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## Daily Focus, 18 March 2022

### Time for Imran to go?: The 172 reasons

*The numbers in the Parliament are increasing against Imran Khan. The Establishment is staying out.*

D Suba Chandran



Image Source: Dawn

Two recent analyses in this column looked at the numbers in the Parliament supporting the government and the opposition, and the implications of filing the no-confidence motion. Both the analyses were critical of the opposition's claims in having the necessary support to succeed in passing a no-confidence motion against Imran Khan.

The government was confident of the numbers in the Parliament and was poo-pooing the opposition's efforts to pass the no-confidence against Imran Khan and the government. Some ministers even dared the opposition to take the process forward. Despite all those brave statements and sarcasms to dare, the situation in Islamabad seems to have suddenly changed. Imran Khan stands cornered and is not confident of facing the opposition in the Parliament. Some of his recent statements (about the PTI taking the road and returning to the containers) and attacking the Parliamentarians in their lodge, fearing horse-trading high light the new situation for Imran Khan.

What had happened during the last few weeks, that the situation has completely changed for Imran Khan, and the PTI

government? Four reasons could be identified for the above change, that would lead to the unseating of Imran Khan.

**Numbers in the Parliament: A brief view**  
Before looking into the factors that have changed the situation for Imran Khan, a quick look at the numbers in the Parliament. There are 342 members in the Parliament; the opposition would need 172 votes from the Parliamentarians to win the no-confidence motion against Imran Khan. But it has only 162; it includes the following: PML-N (84), PPP (56), MMA (15), BNP-M (4), ANP (1) and independents (2).

Besides what it has (162), the opposition would need ten more votes to reach 172. These ten crucial votes for the opposition will have to come from the ruling coalition. The PTI does not have a simple majority in the Parliament; it has only 156 votes; the rest come from its coalition partners – the MQM-P (7), Baluchistan Awami Party (5), PML-Q (5), and the Grand Democratic Alliance (3).

Four factors, that would seal Imran's fate in the Parliament  
First, the PML-Q. Led by the Chaudhrys, the PML-Q is a part of the PTI lead coalition at the national level, and also in Punjab. The erstwhile King's party, nurtured by General Musharraf, came out of the PML-N fold. Since the 2002 elections, the PML-Q has remained pro-Establishment and anti-Sharif. During the last few elections, the PML-Q fought against the PML-N in Punjab and also at the national level. During the 2018 elections, the party continued its anti-Sharif position and was able to win substantial seats in the Punjab provincial assembly. Though, it has managed to secure only five

at the Parliament, it is crucial for the PTI.

Imran Khan was sure of the PML-Q's support because of the provincial equation between the Chaudhrys and the Sharifs. It was the case until recently. This support (for Imran and against the Sharifs) seems to have changed recently. Dawn quoted Pervez Chaudhry Elahi saying in a TV interview recently: "He (Zardari) is right. They (the opposition) have the required number ... even have more than what one can imagine. This is what we have assessed and seen." Many within Pakistan consider the above interview as a factor in PML-Q's changed position towards supporting Imran Khan. During the recent weeks, Shebaz Sharif met with the Chaudhrys after many years; this meeting should have broken the ice, with Asif Ali Zardari following up.

If the PML-Q has decided to support the opposition, it would mean five more votes and would take the PDM tally to 167.

Second, the MQM, which is also a member of the ruling coalition at the national level. As mentioned above, it has seven seats in the National Assembly. The MQM's relationship with the PTI is not based on any ideological understanding. Both parties are poles apart, in terms of their outlook and votebase in Karachi. However, post-2018 elections, the MQM supported the PTI; many believe the Establishment playing a role in the above equation.

Reports in the public domain in Pakistan during the recent days support an argument that the MQM would be willing to vote against Imran Khan. These reports also hint at a deal between the MQM and the PPP at

the provincial level. If this is true, the opposition would have 173 votes, one more than the required 172.

If the PML-Q and MQM have reached a deal with the opposition, this alone would seal the fate of Imran Khan, when the Parliament resumes and see the vote of no-confidence.

However, there are two more factors – the third and fourth, that will also factor in Imran's fall. The divide within his own party and the support (or the lack of it) from the Establishment. During the recent weeks, the chorus against Imran Khan within the PTI has been growing. With every single day, there are more on the Jahangir Tarin (those who oppose Imran Khan, but within the PTI) camp. The opposition believes this number would become substantial, as the no-confidence comes closer.

The final factor is the Establishment. Despite all the tall claims of being on the same page, it appears the Establishment is not averse to what the opposition is pursuing. Why the Establishment has turned against Imran Khan, or unwilling to support him – is a separate story in itself.

Of the above four factors, the final one – the "neutrality" of the Establishment should be the most crucial. Neither the PML-Q nor the MQM, despite the differences with the PTI would vote against Imran Khan, if the latter still remains the blue-eyed one. Come end March, Imran may have a black-eye.

Alternatively, on 1 April, Pakistan politics is capable of making all the analysts celebrate the day!

## Daily Focus, 17 March 2022

### Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan: The problems of impunity and accountability

*Lack of accountability and impunity are two main causes for the continuing case of disappearances in Pakistan*

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Image Source: Dawn

#### What the report says

A recent report submitted by the Commission of Inquiry on Enforced Disappearances (COIED) to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) revealed that of the 8,463 citizens missing since March 2011, only 3,284 have been traced and returned. Of these cases, the commission has disposed of 6,214 cases, whereas 2,249 are still under investigation. Further, the report states that 1,178 cases were “not of enforced disappearances” after thorough investigation because in these cases “missing persons have either gone on their own” or these cases related to “kidnapping for ransom or personal enmity.”

The report also claimed that the major reasons for the increasing number of missing people between 2007 and 2009 were a military operation against the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), drone attacks in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and illegal crossing of the Afghan border. Further, the report states that 228 individuals on the missing persons' list were found to have been killed in ‘encounters’, with no individual or entity held to account for the extrajudicial killings yet.

#### The Problem of Enforced Disappearances: Numbers, Victims, and Preparators

The issue of enforced disappearances is one of the major human rights concerns in Pakistan. Although this is not a recent phenomenon in Pakistan, the involvement of security forces in enforced disappearances has been a recent factor. Earlier reports of enforced disappearances date back to the 1970s; however, a significant rise in the number of cases was recorded in the early 2000s, starting with Pakistan’s involvement in the US-led “war on terror” in late 2001. Since then, several people accused of terrorism-related offences have reportedly “disappeared” after being allegedly abducted by security agencies and detained in secret facilities, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh. As a result, the issue which is endemic to Pakistan remains unresolved.

