

NIAS Area Studies
Pakistan Weekly # 04, Vol.1, No.4
15 May 2022



Pakistan's Establishment is upset: Four reasons why
The political crisis in Punjab: Three likely scenarios
Pakistan's Sugar Crisis: New government, Old issues
Political Instability in "Azad Jammu and Kashmir"

PAKISTAN IN BRIEF

Politics | Internal | Economy | External | Provinces | Judiciary

Daily Focus, 13 May 2022

Pakistan's Establishment is upset: Four reasons why

The Establishment is no more a sacrosanct, holy, and unassailable. Contemporary political developments in Pakistan will only make this worse. This should be the Establishment's greatest worry.

D Suba Chandran



Image Source: Dawn

The ISPR statement over Peshawar Corps Commander

On 13 May, Dawn had quoted an ISPR statement saying: "Recent statements by senior politicians regarding the Peshawar Corps Commander are highly inappropriate. Such statements negatively affect the morale and dignity of the army and the leadership." The same statement also underlined the importance of the Peshawar Corps Commander. It read: "The Peshawar Corps is a prominent formation of the Pakistan army. It has been playing a leading role in the national war on terror for two decades. The leadership of this important corps has always been in the hands of the best professionals."

The Establishment is upset: Four issues
First, on the latest statement by the ISPR supporting the Peshawar Corps Commander. There were two recent statements over Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, who is currently heading the Peshawar Corps. Gen Hameed earlier served as the DG-ISI during 2019-21. Maryam Nawaz, answering a question about whether Gen Hameed would be considered as the next army chief, was quoted to have

stated that the person should have a "flawless reputation."

An earlier statement from her on Gen Hameed was worse. In a public meeting, while referring to a statement by Imran Khan that the intelligence chief was government's "eyes and ears," Maryam Nawaz was quoted to have stated: "We know that he wasn't your eyes and ears [rather] he was your hands through which you throttled your political opponents." Earlier, in a different context, Zardari was quoted to have mentioned that "the helpless Faiz Hameed has been sidelined." Clearly, the Establishment is not happy about the public statements by the political leadership.

But the issue is not just that. The Establishment is worried that it is getting dragged into the nasty politics between the parties and leaders – with the PTI on the one side and the rest on the other side. This is the second issue. Though the DG-ISPR Major General Babar Iftikhar mentioned that "We, as an institution, have nothing to do with the political situation of the country," the Establishment is very much in the centre of the political situation, that is getting worse every day. The Establishment, though, would want to believe that it stayed neutral in the recent change in Pakistan's political equation, Imran Khan may not. One is not sure, whom he was referring to Mir Jafar and Mir Sadiq. Though he explained he referred to Shehbaz, a debate in the national assembly objected to it as linking it to the armed forces. The Establishment may have a short memory, or want to believe

otherwise, but the political leaders, people and the rest of the world see the Establishment as in the middle of Pakistan's politics.

Third, the political debate over the appointment of the army chief, the ISI chief and also their extensions. The Establishment would like to have the appointments and the extensions as a given, and a non-partisan approval of the same in the Parliament. The Establishment would have preferred to get the above done, without any debate – either in the Parliament or in public. The appointment of the last DG-ISI and the extension of Gen Bajwa were anything but that. The debate was not only political but also legal. The Imran government wanted to have its own space in appointing the DG-ISI, whereas the Establishment wanted him to sign on the dotted lines. He did, but after a big drama. Same thing happened in 2019, with the extension of the army chief's

tenure. The extension got delayed, and the case went up to the Supreme Court.

Fourth, the larger image of the Establishment outside the political debate. Many in the media have been questioning the Establishment's role over the last few years. For the majority within Pakistan, the Establishment was an Institution that should not be touched. This position is sinking now, which should be a more significant worry for the military.

The Establishment is no more a sacrosanct, holy, and unassailable, in the public eye. Contemporary political developments in Pakistan will make this worse further. This should be the Establishment's greatest worry.

Daily Focus, 12 May 2022

The political crisis in Punjab: Three likely scenarios

Punjab now has a chief minister, but no cabinet yet.

Ankit Singh



Image Source: Dawn

On 11 May, the Lahore High Court (LHC) constituted a larger five-member bench to hear PTI's intra court appeal. The PTI has filed against the previous single bench

judgment by the court which called for the oath-taking ceremony of CM elect Hamza Shahbaz Sharif without delay. The judgment had not sought an opinion from the governor as well as the president who were constitutional stakeholders in the process.

Hamza Shehbaz Sharif in his three petitions earlier had pleaded with the judiciary to enable his official swearing as the governor was not willing to facilitate the process. The governor lamented on a mafia-style take over by Hamza Sharif supported by police and the provincial assembly secretariat. The LHC is taking up the case against the delay by the Election Commission of Pakistan

(ECP) over the question of disqualification of PTI MPAs for defection. They have voted against the PTI requirement in the election of the chief minister of Punjab on 13 May, an action perhaps validating the ex-post-facto situation in the province.

Now, Punjab has a Chief Minister but does not have a cabinet. What does it mean for the political future of the province? This note looks at three possible scenarios.

First, the return of dynastic politics with PML-N at the front in Punjab. The province has more than half of Pakistan's population and has been the kingmaker in political contestations at the national level. The PML-N has had a base in the province and would not want to give up easily; this would explain the exasperation of the party in snatching power from PTI. The PML-N would likely reinforce that all roads lead to Lahore and that can be affirmed with loyalty on top of governance. The retaining of bargaining power of the PML-N vis a vis other mainstream political parties originate from the province. The PML-N would likely reinforce that all roads lead to Lahore and that can be affirmed with the loyalty of voters on top of Punjab speed governance to remain politically relevant.

Second, PTI as an alternative. Punjab is fertile for PTI to increase its national influence and impact across other provinces. The rise of PTI is a symptom of populism, many democratic countries in today's information revolution era have witnessed the rise of independent voters who do not

believe in freezing their loyalty. The voters desire a rejigged of politico-economic network of elites to hope for better governance. PTI during its rule had initiated a crackdown on food commodity hoarders and ensured that at least heavyweights with indirect support from PML-N are brought to become accountable. This will nudge the voters to keep an alternative.

Third, Punjab with no clear winners, leading to multi-party fighting. The PML-N has been cropped up with active support from an Establishment in its early years during 1990s. The party was utilised as Punjab's response to the heavyweight PPP from the Sindh province. Over time, the PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif pitted himself as real Punjabi alternative to the 'Punjabi' Army. There is an effort by the establishment to not cede much space to the alternative Punjabi narrative, which also gives scope for political representations from provinces like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.

