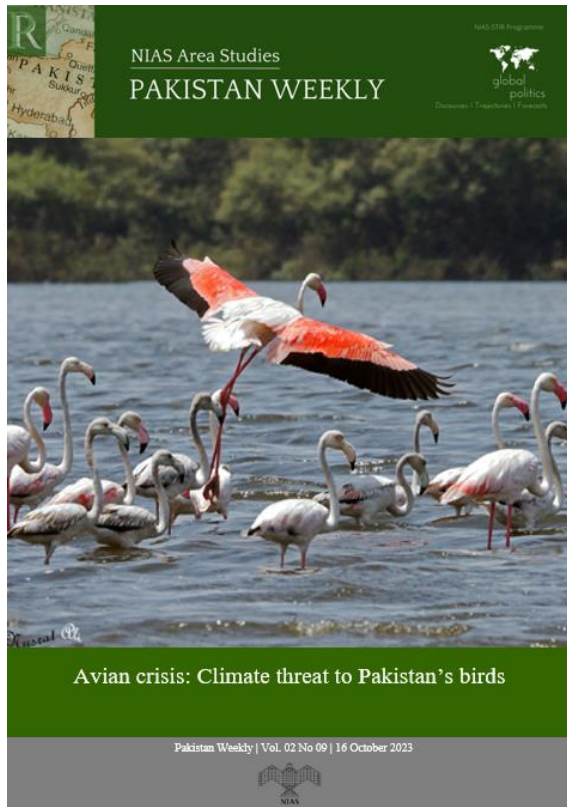


NIAS Area Studies PAKISTAN WEEKLY



Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh Ali Hajveri: On Sufi spirituality





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Global Politics is a primary focus of the NIAS Programme on Science, Technology, and International Relations (STIR). The primary focus is on contemporary world affairs. The Programme publishes *The World This Week*, and *NIAS Fortnightly on Science Technology and International Relations*.

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About NIAS Pakistan Reader

Pakistan Reader is an academic exercise at the National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) in the Indian Institute of Science Campus, Bangalore, India. The objective of its alert - "Pakistan Reader - Evening Brief" is to update the readers on contemporary developments within Pakistan, on a regular basis.

The PR Evening Briefs are a part of the focus on Pakistan at the International Strategic and Security Programme (ISSSP) within the NIAS.

PR Commentary

Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh Ali Hajveri: The illuminated path of Sufi spirituality

Dhriti Mukherjee

Sufism in the context of Pakistan and Islam Sufism has played a major role in shaping the spiritual and cultural history of Pakistan. In a country that is often characterised by rigid interpretations of Islam, Sufism paved the way for a counterbalance, through emphasis on spirituality, mysticism, and the pursuit of a direct connection with the divine. Moreover, Sufi philosophy and practices have contributed to the promotion of tolerance, interfaith harmony, and a deep reverence for humanity. Aside from the preachings, there have been significant contributions from the perspective of poetry and music. These creative contributions, which were revolutionary for their time, revolve around peace, humanity, and tolerance. This has resulted in the Sufi perspective being adopted for religions other than Islam.

In the broader context of Islam, Sufism has wielded a profound influence on the interpretation and practice of the faith. Sufi saints have helped further the image of Prophet Muhammad, thus forming a large Muslim society. Islamic tradition has been considerably influenced by the emphasis that Sufi saints place on love and spirituality. Additionally, Sufi scholars and mystics have contributed significantly to Islamic jurisprudence, theology, and philosophy, offering alternative perspectives on the faith. These themes have helped facilitate dialogues with other religious and philosophical systems.

In the context of Sufi mysticism, Hazrat Data Ganj Bakhsh Ali Hajveri is one of the most revered and influential Sufi saints in Pakistan's history. His life and teachings have revolved around themes of love, spiritual enlightenment, and profound wisdom. He believed that: "The world is a shadow, and God is the substance. The wise person does not chase shadows; he pursues the substance."

The origins and spiritual awakening of Ali Hajveri

Ali Hajveri was born in Ghazni (in present-day Afghanistan), an ancient city with a rich history of scholarship and spirituality, in the year 990 CE. He was born into a family that was devoutly pious and religious, characterising his childhood with a rich scholarly and theological heritage. This helped him to further his natural intellectual and religious curiosity. As he delved into the Quran, Hadith, law, and theology, Ali Hajveri demonstrated an

exceptional aptitude for understanding and interpreting Islamic teachings.

Claiming that "the spiritual path is a journey from the self to the Self," he embarked on a momentously spiritual journey in 1031 AD, through Persia, Syria, and Iraq. He took from each place a different understanding of Sufism, shaped through the lens of the country's individual cultures and spiritual practices.

He eventually reached Lahore, a hub of learning and culture, where amidst a vibrant intellectual milieu, Ali Hajveri found fertile ground to sow the seeds of Sufism. It was over here that he established himself as a teacher and preacher, speaking on love for God, spiritual guidance, purification of the soul, and compassion towards others.

Teachings of love, tolerance, and spiritual awakening

At its essence, Hajveri's doctrine revolves around the transformative efficacy of love and devotion. He firmly postulated that love for the Divine represents the ultimate wellspring of salvation and the anchor for spiritual enlightenment. His discernment of the complexities and nuances of Sufism took shape in literary form.

The central ideals of Hajveri's teachings reside in his magnum opus, "Kashf al-Mahjub," which can be translated as "The Revelation of the Veiled." This revered treatise encapsulates the doctrines of Sufism and is used contemporarily by those who wish to take on the course of understanding Sufi spirituality, self-discovery, and the quest for divine communion. The book, which illuminates the trajectory of Sufi spirituality, resulted in Hajveri being regarded as a preeminent authority of Sufism. His other notable seminal works include "Minhaj al-Din" (The Path of Religion) and "Adab al-Muridin" (The Etiquette of Disciples).

However, Hajveri's teachings are not limited to this, as he also highlighted how it was important to showcase a profound love for all of God's creations. His core values include compassion, inclusivity, and interconnectedness. A major pillar of his teachings is the ethos of tolerance. Hajveri held that a true seeker of the Divine must display tolerance when faced with a multitude of

perspectives and religious beliefs. This meant that tolerance goes beyond the domain of religious implications.