The exact number of disappearances remains unknown; several cases go unreported by families who prefer not to report cases to the authorities or human rights organizations because of fear of retaliation by the authorities. However, according to the monthly press release of COIED for 28 February 2022, the number of missing persons stands at 8463. Of which the following number of cases were reported from each province, Punjab (1502) Sindh (1696), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (3201), Balochistan (1676) and Islamabad (319).

The main sections of victims include Baloch, Pashtun, Sindhi and Shia backgrounds. They are often suspected Islamic or separatist militants; however, they are mostly political opponents, activists,

students, politicians, human rights defenders, journalists and lawyers. The victims are usually picked up by the State without due process and no information is given to the family.

The preparators are state officials from the intelligence agencies and security forces. In 2019, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan said, "HRCP has ample evidence to support the allegations of victims' families that the perpetrators of enforced disappearances are intelligence agencies and security forces." Additionally, it is also claimed that the perpetrators include officials from the Frontier Corps (FC), the Directorate for Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) who often work together with the local police.

#### Two major issues of Enforced Disappearances: Impunity and Accountability

First, the impunity. Enforced disappearances are closely connected to the culture of impunity that exists in Pakistan. In most cases, the perpetrators have acted openly in the presence of witnesses. It is this impunity that is seen at several levels right from the police who often refuse to register and investigate disappearance cases to courts who are unable to fully enforce the law against the security forces to intelligence agencies who believe they are above the law. Additionally, security officials claim that there are deficiencies in the procedure of investigation and penal laws, which is why they resort to picking up people rather than eliminating the deficiencies in the law of crime. Thus, by justifying their actions as an essential means to ensuring security.

Second, the failure to ensure accountability. The culture of impunity closes links to the issue of accountability. With security forces claiming that they are doing a 'good deed' by picking up alleged criminals, they hope that the actions not be made accountable. Additionally, in many instances, security forces withhold

information on cases stating that such agencies are "not accountable to anyone." Thus, cases remain unresolved because there is no entity or individual to hold accountable for the practice.

Additionally, the ability to hold the perpetrators accountable is linked to the inability of the victims' families to access courts. Often, courts have refused to hear their petitions and have directed them to lodge their complaints before the COIED instead. Another reason is the lack of legislation.

Enforced disappearances are yet to be criminalised in Pakistan. In August 2021, Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari stated that Pakistan was "moving forward" in its commitment to criminalise enforced disappearances and emphasised that such acts were "unacceptable in a democracy" as the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Interior approved a bill on enforced disappearances. However, in January 2022, she claimed that the bill that was prepared regarding missing persons was passed by the standing committee and the National Assembly had gone missing after it was sent to the Senate.

#### The COIED's Responsibility

The COIED was constituted in March 2011 with two primary mandates - to "trace the whereabouts of allegedly enforced disappeared persons" and "fix responsibility on individuals or organizations responsible." While the COIED has been relatively successful in tracing the whereabouts of missing persons in several cases, there has been no progress or efforts taken to address the latter which is to fix responsibility. The failure to address the situation by the COIED reflects the fact that the burden of the issue solely falls on the victims' families.

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## Daily Focus, 16 March 2022

### Pakistan Air Force inducts J-10C: Three Takeaways

*The fourth-generation aircraft will add wings to the technological capability of combat aviation and its air warfare*

Ankit Singh



Image Source: Dawn

On 11 March, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) inducted newly acquired six J-10C multirole fighter aircraft at Minhas Air Base, Kamra. Pakistan became the first country to commission the aircraft; until now, it was used only by China’s People’s Liberation Army Air Force.

J-10C is a fourth-generation aircraft, with a multi-role use, manoeuvrability and fly-by-wire flight control system. The PAF Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Babar said: “We have never attempted to match numbers nor wish to be in any arms race. However, we continue to enhance our capability to ensure national security and regional stability.” The aircraft adds to the aerial warfare platform kitty of PAF.

The above is crucial for three important

reasons.

First, the upgraded technological platforms. The J-10C is a sequel to a previous collaboration between Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) and Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group to jointly develop JF-17 Thunder/FC-1 Xiaolong light fighter aircraft. PAC has a 58 per cent share in the airframe design of JF-17. J-10C is an up-gradation of the previous aircraft platform.

In terms of specification, the maximum speed of JF-17 is 1.6 Mach while that of J-10C is 1.8 Mach; G-limit for JF-17 is +8/-3 while that of J-10C is +9/-3; the empty weight and maximum take-off weight for JF-17 is 7695 kg and 13500 kg respectively and for J-10C; the empty weight and maximum take-off weight is 9750 kg and 19277 kg and ferry range for JF-17 is 1880 Nautical Miles (NMI) while for J-10C it is 1590 NMI.

The canard design is one of the new features to provide enhanced manoeuvrability; the Chinese indigenous turbofan engine Shenyang WS-10, which took 20 years to develop marks another milestone in the collaboration of Pakistan and China.

However, the modern combat aircraft is a complex system and considering most of the technological equipment from carbon composite to radar systems, and jet turbofan is developed in China. Pakistan has little to gain in terms of technical capability and, eventually, lack of domestic support for technological risks will keep Pakistan aligned to China.

Second, the scope of the venture. For Pakistan, the utility will primarily remain limited to its eastern neighbour. PM Imran stated at the induction ceremony: “An imbalance is being created in South Asia. This induction will address that security imbalance.” The economy of scale is not a practical requirement, as the statement explains, Pakistan is opting for advanced air platforms to match the cumulative strength of the Indian Air Force.

Though the details of the total number of aircraft are unknown, a minimum of 25 J10-C are to be exported. This will take the total combat aircraft with PAF to approximately 425 units. China, however, has different plans; it showcased the aircraft on display at its pavilion at the 2019 Dubai Air Show, which was held from 17-21 November 2019. The export proceedings will enhance innovation and economies of scale for China; for Pakistan, it will open up new avenues for access to platform-based technology. Air warfare is offensive in its posture and explains the tactical necessity for Pakistan in deterring any misdemeanour by its adversaries.

Third, Pakistan's defence technology objective. Pakistan is collaborating with Turkish Aerospace Industries (TAI) to develop a fifth-generation aircraft (TF-X), the operational requirement of a fifth-generation aircraft works on advanced features such as stealth, radar interception and advanced avionics. China operates fifth-generation aircraft, Chengdu J-20 which entered the service in 2017. Pakistan instead

of continuing ahead in its partnership and reliance on China, has sought an independent trajectory with Turkey. Even though Pakistan and China are long-time allies, the preference for fifth generation combat aircraft by Pakistan gives a hint about its long term strategic objectives in developing its own niche of defence manufacturing.