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Daily Focus, 11 May 2022

Pakistan's Sugar Crisis: New government, Old issues

Temporary measures on sugar export will not address the existing sugar crisis in Pakistan

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Image Source: Dawn

Prime Minister calls for zero tolerance
On 9 May, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a "complete ban" on sugar export due to "domestic demand." He said, "Given the domestic demand, I have ordered a complete ban on the export of sugar. There will be a [sic] strict action against smuggling and hoarding. Absolutely zero tolerance [will be shown] for those found negligent in their duties." Additionally, the Prime Minister's Office stated that the PM has directed for first meeting the demand of people and stabilizing the price of sugar and has asked the departments concerned to keep him informed about the implementation of his orders.

Earlier, Shehbaz Sharif directed the Utility Stores Corporation (USC) to reduce the rates of sugar and flour to provide relief to people during Ramazan. This came after consumers' complaints about the shortage of sugar and flour at utility stores; they complained that store administrations were conditioning the sale and purchase of oil and sugar with other items, and not providing single items to consumers. However, while speaking to *Dawn*, the USC spokesperson Sajid Rehman denied the allegations. He claimed that the shortage of flour, sugar, and oil was temporary due to the rush at the stores. He also claimed that the supply of three to four items was sent to the stores

daily and that the issue would soon be resolved.

The ban: A temporary fix for profiteering and hoarding

The ban on sugar export is a temporary fix to address the larger systematic issues in the supply chain. Pakistan's current crisis stems from the fragmentation of its sugar sector. It starts from the cultivators and moves up to the millers, wholesale distributors, retailers and the government who want to follow their own regulatory policies.

While the government fixes the price of sugar cane, the finished product (sugar) is sold at the 'market rate' to wholesale dealers. This system creates significant distortions in the value chain. This is sustained through a 40 per cent duty on the import of sugar in Pakistan which is borne by the consumers. It was highlighted in the sugar commission report; the latter revealed the nexus between these owners and various government officials, which to unregulated practices bypassing laws and often exploiting the farmers.

The inability of the government's policies to minimize the space for allowing market players to periodically create artificial shortages to rig profits and raise their prices is one of the main causes of the crisis. According to an editorial in *Dawn*, several studies have highlighted that the excessive regulatory and financial state interventions in the sugar markets in efforts to protect the interests of small-holder farmers and consumers have been the immediate causes for the eruption of periodic shortages. Additionally, it states that frequent government interference in the market has made the product internationally uncompetitive. This further created

opportunities for large farmers, millers and others to manipulate economic rent at the expense of small producers and poor consumers.

The sugar industry in Pakistan is not only highly politicized but is already ridden with corruption. While the reason behind the soaring price and shortage of the commodity is known, the solutions taken to address the issue have only been cosmetic, thus yielding no results.

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Daily Focus, 10 May 2022

Political Instability in “Azad Jammu and Kashmir”

The “AJK” politics continues to remain a playground for Islamabad

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Image Source: Dawn

In April 2022, political instability gripped “Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)” as Prime Minister Abdul Qayyum Niazi resigned after 25 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) members filed a no-confidence motion against him. During a press conference, he claimed, “I am a democratic person and will always remain with Imran Khan. I took my democratic decision and resigned in a dignified manner.” Further, he rejected the allegations levelled against him as “baseless.” His resignation came just before the “AJK” Legislative Assembly session

was called for voting on the resolution.

AJK Prime Minister: From Abdul Qayyum Niazi to Sardar Tanveer Ilyas

On 14 April, members from the ruling PTI in “AJK” had filed a no-confidence motion against Niazi, under Article 18 of the “AJK” constitution. The motion claimed that Niazi had lost the confidence of the parliamentary party due to the non-implementation of the party manifesto together with mismanagement, nepotism, breach of merit, and failure to highlight the Kashmir issue. The PTI MLAs proposed its regional chapter’s president Sardar Tanveer Ilyas for the prime minister’s slot.

Meanwhile, as the PTI tried to get Ilyas elected as the new prime minister, the opposition members filed a petition in the high court. They pleaded that the speaker and other respondents should be restrained from initiating any proceedings of the assembly to hold the election to the office of

prime minister after the latter called for the suspension of Rule 15 (1) of the Rules of Procedure. The rule stipulates a gap of two days between the filing of the nomination papers and voting for the prime minister's election. Following this, the high court put the proceedings of the Legislative Assembly on hold until 18 April.

On 18 April, Sardar Tanveer Ilyas was elected the 14th prime minister of "AJK," however, the combined opposition comprises 12 legislators of PPP and seven of the PML-N boycotted the vote. Initially, the opposition had nominated PPP's regional president Chaudhry Mohammad Yasin as their candidate, however, on 17 April they announced that it was pulling out of the contest.

The Big Picture in AJK: The Islamabad factor

The recent set of events in the region reflects the larger politics at play. Over the recent years, politics in "AJK" has been dominated by national parties to extend their bases due to the lack of regional parties. These two reasons along with the absence of local government are the main reasons for political instability in the region.

The history of elections in the region, since 1975, highlights that parties ruling Islamabad, or its allies have won the elections in the region. This trend is due to the dependence on Islamabad for resources and the ruling party's ability to provide resources.

However, over the recent years, larger political parties such as the PTI, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) have engaged directly in the local politics. Each party has successfully established their regional chapters with each giving stiff competition to the other. Additionally, these political

parties use the rallying in "AJK" as a critical test of their popularity and as a means of boosting their standing in national politics.

Earlier, the PPP and PML-N have successfully formed the government in AJK, however, it was the first time that the PTI was ruling the region. The link between Islamabad and Muzaffarabad is evident in the region's 53-member Legislative Assembly in which the PTI holds 32, PPP has 12, PML-N with seven, Jammu Kashmir Peoples Party (JKPP) and All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference (MC) holding one seat each. Thus, it reveals the assumption that parties ruling Islamabad, or its allies have won the elections in the region.

Weakness of AJK's regional Parties

While Islamabad-based parties made electoral inroads in "AJK," regional parties and other pro-independence political groups have significantly become less prominent. The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, the oldest and most important political party initially an ally of the PML-N, lost its prominence after the latter decided to create its own chapter in the region. Similarly, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation League (JKLL), another state-based party, initially saw success after it was able to defeat the MC, however, the party gradually became weaker and is now inactive in the region's politics. Likewise, the JKPP has not been able to succeed in the region's electoral politics.

The reasons why these regional parties have become less prominent largely stem from two changes that were introduced in the region. First, a recent change where news electoral laws were introduced through an amendment in AJK's constitution in 2018. Through this amendment, only political parties favouring Kashmir's accession to Pakistan were allowed to take part in the

polls. This restricted pro-independence Kashmiri groups from registering with the region's election commission and taking part in the polls. Second, is the very introduction of Pakistani political parties in "AJK." In 1974, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto introduced the PPP in the region and successfully established power in AJK in the first elections held under the Interim Constitution. This move has been criticised as it reduced the significance of regional parties.