Besides this, Hajveri underlined the magnitude of spiritual awakening and self-purification. According to him, the journey toward God required upholding sincerity and unwavering devotion to the Divine. From his perspective, one had to be deeply introspective and display purity and authenticity during this journey.

Followers of Ali Hajveri

The followers of Hajveri, affectionately known as Data Ganj Bakhshis, are heterogeneous, as they belong to a wide spectrum of ethnic, cultural, and social backgrounds. Data Ganj Bakhshis shape their lives around Hajveri's emphasis on love as the path to God, thereby leading lives characterised by compassion and service to others.

However, the impact of Hajveri's teachings has spread beyond his shrine, with his followers engaging in acts of charity and community service, reflecting the Sufi emphasis on social responsibility. The main mission of his followers is to instil a positive change within society by upholding values of generosity and kindness.

These values have also had implications outside Pakistan. By preaching love, tolerance, and spiritual awakening, Hajveri has attracted diverse followers from outside Pakistan. For instance, he is deeply revered by Muslims in India (particularly in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh), Bangladesh, and Afghanistan, who make annual pilgrimages to his tomb shrine in Lahore, seeking blessings and guidance. Sufism in Iran and Turkey has been impacted by Hajveri's teachings, with many scholars studying his works.

Additionally, his works have gained increasing popularity and North America and Europe. The growing interest in Sufism in these areas has led to many of his texts being translated into English, making them accessible to a wider audience.

Enduring contributions to Sufism and Islamic mysticism

In a world that is becoming increasingly polarised, Hajveri's teachings and core values are being more regarded than ever. The ideals of universal love, tolerance, and spiritual awakening, being inherently transcultural and unconstrained by geographic confines, have attracted individuals from all walks of life. His teachings on ethical conduct and social responsibility are also highly relevant in today's world, with his followers looking at these values as

a message of unity and understanding.

The Data Darbar in Lahore remains a symbol of spiritual awakening and inclusivity, welcoming individuals of all backgrounds and beliefs. It serves as a testament to the enduring influence of Hajveri, offering solace and inspiration to all who seek it.

Multiple organisations are working in contemporary times based on the preachings of Hajveri. The Data Ganj Bakhsh Trust is working presently in Pakistan towards promoting peace and interfaith dialogue through education and social development programs. In India, the Data Ganj Bakhsh Foundation aims to spread Sufism and its message of love and compassion. Additionally, in the United States, the Data Ganj Bakhsh Circle fosters spiritual growth and community among Muslims and non-Muslims.

5 September 2023 marked the 980th annual Ur celebrations of Data Ganj Bakhsh at Lahore, where "fateha" was offered by visitors, along with special prayers for the solidarity of Pakistan. The event, which was inaugurated by the caretaker chief minister of Punjab and the former finance minister, will last for three days and will host devotees from all over the world. The Punjab Aqaf and Religious Affairs Department has allocated PKR 125 million for langer (free food) to devotees.

PR Short Note

CPEC Post-BRI Forum 2023: Agreements, security, and implications

By Dhriti Mukherjee



Source: X/Anwaar Kakar

On 20 October, Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar returned from Beijing, after attending the five-day Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Forum. During this meeting, Pakistan and China strengthened their longstanding partnership, thus signifying a renewed commitment to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It also resulted in various agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) being signed. Pakistan thereby gained a lot from the forum, securing its position as the 'key link' in Beijing's BRI. On the other hand, China asserted itself as a pioneer of "economic multilateralism and globalisation."

Agreements and MoUs

During Kakar's visit, he stated that "Pakistan views its ties with China as a longstanding strategic partnership," and on these lines, 20 agreements covering diverse sectors were signed. They centred around currency swapping, peace talks, infrastructure development, and even a lunar research station. Chinese President Xi Jinping believes that getting involved in different sectors would support an "upgraded version" of CPEC. A statement released after the visit underscored the commitment of both nations to support each other on issues vital to their core interests. Pakistan reaffirmed its adherence to the one-China principle and opposition to "Taiwan independence," signifying its strong alignment with China on sensitive geopolitical matters.

Furthermore, both countries witnessed the signing of an initial cooperation agreement on the lunar research station project. According to the China National Space Administration, the collaboration encompasses engineering and operational aspects of the Chinese lunar base program. This endeavour, combined with China's goal to send astronauts to the moon, underlines China's ambition to become a significant space power by 2030.

Security concerns

While China remains a vital ally and investor in Pakistan, Jinping and the Chinese foreign ministry voiced security concerns that they had. Pakistan has witnessed attacks on Chinese personnel and projects. Jinping emphasised the need for security guarantees, stating, "We hope the Pakistani side will guarantee the safety of Chinese institutions and personnel in Pakistan."

The future of CPEC

CPEC, often regarded as the flagship project of the BRI, is crucial for both nations. As Pakistan completes numerous projects under CPEC, there is a renewed focus on expanding the scope of this economic corridor. Both countries aim to enhance cooperation in various domains, including industrial parks, agriculture, mining, and new energy. Early implementation of major connectivity projects is also on the agenda. However, the issue of revenue distribution within CPEC has garnered attention.

Harsh V Pant's article, "Responding to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Challenge," suggested that China acquires 91 per cent of the revenue generated by CPEC, leaving Pakistan with a meagre nine per cent. Although specific data to substantiate this claim is not readily available, there are "growing voices in Pakistan that China seems to be a bigger beneficiary from CPEC than Pakistan." The Chinese view, on the other hand, as expressed by the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan Sun Weidong, is that the trade balance will only be rectified when Chinese companies produce those goods in Pakistan that have a Chinese demand.

An additional angle explored by Pant was the evidence that the "viability of CPEC requires India's participation." However, continued Indian opposition to this proposition "galvanized those who remain suspicious of Chinese motives behind Obor in Pakistan as well as in the rest of the world."

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PR Short Note

All set for Nawaz Sharif's homecoming

By Shamini Velayutham



Source: *The Nation*

On 19 October, Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was granted protective bail by the Islamabad High Court in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases until 24 October after the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) did not object to the petitions that were filed by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supreme leader before his scheduled return from self-imposed exile on 21 October. As part of its investigation into the Toshakhana case, an accountability court in Islamabad revoked the perpetual arrest warrants issued against the former prime minister in the graft cases involving a vehicle.