The predecessor of J-10C, JF-17 is majorly manufactured in Pakistan, 58 per cent of manufacturing. The ejection seat in JF-17 is sourced from United Kingdom and similar trends might as well be seen in domestic production of J-10C, if and when that happens. The lego approach in designing a combat aircraft is advantageous, as Pakistan does not have to rely on a single industry for array of equipment. It retains the scope and chance to select the best equipment for efficient operationalisation. For example, Turkey before being discarded from F-35 program was manufacturing critical engine parts for F-35 aircraft. F-35 is considered one of the advanced fifth generation aircraft available in the world. The partnership of Pakistan with Turkey on fifth generation platform will enable indirect exchange of expertise and experience from China and USA. The pursuit is to not remain hostage to technological deficiency and Pakistan is attempting to scramble all possible technological equipment required for a combat aircraft. The country has placed its eggs in many baskets and will not subsume to any narrative being framed on it.

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## Daily Focus, 14 March 2022

### PPP's Long March: Three Takeaways

*PPP's long march is aimed to showcase Bilawal's political prowess and prepare for the general elections*

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Image Source: Dawn

On 8 March, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) conclude the 'Awami Long March' against the government after reaching the D-Chowk, in front of Parliament House in Islamabad. The march was led by PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari began from the Mazar-e-Quaid in Karachi on 27 February. During the ten days long march, Bilawal and other PPP leaders declared 'war' PM Imran Khan who they claimed was 'illegally elected.'

The PPP's long march passed through 49 cities and towns across Pakistan. According to the schedule approved by Bilawal, the march passed cities and small towns of Sindh and Punjab and then made its way up to Islamabad. Few of the places the march passed through included, Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Multan, Lahore, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Rawat and Islamabad. Over the last 10 days, the PPP took on one of the longest marches the country has seen. While the PPP's march has been directed

towards the PTI government, understanding the timing, larger objectives and endgame of the march is pre-eminently more important.

A platform for Bilawal's launch

The march undeniably became a platform for Bilawal to showcase his political prowess. Although he has been in the political scene since 2012, this was the first time Bilawal took out on his own and led the party through the march. This highlights the fact that Bilawal has and is ready to take on the responsibility of leading the party. Conversely, it also highlights the PPP party's acceptance and support of Bilawal being their leader. The march thus became a tool to launch Bilawal both to the party as well as to the people. PPP Senator Sherry Rehman in an opinion in *The News International* said that in 2022, Bilawal had come of age claiming that he is clearly ready.

Building momentum for the next general elections

Given that the PPP has experienced defeat in the recent by-elections in Punjab and the first phase of the local government elections in 17 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the weaknesses of the party was evident. With the part workers demoralised and the PPP losing a substantial per cent of its vote bank, the march was crucial in bringing back energy and confidence, especially in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Additionally, the

politicking through the march, the PPP aims to convince some candidates from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and southern Punjab to join the party. Thus, the march has become a means to mobilise and activate the party structure before the general elections.

Despite the march, challenges ahead for the PPP

While the PPP's march comes to an end, there are several challenges that the party will face.

First, the opposition against the PPP. In recent weeks, there has been major opposition to the PPP government. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan have joined hands along with the Grand Democratic Alliance and the Jamaat-e-Islami have launched protests against the PPP. Although these alliances are fragile and may not be enough to tackle the PPP given its expanse in the province they still pose as a challenge for the PPP.

Second, finding its space outside Sindh. In the last two general elections of 2013 and 2018, the PPP has not been able to establish a strong foothold outside of Sindh due to its poor electoral performance in other provinces. While the PPP may have intentionally focused on Sindh, the party need to expand its reach in other provinces to make a strong comeback.

Third, rebuilding alliances. In recent weeks, the PPP has intensified its contact with other opposition parties. Some of the recent visits include Zardari meeting with Shahbaz Sharif, Maryam Nawaz and Hamza Shahbaz

as well as reaching out to the Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leadership reflect renewed efforts to bridge the gaps and rebuild strategic alliances. However, given the deep-rooted resentment and mistrust between the parties, the PPP is posed with the challenge of gaining the confidence of these opposition parties and government allies.

In conclusion, the PPP's decision to conduct a long march shows that the party has begun its preparation for the 2023 general elections. Unlike other parties that are mostly focused on ousting PM Khan, the PPP has larger plans. Although the plans and strategies are unclear it is evident that the PPP is ready to engage in heavy politicking, however, how they address the several challenges and succeed in their efforts remains to be seen.

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## **PAKISTAN IN BRIEF**

### **POLITICS**

#### **PTI supporters enter Sindh house after hours of protesting**

On 18 March, PTI supporters forcibly entered the Sindh House in Islamabad. This came after the PTI workers were protesting outside against defector MNAs who are staying in the building. According to Dawn, television footage showed PTI workers climbing over the walls of Sindh House with some of breaking down the doors to enter the building. Meanwhile the Islamabad police brought the situation under control and took 13 of the protesters into custody for rioting. ("[PTI supporters forcibly enter Sindh House in Islamabad after hours-long protest](#)," *Dawn*, 19 March 2022)

Zardari and Fazl meet to discuss next steps  
On 18 March, Asif Zardari and Maulana Fazlur Rehman met at Zardari House to discuss the current political situation in the country and discuss their next move in their plans to remove PM Khan. ("[Zardari, Fazl review political chessboard](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 19 March 2022)

#### **"No room" for minus one in the PTI, says FM Qureshi**

On 18 March, FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi stated that there was "no room" for minus one in the PTI. Additionally, he dismissed the rumors that "everything is okay but Imran Khan. Everything can be saved if we go towards minus one," stating that if anyone had any misunderstanding, they should remove it. ("[No room for minus Imran in PTI: Qureshi](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 19 March 2022)

#### **SCBA files petition demanding restraint on D-Chowk rallies**

On 18 March, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) filed a petition in Supreme Court as the government and opposition leaders continued to trade blows in the volatile days leading to the no-confidence vote. It asked SC that directions

be given to all state functionaries to act strictly in accordance with the Constitution and request the apex judicial body to ensure law and order to make sure the members of the National Assembly (MNAs) from reaching the Parliament House and from attending the session of the National Assembly, as and when summoned. SC will take up petition on 21 March under the bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial. ("[SC to hear plea against D-Chowk rallies on 21<sup>st</sup>](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 19 March 2022)