Absence of Local government

Local government remains dysfunctional in AJK. This has resulted in informal structures that have enhanced social divisions and deprivation among the public. Earlier, local body elections were last held in 1991. Despite the public demand and successive governments promising to hold the LG elections in the manifestos, none were able to hold elections. However, the PTI government in 2022, announced that local government elections will be held in the region. Almost 31 years later, the region is scheduled to hold its LG elections in August as per directives of the AJK Supreme Court.

To conclude, the political instability in "AJK" highlights the region's electoral politics becoming a playground for larger Islamabad-based parties that see the region as a significant aspect for increasing their popularity. It also highlights the failure of a strong local party within the "AJK."

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PAKISTAN IN BRIEF

POLITICS

Fazl calls for electoral reforms before polls

On 12 May, Maulana Fazlur Rehman while highlighting the suggestion of Asif Ali Zardari who called for the polls only after electoral reforms and amendments to accountability laws called for consensus among the allied parties for the next general elections. He said, "First thing we should demand before deciding its schedule is that the elections should be held free and fair," adding, "it's my opinion that the elections should only be held after electoral reforms and then fixing the accountability laws. We all know that NAB [National Accountability Bureau] during last three years was turned into an institution of vendetta. The flaws which led to all such mess should be addressed before next election." ("[Taking cue from Zardari, Fazl calls for electoral reforms before polls](#)," *Dawn*, 13 May 2022)

PML-N and PPP on same page regarding electoral reforms, says PPP Information Secretary

On 12 May, PPP Information Secretary Faisal Kareem Kundi cleared the cloud of rumors on difference of position between PPP and PML-N on electoral reforms and said: "As soon as ECP is done with its preparation, we too would instantly move towards fresh elections." He explained that actual meaning of election reforms were mainly three things, external interference, EVMs and right to voting for overseas Pakistanis. ("[PPP seeks elections after reforms](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 13 May 2022)

Ready to face any consequences, whether killed or arrested, says Imran Khan

On 12 May, Imran Khan while addressing a power show of the PTI in Attock urged the people to join hands with the PTI for a march for an "independent Pakistan." He added that he was ready to face any consequences, whether he was killed or arrested.

Meanwhile, Imran Khan has urged the Supreme Court to review the ruling of then deputy speaker of the National Assembly Qasim Suri on a no-trust move the apex court held contrary to the Constitution. (Amjad Iqbal, "[Imran says ready to face consequences over long march](#)," *Dawn*, 13 May 2022; "[Imran asks SC to review decision on Suri's ruling](#)," *Dawn*, 13 May 2022)

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and top PML-N leaders meet with Nawaz in London

On 11 May, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and other PML-N leaders met with Nawaz Sharif in London. During the meeting they briefed Nawaz on the "serious economic, constitutional and administrative crises inherited by the present government." Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb stated that the meeting reviewed the steps taken by the government since it came to power and considered recommendations to save the public from inflation and power outages, adding that another meeting is to take place on 12 May to finalise the strategy to address the economic and constitutional crises. (Atika Rehman, "[Nawaz Sharif briefed on crises festering at home](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

PML-N leaders to meet Nawaz Sharif in London for political consultations, says Minister for Information

On 10 May, Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb during a press briefing clarified that a 10-member delegation including PM Shehbaz Sharif from PML-N was on a private visit to meet the PML-N supremo in London. According to sources, several key decisions may be taken in the meeting, including settling the question of early elections and developing a strategy to counter PTI and prevent the oncoming price hike. Information Minister also informed that the cabinet decided, not to increase prices of flour and sugar and import three million tonnes of wheat to meet the local demand, to revoke multiple foreign

passports under Passport Act, 1974. Aurangzeb also revealed that the cabinet approved the appointment of Fawad Asadullah Khan as director-general of the Intelligence Bureau. (Syed Irfan Raza, “[‘N’ bigwigs in London to seek Nawaz’s counsel.](#)” *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

JI Chief support formation of judicial commission for ‘Lettergate’ scandal

On 8 May, while speaking at a public function in Peshawar, Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq sought formation of judicial commission to investigate whether the PTI government was dismissed through a foreign conspiracy or not. He said: “The judicial commission should resolve this issue once and for all.” He requested PM Shehbaz to further electoral reforms and conduct fresh elections on time. (“[Siraj seeks judicial probe into ‘foreign conspiracy’ claim.](#)” *Dawn*, 9 May 2022)

INTERNAL

Police interrupt PTI’s Sialkot jalsa

arrangements; Imran Khan vows to go ahead
On 14 May, the police had stopped PTI part workers from erecting structures in preparation for the rally in Sialkot's CTI ground. Additionally, the police also fired tear gas and baton-charged party activists who were resisting the move. Following this, Imran Khan vowed to go ahead with his planned rally. He said via Twitter "let there be no doubt" of the PTI's presence in Sialkot, adding, "What imported govt did in Sialkot against our leadership & workers is outrageous, but not unexpected. This bunch of criminals out on bail and their convict mafia boss in London have always used fascist tactics against opponents when they are in power." (Imran Sadiq, “[Defiant Imran vows Sialkot jalsa will go ahead after police action.](#)” *Dawn*, 14 May 2022)

President approves reconstitution of CCI

On 13 May, President Arif Alvi reconstituted the Council of Common

Interests (CCI) on the advice of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif under Article 153 of the Constitution, three new federal ministers have been nominated by PM Sharif. Other than President, PM and three federal ministers, the CM of the provinces are also part of the CCI. PM Shehbaz has named Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal, Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar and Aviation and Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique for the three federal slots. (“[Alvi okays reconstitution of CCI.](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 14 May 2022)

PML-N London brainstorming session concludes with Sharif

On 13 May, PML-N leader and Federal Defence Minister Khawaja Asif informed press reporters in London that the nature of discussions during high-level meeting with Nawaz Sharif would be put before all coalition partners to take the country out of political, economic and constitutional crisis. Sources internal to Dawn informed that Nawaz Sharif was against fuel price hike and alternative to early elections was also kept open. He dismissed that ruling federal government was under any pressure and said, “If there is any pressure, it can be from the people of Pakistan. They have the right. They are the ultimate rulers according to the Constitution and law.” (“[Can’t take decisions if allies not on board: Khawaja Asif.](#)” *Dawn*, 14 May 2022)