On 18 October, the petitions from the Nawaz were heard by a two-person Islamabad High Court (IHC) bench made up of Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb. Special prosecutors Muhammad Rafay Maqsood and Muhammad Afzal Qureshi appeared before the court together with Deputy Prosecutor General Naeem Tariq Sanghera. After that, the IHC made the decision public and prohibited the authorities from detaining Nawaz upon his return.

Where is the PML-N supremo now?

On 18 October, PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif arrived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) before his anticipated return to Pakistan. On 21 October, he will return to Pakistan after living in self-exile in London for four years. Despite having been given a prison term, he was permitted to fly. He was held up in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, for a crucial meeting, according to sources who spoke to Geo News, which caused him to arrive after a little delay. At the airport in Dubai, he was given "special protocol." Nawaz will spend his two days in Dubai with a small group of people before departing for Pakistan, travelling first to Islamabad and then to Lahore.

PML-N's responses

The PML-N is in control of the past, present, and future, according to the party's Senior Vice

President Maryam Nawaz Sharif, who spoke during a ceremony. The new party song, which details the party's historical upheavals, was formally introduced during the occasion by PMLN President Shehbaz Sharif. The people who had aimed to destroy Nawaz, according to Maryam Nawaz, are no longer involved. She thanked the Former Minister of Information Marriyum Aurangzeb, for his assistance in launching the anthem.

Meanwhile, Shehbaz Sharif expressed his heartfelt congratulations on the anthem's debut to Maryam, Marriyum Aurangzeb, and their entire team. He stated that the party's youth wing would give Nawaz Sharif a historic welcome on October 21. "We have to honour Nawaz Sharif by, according to him, the biggest welcome in the country's history. I also thank the party leaders for their efforts to stage a historic welcome for Nawaz Sharif," he insisted. Shehbaz added that Nawaz's homecoming was not an act of retribution but rather an effort to hasten the country's development and help it navigate its current challenges.

PPP and PTI contentions

The PPP and the PTI both argued that the IHC's decision to grant bail to the former prime minister was unlawful, and this did not sit well with the court. The ruling was described as a "murder of justice and law" in a statement made by the PTI spokesperson, who called it the "darkest day" in the nation's legal history. The PTI spokesperson recalled that although the country had waged a long and difficult battle for judicial independence, the court itself had damaged the rule of law and the administration of justice via its own "flawed and compromised" rulings. The spokesperson claimed that a section of the judiciary was acting as "an open facilitator in the ongoing political engineering". Separately, the PPP's leadership in Punjab said that "favours and concessions were being showered on a particular party as the caretaker government and some institutions were openly facilitating" the PML-N. They said that the protected bail granted to Mr Sharif was a first in legal history.

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Murtaza Ali Shah, "En route to Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif reaches Dubai," *The News International*, 19 October 2023

PR Short Note

Kakar reaffirms CPEC's future at the BRI forum

By Femy Francis



Source: BNN Breaking

On 18 October, Interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar reaffirmed Pakistan's resolves to further China -Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) while attending the third Belt and Road Initiative Forum (BRI) in Beijing, China. Kakar congratulated Beijing on the 10th anniversary of BRI and expressed the significance of the initiative being paramount for the world to advance connectivity and shared prosperity. He hoped that moving forward, the BRI would look into uplifting rural farmers, education and supporting small businesses. Kakar said: "This vision promotes cooperation, collective security, inclusive and sustainable development, and a balanced ecosystem as the only way to address global challenges."

Chinese Premier Li Qiang expressed his satisfaction and support for the steadily growing CPEC relations and noted the positive momentum the bilateral cooperation was heading towards. Pakistan is looking forward to continuing this engagement and even endorsed Chinese global vision and connectivity, said Kakar. He pointed the CPEC has played a vital role in generating new economic life and opportunity into Pakistan.

[Fifty projects accomplished under CPEC, says Kakar](#)

Interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar also announced at the meeting that USD 25 billion worth 50 project have come to fruition and have been completed under CPEC. He said that they successfully completed the construction of an airport at the southwestern Gwadar port. On 18 October, Chinese state media Xinhua reported of the "[China-funded airport in Pakistan to facilitate regional connectivity](#)" called Gwadar International Airport in Balochistan. The building of the expensive airport came under scrutiny comparing it to China funded airport in Nepal called Pokhara International airport, that is now saddling the debt owed to China. China has heavily invested in the area that stands crucial to the shipping route to the

Arabian Sea through the Strait of Hormuz, while the possibility of it becoming a vibrant route incurring revenue is questioned. Kakar also announced the plans to complete clean energy projects in four to five years.

Some of the major CPEC projects in Pakistan include the following:

- Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan
- Gwadar Eastbay Expressway
- China Hub Coal Power Project, Hub Balochistan
- Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant
- Sachal Wind Farm, Jhimpir, Thatta
- Karot Hydropower Project, AJK/Punjab

[Mainline-1 railway project signed between Islamabad and Beijing](#)

The highlight of the growing China-Pakistan collaboration at the BRI forum was the signing of the Mainline-1/ML-1 project worth USD 7 billion aiming to connect the Northwest city of Peshawar to the Southern port city of Karachi by establishing a 2,600-kilometer track. Secretary to Pakistan's Ministry of Railway Syed Mazhar Ali Shah stated that the project would transform the Pakistan transportation network and they would increase the railways market share from 2 per cent to 40 per cent while creating employment opportunities for 20,000 jobs.

[Kakar on Debt Traps](#)

Kakar dismissed the allegations that participation in BRI has led several countries to "Debt Trap" and stated that the Chinese model of development financing is without any conditionalities and is entirely different from any other traditional financial models of development. He vehemently opposed the claims that BRI financing leads to debt traps on the contrary he stated the vitality of BRI by calling it an "essential tool" to help countries, "in achieving comprehensive and inclusive development of their peoples."