#### **PM directs NA Speaker to commence the sitting of the lower house and action against 'turncoats'**

On 17 March, PM Imran Khan met with National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser. During the meeting, he directed Qaiser to commence the sitting of the lower house on 21 March and take action against "PTI's possible turncoats." Following the meeting, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry while speaking to Dawn stated that the decision to summon an NA session would be taken by the speaker, and not the prime minister. Further, on what he termed 'PTI turncoats', he said, "PM Khan has decided to de-seat them before voting on the no-trust motion." ("[PM, speaker weigh options against 'turncoats'](#)," *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

#### **PPP calls Sindh police to help protect the premises of Sindh House**

On 17 March, the PPP called in the provincial police to help protect the premises of Sindh House. According to Dawn, a contingent of 115 Sindh police officials usually performed duties at the Sindh House, however, the number of officials now has increased to 228. When the issue was brought up by the Islamabad police they were informed that the increase was due to the presence of important personalities and legislators from Sindh. ("[Why Sindh police...](#)," *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### JUI-F to send 10,000 volunteers to protect Islamabad marchers

On 17 March, the JUI-F announced that it would send around 10,000 volunteers to Islamabad to provide security to the participants of the opposition's march. The volunteers would come from the JUI-F Ansarul Islam force, which provides security to the party's leaders and workers during public rallies, conventions and other events. (["10,000 JUI-F volunteers to protect Islamabad marchers,"](#) *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### Opposition to bring a no-confidence motion against CM Usman Buzdar

On 18 March, Dawn reported a senior PML-N leader stated that the opposition would bring a no-confidence motion against CM Usman Buzdar. The official said, "The PML-N and PPP leaders are deliberating to bring a no-trust move against Buzdar in the last week of this month sensing that Imran Khan may ask Buzdar to dissolve the Punjab Assembly in case of his (Khan's) ouster to make things complicated for the opposition in its post-PTI arrangements." (Zulqernain Tahir, ["Option of no-trust move against Buzdar up opposition's sleeve,"](#) *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### ECP makes it clear that it has no role in the proceedings of the no-confidence motion against PM Khan

On 17 March, the ECP made it clear that it has nothing to do with the election and no-trust motion against PM Imran Khan. The ECP stated that the proceedings of the no-confidence motion would be conducted under Article 95 of the Constitution. It added that Article 63-A explained the procedure about the action taken on the ground of floor crossing. (Iftikhar A. Khan, ["Nothing to do with no-trust motion, says ECP,"](#) *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### PPP accepts PDM's invite to join the long march

On 16 March, the PPP accepted the PDM's invite to participate in its long march.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman said, "I had to go to invite (PPP Co-Chairperson) Asif Ali Zardari to participate in the long march but he before that he came to us," adding, "Before I could invite him (Zardari), he told me that he had already accepted the invitation." (["PPP to 'join' PDM's long march,"](#) *The Express Tribune*, 17 March 2022)

### PM Khan calls citizens to come out of their home against "the three thieves"

On 16 March, PM Imran Khan stated that it was the responsibility of the entire country to come out of their homes and stand with the PTI government on 27 March against "the three thieves." Further, he claimed that Maulana Fazlur Rehman nor any other prime minister could ever speak against Islamophobia, because they all were allegedly the "slaves of the west." (["PM Imran seeks 'sea of support' on 27th,"](#) *Dawn*, 17 March 2022)

### MNAs are presently staying at Sindh House for their own safety, says PPP

On 16 March, PPP leader Faisal Karim Kundi claimed that opposition MNAs were staying at Sindh House to provide them security amid the threats by government ministers and previous police raid on Parliament Lodges. He said, "Yes, the members of parliament are staying at Sindh House. Every member has a right to stay there. These members are from the opposition and our allies." Meanwhile, the PPP accused the government of planning to attack Sindh House in Islamabad. This comes after the PTI claimed some of its lawmakers were staying hidden in the building at the opposition's behest. (Amir Wasim, ["MNAs at Sindh House 'for own good': PPP,"](#) *Dawn*, 17 March 2022; ["PPP accuses PTI govt of planning to raid Sindh House in Islamabad,"](#) *Dawn*, 17 March 2022)

### PDM reschedules long march towards Islamabad

On 15 March, Maulana Fazlur Rehman

announced that the PDM has decided that their long march will enter Islamabad on 25 March, after departure of the participants in the OIC Foreign Ministers session. Further, he said that the opposition long march would start several parts of the country on 23 March and subsequently enter Islamabad on 25 March. ([“PDM march to enter capital after OIC FMs’ departure: Fazl,”](#) *The News International*, 16 March 2022)

### **MQM-P wants Shehbaz, Maulana to ‘own’ its possible future pact with PPP**

On 15 March, Dawn reported that MQM-P has asked the PML-N and JUI-F to ‘own’ its possible future pact with PPP. This comes after MQM-P convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui met with Shehbaz Sharif and Maulana Fazlur Rehman. ([“MQM-P wants Shehbaz, Maulana to ‘own’ future pact with PPP,”](#) *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### **PML-Q calls on the government and opposition to show restraint**

On 15 March, PML-Q president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has ‘appealed’ to the PTI government and the opposition parties to show restraint, urging them to cancel their planned public meetings at D-Chowk in the larger national interest. (Amir Wasim, [“PML-Q calls for ‘ceasefire’ in national interest,”](#) *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### **PM thankful to opposition for reinvigorating the PTI’s morale**

On 15 March, PM Imran Khan while addressing a convention of overseas Pakistanis challenged the media, opposition, economists to debate the economy’s ‘upward trend’. He said that PTI has “proved that nobody has made the kind of improvements we have brought in Pakistan in 3.5 years.” He called on people from across Pakistan to gather ‘mammoth’ public meeting of PTI at D-Chowk in Islamabad. While commenting on opposition leaders he said, “I am thankful to the three stooges for bringing the no-confidence motion as it has not only revived my party, but will also pave the way for their own elimination.” The PM

lauded the overseas Pakistanis contribution to the country’s economy. In a separate rally in Lahore, interior minister Sheikh Rashid clarified on the role of ‘umpire,’ he said, “they are neutral in the true sense of the word and stand with Pakistan and democracy.” (Syed Irfan Raza, Ahmad Faraz Khan, [“No-trust has awakened PTI juggernaut: PM Imran,”](#) *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### **PDM announces long march towards Islamabad**

On 14 March, the Pakistan Democratic Movement announced a long march towards Islamabad on 23 March to stage a sit-in that would continue until the completion of the voting process in the National Assembly. This decision was made after the joint opposition met at the residence of Shehbaz Sharif, which was attended by heads of the opposition parties and prominent leaders, including PPP’s Asif Ali Zardari, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari, Sardar Akhtar Mengal of the Balochistan National Party, Amir Haider Hoti of the Awami National Party and independent MNA Mohsin Dawar. (Amir Wasim, [“Showdown feared as PDM calls for march on capital,”](#) *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