Ali Wazir granted bail in hate speech case

On 11 May, Sindh High Court granted post-arrest bail against a solvent surety of PKR 500,000 to the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) leader MNA Ali Wazir. The lawmaker has to be two more similar cases, one registered in Karachi and the other in Bannu. The counsel argued for bail on sympathetic grounds as other co-accused were on bail. (Ishaq Tanoli, “[MNA Ali Wazir gets bail in hate speech case.](#)” *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

Reference against defection by PTI MNAs dismissed by ECP

On 11 May, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) bench headed by Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja, held that Article 63-A of the Constitution dealing with disqualification on the grounds of defection was not applicable in the case of 20 dissident MNAs. PTI leadership declared that they are initiating a legal battle against the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), and will file references against Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja and Sindh ECP member in front of Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). Speaking on the occasion, Faisal Vawda of PTI said: "The real story of these black sheep, who got their prices fixed in the market, is starting from today and a reference is being filed against Sindh ECP member." (Mumtaz Alvi, "[ECP dismisses references against dissident PTI MNAs](#)," *The News International*, 12 May 2022)

TTP extends ceasefire for five days

On 10 May, the TTP's military commission announced that it was extending the ceasefire reached between the Pakistan Army and the group on the account of Eidul Fitr for another five days. According to the order, the ceasefire will remain in place till 15 May, with new directives to be issued on 16 May. The TTP warned its fighters against defying the order and directing them to avoid skirmishes with security forces. ("[TTP extends ceasefire for another five days](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 11 May 2022)

PM Shehbaz Sharif orders immediate restoration of NCOC

On 10 May, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif ordered for the restoration of the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) after Pakistan reported the first case of Omicron sub-variant BA.2.12.1. A health ministry official said, "We have decided not to mention the name of the country from where the patient had travelled to Pakistan. However, the new variant has been

continuously spreading in different countries. The patient is feeling well and all his contacts have been quarantined at their home." ("[PM Shehbaz orders immediate restoration of NCOC after first case of Omicron sub-variant detected](#)," *Dawn*, 10 May 2022)

Senate committee on human rights condemns misuse of blasphemy laws against PTI leadership

On 9 May, the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights with senator Walid Iqbal took cognizance of FIRs registered against PTI chairman Imran Khan over sloganeering against Pakistan's delegation during their pilgrimage to Masjid-i-Nabwi. Representatives from various institutions also exchanged views on the measures to eliminate the misuse of the blasphemy law and suggested that amendments be made to the law to discourage such accusations. The committee was informed that 580 cases under accusation of blasphemy were filed last year, which is an increase of 100 per cent. The committee will next meet on 16 May to seek further details. (Kashif Abbasi, "[Senate panel slams 'misuse' of blasphemy law in Madina incident](#)," *Dawn*, 10 May 2022)

Imran Khan asks people to be ready for 'Islamabad march'

On 8 May, Imran Khan called on his party workers and people to get ready for his call to reach Islamabad, stating that the 'Azadi March' call any day after May 20. He claimed that a sea of people would remove all hurdles and barricades that would be set up by the "imported" government. He said, "I am confident that on my call, a record number of people will participate in the march," adding that there would be only one voice and that would be "we do not accept the imported government and want real independence."

Meanwhile, Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said, "If the PTI's planned long march on Islamabad leads to

bloodshed, the government will take preventive measures to check the march.” (Rashid Javed, “[Sea of people to remove hurdles en route to Islamabad: Imran](#),” Dawn, 9 May 2022; “[PTI’s march to be contained if it goes violent](#),” Dawn, 9 May 2022)

PROVINCES

Sindh-Punjab: Water shortages trigger Sindh suspicions as Punjab blames flows

On 14 May, Dawn reported that the acute water shortages and heatwave have sparked grave concerns in Punjab and Sindh as tensions between the two provinces over their share of the nation’s water resources as demand far surpasses supply. Punjab has raised complaints of receiving less than its share since 16 April. Meanwhile, Sindh claims that the share is being unfairly diverted to Punjab. (“[Water woes fuel Sindh suspicions as Punjab blames flows](#),” Dawn, 14 May 2022)

Punjab: Parvez Elahi postpones the assembly session to 30 May

On 14 May, Dawn reported that Punjab Assembly Speaker Parvez Elahi postponed the assembly session to 30 May. The assembly session was earlier convened for 28 April, but the Parvez Elahi put it off minutes before the start of the proceedings for 16 May without assigning any reason and on 13 May further put it off to 30 May. (Amjad Mahmood, “[Parvez Elahi delays Punjab PA session yet again](#),” Dawn, 14 May 2022)

Sindh: CM assigns task to security agencies to weed out anti-state social media users and their financing roots in Karachi

On 13 May, Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah chaired the 27th Apex Committee meeting which was attended among others by Pakistan Army, Rangers as well as provincial ministers, police chief, heads of intelligence agencies and other officials. The meeting was given a briefing on the social

media being used by terrorist outfits and criminal groups with their names and identification and handles were identified with number of followers and traffic on their accounts. The Committee condemned killing of three Chinese teachers at Karachi University and vowed to bring the culprits to book. List of active drug dealers, land grabbers, illegal migrants and narcotic dealers was also discussed. Karachi has seen a rapid rise of street crime, in 2013, street crime cases were recorded at 1,506 per month, but the number increased to 3,939 per month in 2022. (Tahir Siddiqui, “[Sindh’s social media users spreading anti-state material to face action](#),” Dawn, 14 May 2022)

Balochistan: Grand jirga organized in Panjgur by FC

On 13 May, the Frontier Corps inspector general held a grand jirga in Panjgur, adjacent to the Pakistan-Iran border, to listen to the problems the people of the area were facing in border trade. Senior military officials and a large number of political, tribal and social personalities attended the jirga whose purpose was to discuss the situation in the area and find a solution to the problems being faced by the people. (“[Grand jirga organized in Panjgur by FC](#),” Dawn, 14 May 2022)

Sindh: One person killed and several injured in blast in Karachi

On 12 May, one person was killed and over 10 people were injured after an improvised explosive device (IED) planted in a motorbike went off in Saddar. While speaking to Dawn, Karachi police chief Ghulam Nabi Memon stated that the nature of the explosion was being determined, adding that it would be "premature" to say whether the blast was intended to target a vehicle of the Pakistan Coast Guard. (“[1 passerby killed, at least 9 injured in blast in Karachi’s Saddar](#),” Dawn, 13 May 2022)

Sindh: MQM-P and Pakistan inch closer on 'charter of rights'

On 12 May, a two-member PPP delegation visited MQM-P's temporary headquarter in Bahadurabad and discussed to prepare the consensual draft of new local government law and move it to the Sindh Assembly for final amendments to the new local government law. The discussions were held under "Charter of Rights" signed by the two parties last month. Appreciating MQM-P's decision to join PDM, Sindh Local Government Minister Nasir Hussain Shah said: "The PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and president Asif Zardari have issued very clear directives that we have to move forward in the larger interest of our country, this province and its people." (Imran Ayub, "[MQM-P, PPP set to finalise terms for coalition](#)," *Dawn*, 13 May 2022)