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PR Daily Briefs

POLITICS



Source: Dawn

PTI wants the "bat" symbol to be assigned

On 20 October, PTI requested ECP to allot the "bat" as its electoral symbol for the upcoming general elections. The party, which has complained about the absence of fair competition, called the delay in the release of the election symbol "unjustifiable" and "intolerable." The excessive delay and non-issuance of the oral decision announced on 30 August raised many eyebrows, hence the ECP should soon issue its full written ruling pertaining to the party election symbol, according to a PTI spokeswoman in a press release. The watchdog had no legitimate reason under the law or the constitution to withhold the party's election symbol, the spokesman encouraged the watchdog to issue a comprehensive decision as soon as possible in accordance with the verbal order issued on 30 August. A farce, according to the spokesman, would be free, fair, and transparent elections "without the largest and most formidable political force of the country." He continued by saying that the "conspiracy to keep PTI out of the electoral arena on the state-mandated and unknown technical grounds" amounted to an assault on the nation's political system and constitution. ("PTI wants 'bat' symbol allotted to it without delay," Dawn, 21 October 2023)

SC to hear petitions opposing civilian military trials

On 20 October, a five-member Supreme Court bench will hear approximately a dozen petitions contesting the prosecutions of civilians in military courts on 23 October (Monday). Following the unrest on 9 May, the National Assembly issued a resolution calling for the rioters to be tried under the Army Act. Days later, the army had disclosed that military proceedings against "102 miscreants" were in progress. The bench is presided over by Justice Ijazul Ahsan and is composed of Justices Munib Akhtar, Yahya Afridi, Mazahar Ali Akbar Naqvi, and Ayesha Malik. The hearing is slated to

start on 23 October at 11:30 a.m., according to the cause list released by the Supreme Court. The PTI, former Pakistani leader Imran Khan, the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA), PPP politician Aitzaz Ahsan, former Pakistani Chief Justice Jawwad S. Khawaja, five members of the civil society, Junaid Razzaq, and Zaman Khan Vardag are among the parties who have filed arguments. (Haseeb Bhatti, "SC to take up pleas challenging military trials of civilians on Oct 23," Dawn 20 October 2023)

Pakistan Supreme Court may hear cases on trial of civilians by military courts and general elections

On 20 October, Dawn reported that Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa has hinted that the Supreme Court (SC) may take up important constitutional matters in the coming weeks. These matters include the trial of civilians by military courts and issues related to the holding of general elections. The court has been urged to fix the military court case as early as possible, as concerns have been raised about the trial of civilians commencing in violation of previous SC directions. The court is also considering a petition by PTI, seeking a direction for the announcement of a date for elections within 90 days of the dissolution of the National Assembly. (Nasir Iqbal, "CJP Isa may take up military court trial cases soon," Dawn, 20 October 2023)

100 protesting teachers and female healthcare workers arrest in Lahore

On 19 October, during a protest demanding the reinstatement of leave encashment, reversal of revisions to pension regulations, and cancellation of privatization plans for public schools, police arrested over 100 more teachers, lady health workers (LHWs), and other government employees. Aiwan-i-Adl to PMG Chowk was the route of a rally organized by the All-Government Employees Grand Alliance (Agega). A coalition of 34 organizations, including those from the health, education, and higher education ministries of government, continued to demonstrate against the Punjab government and the district administration over the detention of more than 200 teachers who were already in jail. ("Lahore police baton-charge protesting teachers and lady health workers," Dawn, 21 October 2023)

Pakistan Election Commission issues production orders for Imran Khan

On 19 October, the Election Commission of Pakistan issued production orders for Imran Khan to appear in contempt cases scheduled for a hearing on 24 October. The written order stated: "Since the respondent is in jail and his personal appearance is mandatory to proceed further with the matter. In such view of the matter, there is no alternative except to issue production order of respondent namely Imran Ahmed Khan Niazi." The production order directs that he be produced before the Election Commission of Pakistan on the specified date, after which he will be returned to jail. The cases involve charges of contempt of the Commission and the Chief Election Commissioner. Additionally, bailable warrants have been issued for former PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry for his non-appearance. (Iftikhar A Khan, "[Imran's production order issued in contempt cases](#)," *Dawn*, 20 October 2023)

Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari criticises Nawaz Sharif, urges Election Commission to announce polls date

On 18 October, PPP chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari criticised PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif for his return to Pakistan, stating that "the Constitution, election, and democracy were halted due to one person's return." Despite being partners in the previous government and demanding Nawaz Sharif's return, the PPP has raised concerns about special treatment for him. Zardari called for an end to the politics of division and abuse, stating that the delaying of elections, which had been a "bitter pill" for PPP to swallow, is a "disrespect" to the Constitution. He urged political parties to support the PPP's demand for the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to "immediately announce the date for the polls." He also emphasised the need for "new politics and new thinking" in Pakistan. ("[Election halted for one person,' Bilawal slams Nawaz](#)," *The News International*, 18 October 2023)

NAB has no objections as Nawaz requests bail through the IHC

On 18 October, Nawaz Sharif, the party's supreme leader, was granted protective bail in the Avenfield and Al-Azizia cases by the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in advance of his return from London on Saturday. A NAB counsel said that the accountability watchdog had no objections to the pleas made by elder Sharif. As a declared offender in the Toshakhana automobile case, Mr. Sharif also asked the accountability court to suspend the perpetual arrest orders that had been issued against him. Much sooner than the PML-N legal team, NAB Special Prosecutor Afzal Quershi entered the

courtroom. The prosecutor responded when the bench questioned him about the NAB's position on these petitions by saying that the NAB had "no objections" if Mr. Sharif decided to pursue the charges. ("[No objections' from NAB as Nawaz moves IHC for bail](#)," *Dawn*, 19 October 2023)

PTI call for "Grand National Reconciliation Dialogue"

On 17 October, PTI called for a "Grand National Reconciliation Dialogue" in a bid to revive the scattered PTI leadership. The statement came from the president's house where PTI leaders Raouf Hassan and Barrister Umair urged President Arif Alvi and the Interim Information Minister Murtaza Solangi to participate. The meeting aims to bring all stakeholders and leaders to discuss and reignite the party. The PTI leader Shafqat Mahmood met with the Murtaz and proposed the reconciliation dialogue and stated: "This dialogue is a must ahead of the upcoming polls to move forward in the right direction. Let's sit together and set a target for the next 10 years. Mr Solangi has agreed to the proposal." (Syed Irfan Raza, Zulqernain Tahir, "['Grand dialogue' floated to revive PTI's fortunes](#)," *Dawn*, 18 October 2023)

