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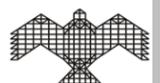


**Aurat March 2022: New Manifesto, Old Challenges**

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## Daily Focus, 1 March 2022

### Aurat March 2022: New Manifesto, Old Challenges

*While the Aurat March is gaining support, there are also challenges as it gets ready for the fifth annual on 8 March 2022*

Sneha M



Image Source: Dawn

The Aurat March, being one of the largest women's demonstrations, has evoked various responses from the people. The March has become important for Pakistan's women in recent years. They are among the prime revolutions in Pakistan, focusing on creating an egalitarian society drawing examples and inspirations from similar protests and countless insightful stories.

While the Aurat March rejoice and strive to enlarge women's social space, there has been a constant resistance to what they want to achieve. Some see the March as a means to address the suffering of women and minorities; others see it as a breach of Pakistan's culture and customs. Over the last few years, the conservative and Islamist organisations have intensified their opposition to gender issues significantly.

#### Context, Complexities and Challenges

In 2018, a group of young feminists founded Aurat March, which has now become a big platform for women in Pakistan to address gender issues and create an awareness. The Aurat March takes place every year on 8 March, on International Women's Day. It is individuals from all walks of life joining together to end the patriarchal culture resulting in significant gender disparities. However, the fundamentalists accuse the

movement of being a "Western campaign" aimed at promoting "profanity" in Pakistan. In 2021, the Aurat March supporters in Islamabad were pelted with stones by right-wing opposition who had staged a counter-protest on the same day. The cops did little or nothing to deter the attack, and the government's decision to allow the opposition to gather in the same venue added to the tension in a space that was supposed to be peaceful.

In 2022, the opposition to the proposed Aurat March has already begun. In February, the Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Noorul Haq Qadri wrote to the Prime Minister requesting to celebrate International Women's Day as International Hijab Day. He claimed that such a decision would show solidarity with Muslim women worldwide who are fighting for religious freedom and basic human rights.

He has also asked the government not to allow any organization or individual to raise "anti-Islam slogan" during the proposed Aurat March. He argued that no group should be allowed to challenge or ridicule Islamic beliefs, societal norms, hijab, or Muslim women's modesty during the Aurat March or any other event organised in connection with International Women's Day, as these gestures damage the sentiments of Muslims in the country.

Religious political parties, in addition to the minister's viewpoint, have taken similar positions. The President of the Islamabad section of Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) has expressed objection to the Aurat March, and has threatened to use "force" to stop it. The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) has also spoken out against the Aurat

March, alleging that it violates societal and Islamic values.

The Aurat March manifesto 2022: Five major takeaways

Despite the opposition, frontline leaders of the Aurat March presented their manifesto on 19 February. It is centred on the idea "Reimagining Justice."

The manifesto calls for a fundamental rethinking and structural revision of the state's notions of justice.

The manifesto looks at the following aspects.

First, the manifesto looks at the judicial system and gender minorities. The manifesto contains examples of how women and gender minorities have been treated in court, emphasizing the existing system's failure to protect assault survivors. The raping of a woman inside a judge's chamber in Sindh, lawyers resorting to physical violence against a woman in court in Malir Cantt, and the acquittal of the killer of Qandeel Baloch are few examples of how the criminal justice system is intrinsically flawed.

Second, the manifesto explores minimum wages. Workers should be paid a living wage depending on their provision of safe housing, decent education, and reasonable healthcare for themselves and their families, whether they work in factories, on farms and homesteads, in homes as domestic workers, or as sanitation workers. As a first measure, the manifesto calls for the minimum wage to be reinforced across all industries, with any actors who refuse to pay it being penalized under the law.

Third, the manifesto looks at social and financial security. In light of the care labour, they undertake and the financial abuse they face, the manifesto insists that women be provided with social security and protection through increased benefits, such as stipends.

Fourth, the manifesto addresses the need for environmental justice. It argues "climate change has created a food security crisis and food insecurity is a feminist issue," because, women are more prone to suffer from malnutrition and lack of access to food due to patriarchal household systems and gender discrimination.

Fifth, the manifesto iterates economic justice. It claims that Pakistan is amidst an economic crisis underpinned by a crisis of capitalism, indifference and patriarchy. Excessive borrowing from the IMF by the current government and its inability to fulfil IMF's demands has also put more pressure on the citizens. Hence, the manifesto advocates that the poor and marginalized should not face the burden of IMF-driven policies.

In conclusion, the manifesto believes that instead of short-term remedies, it urges systemic reforms to prevent patriarchal violence. It necessitates a paradigm shift in preventative strategies through education, community building, and social welfare at the forefront. Though some of the demands are far-sighted to achieve, striving to reimagine and address societal paradoxes, need immediate action and undivided support.