Punjab: Cheema warns of a 2007-like "save judiciary movement" against his removal

On 11 May, Omar Sarfraz Cheema warned of a 2007-like "save judiciary movement" against his "illegal removal" from office. He said, "In case no solution is proposed to end the prevailing crisis in Punjab, we will go for a protest campaign like 2007 when the whole nation had taken to the streets," adding, "I am consulting different groups, including the lawyers' community, media and civil society, to launch a similar movement under which former chief justice Iftikhar Chaudhry was restored in 2007." Meanwhile, the Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Ashtar Ausaf stated that it was a constitutional responsibility of the Punjab Assembly speaker to assume the responsibility of acting governor, emphasising that Pervaiz Elahi cannot turn away from constitutional responsibilities. (Syed Irfan Raza, "[Omar Sarfraz Cheema warns of 2007-like movement against ouster](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022; "[PA Speaker cannot shirk his constitutional duty: AGP](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 12 May 2022)

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Change in federal government resulted in withholding of development funds, says CM

On 11 May, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Mahmood Khan while attending a ceremony of Peshawar District Bar Association (PDBA) mentioned that efforts were under way to exclude development projects of the province from the federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). The chief minister urged upon the lawyer community to come forward and support the provincial government in its legal and constitutional struggle to protect the rights of the province. ("[Centre withholding tribal districts' funds: KP CM Mahmood Khan](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

Punjab: ATC awards five-year term to 22 accused persons in the Rahim Yar Khan (Bhong) temple attack case

On 11 May, An Anti-Terrorist Court (ATC) judge convicted 22 out of a total of 84 persons for attacking and damaging the temple's building. According to the prosecution, the accused persons had on 4 August 2021 had attacked Ghanesh Mandir of the Hindu community in Bhong area of Rahim Yar Khan district and ransacked its building. ("[22 get five-year term each in Bhong temple attack case](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

Punjab: Parvez Elahi refuses to take charge as acting governor

On 11 May, *Dawn* reported that Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Parvez Elahi refused to take charge of acting governor after the removal of Omar Sarfraz Cheema. A PML-Q spokesperson said, "Mr Elahi has not taken the charge of acting governor as he is consulting constitutional experts in this regard." Meanwhile, Elahi via Twitter said, "We will continue to uphold the Constitution and law and resist all of the government's unconstitutional actions. The government has set up a factory of unconstitutional measures, but I will carry out my duties in accordance with the Constitution and law." (Zulqernain Tahir,

[“Parvez Elahi refuses to take over as acting Punjab governor,” Dawn, 11 May 2022\)](#)

Punjab: LHC to hear ICA from PTI with a larger bench on 12 May

On 11 May, Lahore High Court (LHC) constituted a five-member larger bench to hear PTI’s intra court appeal (ICA) against the previous single bench judgment which dictated the oath-taking ceremony of CM elect Hamza Shahbaz Sharif. The judgement on a petition by Hamza was challenged by PTI as the hearing did not implead the governor or president in seeking their response to contentions claimed by Hamza Sharif in his petition. The ICA by PTI pleaded that the high court had no authority to nominate any specific person, including the speaker of the national assembly, for the administration of oath to the newly elected chief minister, thus the impugned judgment, being in violation of various provisions of the Constitution as well as applicable law, was unsustainable. Separately, Justice Shujaat Ali Khan of the Lahore High Court would resume on 13 May the hearing of a petition of the PTI against the alleged delay by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in disqualification of its MPAs for committing a defection in the election of the chief minister of Punjab. ([“CM-elect oath: Larger bench to resume ICA hearing tomorrow,” Dawn, 11 May 2022\)](#))

Punjab: Cheema refuses to step down from the office despite his removal

On 9 May, Omar Sarfraz Cheema has refused to step down as governor of Punjab despite his removal by the federal government through a notification by the Cabinet Division. Cheema rejected the Cabinet Division notification, terming it "unconstitutional," adding that was consulting constitutional experts and would soon announce his future course of action

Meanwhile, Imran Khan urged the Supreme Court to look into the matter terming it as a "blatant violation" of the Constitution and law in Punjab. He said, "Imported puppets

are stirring up constitutional anarchy and chaos in Punjab," adding, "First, a criminal puppet was imposed on the province as a chief minister through a ghost election. Now, keeping all constitutional requirements aside, the office of the president has been insulted." ([“Imran urges SC to take notice of 'blatant violation' of Constitution after Punjab governor de-notified,” Dawn, 10 May 2022;](#) [“Cheema refuses to exit despite removal as Punjab governor,” The Express Tribune, 10 May 2022\)](#))

Sindh: CM forms task force for crackdown on water theft in Karachi

On 8 May, Sindh CM Syed Murad Ali Shah formed the task force comprising of police, Rangers and officials of the anti-encroachment departments to take a decisive action against illegal connections and water hydrants. He further directed officials to install meters from the water source to the last user of Karachi Water and Sewage Board (KWSB) to better calculate losses and better manage the distribution of water among towns based upon the population. (Imran Ayub, [“Murad sets up task force for crackdown on water theft in Karachi,” Dawn, 9 May 2022\)](#))

Balochistan: CM emphasizes on overall development of Gwadar and other parts of Makran division critical for development in Balochistan

On 8 May, Chief Minister House, Balochistan released a press statement about meeting of CM Bizenjo with former minister Mir Abdul Ghafoor Kalmati in Muscat. The statement from the CM read: “Providing basic services to the people at their doorstep is the main objective of our development policy, besides ensuring the rights of fishermen and their welfare.” The CM assured Mr. Kalamati about special instructions given to law enforcement officials in ensuring self-esteem and respect to be protected at all costs. (Saleem Sahid, [“Development of Gwadar top priority, says](#)

[Balochistan CM Bizenjo.](#)” *Dawn*, 9 May 2022)

ECONOMY

Record remittances received during April 2022

On 13 May, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) released monthly report on remittances. For the first time, remittances crossed the figure of USD 3 billion in a month, which gave hope that the country would achieve its annual remittance target of USD 30 billion. The remittances from Saudi Arabia were highest at USD 6.5 billion at consistent growth rate over the last financial year followed closely by UAE (USD 4.9 billion), UK (USD 3.6 billion) and USA (USD 2.55 billion). Currency dealers said the higher remittances in April were also due to Ramazan and Eid, as overseas Pakistanis traditionally send higher amounts for their families and charity, including Zakat. (Shahid Iqbal, “[Record \\$3.1bn remittances sent in April.](#)” *Dawn*, 14 May 2022)