Nawaz Sharif's legal team sets protective bail precedent for his return

On 17 October, *Dawn* reported on the measures taken by the legal team for the PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif's return. The team has completed the procedures to sort protective bail from the Islamabad High Court over three cases of Avenfield, Al-Azizia and Toshkhana vehicle case. The confirmed date for his return is set to be 21 October where upon his return he will address a gathering of his supporters. One exception has been made by the IHC where procedurally one has to surrender to be granted protective bail, while for Nawaz the court has set a precedent before surrendering. The court will have two hearings one before his return and one after he has surrendered himself. (Malik Asad, "[Nawaz's legal team all set to move IHC for relief](#)," *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

SECURITY



Source: *The Express Tribune*

In the Lakki Marwat operation, four terrorists killed

On 20 October, the military reported that during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) that was conducted in response to reports of the presence of terrorists in the general area of Semu Wanda of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa's Lakki Marwat district last night, security forces killed at least four terrorists injured another, and captured another. Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) released a statement saying, "During the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, ultimately resulting in four terrorists being sent to hell, while one terrorist got injured and was apprehended by security forces." ("Four terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat operation," *The Express Tribune*, 21 October 2023)

Six terrorists, including a "high-value target," killed in a security operation in North Waziristan

On 19 October, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated that two "fierce encounters" between troops and militants in North and South Waziristan killed six terrorists. Of these, one was a "high-value target," namely terrorist ringleader Hazrat Zaman. As per the ISPR, Zaman was "actively involved in multiple terrorist activities in the area," making him a target of "law enforcement agencies." Three soldiers were also killed during the operation. "Sanitisation" is currently underway "to eliminate any terrorists found in the area." (Iftikhar Shirazi, "6 militants, including 'high-value target', killed in North Waziristan operation: ISPR," *Dawn*, 19 October 2023)

Pakistan Army Chief Visits PAF's "Indus Shield" Aerial Exercise 2023

On 19 October, Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir visited an operational air base of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to witness the "Indus Shield" 2023 aerial exercise. The exercise, featuring participation from 14 allied countries, aims to consolidate modern concepts of aerial warfare, foster cooperation, and enhance

interoperability among participating air forces. The Air Chief Marshal praised the Pakistan Army's support for PAF's modernisation efforts, stating: "The successful execution of an aerial mission requires the effective utilisation of all components of combat efficiency, including electronic warfare operations, force multipliers and support elements." The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) also commended the exercise, saying that it is "a testament to the unwavering commitment of Pakistan Air Force in bolstering regional security and fostering cooperation among allied nations." ("COAS visits PAF airbase to witness 'Indus Shield 2023' exercise," *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2023)

ECONOMY



Source: *White Star*

Short-term inflation at 35.4 per cent

On 20 October, according to newly disclosed government data, short-term inflation jumped to 35.4 per cent on an annual basis. The benchmark measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), increased significantly, primarily as a result of rising prices for power and staple foods. For six weeks running, the SPI has been above 30 per cent. Last week, the interim administration significantly reduced the cost of fuel items. In the next few weeks, the effects of these drop-in prices will be felt. Petroleum prices are expected to drop in the review scheduled for the end of the current month, according to analysts. Despite this, decreases in fuel prices do not consistently have an impact on transportation costs because there is no regulatory system. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, "Short-term inflation clocks in at 35.4pc," *Dawn*, 20 October 2023)

To preserve flight operations, PIA opts for plan B

On 20 October, International Airlines (PIA), which is currently experiencing a fuel shortage, continued with its backup plan of limited operations. The majority of the two-way flights operated by the state-run airline from Karachi to other cities were delayed in addition to continuing to be cancelled. Due to unpaid debts, Pakistan State Oil (PSO) has refused to supply jet fuel to the cash-strapped

Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), further aggravating the national flag carrier's dire financial situation. Two PIA flights, PK 308 and PK 368, from Karachi to Islamabad, were cancelled. Also, unable to take off were the national airline's flights from Karachi to Dammam, Muscat, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, and Quetta. ("PIA switches to plan B to maintain flight operation," *The Express Tribune*, 21 October 2023)

Various initiatives and programs: World Bank for upholding established deadlines

On 21 October, Business Recorder reported on The World Bank urging the implementing agencies to carefully follow the agreed timetables set for completion of various tasks after expressing worry over the delays in various projects. Pakistan's World Bank, Country Director Najy Binhasine, raised these issues during a recent meeting of the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) to discuss ongoing projects and initiatives in several industries. The Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure Project faced lengthy implementation delays due to budgetary allocation, slow decision-making, and delay in finalizing procurement as, despite approval of revised PCI, the signing of the Subsidiary Grant Agreement (SGA) is still pending. To support the service delivery program, public financial management and accountability were discussed. During the meeting, it was announced that the Finance Division had confirmed the accomplishment of DLRs totalling USD16 million. (Mushtaq Ghumman, "Different projects/programmes: World Bank for adhering to agreed timelines," *Business Recorder*, 21 October 2023)

CPPA requests additional fuel cost adjustment amid record domestic fuel usage

On 19 October, the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) in Pakistan filed a request for an additional fuel cost adjustment (FCA) of approximately 55 paise per unit for ex-Wapda distribution companies. This comes despite a record 77 per cent of electricity generation in September originating from cheaper domestic fuels. The proposed FCA would seek to generate an extra PKR seven billion from consumers. This request raises concerns about the potential impact on consumer electricity bills. Nepra has scheduled public hearings to assess the proposed increase in line with monthly FCA mechanisms and the economic merit order. ("Central Power Purchasing Agency seeks 55-paise FCA for Discos," *Dawn*, 20 October 2023)

Private airlines increase fares amid PIA fuel crisis, charging up to 30 per cent more on domestic flights

