report on May 6th, but the report, which was delayed by two weeks, blamed four officers of the Federal Ministry of National Food Security for poor planning and negligence, thus closing the matter. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also approved the committee's recommendations and issued orders to suspend the mentioned officers, seemingly bringing this scandal and its investigation to an end.* However, many questions remain unanswered. Who granted permission for the wheat import during the caretaker government? How much wheat was authorized for import? Who was responsible for determining this? Why was the elected government not informed after importing excess wheat? Who opened the LCs for the wheat? The report does not answer any of these questions. *According to media reports, no member of the caretaker cabinet was called for investigation by the committee. Given this scenario, it will not be possible to keep the*

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<sup>18</sup> [https://e.dunya.com.pk/index.php?e\\_name=LHR&edate=2024-05-22&page=25](https://e.dunya.com.pk/index.php?e_name=LHR&edate=2024-05-22&page=25)



*investigation of this scandal free from doubt and ambiguity.* Such an inquiry is not expected to solve or alleviate the problems of farmers, nor does it provide hope for preventing such incidents in the future. *In these circumstances, if the government gains the farmers' trust by providing interest-free loans and finds a way to export the excess wheat at the government level, it could benefit the farmers. Furthermore, instead of closing this matter here, comprehensive investigations into the surplus wheat scandal should be ensured so that this crisis can serve as an example for the future, leading to the accurate compilation of food reserves and the establishment of a track-and-trace system to eliminate mismanagement in the food sector and end the unnecessary import and export of food items.*

### **Debt economy, What is the solution? Editorial, Roznama Jasarat, 24 May<sup>19</sup>**

*The biggest challenge for Pakistan and its people is the burden of a debt economy. The statistics that various economists describe paint a grim picture. As a result of the debt-ridden economy, negotiations with the IMF are going on for the preparation of the next budget. There is nothing new in the details that media representatives aware of these talks are giving. Every day news comes that electricity prices should be increased, petrol and gas prices should be increased, the value of the rupee is constantly falling and the prediction that the dollar will exceed Rs 350. Additionally, the IMF directs authorities to impose more taxes on the public, resulting in increased interference of government officials in private businesses, with no relief for the consumers. Neither do farmers nor industrialists receive conducive environments for their businesses. The rise in prices and the lack of income sources have disrupted the entire social life. Electricity bills, like a thorn, burden the public every month. Now, gas companies are also subjected to the same path. Protests erupted in Azad Kashmir over this issue. On one side are unbearable electricity bills, and on the other, the issue of load shedding persists, with some areas in Karachi experiencing up to 22 hours of outages. It means people not only lack electricity but also have to bear its cost. The latest IMF report indicates a looming threat of debts exceeding Rs. 87 trillion. Neither do political parties have any concrete solutions to alleviate this debt crisis, nor does the establishment ponder over how to break free from IMF slavery, which practically governs the country.* While labels of treachery and patriotism have been thrown around, the need of

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<sup>19</sup> <https://islamabad.jasarat.com/2024/05/24/islamabad/2>

the hour is to hold accountable the responsible parties of private electricity agreements. Those who entangle the nation's freedom in the economy of debts are the real traitors of the nation.

## ELECTRONIC MEDIA

**Will PTI & Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman unite? Capital Talk, Geo News, 30 April<sup>20</sup>**

The opposition parties are gearing up to set protests against the government, the PTI, JUI-F are coming out with plans to protest in the coming days. On the other hand Akhtar Mengal is also not happy and is making his voice high against the government. Amid all these there seems to be a clash between the government and the judiciary. Amid all these developments how can there be political unity to take the country forward and bring order in the Parliament? *Senator Irfan Siddiqui* of the PML-N pointed out that we have to take the Parliament seriously and make laws, but the environment is changing and it is respected less. The sanctity of the parliament is perishing and it has now come to whistles and shouting. The role of leaders and politicians in weakening the parliament cannot be blamed fully on that but judiciary also played its negative role in reducing the role and image of Parliament. The PML-N accepts that it was weak at some points, like in case of Pervez Musharraf, we could not put him in jail for one day that is the truth, and instead a sub jail around his home was created. Similarly in their Faizabad case, Faiz Hamid will not be called in the court because he belongs to the establishment. *Ali Muhammad Khan* of the PTI underlined that many issues of the PTI was pending and the core committee meeting of the party was due. Re inclusion of the party was one topic for the meeting but it was decided that this will be pending until the release of supremo Imran Khan. Second, there was also talk about free and fair elections, and if the SC makes a commission on this it will be great news, we have already filed a case on this in court. When asked about talk with establishment, he said pointed out that there is no news about this, we have not said that there will be no talk to civilian government. He also added establishment is important

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxPFq\\_wU5\\_4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hxPFq_wU5_4)

and without them the country cannot go forward. He added but if the government is ready to talk they have to take some clear steps, there should be clarity on mandate of the elections. Also, *the release of Imran Khan is our first priority*. Maulana has the same issue at this point like Imran Khan but we cannot forget that he was also a part of the bringing down of Imran Khan's government. He added that we have to strengthen the institution not the personalities.