The suppressed have made their case. Women's suffering experiences must be heard across the country, both rural and urban areas, as this requires patience, compassion, and understanding from all kinds of individuals. Is Pakistan prepared to pool its resources to fight for the right cause, women's rights?

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## Daily Focus, 2 March 2022

### The return of cricket: From the PSL to Australia in Pakistan

*The completion of the PSL 2022 and the arrival of the Australia team should be a new start. Will Pakistan ensure it does not become a false start?*

D Suba Chandran



Image Source: Dawn

The Indian subcontinent is crazy about cricket. Despite the COVID restrictions, the passion for the game remains the same; perhaps, it has become the only good news amidst the COVID gloom in South Asia. Pakistan should have two extra reasons to celebrate vis-à-vis cricket. First, the successful completion of the Pakistan Super League, and second the arrival of the Australian cricket team. Will Pakistan sustain the new momentum, or will it become another false start?

#### PSL and return of the cricket

Following the success of the IPL in India, numerous other cricket leagues came into being in South Asia. Though Bangladesh and Sri Lanka also have their cricket leagues attracting outside players, PSL in Pakistan is the second-largest cricket league in South Asia, after India's IPL.

Unlike the previous editions, the PSL saw

all the games being played in Pakistan this year. The primary issue was not COVID but the security situation within the country. Karachi and Lahore hosted all the league and final matches. Clearly, Pakistan was confident that the security situation was improved and decided to host all the games within Pakistan. Perhaps, it was felt that the condition outside Lahore and Karachi are not satisfactory enough to conduct matches. Since the PSL leagues have their headquarters in Peshawar (Zalmi), Islamabad (United), Multan (Sultans) and Quetta (Gladiators), it is only fair that the matches are held in all these cities.

The landing of Australia in Pakistan to play three tests, three one-dayers, and a T-20 match should highlight the confidence within Pakistan and outside. For Pakistan's cricket, this should be a welcome development. In terms of venues, like the PSL matches, Pak-Australia games are likely to be held mainly in Karachi and Lahore; Rawalpindi is the only addition. Pakistan has hosted international matches in other venues – from Peshawar to Quetta in KP and Balochistan, and numerous towns within Punjab – Sialkot, Multan and Faisalabad. It appears the State is yet to become confident to host matches in other venues, even within the Punjab province.

Outside the matches, there was a controversy over the abrupt exit of

Australian player James Faulkner over the contract and payment. Faulkner had complained that the PCB “continued to lie” to him about his contract and payment. However, the issue did not snowball into a crisis.

Shaheen, Rizwan and Fakhar: The rise of new and young warriors

While the PSL 2022 had a good mix of young talents and veterans playing, it witnessed the rise of a few young players. Shaheen Shah Afridi (captain of the winning Lahore Qalandars), Mohammad Rizwan (captain of the losing Multan Sultans), Fakhar Zaman (opening batsman for the Lahore Qalandars), and Shadab Khan (allrounder for the Islamabad United) are some of the success stories this PSL.

Shaheen Shah is 21 years, and Shadab is 23. Rizwan, the wicketkeeper, captain and opening batsman for the winning Lahore Qalandars, is one of the most prolific and consistent batsmen, not only during the PSL 2022 but also in Pakistan’s international matches in recent years. Though he is not as young as Shaheen and Shadab, at 29, he still has enough cricket in him. With Babar Azam (who unfortunately had a bad series – both as an individual batsman and as the captain of Karachi Kings, who lost very badly) and Fakhar Zaman, Pakistan’s top order lineup today should be as good as Saeed Anwar-Aamir Sohail era.

In this context, the PSL should be a success in providing local talents to emerge.

Shahid Afridi, Mohammad Hafeez and Shoaib Malik: End of an era

If the emergence of young players is a feature of the PSL 2022, it also saw Shahid Afridi finally calling it a day. A magnificent player of his era, he had already retired from international cricket. He continued playing for the PSL; but finally hanged the boots. Yesterday, on 1 March 2022, he turned 42; it is time. Well played Afridi.

In retrospect, along with Shoaib Akhtar, another extremely talented player, the two could have really taken Pakistan’s cricket to the next level. There was so much potential in these two players; would they be satisfied with what they had achieved, given their natural talent? This has been an issue; the PCB (Pakistan Cricket Board) could have done better – in nurturing the talent, guiding the young players on the right path, and grooming them to achieve greatness, and become legends. The story of Mohammad Amir, Mohammad Asif and Salman Butt, who got carried away and involved in a fixing scandal is a case in point. Though Mohammad Amir returned to play for Pakistan after a ban, he was never the same player. The case of Umar Akmal is another point; though he did not involve in a scandal as Amir or Butt, his ego got the worst of him. In all the above cases, the PCB should take responsibility for failing to nurture and guide the young players.