On 19 October, *The Express Tribune* reported that in light of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) fuel crisis, private air carriers have raised their fares by up to 30 per cent on domestic flights. With PIA's domestic flight schedule disrupted, passengers are now paying significantly higher prices for one-way and return tickets on private airlines. This comes as PIA faces serious financial challenges, including payment issues with the Pakistan State Oil (PSO), leading to flight cancellations and delays. Private airlines have been quick to adjust their fares, affecting domestic travellers in Pakistan. ("Private airlines up fares as PIA in a fix," *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2023)

Cotton production rises by 22 per cent to approximately 6 million bales

On 18 October, according to data from the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association, cotton production had climbed by 22 per cent as of 15 October compared to the crop's overall production the year before. However, Sindh saw an unprecedented 84 per cent gain in cotton production during this time, whereas Punjab saw a 16 per cent decline. 5.99 million bales of cotton, or 1.08 million more than the total production of the previous cotton season, had arrived in the nation's ginning plants by 15 October. 3.45 million bales of cotton arrived in Sindh, which is 84 per cent greater than the province's whole lint production for the previous year. According to the Cotton Ginners Forum chairman Ihsanul Haq, heavy whitefly attack on the crop, which caused cotton production to remain significantly below expectations and raise concerns that this year's total domestic production of cotton will be 9 million bales rather than the revised target of 11.5 million bales, was to blame for the decline. According to him, the primary cause of this reality is the persistent decline in the value of the dollar over the past month, together with the ongoing rise in the cost of electricity and gas, while reimbursements for textile exporters totalling more than Rs700 billion remain unpaid despite numerous assurances. ("Cotton production jumps 22pc to almost 6m bales," *Dawn*, 19 October 2023)

PIA flights to return after fuel finance confirmed

On 18 October, after acquiring funding for the purchase of gasoline, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) declared that the severely disrupted flight schedule had returned to normal. After securing funding for fuel provision, a PIA official said that the flight schedule is gradually returning to normal. He said that the airline was able to raise

money on its own, and that as of today, 19 October, flights should resume as usual. In the upcoming days, he noted, it is anticipated that the flight schedule will continue to improve. The flawless operation of flights on international major routes, including those to Toronto, Saudi Arabia, Istanbul, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai, is PIA's main priority. According to the official, the PIA expressed apologies for the difficulty that recent flight delays had caused to its passengers. (Mohammad Asghar, "PIA flights start operating after fuel funding secured," *Dawn*, 19 October 2023)

12.3 per cent dip in petrol prices

On 17 October, an editorial in *Dawn*, 'Decrease in oil prices' reported that there has been of 12.3 per cent 4.7 per cent decline in the prices of petrol and diesel. This comes as a sigh of relief for the inflation-stricken population of Pakistan, but it is unlikely that this would lead to any massive change in the inflation of the country. Within this month the government has cut the cost of fuel prices twice but as reported by the Sensitive Price Index it did not bring any significant change in curbing surging inflation. However, it is understood that stable fuel prices bring larger stability to the market and can aid in slowing down the surging costs. ("Decrease in oil prices," *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

Fourteen PIA domestic flights were cancelled over halted fuel supply by PSO

On 17 October, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) cancelled 14 domestic and international flights and delayed 12 flights owing to the restricted fuel supply. The loss incurred by airlines have over the years accumulated sizeable dues and due to the non-payments, the flights had to be cancelled. The PIA spokesperson stated that due to the limited fuel supply to PIA owing to operational reasons. Pakistan State Oil (PSO) has halted its supply of fuel to the public entity over non-payment of dues. (Mohammad Asghar, "Fuel payment dispute disrupts PIA flights," *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

PSO receivables amount to PKR 755 billion

On 16 October, *Dawn* reported that Pakistan State Oil has a record PKR 775 billion receivables if affecting its business. The financial report submitted to the government states that Pakistan's largest fuel supplier has 90 per cent of its funds stuck with government bodies and entities. The largest share of receivables is held up with Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Ltd estimating the due to be PKR 478 billion. PSO is the largest fuel supplier in the market owning 50 per cent of shares in petroleum products and 49 per cent is shared by oil

marketing companies. The report highlighted that last year PKR 40 billion in profits were lost to keep the operations running owing to non-payment by the government enterprises. (Khaleeq Kiani, "PSO receivables cross Rs755bn," *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

UK firm interested in procuring Shell Pakistan

On 16 October, Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) announced that a UK-based firm Prax Overseas Holdings Ltd has expressed their interest in buying shares of the company. The firm proposed to buy 77.42 per cent shares of Shell. In June SPL announced its plans to disinvest of 77.42 per cent stake in the company aiming to "simplify" its global portfolio. The Shell Petroleum Company Ltd is the only biggest shareholder in the Pakistan firm and the public owns 15.2 per cent. It is assumed that the parent company Shell Petroleum Company wanted to halt the local operation and sell its stake over the incurring loss acquired during 2022 owing to the dip in exchange rates, devaluation of the currency and overdue debts. ("UK firm shows interest in buying Shell Pakistan," *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

Iesco fines PKR 1.9 million against electricity thieves

On 15 October, The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (Iesco's) fined 43 electricity defaulters and thieves of PKR 1.9 million. The anti-electricity pilferage campaign of 2023 kickstarted under the Ministry of Energy has found the usage of 2,000 illegal meters either tampered with or slowed down. The FIR issued stated that "Fines of more than Rs137 million were imposed on the consumers by charging for more than 2.8 million units. As many as 434 FIRs were also registered and 336 electricity thieves were arrested by the police." The Chief Executive Officer Dr Mohammad Amjad Khan reaffirmed their conviction to make the campaign a 100 per cent success and urged the citizens to inform of the defaulters through the Iesco helpline. ("Prs1.9m fine imposed on power pilferers," *Dawn*, 18 October 2023)

EXTERNAL



Source: ISPR

US imposes sanctions on three Chinese companies selling Pakistan ballistic missile parts

On 20 October, in a significant move, the US imposed sanctions on three Chinese businesses for giving Pakistan ballistic missile components and technology. The US State Department stated in the designation that the restrictions were being implemented as a part of the international nonproliferation framework. According to a statement from the US State Department, "Today, we are designating three entities in accordance with Executive Order (EO) 13382, which targets those who spread WMDs and their delivery systems. The three organizations, according to the US, are based in China and worked to provide Pakistan with things that could be used as missiles. General Technology Limited, Beijing Luo Luo Technology Development Co Ltd., and Changzhou Utek Composite Company Ltd. are among the organizations that have received sanctions. ("US Sanctions 3 Chinese Firms That Provided Ballistic Missile Components To Pakistan," *The Friday Times*, 20 October 2023)