### **PTI decided to hold a public meeting at D-Chowk**

On 14 March, the PTI has decided to stage a “mammoth” public meeting at D-Chowk on 27 March. The party warned lawmakers that they would have to move through a crowd of ‘one million’ to enter Parliament House for casting their vote on the no-trust motion PM Imran Khan. This decision was announced by Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed following the party’s core committee meeting which was chaired by PM Khan. (Syed Irfan Raza, [“D-Chowk picked as first war front: PTI plans power show to counter no-trust move,”](#) *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

Meanwhile, FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi claimed that the opposition did not have the numbers to succeed in the no-confidence

motion. He said, "Their announcement for a march proves that their numbers are incomplete and they have differences within their ranks," adding, "What will be the future setup, who will be the next prime minister ... They don't have any consensus on it. Their ideology, destination, manifesto are all different." ("[Why is opposition holding a march if their numbers are complete?' asks Qureshi](#)," *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

#### **PML-N and Tareen group agree on CM Buzdar's removal**

On 14 March, the PML-N and Jahangir Tareen group agreed on the idea of removing Punjab CM Usman Buzdar. According to a joint statement, "The PML-N and Jahangir Tareen group have agreed that CM Buzdar should be removed as the political and administrative matters in the province have suffered a severe blow during PTI's rule in Punjab." (Mansoor Malik, "[PML-N, Tareen group agree on CM Buzdar ouster](#)," *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

#### **PPP, MQM-P agree to work together**

On 15 March, The Express Tribune reported that the PPP and MQM-P have agreed to work together "in the larger interest of the country." This comes after Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari met with an MQM-P delegation at Zardari House in Islamabad. ("[PPP, MQM-P agree to work together 'in country's wider interest'](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)

#### **PTI asserts that PML-Q would remain a part of the alliance**

On 14 March, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry stated that the PML-Q and other allies would remain a part of PTI-led coalition government. He said, "We discussed in detail reservations of [allies]... they remained part of the coalition government for the last three and a half years and we hope that they would continue to do so; politics, government and future is in our hands." Further, on the PML-Q he said that PM Khan considers PML-Q chief

and former premier Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain his brother. ("[Shujaat is like a brother to PM', says Fawad as govt again reaches out to ally](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)

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#### **INTERNAL**

#### **NEPRA notifies on effect of PM relief package in tariff pricing**

On 18 March, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) issued a letter to power, finance and cabinet division on Rs5 per unit reduction in electricity rates for domestic and commercial consumers. Prime Minister Imran Khan on 28 February had announced tariff reduction commercial consumers having a sanctioned load of less than 5kW and domestic non-TOU (time of use) consumers having a monthly consumption of up to 700 units (except lifeline consumers). The letter said: "The instant decision is being intimated to the federal government for the purpose of notification in the official gazette within 30 days as per the Neptra Act." (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Rs5 reduction in power tariff notified](#)," *Dawn*, 19 March 2022)

#### **Government initiates settlement of Reqd-Diq and releases USD 900 million**

On 19 March, The Express Tribune reported that government had released USD 900 million for beginning settlements to Chile's Antofagasta, which was partner with Canada's Barrick Gold in the joint venture of Tethyan Copper Company (TCC) which was blocked by SC in 2013. Attorney General of Pakistan had negotiated terms of the settlement with both Antofagasta and Barrick Gold. The terms of the settlement were presented to Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) which were approved consequently in a recent meeting. The government is to give Antofagasta a letter of credit (SBLC) for the settlement amount by no later than March 31 2022; provided, however, the funds shall not be released to the firm until the completion of all legal

requirements, including but not limited to approval by the federal and provincial cabinets and the necessary legislation. The SBP however, objected to the release of funds considering the forex reserves. (Zafar Bhutta, “[Govt to pay \\$900m as part of Reko Diq settlement.](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 19 March 2022)

### Pakistan observes Youm-e-Tashakur

On 18 March, Pakistan observed Youm-e-Tashakur. This comes after the UN recognised the challenges of Islamophobia across the world. To mark the day, Pakistan Television will air special transmission on Islamophobia and will highlight the efforts of PM Khan to tackle Islamophobia among other events. Previously, 193-member states of the UN, adopted a resolution introduced by Pakistan, on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), designating 15 March as “International Day to Combat Islamophobia.” (“[Islamophobia: Nation to observe Youm-e-Tashakur today.](#)” *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association warns to close 600 factories next week

On 17 March, after failed attempt to reach a consensus with Ministry of Finance over imposition of tax imposed on raw materials used to manufacture medicines an ultimatum was given to the government to shut down 600 pharma production units across the country next week. Earlier government had decided to impose 17 per cent sales tax on raw material of the medicines. PPMA chairman Qazi Mohammad Mansoor Dilawar said: “Moreover, the government has imposed sales tax on services of contractors and consultants. Unfortunately, there is also a huge tax on import of machinery and pharmaceutical plants. Now a tax has been imposed on import of raw material which is not being reimbursed despite commitment by the government.” (Ikram Junaidi, “[Drug makers threaten to close 600 factories next week.](#)” *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### COAS orders for more security for the upcoming OIC meeting and Pakistan Day parade

On 15 March, COAS Gen Qamar Bajwa ordered that security be increased for the safe conduct of next week’s Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) foreign ministers’ meeting and the Pakistan Day parade in Islamabad on 22-23 March. (Baqir Sajjad Syed, “[Army chief orders more security for OIC summit.](#)” *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### Opposition to move National Assembly for ‘safe passage’

On 15 March, the PML-N, PPP and JUI-F have decided to file a joint petition before the Islamabad High Court (IHC) seeking safe passage for parliamentarians who intend to cast their vote on a no-confidence resolution against PM Khan. The petition seeks a directive for the federal government and Islamabad administration to give safe passage and uninterrupted access to the lawmakers to the Parliament House. (Malik Asad, “[IHC to be moved for ‘safe passage’ to NA.](#)” *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### ECP reserves verdict for PTI latest plea

regarding foreign funding case on 17 March  
On 15 March, ECP reserved its verdict for a plea by PTI which sought secrecy of the documents available with State Bank of Pakistan. During the hearing scheduled for 17 March, both the parties are to present their opinion on merits of the foreign funding case. Outside the office of ECP, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib demanded that the commission should start hearing the foreign funding cases against opposition parties — the PML-N and PPP. (Iftikhar A Khan, “[ECP reserves verdict on PTI pleas in foreign funding case.](#)” *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### Pakistan lifts all COVID-19 restrictions