Back to Afridi. Besides him, perhaps it should be the end of the road for Mohammad Hafeez and Shoaib Malik, two other senior players. Along with Afridi, they were given enough opportunities. Though Hafeez was part of the winning PSL team this year, and played a crucial part in the team lifting the trophy in the final match, his performance during the league matches were below par. So was Shoaib Malik’s. Both are getting old, and have crossed 40; Hafeez is 41; Malik has just crossed 40.

Hafeez and Malik are not in the same category as Afridi and Akhtar; but they did win matches for Pakistan single-handedly. Both are all-rounders; however, both played more one day and T-20 matches, than test matches, which is considered the ultimate challenge for any batsman. Hafeez has played 55 test matches at an average of 37 plus, while Malik has played 35 matches at an average of 35 plus. The Hafeez-Malik era should have followed Yousuf Youhana-Younis Khan-Misbah Haq era; but, it was not the case.

With the PSL over, now is the time to reflect on lessons that Pakistan cricket learn from these three great players of the contemporary era. The PCB has to invest and nurture talent; Babar Azam and Mohammad Rizwan are top players today, more because of their natural talent than because of the system. The PCB should learn from Hafeez and Malik cases, and

ensure how to turn the natural talents into greatness and legendary. Else, they will retire as great players, but not as legends. Or get carried away halfway through, and disappoint everyone. Like Umar Akmal and Mohammad Asif.

## Daily Focus, 3 March 2022

### Imran Khan's maiden Russia visit: Four focus areas

*Pakistan aims to deepen the relations with Russia and make use of the new strategic environment in its favour*

Abigail Miriam Fernandez



Image Source: Dawn

Prime Minister Imran Khan embarked on a two-day visit to Moscow on 24 February making it the first bilateral visit by a Pakistani prime minister to Russia in nearly 23 years. Although the much-anticipated visit came amidst the Ukraine tensions, the three-and-a-half-hour meeting between Imran Khan and President Putin was not a short discussion. According to the Kremlin, the two leaders discussed the main aspects of bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on current regional topics, including developments in South Asia. A statement released by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in Pakistan said that the two leaders held wide-ranging consultations on bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual interest. The PMO's statement added that PM Khan underscored

Pakistan's commitment to creating a long-term, multi-dimensional relationship with Russia.

#### Pakistan's bear hug

In the recent past, Pakistan has been working towards building its bilateral relations with Russia; Khan's visit is a part of this. In December 2021, the national security advisers of the two countries met in Moscow. According to National Security Division (NSD), National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf and Secretary of the Security Council of Russia Nikolai Patrushev reviewed several areas of bilateral relations. They held in-depth discussions on regional and international issues including the economy, energy, defence, counter-terrorism, counter-narcotics, information and cybersecurity. In April 2021, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov visited Pakistan, the first by a Russian foreign minister in nine years. During the visit, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi termed the meeting as the beginning of 'a new era' with Russia. Thus, in the recent past, there has been substantial engagements at various levels between the two countries.

Imran Khan's Moscow visit: Four focus areas

PM Khan's visit is aimed to strengthen the bilateral ties in key areas of defence, energy and economic cooperation. These three areas have focused on the recent visit and previous engagements.

First on defence and security. Pakistan has been keen on procuring new defence equipments from Russia without triggering any sanctions. Additionally, regarding intelligence sharing and for enhancing cooperation in security-related matters, plans have been made to finalise pending agreements such as the agreement on Mutual Protection of Classified Information, agreement on Intellectual Property Rights and agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Ensuring International Information Security.

During the visit, the two countries signed a letter of intent to enhance bilateral cooperation in the technology sector, foster business relations and increase exchanges between the scientific and technological institutions of the two countries. In this regard, the Skolkovo Foundation, Russia's principal agency for the development and commercialisation of advanced technologies, and the Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) of Pakistan will collaborate for this purpose.

Second, international support at NSG and the FATF. Pakistan also seeks to gain Russian support for its membership in the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) and Russian support in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). Conversely, since Russia also looks for defence cooperation and sales in South Asia, Pakistan wants to serve as a significant buyer for Russian defence and technology.

Third, on energy, pipeline and investment. As Russia seeks to increase investment in Pakistan, the ongoing construction of the 1100km-long Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline that is planned for transporting gas from Karachi to Kasur is the largest project

between the two countries. During the visit, PM Khan reiterated this flagship economic project between the two countries and also discussed cooperation on prospective energy-related projects. With the two sides currently negotiating shareholding and facilitation agreements of the project, the visit has given a push for the construction of a long-delayed gas pipeline.