Japan provides fourth grant aid project worth JPY 794 million to schools in Sindh

On 19 October, *The Express Tribune* reported that Japan has announced that it will provide grant assistance worth JPY 794 million to help the reconstruction of educational facilities in the flood-affected areas of Sindh. There was a signing ceremony for the same in Islamabad, which was attended by Pakistani and Japanese officials, including the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Wada Mitsuhiro. Mitsuhiro stated that Japan was committed to supporting education in all flood-prone areas of Pakistan, saying that he is hopeful that the grant would allow children to continue studying. The Chief Representative of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), Kinoshita, who was also in attendance, explained that the aid was intended towards building a brighter and more resilient future generation of Pakistan. ("\$5.3m Japanese grant for Sindh's schools," *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2023)

Pakistan Refinery Limited strikes long-term oil deal supply with Russia, secures Chinese investment

On 18 October, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between the United Energy Group of China and Pakistan Refinery Limited, for investment worth USD 1.5 billion in Pakistan's petroleum sector. Furthermore, signed a significant long-term oil supply contract with Russia, marking a significant development in Pakistan's energy sector. These agreements connect the refinery with two major countries, Russia and China, strengthening its position in the international energy landscape. The expansion project aims to double PRL's refining capacity, focusing on producing cleaner and environmentally compliant fuels while eliminating the production of loss-incurring furnace oil. (Zafar Bhutta, "PRL clinches long-term oil supply deal with Russia," *The Express Tribune*, 19 October 2023; "Petroleum sector: Pakistan, China sign MoU on \$1.5bn investment," *Business Recorder*, 19 October 2023)

Committee to investigate 12,000 fake Pakistani passports to Afghan citizens

On 19 October, *The News International* reported that Saudi Arabia had sent 12,000 false Pakistani passports belonging to Afghan citizens to the Pakistani Embassy. A five-member committee to look into the allegations of these fake identity cards being issued has been formed. The committee, which is being headed by the Passport and Immigration Directorate DG Mustafa Jamal and includes senior ministry, Nadra, and FIA officers, will give recommendations in 15 days on how to prevent this issue from recurring. ("Saudi Arabia sends 12,000 passports of Afghan citizens to Pak embassy," *The News International*, 19 October 2023)

Pakistan shelves long-term oil import deal with Russia

On 18 October, *The Express Tribune* reported on the Pakistani government's decision to abandon plans for a long-term oil import deal with Russia under a government-to-government arrangement (G2G). In place of this, it has allowed refineries to engage in direct commercial agreements with Russian companies. Delays in establishing a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) for crude oil imports were among the reasons for this change. An official of the Pakistan Refinery Limited stated that "The import of Russian crude via SPV involves high risks." Private-sector refineries have already imported Russian oil, prompting the government to pursue commercial agreements without G2G involvement. This decision aims to

diversify energy sources and reduce risks associated with G2G deals, as experts believe that oil imports from Russia were a gable due to the absence of diligence being conducted by the previous government. (Zafar Bhutta, "[Plan for G2G oil deal with Russia shelved](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 18 October 2023)

Pakistan and Turkey aim to boost bilateral trade to USD five billion in one-two years

On 18 October, *The Express Tribune* reported on a statement by Turkey's Ambassador to Pakistan, Dr Mehmet Pacaci, who said that Pakistan and Turkey can increase bilateral trade to USD 5 billion within one to two years and eventually reach USD 20-25 billion in the long term. Pacaci highlighted the importance of making "full use of mutually shared multilateral platforms like the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO)." He also discussed introducing "two more visa categories including tourist visa and business tourism visa." FPCCI President Irfan Iqbal Sheikh emphasised the potential for Pakistan to export IT services to Turkey, stating that they "should capitalise on opportunities made available by Pakistan's inclusion into the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) convention." Sheikh stated that this could help reduce Pakistan's ongoing trade deficit. (Gohar Ali Khan, "[Turkiye eyes \\$5b trade in next two years](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 18 October 2023)

COAS expresses concern over Gaza-Israel conflict during 260th Corps Commanders' Conference

On 17 October, the Pakistani military leadership expressed deep concern about the Gaza-Israel conflict during the 260th Corps Commanders' Conference. Chief of Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir extended "diplomatic, moral and political support of the Pakistani nation" to Palestine, amid apprehension over adverse developments and the significant human cost being imposed on innocent civilians. The forum also paid tribute to the sacrifices made by security forces and law enforcement agencies, affirming that the Pakistani Army would continue to "provide all-out support to the government and LEAs in taking strict lawful actions against illegal economic activities across the country." After a briefing on how this conflict could affect national security, participants reinstated the Pakistani Army's commitment to defending the "sovereignty and territorial integrity of Pakistan against all kinds of direct and indirect threats." ("[Army backs Palestinians in Israel-Gaza conflict](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 17 October 2023)

Pakistan shifts to commercial imports of Russian crude oil, scrapping SPV plan

On 17 October, Pakistan decided to abandon plans for a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for importing Russian crude oil, choosing instead to have refineries import Russian crude on a commercial basis. The SPV plan, which would have involved depositing gains from discounted Russian crude to benefit consumers, was shelved due to a lack of substantial reduction in consumer prices. Under the new approach, refineries will import Russian crude and the government will benefit from the 46 per cent tax deposited by the refineries in the national exchequer. Pakistan plans to import more Russian crude oil in the future. (Tanveer Malik, "[Pakistan drops plan for SPV to import Russian oil](#)," *The News International*, 18 October 2023)

Pakistan to dispatch humanitarian aid to Gaza amid Israeli aggression

On October 16, Pakistan's Foreign Office (FO) announced that the government would "immediately dispatch humanitarian relief assistance to Gaza, to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian brothers and sisters." Pakistan is collaborating with organizations such as the Palestinian Red Crescent Society, relevant United Nations agencies, and the government of Egypt to deliver aid to the Palestinians. US President Joe Biden has also expressed support for a humanitarian corridor to allow people to flee the war-hit area and deliver essential aid. ("[Pakistan to send humanitarian aid to Gaza amid Israeli aggression](#)," *The News International*, 16 October 2023)

