**[Choked by politics](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869976/choked-by-politics)**

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IT is becoming harder and harder to find something new to write about as far as politics in Pakistan is concerned.

The country is stuck in a time warp and so is one’s commentary. So much so that I spend more time staring at the screen than I do pounding on the keyboard — with the occasional exception, such as the previous chief justice’s [retirement](https://www.dawn.com/news/1868383/a-tale-of-two-judges) for which the sentences had been simmering in my head from the beginning of the year. But other than that, deadlines arrive and I go through my version of ‘I have nothing to wear’ routine.

Should it be about a jittery government? What else can one call a set-up which has managed a constitutional amendment only to realise it is still not in control of the judiciary as such? Not a lawyer out there, who is worth his or her salt, thinks the matter is done and dusted. For there is little clarity about the judiciary losing all hope and deciding to capitulate altogether. There are rumours aplenty of what can and might happen in the coming days.

Even if the government can dominate the new [Judicial Commission of Pakistan](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869952/jcp-convenes-today-to-pick-judges-for-constitutional-bench), there is no guarantee the ensuing decision will go its way. For instance, how will the review of the [reserved seats](https://www.dawn.com/news/1860621) be heard by a bench formed by the JCP because the original issue was heard by the full court? And even if the government gets to choose a smaller bench which hears the matter, will all the judges give a ‘convenient’ judgment?

But then, this is an issue best left to the legal eagles who have replaced retired bureaucrats as the most frequent visitors on newspaper op-ed pages and talk shows than to half-literate hacks who dabble in political commentary.

Will the voters be as disillusioned with Imran Khan as they were with Nawaz Sharif?

Then there is human rights, which is always good for a lament in Pakistan any day of any week. And this past week, we also managed to hit new lows. The week began with the [arrest](https://www.dawn.com/news/1868646) of Imaan Hazir and Hadi Ali Chattha under the terrorism act for having removed a security barrier and ended with the news of the [disappearance of 10 Baloch students](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869261/demo-in-quetta-for-recovery-of-missing-balochistan-university-students) from Rawalpindi as well as [heartbreaking footage](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869569/legal-fraternity-journalists-and-politicians-react-to-recovery-of-imrans-lawyer) of lawyer Intezar Panjutha, who was ‘recovered’ by the police; the official account of his ‘recovery’ was one that even the concerned police officer’s doting mother would have had trouble believing.

There is something of a lament to be written for how the government and its allies barely blinked at these events; ignorance is a convenient plea, especially when working long hours to strengthen the terrorism act itself by legalising a [three-month custody](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869247/bill-tabled-for-preventive-detention-of-terror-suspects) of suspects.

Perhaps I could count the blessings — at least Imaan and Hadi Ali were arrested before the passage of the act and didn’t face a three-month-long incarceration. Or should there be hope that the Baloch students who were picked up will now not simply disappear and be presented in court because they can now be held for three months, no questions asked?

But how many times can one write on human rights and their blatant disregard by those in power, civilian and military? And what difference does it make? Of all the lost causes a journalist is compelled to speak about in Pakistan, nothing is as hopeless as human rights.

Then there is the topic much beloved of our all-knowing journalists — the PTI, its [rifts and plans](https://www.dawn.com/news/1868816). Apparently, it makes for good television in a country where no channel seems to think content matters though opaque ratings do. So there is endless [speculation about a deal](https://www.dawn.com/news/1868805), now that the PTI has, despite much bluster, not brought any crowds on the roads and Imran Khan’s wife has been [given bail](https://www.dawn.com/news/1867339/imrans-wife-bushra-bibi-freed-after-nearly-9-months-following-bail-in-new-toshakhana-case) after nearly nine months of imprisonment.

That this is being pondered over by many who have spent months telling us that the PTI and Imran Khan could never be forgiven for their unforgiveable sins is not mentioned by anyone. Nor how the news of a deal could be all that surprising because the PTI has never hidden its interest in [talking to the establishment](https://www.dawn.com/news/1826220). So the question should not be that there is a deal but why the other side came around. But then, our political discussions are hardly known for being focused.

Even so, it is interesting that people in the government are hinting at the possibility of a ‘deal’ without being asked in a polite way, ‘*phir tera kiya ho gaa kaaliya*’ (what will happen to you then?).

Of course, as we tend to focus on the elite side of politics without sparing a thought for the ordinary people, this whole deal or *dheel* or no-deal brouhaha never ventures beyond party leaderships and few will ever focus on the reaction of the people. Will the voters be as disillusioned with Imran Khan as they were with Nawaz Sharif after the vote of no-confidence, and if so, who will they turn to? Or will they become disillusioned with politics altogether? After all, Nawaz Sharif was seen to be the most popular leader in Punjab till his brother became prime minister and showed everyone that democracy’s revenge doesn’t even spare relatives.

And then came the best story of the week. The [failed privatisation bid](https://www.dawn.com/news/1869026/pia-sale-stalls-as-lone-bid-too-low-to-consider) of PIA, where the only one left in the game was a property dealer. And why not? If the real power resides with property dealers, why shouldn’t one of them run the national airline too?

It’s a good metaphor for the country — though the state of governance in the country is best explained through the claims of two provincial governments which have no capacity to raise the revenues needed for their expenditures but feel they can run an airline. The only problem is that it is less of an insight into politics and more a joke for a stand-up comedy routine.

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