PKR to recover only after ills of Imran Khan undone, says Finance Minister

On 13 May, Finance Minister Miftah Ismail highlighted the development of PKR nosediving against USD for the fifth consecutive day, reaching at an exchange of PKR 193 per Dollar. He said: “If we get out of the clutches of the agreement Imran Khan inked with IMF, only then the rate of dollar will come down. Reviving the economy that Imran Khan left is not an easy task.” He also mentioned about large burden of subsidies through fuel and food were unbearable for already debt-ridden government of Pakistan. (Irshad Ansari, “[Dollar to fall only after coming out of clutches of ‘PTI-IMF’ deal: Miftah.](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 14 May 2022)

External public debt of Pakistan reaches USD 90.6 billion

On 12 May, Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA) released its quarterly report on

Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) for July-December 2021. The report mentioned a net addition of USD 4.772 billion. During the first half of FY22, the government of Pakistan signed new loan agreements worth \$8.481bn as commitments. These included USD 2.484 billion worth of agreements with foreign commercial banks, USD 1.956 billion with multilateral development partners, USD 3 billion as safe deposits, USD 1 billion committed as Eurobonds, and another USD 1 billion from the international capital markets through tap-issuance. The government paid an amount of USD 5.039 billion during July–December 2021 on account of debt servicing of external public loans. This consists of principal repayment of USD 4.2 billion and interest payments of USD 839 million. (Khaleeq Kiani, “[Pakistan’s net external debt soars almost \\$5bn.](#)” *Dawn*, 13 May 2022)

ADB assures to provide USD 2 billion to Pakistan

On 12 May, Minister of State for Finance Dr Aisha Ghous Pasha met the Asian Development (ADB) Country Director in Islamabad Yong Ye and discussed additional funding avenues and enquired about countercyclical support facility (CSF), a relatively new mechanism to help finance oil imports amid unprecedented global prices. An official said these funds would be in addition to an ongoing pipeline of funds under the five-year Country Partnership Strategy (CPS 2021-25) under which the Manila-based lending agency had promised up to \$10bn financing depending on project preparedness, reform implementation strategy and ability of the relevant agencies to meet conditions and process loan approvals. Dr Aisha during the meeting said: “Currently Pakistan is facing various fiscal and monetary challenges but the present government is keenly working on various structural reform measures to bring back the economy on an inclusive and sustainable growth path.” (Khaleeq Kiani, “[ADB likely to disburse \\$2bn to Pakistan before December.](#)” *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

Ministry of Industries and Production demands food subsidy arrears

On 11 May, the Ministry of Industries and Production put forth a request for clearance of USD 96 million from the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) on account of subsidy under the Prime Minister's Relief Package 2022 to cover arrears of previous months. The government has continued to provide relief on five essential commodities after the Ramazan for the general public. The industry further recommended that any subsidy disbursement in future must be linked with online verification with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA). ("[Rs16b sought for food subsidy](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 12 May 2022)

IMF asks higher tax collection target up to USD 43.5 billion

On 11 May, The Express Tribune reported on additional demand by IMF regarding revenue targets along with the previous commitments in the last review discussions. Currently, the external public debt of the country stands at USD 90.1 billion and IMF needs to be satisfied with the repayment capacity of the country. In the current financial year, the revised tax collection target is at USD 36.6 billion and the FBR chairman has informed Finance Minister Ismail that tax collection can only remain at around USD 41 billion due to a lack of room in policy measures. On top of this constraint, the country has been asked to rationalize multiple tax slabs which would deduct higher taxes from middle and upper-middle-income groups, to remove exemptions to include fertilisers and tractors. The FBR's performance has remained largely dependent on imports that contributed nearly 52 per cent to the total tax collection, which camouflaged the weaknesses in the domestic sales tax collection that remained negative all currency conversions done at current exchange rates. (Shahbaz Rana, "[IMF asks for Rs7.25tr tax collection target](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 11 May 2022)

Government assures World Bank of reform push in the upcoming budget

On 10 May, Pakistan assured the World Bank (WB) of better fiscal consolidation to work again on the circular debt management plan. The 28 February announcement on the relief package was expected to increase the circular debt by more than USD 3 billion, reminded the WB officials. Hartwig Schafer heading the WB delegation said to: "stay the course on key structural reforms to improve power sector performance and on economic reforms including revenue mobilisation, fiscal consolidation, and debt management." Under the two WB loan programmes, the authorities had prepared a circular debt reduction plan that led to a reduction in the power sector debt from PKR 538 billion in the fiscal year 2021 to about PKR 295 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year. (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Govt assures World Bank of reform push in upcoming budget](#)," *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

Government announces complete ban of sugar export

On 9 May, PM Shehbaz took to Twitter to declare a complete ban on sugar exports from the country in order to enable sugar stocks and prices to be stable. He also directed them to continuously inform about the effective implementation of the ban and said that in case of negligence and omission, the concerned officers and staff will be held responsible. ("[PM Shehbaz imposes ban on sugar export](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 10 May 2022)

Circular debt is biggest test for government, says Minister for Energy

On 9 May, Federal Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir attended a press conference in Lahore and declared a three-pronged strategy to stabilise the circular debt. The first is to resolve consumer complaints swiftly, followed by making 100 per cent recovery from consumers and clearance of Central Power Purchase Agency (CPPA) bills / invoices and ensuring

safety of electricity workers. On a question of shortfall of fuel and loadshedding he replied: "Look, the shortfall prevailing at the moment is for some time, as it would be no more soon. But, due to this, we are doing load management in the areas being fed by the high-loss category feeders." He added that country has 51 undergoing power projects and sufficient provisions were taken to fulfill current annual system constraints removal plan. (Khalid Hasnain, "[Circular debt is biggest test for PML-N govt, says Dastgir](#)," *Dawn*, 10 May 2022)

Government orders procurement of 4.5 million tonnes of wheat

On 9 May, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet decided to beef up wheat stocks by ordering tax free three million tonnes of imports including 2m tonnes on a government-to-government (G2G) basis from Russia and 1m tonnes through an international competitive tender and at least 1.5m tonnes of domestic procurement by the public sector. ECC also decided to reduce the prices of wheat, sugar and vegetable oil/ghee at the outlets of Utility Stores Corporation for two months. The official statement from the meeting read as: "...in the wake of low production of wheat in the country due to previous government's failure to provide fertilisers to the growers on time." (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Shortage, rising prices prompt govt to beef up wheat stocks](#)," *Dawn*, 10 May 2022)

Systemic losses in gas companies fail regulatory targets and causing heavier losses