On 15 March, Federal Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar announced that the government is lifting all coronavirus-related restrictions across the

country. Meanwhile, Special SAPM on Health Dr Faisal Sultan stated that the COVID-19 cases in Pakistan were constantly declining, while 70 per cent of the population has been vaccinated. ([“Pakistan lifts all coronavirus-related restrictions,”](#) *The News International*, 16 March 2022)

### **PBS governing council approves official results of sixth census**

On 15 March, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) held its nineteenth meeting under the chairmanship of Asad Umar. The council approved the new method for rebasing the value of the economy. Also, the council formally endorsed the official results of the sixth Population and Housing Census 2017. It was also decided that work on the next rebasing may be initiated after Population Census 2022. The fiscal year 2022-23 might be taken as the base year for the next rebasing of National Accounts. However, the council did not approve to reconstitute the National Accounts Committee (NAC). There was a proposal seeking to give the chairmanship of the NAC to the statistician by taking it from the planning secretary. It also did not approve the large composition of the NAC. (Shahbaz rana, [“6th census results get official nod after five-year gap,”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 16 March 2022)

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## **PROVINCES**

### **Sindh: PM Khan rules out governor’s rule in the province**

On 18 March, PM Imran Khan ruled out the possibility of governor’s rule in Sindh. Further, the government stated that it would petition the Supreme Court to seek a ruling on whether PTI defectors could lose their seats ahead of a no-confidence vote against PM Khan. (Syed Irfan Raza, [“PM Imran turns down summary on governor’s rule in Sindh,”](#) *Dawn*, 19 March 2022)

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Government directed**

### **to handover assets to newly elected tehsil governments**

On 17 March, Peshawar High Court while addressing a petition by Mardan city mayor Himayatullah Mayar for provision of several reliefs gave Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government a 10 days time to transfer movable and immovable assets of previous district governments to newly elected tehsil governments. The counsel asked court cognizance of oath conducted after the petition was filed. ([“PHC orders handover of assets to tehsil govts in 10 days,”](#) *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: PPP to conduct four rallies before second phase of election**

On 17 March, PPP announced that it will conduct four rallies in Chitral, Upper Dir, Malakand and Kurram. Bilawal Bhutto is to address the rallies. The announcement came after ECP barred PM Imran Khan and KP CM were scheduled to address a public meeting in Kurram district. As per a meeting consensus was arrived with ECP that no public holders will be allowed to attend meeting political rallies, only elected representative would be allowed to attend rallies. ([“PPP announces four rallies in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa,”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 18 March 2022)

### **Balochistan: Police and government employees clashed in Quetta**

On 17 March, at least three female public servants were injured when members of the Balochistan Grand Employees Association (BGEA) were trying to enter and stage a sit-in in the Red Zone but baton-wielding policemen tried to push them back. Spokesperson for the BGEA said: “The Injured women employees now have been discharged from the hospital.” Members of BGEA had staged a 12-day sit-in in Quetta last year. ([“Three female govt employees injured in clashes with police,”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 18 March 2022)

### **Punjab: First transpersons school in Lahore to opened soon**

On 16 March, Punjab School Education Department (SED) announced launching a transgender school in the Barkat Market of the provincial capital. This is the second such school after first was opened in Multan in July 2021. In another development, the Punjab Board of Technical Education and Tang Corporation for International Education and Technology launched a joint education programme for assessment and certification of the DAE-Dual Diploma. It will give education (in Pakistan) and training (in China) to Pakistani students. Two advanced courses such as the Diploma in Software Engineering and Advanced Construction Technology Specialisation in Road and Bridge Technology have been finalised at the start. ( "[First transpersons school to be opened in Lahore](#)," *Dawn*, , 17 March 2022)

### **Balochistan: Anti-harassment committees formed in the province**

On 16 March, while speaking at a dialogue on 'Gender and Racial Equality' organised by the FDI Pakistan, the Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Parliamentary Affairs and Chairperson of the Women Parliamentary Caucus Forum Dr Rubaba Khan Buledi shared that Balochistan government has set up anti-harassment committees in 17 departments of the province. She said, "Legislation is under way in Balochistan to bring the marginalised sections, including women, youths and transgenders, into the mainstream of development so that they could play a positive role in this regard." ("[Anti-harassment committees formed in Balochistan](#)," *Dawn*, 17 March 2022)

### **Sindh: Karachi's delimitation of local body constituencies attracts 267 objections**

On 16 March, Dawn reported that around 267 objections and representations on the delimitation of new local government constituencies in the seven districts of the city have been filed with the regional

election commissioner. The ECP is to announce the final list of union councils and wards on 24 March. The delimitation in the South district received 65 objects and representation, the highest among the seven districts. LG elections are likely to be held in May 2022. (Tahir Siddiqui, "[267 objections filed over new delimitation of Karachi's LG constituencies](#)," *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### **Punjab: PM Khan to launch Rs581 billion South Punjab Package**

On 15 March, The Express Tribune reported that PM Imran Khan is set to launch a Rs581 billion South Punjab development package. The package would cater to upgrading the ruined infrastructure, improve the power supply system, strengthen universities and give access to information technology. According to the Planning Ministry the package has been finalised with input from the government of Punjab, the South Punjab Secretariat and it has already been presented to PM Khan. ("[PM set to launch Rs581 billion South Punjab Package ahead of no-confidence vote](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Assembly passes KP Child Protection and Welfare (Amendment) Bill, 2022**

On 14 March, after lengthy discussion the bill was legislated, the bill seeks enhancement in child-related offences, including sexual abuse, pornography and dealing with organs. A controversial clause was dropped which mandated recording of execution of an offender after reservations voiced by civil society groups. The punishment legislated range from death sentence to imprisonment of life along with heavy fine. The police is to maintain a register of sexual offenders under the act. The government also introduced the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Press, Newspapers, News Agencies and Books Registration (Amendment) Bill, 2022 in the assembly. ("[Clause for filming child abusers' execution removed from KP govt](#)

[bill.](#)” *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 1,000 more Girl Community Schools**

On 14 March, while releasing their annual report, Elementary and Secondary Education Foundation (ESEF) pledged to set up 1,000 more Girl Community Schools in upcoming academic year. ESEF operates 2, 219 schools in 26 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ESEF is an autonomous body operating under mandate of Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. ESEF will start setting up middle and high schools on that pattern in the next two years. (“[1,000 more girls community schools to be set up in KP in upcoming academic year.](#)” *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