### **Negotiations between PTI and Establishment? Aaj Shahzeb Khanzada Kay Sath, *Geo News*, 02 May<sup>21</sup>**

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf has expressed concerns over the lack of progress in handling the country's affairs by the current government. PTI leader Ali Mohammad Khan has also advised his party to consider negotiating with the government instead of the establishment. But on the other hand many party leaders like Ali Amin Gandapur, CM KP have disagreed with him and said that they will not talk with the government but instead are more interested in talking to the establishment. On the other hand there is a division within the party. The acting chairman of the party Gohar Khan has said that the main target of the party is to bring out Imran Khan out of the jail and now they are saying he will be out in May. Ali Amin Gandapur has thanked Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman to support PTI but he underlined that his mandate has not been stolen but he has been cheated by his allies of the PDM. The host of the show questioned this double standard of the party and asked will the establishment talk directly to PTI? **Asma Sherazi**, senior journalist pointed out that the PTI want it all at this point of time. They want to talk to establishment and the government want to talk to PTI, but they are rejecting it. The establishment has not given any green signal or interest in talking to them. It looks like that PTI has given some options to army but there is a trust deficit between army and PTI and somehow they want to bridge this gap. Imran Khan's case has been taken up in the court and new cases are labelled on him, and if there is a plan to bring him out this would not have been the case. The establishment is messaging that they can put more cases on him if they want to. Ali Amin Gandapur is trying to communicate with the army and he has met with the core commander at Peshawar.

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nYH01W7Hwec>

Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi Monday said that he has no information about any deal between the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the establishment. “*Ask them who are involved in the deal. I have no information regarding this,*” Naqvi said in response to a question regarding the PTI-establishment deal while speaking to the media in Islamabad. His remarks come as purported “talks” between the PTI and the establishment have been the talk of the town in recent days.

### **Why Kashmir is Uncontrollable? : Protests in Pakistan Administered Kashmir** **Analyses by Syed Muzammil, 13 May<sup>22</sup>**

The protests in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) has intensified and has turned into violent clashes between the police and the people. The host underlined that this protest was going on from May 2023 across the Rawalkot-Ponch section. The main three issues that triggered the protests are: **(1). Construction of Neelum-Jhelum Power Plant** without taking the local people into confidence. **(2). Wheat Subsidy issue**, the people complained that there is no subsidy insured on what and their condition in the wheat subsidy is way worse than people of GB and the **(3).** Last and main issue was the **increase in electricity bill**. The people of the region complained that the local production of electricity in the region is 35, 000 megawatt but the 10 districts of PoK are only given 350 megawatt. They questioned why the indigenous resources and electricity produced in their land are not given to the locals and on top of it there electricity bills are sky rocketing. It has to be noted that the government of PoK buys electricity for 2 Rupees unit from WAPDA but the government sell it for 18 rupees and above per unit to the locals. In September 2023 the people of the region boycotted the electricity department and starting a burn the electricity bills campaign which is continuing till now. The only difference is that right now the protests have turned violent and 144 section is put in all 10 districts of PoK. The federal government and the national media has taken note of the situation before it goes out of hand. The Joint Awami Action Committee (JAAC) gave a call for the 10 May protest but before that arrests were made and the protests turned into a long march which started from Mirpur-Kotli to Muzaffarabad. So far one police officer has died and many

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<sup>22</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tpQ5hQrljb4>

civil as well as policemen are injured. The manner in which it is turning into a violent protest will be a big issue for the government.