On 9 May, Dawn reported on the latest report from the petroleum division on persistent systemic losses in two main gas utilities of the nation, Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL). The utilities failed to achieve unaccounted-for gas (UFG) reduction targets, according to latest performance report of the petroleum division. The targets of losses set up by regulatory bodies hovered from 0.50 per cent to 2.87 per cent while the losses for

SSGCL and SNGPL stood at 15.1 per cent and 8.83 per cent. The report attributed the failure of the SSGCL to contain UFG losses to poverty, cold weather, theft and the law-and-order situation. (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Gas utilities struggling to control system losses](#)," *Dawn*, 9 May 2022)

Divisions among government comes up over reversing fuel subsidy program to extend IMF deal

On 9 May, The Express Tribune reported on prospects of Pakistan's tentative meeting with IMF to be held in Doha on 18 May. Currently, the forex reserve of the country stands at USD 10.5 billion being used in financing the expensive imports and debt servicing. The USD 10.5 billion is inclusive of deposits worth USD four billion from China, USD 3 billion deposits of Saudi Arabia, and USD 2.5 billion of the UAE deposits. Sources in ministry revealed that Former State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) governor Dr Reza Baqir pumped billions of dollars in the exchange market to defend the weakening rupee but ended up losing the precious reserves. Currently, the government is giving PKR 29 per litre subsidy on petrol and PKR 73 on high-speed diesel, which both the finance ministry and the IMF want to reverse. The country could not secure any new big loan deal with Saudi Arabia and UAE, and awaiting a rollover of USD 2.3 commercial loans from China while another loan from China worth USD 1 billion is maturing this month. The inability of the government to secure big loans have put it in a lower bargaining position vis-à-vis IMF. Former finance minister Ishaq Dar is of the opinion to start a fresh deal. (Shahbaz Rana, "[Pakistan-IMF talks likely in Doha on May 18](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 9 May 2022)

Reduced wheat production likely to cause flour crisis in the country

On 9 May, The Express Tribune reported on looming flour crisis in the country. The Prime Minister's Office had said wheat production was projected to be 26.173 million tonnes against a target of 28.89

million tonnes while the estimated consumption would be around 30.79 million tonnes. The reasons for this shortage were reduced area under wheat cultivation, shortage of water and fertiliser, and delay in the announcement of support price. Among other issues were oil price hikes and an earlier-than-usual heatwave. According to sources, the government will bear a subsidy of more than Rs600 per 20-kg bag for providing cheap flour to the people. ("[Flour crisis looms over country](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 9 May 2022)

EXTERNAL

China ready to synergise Pak development strategy

On 12 May, during a regular press briefing Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said: "We will further deepen cooperation in industrial and other areas to boost the driving force for Pakistan's economic development and its economic resilience." On 11 May, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held a virtual meeting and agreed to carry forward the traditional friendship. The Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson quoted foreign minister of Pakistan and said: "(he) has reiterated that the China-Pakistan friendship remained the cornerstone for Pakistan's foreign policy and is also a strategic priority for Pakistan." ("[China ready to synergise Pak development strategy](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

Pakistan and US completed security level talks in Washington

On 11 May, Pakistan and the United States completed their security level talks, after DG ISI Lt-Gen Nadeem Anjum spent three days in Washington meeting with senior security officials, including US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and CIA Director William J. Burns. The details of the meeting have not been disclosed by either side. (Anwar Iqbal, "[Pakistan, US hold](#)

[security talks ahead of FM Bilawal's visit](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)

United States will not let "lies get in the way" of its bilateral ties with Pakistan, says US State Department

On 10 May, State Department Spokesperson Ned Price during a press briefing stated that the United States will not let "lies get in the way" of its bilateral ties with Pakistan. This statement came in response to a question about Imran Khan blaming the US for his removal and running an "anti-America campaign." He said, "We are not going to let propaganda, misinformation, and disinformation — lies — get in the way of any bilateral relationship we have, including with the bilateral relationship we have with Pakistan, one we value." ("[Won't let 'lies' get in way of ties with Pakistan, says US on Imran's conspiracy allegations](#)," *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

Interior minister assures deputy Ambassador of China of enhanced security for Chinese nationals

On 10 May, Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah met with Chinese Charge d' Affaires Pang Chunxue and agreed to improve liaison between the interior ministry and the Chinese embassy to improve security of Chinese citizens. He said, "The coalition government under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif would take Pak-China relations to a new height, and no internal or external conspiracy to harm them will be allowed to succeed." ("[Minister vows to beef up security of Chinese](#)," *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

FM Bilawal reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve to further strengthen its relations with China

On 10 May, The Express Tribune reported that according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office, Bilawal reiterated Pakistan's desire to further strengthen its "All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership" with China, including the rapid implementation of the CPEC project. The statement added, "Pakistan will continue its efforts to enhance

cooperation with China through CPEC, to advance its national implementation of SDGs, in addition to participating actively in the work of the GDI Group of Friends to promote the common aspiration of a peaceful, prosperous and shared future for all mankind.” ([“Bilawal seeks deeper ties with China, rapid CPEC implementation,”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 10 May 2022)

Pakistan needs to do more for maintaining GSP+ status, says PBF

On 10 May, *The Express Tribune* reported on the progress of export competitiveness of the country under the regime of GSP+ tag. Under GSP+ status, the government has attained concessions on around 6,300 items under the GSP+ status but Pakistan has heavily relied on only textiles to date. Pakistan’s GSP+ status is to expire in December 2023 and fresh applications would be submitted along with credentials on export diversification while the EU as well as increased the conventions from 27 to 32 to make the process more accountable. Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Vice President Ahmad Jawad said: “The textile sector was able to increase exports, but the potential for exports from other sectors like agriculture and other items was not tapped.” Exports to the EU are dominated by textiles and clothing, which accounted for 75.2 per cent of Pakistan’s total exports to the EU in 2020. (Usman Hanif, [“Pakistan yet to take full advantage of GSP+,”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 10 May 2022)

JUDICIARY

CJP delineates dilemma between stability and punishment in reference to Article 63-A

On 11 May, Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Umer Ata Bandial pointed that lifetime disqualification due to defection was a severe punishment. The CJP said that Article 63-A had been introduced through a democratic process and after amending the Constitution and its prime objective was to

stabilise the system. The CJP went on to ask on utility of Article 63-A and said: “Should we treat Article 63-A just a ceremonial thing or to connect it to the fundamental rights for bringing stability to the system.” (Sohail Khan, [“Life ban for defection too harsh: CJP Umer Ata Bandial,”](#) *The News International*, 12 May 2022)

PHC reverts the decision of the parliamentary committee against the elevation of judges