### **Balochistan: Three miners killed in Sorange coal field blast**

On 14 March, the gas blast took place due to accumulation of methane gas, as per the officials of the Pakistan Central Mines Labour Federation. The victims were identified as Abdullah, Naseebullah and Mirza Khan. It is second time in six months, such incident has taken place in the same area. An enquiry has been ordered into the incident. (Saleem Shahid, “[Three miners killed in Sorange coal field blast.](#)” *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

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## **ECONOMY**

### **On 11 March, Next IMF tranche hangs in the balance**

On 19 March, *Dawn* reported that the seventh review meeting between IMF staff and Pakistan to release USD 955 million could not come to a conclusion. IMF is concerned with tax amnesty, reduced tariff and petroleum levy as main hindrances in approval. One official said: “They agreed that there was no issue with the end-December data, but pointed out that the memorandum of economic and financial policies has to take into account the future outlook which should be clear about how the

fiscal deficit would look like and what would be the strategy to finance it in view of the prevailing uncertain conditions.” The 39 months EFF valued USD 6 billion by IMF has only cleared approximately half of the value and the program is to end in September 2022. (Khaleeq Kiani, “[Next IMF tranche hangs in the balance.](#)” *Dawn*, 19 March 2022)

### **FDI damped by 33 per cent on year-on-year basis in February month**

On 17 March, SBP released data on FDI inflows into the country. FDI rose by 6 per cent compared to the same period of last fiscal year. Surging oil prices topped the trade deficit to USD 11.6 billion. The SBP data showed FDI inflow in February this year was \$90.8m compared to \$137m during the same month in FY21; a decline of 33.6pc. However, portfolio investments bettered the increase by USD 134 million from USD 253 million. Despite the drop in Chinese investment to USD 384.5 million, the country retained its first position in the list of the countries investing in Pakistan. Investment from USA, UAE, Switzerland and Singapore figured at USD 175 million, USD 78 million, USD 80.4 million and USD 79 million respectively. (Shahid Iqbal, “[Foreign investment slides 33pc in February.](#)” *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### **Trade with EU doubled over last 9 years due to GSP scheme: Report**

On 17 March, the commerce ministry released an analysis on bilateral trade between European Union member countries and Pakistan after the implementation of the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) Plus scheme from January 2014. The bilateral trade went up by EUR went up 78 per cent to EUR 12.2 billion from EUR 6.9 billion in 2013. Exports from Pakistan to EU posted a figure of EUR 6.64 billion and Germany was the top destination of the exports at EUR 1.61 billion. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, “[Pakistan's trade with EU jumps 80pc since 2013.](#)” *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

### Government confident in getting through seventh review talks

On 16 March, The News International reported about the status of talks with IMF regarding the seventh review for the release of the seventh tranche under Extended Fund Program worth USD 6 billion. Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin said, “The IMF mission raised concerns over PM’s Relief Package on petrol, diesel and electricity prices as well as on tax amnesty for industrial sector but we explained them all aspects properly in details.” The report stated that the demand of IMF on raising petroleum levy and likely standoff due to the government providing subsidy on petroleum. The ongoing discussions are based on energy price reform, which seeks to bring electricity and gas prices in line with cost recovery along with the formulas placed in the amended NEPRA and OGRA Acts were also discussed. (Mehtab Haider, [“Pakistan hopes to pass 7th IMF review hands down.”](#) *Dawn*, 17 March 2022)

### Government slashes another PKR 100 billion from PSDP

On 17 March, The Express Tribune reported about the purported government’s decision to further cut in the public sector development program (PSDP), bringing the total reduction to PKR 300 billion this year. The PSDP is a development budget that goes into capital expenditures of the government in atomic energy, water resources, highway and energy transmission development. With this cut the ongoing projects will take longer time in completion, an average which is currently at eleven and a half years. The reduction in PSDP is in an understanding between IMF and the government. (Shahbaz Rana, [“Govt decides to cut PSDP by Rs300 billion.”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 17 March 2022)

### PKR 40 billion worth of energy bills stuck up with Pakistan Post

On 17 March, the power secretary is to chair an emergency meeting of electricity distribution companies, representatives of

the ministries of finance and communications, the Pakistan Post director-general and others to discuss the issue. Recently, power companies had to resort to expensive bank borrowing despite government guarantees to clear liabilities of fuel suppliers and power producers. Data shows that a total amount of PKR 35.34 billion of 10 electricity companies is stuck up with Pakistan Post while over PKR 4 billion is payable to other agencies like gas companies (Rs2bn each of SSGCL and SNGPL) and water supply agencies of Karachi, Lahore, Gujranwala and Faisalabad. (Khaleeq Kiani, [“Pakistan Post unable to clear Rs40bn electricity bills.”](#) *Dawn*, 17 March 2022)

### Economic Coordination Committee clears relief package for Ramzan and petroleum price differentials

On 15 March, as part of its 30-year-old practice of providing food subsidies for relief during Ramzan, the government cleared a subsidy of PKR 8.2 billion. The subsidy will be provided on flour, ghee, sugar, vegetable oil, besan, white gram, dal chana, basmati rice, dates, moong dal and sell rice. The subsidy will be applicable to the whole population through Utility Stores Corporation (USC). The government had allocated Rs6 billion for the Ramazan package for 2021-22. ([“ECC okays Rs8.2b Ramazan relief package.”](#) *The Express Tribune*, 16 March 2022)

Meanwhile, the ECC cleared the petroleum relief package, reviewed intervention price for the cotton crop, allowed the Ministry of Economic Affairs to sign 15 debt rescheduling agreements with 11 credit countries, finalised under the Debt Service Suspension Initiative (DSSI) for an amount of \$232 million. The meeting also decided to issue a sovereign guarantee amounting to PKR 21bn in favour of Faysal Bank Limited. The decision regarding Faysal Bank is regarding a new finance agreement with respect to pipeline infrastructure development project LNG-II by gas

companies. (Khaleeq Kiani, "[ECC allows another Rs12bn to absorb petroleum price differentials.](#)" *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

#### **Pakistan and IMF's seventh review discussion to continue indefinitely to strike consensus on critical issues**

On 14 March, both IMF and Pakistan authorities confirmed to The News International that timeframe for conclusion of seventh review negotiations was beyond sight as political uncertainties loom around. Staff level agreement will conclude when the fate of the no-confidence motion is decided. MF's Resident Chief Esther Perez Ruiz said: "the authorities and the IMF will continue to discuss recent developments and other measures to promote macroeconomic stability". Both sides are to strike consensus on memorandum of economic and financial policy (MEFP) framework under the IMF programme. MEFP is based performance criterion and structural benchmarks, the current relief package by PM has again point of contention to move ahead on concluding on MEFP. (Mehtab Haider, "[No-trust motion delaying agreement with IMF.](#)" *The News International*, 15 March 2022)