BRI



Source: PID

Anwaarul Haq Kakar invites Chinese investment in Pakistan's energy sector

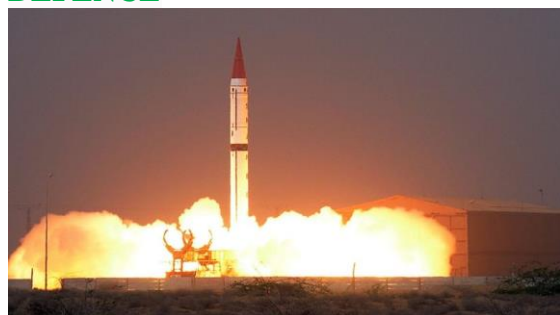
On 17 October, at the 3rd Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for International Cooperation conference, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar invited Chinese investment in solar parts to "support Pakistan's endeavours for climate action and also help reduce the energy import bill." He highlighted Pakistan's "steadfast" friendship with

China, expressing interest to learn from Chinese models for building industrial parks and special economic zones. Kakar appreciated CPEC, describing it as “a catalyst for job creation, poverty alleviation, and rural revitalisation.” He additionally announced Pakistan’s willingness towards “drawing new partners” to join them in benefitting from CPEC. (“[Pakistan seeks investment in solar parks to cut energy bill](#),” *Dawn*, 18 October 2023)

Interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar meets Putin President at BRI forum

On 17 October, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar met Russian President Vladimir Putin during the third Belt and Road Forum (BRF) for Inter-national Cooperation in Beijing. Both leaders discussed the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in trade, defence, and regional peace and security. Kakar illustrated the mutual interest both countries had in terrorism, calling for cooperation in the areas of intelligence, defence, and counter-terrorism. He also invited Russian investment in Pakistan’s energy sector, after a “fruitful and constructive engagement with the Russian team” during a Russian Energy Week event he attended recently. Putin, highlighting 75 years of bilateral relations between both countries, cited the potential for boosting economic and trade relations. (“[PM Kakar, Russian President Putin review defence, trade ties during meeting in Beijing](#),” *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

DEFENCE



Source: ISPR

Successful flight test launch of Ababeel weapons system conducted in Pakistan

On 18 October, Pakistan successfully conducted a flight test of the Ababeel weapon system to revalidate designs, technical parameters, and performance evaluations of the system’s sub-sections. The Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) stated that the test also served the objective of “strengthening deterrence and enhancing strategic stability in the region through the operationalisation of Full Spectrum Deterrence in the overall construct of Credible Minimum Deterrence.” The

Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, senior officers of the Strategic Plans Division and Strategic Forces Command, and other scientists were in attendance for the launch. The members of Strategic Forces were also commended by the President and Prime Minister of the country. (Iftikhar Shirazi, “[Pakistan conducts successful flight test of “Ababeel” weapon system](#),” *Dawn*, 18 October 2023)

SOCIETY



Source: Dawn

The number of out-of-school children in Pakistan surged past 28 million

On 17 October, *Dawn* reported that despite promises by successive governments to enrol out-of-school children, the number of such children in Pakistan continues to increase significantly, surpassing 28 million. An official document from the education ministry reveals the alarming figure, which has raised concerns about the country’s education policies. In 2021, the government reported 18.7 million out-of-school children, but the number has continued to rise. The then Federal Education Minister, Shafqat Mehmood, said that there was “very slow progress on education participation, completion and closing of the gender gap.” Factors such as poverty and lack of awareness contribute to this issue. A schoolteacher in Islamabad said that “kids do labour work to help their families,” meaning that they will continue dropping out after enrolling until the issue is resolved. (Kashif Abbasi, “[Despite lofty claims, out-of-school children soar to over 28 million](#),” *Dawn*, 17 October 2023)

PROVINCES



Source: *The Economic Times*

Sindh/ Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Pakistan proposes a significant gas price increase for all consumers

On 20 October, *The Express Tribune* reported that in a summary prepared for review by the Economic Coordination Committee, the Petroleum Division of Pakistan proposed an increase in gas prices for all categories of consumers, with the change set to take effect from 1 October 2023. The proposal also suggests mixing 25 per cent locally produced gas and imported liquefied natural gas (LNG) for supply to export-focused industries. As a result, gas prices are expected to become more expensive for provinces such as Sindh and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), both major gas-producing regions, while export sectors will benefit from cheaper gas prices. There are concerns that this approach may lead to litigation between provinces and the federal government, particularly given the existing opposition to subsidised gas supplies to certain areas. (Zafar Bhutta, "[Sindh, K-P to pay more for gas](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 20 October 2023)

Balochistan: Public gatherings banned and highway blockades in the Red Zone

On 15 October, the Balochistan Home and tribal affairs department-imposed restrictions on public gatherings, rallies, and road blockades in the Red Zone of the province under Section 144 of the

Criminal Procedure Code. The ban includes gatherings of more than five individuals on national highways, other roads, and within the Red Zone areas. In Quetta, no approvals will be given for public meetings and processions along specific routes. This move is aimed at maintaining law and order and ensuring the free flow of traffic in these areas. (Saleem Shahid, "[Govt bans rallies in Balochistan](#)," *Dawn*, 16 October 2023)

Sindh: The Karachi Circular Railway project advances

On 17 October, the interim Chief Minister of Sindh, Justice Maqbool Baqar, discussed the Karachi Circular Railway (KCR) project with Vice President Li Samaa of the China Railway Construction Company (CRCC) during the "Third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation" in Beijing. They have agreed to resolve issues related to Right of Way (RoW) and the issuance of a sovereignty guarantee to facilitate the commencement of the long-awaited KCR project. The updated feasibility study for the KCR project has been submitted to the China Railway Authority, and it involves a 43.2-kilometre circular route aimed at reducing traffic congestion and air pollution in Karachi. The project will have 24 stations and is a key infrastructure project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). (Tahir Siddiqui, "[Sindh govt, Chinese firm agree on Karachi Circular Railway operation](#)," *Dawn*, 18 October 2023)



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