On 10 May, while hearing a petition filed by three district and sessions judges challenging the decision of the parliamentary committee against confirming the recommendations of the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) for the judges’ appointment, Peshawar High Court (PHC) nullified the rejection by Parliamentary as unconstitutional. Petitioners said the Peshawar High Court had six vacancies of judges for which the chief justice consulted other judges and scrutinised the credentials of numerous candidates. Names recommended by JCP are binding on the government and cannot be delayed forever, said the counsel for petitioners. ([“PHC rejects parliamentary body’s decision against elevation of judicial officers,”](#) *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

IHC order reviewing appoint of Hanif Abbasi as SAPM

On 9 May, Islamabad High Court ordered PM Shahbaz Sharif to review the appointment of Hanif Abbasi as his special assistant. The petition was filed by Awami Muslim League chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed over Abbasi public statement against Rashhed. The court while taking up the case rejigged the former interior minister over statements against judiciary by PTI leadership. (Awaiz Yousafzai, [“IHC orders PM Shahbaz Sharif to review appointment of Hanif Abbasi as SAPM,”](#) *The News International*, 9 May 2022)

ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Heatwave reaching a temperature of 50°C recorded in Pakistan

On 13 May, Pakistan witnessed an extreme heatwave, with some parts reaching a temperature of 50°C. Officials have warned of acute water shortages and a health threat as the temperature soars across the country. Previously, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) warned that the high temperatures since April in extreme weather is consistent with climate change. (M Waqar Bhatti, "[Pakistan pummelled by heatwave that hits 50°C in some parts](#)," *The News International*, 14 May 2022)

Pakistan facing an acute water shortage of 38 per cent for irrigation purposes

On 12 May, the Indus River System Authority (IRSA) gave a presentation to the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Water Resources headed by Minister for Water Resources. IRSA informed that Kharif crops growing is going to be affected as the countrywide rainfall in April 2022 was 74 per cent below average during April and was ranked as the second driest month since 1961. IRSA also informed of lower water inflow to dams from rivers Chenab, Kabul, Mangla and Indus (arranged in decreasing order reduced inflows). The dams consequently were also filled below capacity during the peak summer inflow season. (Israr Khan and Munawar Hasan, "[Water shortage worse than expected: IRSA](#)," *The News International*, 13 May 2022)

Planting trees not core policy on global warming, says Minister for Climate Change

On 10 May, Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman while speaking to Dawn claimed that although planting trees was a necessity to reduce environmental degradation it cannot be the core public policy on global warming. She claimed that this was especially the case given the acutely water-stressed and climate-stressed that Pakistan faces. She added, "The climate change policy made a Climate Council the

cornerstone of its institutional mechanism. But because one province and Sindh government, in particular, was with the opposition its lead performance in reforestation was downgraded, even through the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Project," adding, "I believe the way forward is through a 'policy ministry' like climate change." (Jamal Shahid, "[Planting trees not core policy on global warming: minister](#)," *Dawn*, 11 May 2022)

MILITARY

Don't drag military into politics, says ISPR On 8 May, the Inter-Services Public

Relations (ISPR) in a statement took "strong exception" to what it termed as "unlawful and unethical practice" of dragging the armed forces into politics, warning that such unsubstantiated statements were "extremely damaging" for the country. The statement said, "Recently there have been intensified and deliberate attempts to drag [the] Pakistan armed forces and their leadership in [the] ongoing political discourse in the country," adding, "These attempts are manifest through direct, insinuated or nuanced references to the armed forces as well as their senior leadership, made by some political leaders, few journalists and analysts on public forums and various communication platforms including social media." (Kamran Yousaf, "[Don't drag military into politics, warns ISPR](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 9 May 2022)

ON CPEC

Chinese firms complaint against visa procedures, unjust taxation and non-compliance of contractual requirements in Pakistan

On 9 May, Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal met with more than 30 Chinese companies operating under the flagship multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in various areas including energy, and

communication, railways and others. The Chinese independent power producers (IPP) went to warn the minister if their dues worth PKR 300 billion were not cleared they would be forced to shut down their power plants this month due to higher fuel prices particularly coal. The Chinese IPP companies also expressed concern over the upcoming draft renewable energy policy that requires international competitive bidding. The stakeholders from Pakistan's side in the meeting complaint against delayed responses to their communications. The official statement from the meeting underlined the to resolve all issues which have remained pending for over three years. (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Chinese IPPs warn of closure if not paid Rs300bn](#)," *Dawn*, 10 May 2022)

Only three CPEC projects in Gwadar completed, says CPEC authority

On 8 May, The Express Tribune reported that according to the CPEC Authority only three CPEC projects in Gwadar having value of over USD 300 million has been completed. The other one-dozen schemes costing nearly USD two billion remain unfinished including water supply and electricity provision. According to the CPEC Authority, the progress review of the projects revealed that all the schemes were behind their original completion schedules. (Shabaz Rana, "[Only 3 CPEC projects in Gwadar completed](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 8 May 2022)

ON INDUS WATERS

Islamabad to write another letter to New Delhi on water talks

On 9 May, The Express Tribune reported that Indus Water Commission would write another letter to their Indian counterpart to convene a meeting over Pakistan-India water disputes. Previously, a three-day meeting of water experts from both countries was held on 1 March in Islamabad, following which a meeting was to be held in

New Delhi in May. ("[Pakistan-India water talks likely to be delayed](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 9 May 2022)

ON PAKISTAN OCCUPIES KASHMIR

Local body polls to be held in accordance with the direction of court, says PM Ilyas

On 9 May, Dawn reported that "Azad Jammu and Kashmir" Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas stated that the government would hold the local body (LB) polls in accordance with the direction of the "AJK" Supreme Court. Further, he claimed that holding of LB polls was an important part of PTI's election manifesto and since the court has fixed a timeframe for the polls the government would leave ensure that the polls are conducted as per schedule. (Tariq Naqash, "[LB polls to be held on time: AJK PM](#)," *Dawn*, 9 May 2022)

ON INDIA

"The environment for a fruitful, constructive dialogue is not there," says Foreign Office

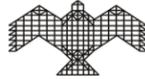
On 12 May, the Foreign Office spokesman Asim Iftikhar stated that doors for diplomacy on outstanding disputes with India remain open, however, "the environment for a fruitful, constructive dialogue is not there." Further, he stated that there was a national consensus on this issue and that successive governments have used the same policy of seeking peaceful settlement of disputes with India. ("[Time not right for talks with India, says FO](#)," *Dawn*, 13 May 2022)

Ministry of Commerce rules out the possibility of trade with India

On 12 May, Dawn reported that the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) has ruled out the possibility of a resumption of bilateral trade with India. An official announcement from the ministry said, "There is no change in Pakistan's policy on trade with India." (Mubarak Zeb Khan, "[Pakistan rules out trade with India](#)," *Dawn*, 12 May 2022)



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