#### **ADB delegation begins their Pakistan visit**

On 14 March, Asian Development Bank (ADB) delegation led by Vice President Shixin Chen and comprising country director Yong Ye met Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Economics Affairs Minister to discuss scope of fiscal and technical support to Pakistan in new reform areas. A statement by the Ministry of Economic Affairs (MEA) said: "Both sides discussed new reform areas for ADB's assistance including domestic resource mobilisation, climate change and public-private partnerships." Currently 37 ADB funded projects worth USD 7.9 billion are under implementation in Pakistan. (Khaleeq Kiani, "[Asian Bank promises support for resource mobilization.](#)" *Dawn*, 15 March 2022)

#### **EXTERNAL**

#### **On ADB committed to incubation centers in long term**

On 18 March, Asian Development Bank (ADB) Vice President Shixin Chen explained that funding from the bank focused on SMEs, women entrepreneurship and eradication of poverty and the support was not similar like IMF during an interaction with the business community at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI). He appreciated the longstanding partnership of ADB and Pakistan and vowed to work in same spirits. Speaking on the occasion LCCI President Mian Nauman Kabir recalled the support ADB had given during covid times and for other social protection programs, he added, "We have great hopes attached with the government of Pakistan's vision for development and improvement of economic management, building resilience, boosting competitiveness and private sector development." Under a new partnership strategy for the period 2021-2025, the bank would support for structural reforms and project assistance in key sectors, including energy, transport, irrigation, agriculture, urban infrastructure and services, small and medium-sized enterprises and social development. Pakistan has committed up to USD 2.05 billion with ADB in the current financial year. ("[ADB's support different from IMF.](#)" *The Express Tribune*, 19 March 2022)

#### **Austria foreign minister to visit Pakistan**

On 16 March, The News International reported that Federal Minister for European and International Affairs of Austria, Alexander Schallenberg, will visit Pakistan from 16-19 March. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Austrian foreign minister will be accompanied by a business delegation during his four-day visit. ("[Austrian foreign minister to arrive in Pakistan today on 4-day visit.](#)" *The News International*, 16 March 2022)

### Pakistan donates humanitarian aid to Ukraine

On 15 March, FM Shah Mehmood Qureshi handed over relief items to the Ukrainian ambassador. The humanitarian aid of emergency medicines, electro-medical equipment, blankets, food items and other items of human needs was provided upon the request from the Ukrainian government. FM Qureshi while defending Pakistan's stance on balanced policy reiterated security concerns of Ukrainian neighbours as well as Russian security concerns of NATO expansion. ("[Pakistan dispatches humanitarian aid to Ukraine](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 16 March 2022)

### PM directs Ambassador-designate to the US to work on strengthening bilateral relationship

On 14 March, Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to the United States of America Masood Khan called on prime minister. PM wished the ambassador wishful luck and directed Ambassador Masood to correctly projecting Pakistan's foreign policy priorities. He also suggested the ambassador to take special effort on enhancement of trade, investment and public diplomacy. ("[PM asks envoy-designate Masood to strengthen Pak-US ties](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)

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## JUDICIARY

### IHC disposed of a petition seeking a ban on political gatherings amid the no-confidence motion

On 17 March, chief justice of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) disposed of a petition seeking a ban on political gatherings before and during the voting on a no-confidence motion against PM Khan. However, the chief justice warned that the interior minister and his subordinates will be held accountable in case of any misadventure. (Malik Asad, "[Onus on Sheikh Rashid, administration if things go bad: IHC](#)," *Dawn*, 18 March 2022)

## MILITARY

### COAS attends induction ceremony of self-propelled SH-15 artillery guns

On 15 March, COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa while attending the induction ceremony SH-15 self-propelled artillery guns in the Corps of Artillery said, "Induction of these most modern guns with increased range, battlefield mobility and accuracy would assuredly enhance operational preparedness of Pakistan Army." Further, he said that any misinformation and propaganda by 'inimical forces' threatens national cohesion and must be identified and countered collectively through a unified response. ("[Misinformation, propaganda must be identified, countered through unified response: COAS](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)

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## ON AFGHANISTAN

### Pakistan to recognise Taliban regime only once regional consensus is reached

On 19 March, Dawn reported that Islamabad's UN envoy Munir Akram stated that Pakistan would recognise the Taliban regime in Kabul when there's a consensus, especially among regional countries. The statement came as the question of recognition was brought up when the UN Security Council voted to establish formal ties with the Taliban-run Afghanistan without extending diplomatic recognition to the regime. During the voting, 14 of the council's 15 members voted for the resolution while Russia abstained. (Anwar Iqbal, "[Pakistan to recognise Taliban regime after regional consensus](#)," *Dawn*, 19 March 2022)

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## ON CLIMATE CHANGE

### Pakistan highlights the challenges of "gender parity and climate change" at the UN

On 14 March, The Express Tribune reported that Nilofar Bakhtiar, the Pakistani delegate to the 66th Session of Commission on Status

of Women while highlighting the challenges of “gender parity and climate change” said, “Climate change is one of the defining issues of our times,” adding, “Our climate policies are paying attention to the plight of women and gender differentials that emerge from climate change and the vastly different experiences men and women have as workers, breadwinners, caregivers, patients and parents through climate-induced stress.” (Malik Asad, “[Islamabad’s climate policies attentive to plight of women](#),” *The Express Tribune*, 16 March 2022)

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## ON INDIA

### FM Qureshi rejects Indian explanation on missile accident

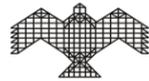
On 15 March, FM Shah Mahmood Qureshi rejected India’s latest explanation on the accidental firing of a missile into Pakistani territory. During a press conference, he said that Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh’s statement in the Lok Sabha was “insufficient” and “incomplete,” adding, “Pakistan cannot be satisfied with such inadequate explanations. I reject it and reiterate the call for a joint probe.” Additionally, he also questioned the US’s statement on the issue, saying it was too serious a matter to be taken lightly. (“[Islamabad rejects Indian explanation on ‘misfire’](#),” *Dawn*, 16 March 2022)

### Pakistan awaits India’s response on a joint probe into a missile accident

On 15 March, The Express Tribune reported that senior office said that Pakistan is thinking about different options in case India refuses to agree on a joint probe into a missile accident. According to the official, “We are still waiting for the Indian response,” adding, “We are looking at various options in case India refuses to agree on a joint probe.” (“[Pakistan weighs options if India refuses joint probe into missile fiasco](#),” *The Express Tribune*, 15 March 2022)



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