**Imran Khan's bail in £190m reference case, Al Qadir Trust Case, Capital Talk with Hamid Mir, *Geo News*, 16 May<sup>23</sup>**

The host informed that Imran Khan got bail in the Al Qadir Trust Case, court also gave orders to release him but because he has other cases on him like the Cypher case, *Nikah in Iddat*, so he has not been released yet. Bilawal Bhutto in the Parliament gave a powerful speech underlining that Imran Khan is now holding hands of powers he himself has said that should not be dragged into politics. The question is if he get bail in both these cases in the future, will he be released from the prison? Senator ***Musadik Masood Malik*** of the PML-N pointed out that Imran Khan is not looking for any political solutions but brining the power brokers and want to talk to them, the irony is that the same power has put him behind bars. Imran Khan is doing the *talk- talk fight-fight policy*, on one hand he is threatening the army on the other hand he is giving hints for talks. The point is that Imran Khan is looking for any settlement and ready to talk to the army. The narrative that is coming out of the PTI is that they want to talk to the establishment and not to the government. Shehbaz Sharif also proposed the PTI to talk on the charter of economy, even Bilawal Bhutto asked the PTI to talk to them and find solution. The only solution is talk with the government. ***Zain Hussain Qureshi*** of the PTI underlined that today's bail in the Al Qadir trust proves that this case was weak and there is nothing against Imran Khan. If the government is ready to talk we are also ready for reconciliation and talks but we have two three points like release the prisoners, give us the stolen mandate then we are ready to talk to any political quarters. Imran Khan will not do any deal and therefore he is behind the bar as he has not taken any deal. He pointed out that after bail in all cases against Imran Khan. Imran Khan should be released and then we can take the debate forward.

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<sup>23</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odXouw7otjs&t=350s>

**Attack on spokesperson Raof Hasan in Islamabad, Off the Record with Kashif Abbasi, ARY News, 21 May<sup>24</sup>**

This violent, criminal & planned attack in the heart of the capital on Raof Hasan outside office of a private TV channel must be immediately & credibly investigated. Its planners seem to want to silence criticism by spreading fear, trauma & insecurity. *Raof Hasan has been stating the PTI's current position on the judiciary, the rigged election results & on the establishment candidly & repeatedly.* Pakistan's history testifies that use of violence to silence people has been resisted-won't be different now. The host informed that the same attack was tried a day before on the same parking by a squad of *Khawaja siara* (transgender community) people. *Aon Abbas* of the PTI pointed out that the plan was to slit his throat with the sharp blade but Raof Hasan somehow managed to dodge it and the cut was on his face, and others managed to save his life. He underlined that it was a planned attack and they were also shooting the incident. *Mustafa Khokhar*, former senator and human rights activist from Pakistan underlined that it is shameful that this incident has taken place in heart of Islamabad and in front of two TV channels with CCTV. He added that there is nothing done in case of kidnapped Kashmiri poet Ahmad Faraz, then there is no hope that inquiry will be done in this case too. It looks like political opponents are targeted and people from all walks of life are recruited to do the attacks.

**Negotiations between Imran Khan and Establishment? Sethi Se Sawal, SAMAA TV, 23 May<sup>25</sup>**

The host informed that JUI-F chief seems like shaking hands with PTI, who once he criticised heavily during his PDM days. There is a news that they will soon hit the streets together and protest against the rigged elections. *Najam Sethi* informed that Imran Khan has directed the workers to come out on the streets and protests, as he thinks enough is more than enough. On 30<sup>th</sup> May there will be judgment on the NAB Amendment case, and Imran Khan has requested to join on video link to address the court. Sethi underlined that Imran Khan thinks that this is a good time to change the posture and strike back. On

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<sup>24</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmnssLMgdiE>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kD1XEZqeAa8>

Pervez Elahi coming out of jail Sethi underlined that establishment is taking a relaxed approach towards him from a long time, and the Chaudhary brothers did some commitment to the establishment and that is why he came out. He might not follow the agenda of Imran Khan and not take part in the protests called by PTI that is why he is out of jail. Imran Khan also fears that Pervez Elahi might take over PTI with the help of army and therefore he has activated Hamad Azhar. About *JUI-F Chief Maulana Fazl Ur Rehman* Sethi pointed out that he is not happy because his demands has not been fulfilled. He will take out separate protests and not join PTI, but he will keep the option open for PTI to join his protests. PTI wants to bring down the government but Maulana does not want it, because he know even if new government comes he will not get any share. But it is true, JUI-F chief has been talking a lot and now he will do something practically to pressure the government. When asked will there be some relieve for PTI, Sethi informed that establishment is angry that judiciary is giving deals to PTI and Imran Khan. Judiciary will ton down and talk in favour of Imran Khan but there is no change of attitude towards him of the judiciary. For army Khan is not a threat, judiciary is challenging them but they will also managed just like Imran Khan. *So far Imran Khan is not a threat for establishment,* army is managing everything. When there will be violent street protests then only Imran Khan will be a threat for establishment. Najam Sethi also informed that there will be come change in top posts of establishment soon and with this new change new political plans will be drawn. How will it impact the political scenario will be seen in the future soon.