Additionally, PM Khan's visit comes after Germany put the Nord Stream 2 pipeline on hold. Thus, with Russia now looking for new buyers, Pakistan's depleting gas reserves and supply issue makes them a perfect buyer. Pakistan's Minister of Energy, Hammad Azhar said that the visit was an "opportunity to learn the technology" of laying a gas pipeline from the Russians, whom he says is the best in the business. He added, "We don't have the expertise of the scale and size that is needed for this project," adding, "The project will remain majority-owned [74%] by Pakistan to begin with, so it could be a win-win."

Fourth, both Pakistan and Russia are looking at economic cooperation in vital sectors of IT, agriculture, power, petroleum, railways, water, commerce. Until now, there has been minimal focus on these areas. Following the visit, PM Khan announced that Pakistan would import two million tons of wheat from Russia and buy natural gas under bilateral agreements that were signed during his official visit. He said, "We went there because we have to import two million tons of wheat from Russia. Secondly, we have signed agreements with them to import natural gas because Pakistan's own gas reserves are depleting."

To conclude, Imran Khan's visit to Moscow aims to deepen the relationship between Pakistan and Russia. The meeting highlights both Pakistan's and Russia's commitment to strengthening the bilateral ties between the two countries. Although the relationship is still nascent, Pakistan and Russia stand to gain from their budding relationship by

furthering economic cooperation, regional connectivity and strategic cooperation. However, the groundwork for a significant relationship has been laid at all levels. As Imran Khan remarked: “Inshallah (God willing), the time will tell that we have had great discussions.”

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## Daily Focus, 5 March 2022

### The new Gas bill: Four takeaways

*The bill aims to rationalize the demand side mechanism and nudge price levelling in other sectors*

Ankit Singh



Image Source: Dawn

On 17 February, the Senate passed a new bill titled – “Weighted Average Cost of Gas (WACOG) Bill 2022.” The bill paves way for moving from ring-fenced pricing of natural gas in Pakistan. Another supplementary bill, OGRA (Amendment) Bill has given the autonomy to OGRA (Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority) to determine and notify the RLNG (Regasified Liquified

Natural Gas) prices, a power that resided with the government earlier.

The WACOG Bill will empower the OGRA to average the price per unit of domestic gas produced and imported natural gas, as there is a huge price anomaly between domestic and imported gas. Before the WACOG bill, Pakistan’s provinces and industrial sectors would pay the differential amount on natural gas based on its source. Hammad Azhar, Pakistan’s Energy Minister, stated that the ratio between indigenous gas and imported RLNG would be 50:50 in the next two years. The fertilisers and electricity industries eventually passed on the charges of expensive imported gas to consumers. The bill is applauded for its initiative towards putting Pakistan on the path of price levelling of dependent commodities eventually as Pakistan provides huge subsidies to industries to shield the poorer

section of the population.

WACOG Bill 2022: Four major takeaways  
First, the ever-increasing circular debt of the gas sector, at the current exchange rate, the circular gas debt stands at approximately USD 4 million. For instance, local system gas costs around PKR 700 per MMBTU (million metric British Thermal Unit) while RLNG costs around PKR 2400 per MMBTU. The bill would enable the average price of around PKR 1400 per MMBTU and hence a larger revenue collection utilized that can be eventually utilised to minimise gas sector debt. Around 30 per cent of domestic consumers are reliant on the gas pipeline for their energy usage and the consumption is going to increase further while the reserves in Pakistan are depleting. The rationalisation of the demand mechanism would reduce the disproportionality in affordability and give scope for further investment in exploration and expanding Pakistan's gas pipeline network.

Second, the blended price will allow for easier import of LNG due to price parity in the country; suppliers from Central Asia and Russia are likely to increase the diversity of suppliers catering to the increasing demand and price stabilisation. Pakistan can then increase its quantity of Floating Storage Regasification Unit, a special floating surface for transporting natural gas. The gas shortage could be dealt with by seeing the increased capacity infrastructure; this will enable n building a case for increasing the onshore capacity of the LNG. The increased capacity and storage would help the country deal with demand in peak seasons of winter.

Third, the bill will bring uniformity in gas prices, as there is sectoral wise pricing for industries. The fertiliser industry, dominant in Punjab, would experience a relative decrease in gas pricing while export-oriented sector industries of other provinces would have to pay a higher price. With Punjab being the most densely populated province, has massive consumption and

relies on imported gas. The bill was passed without the consent of the Council of Common Interests, a parliamentary body to overlook principles of the Eighteenth Amendment. The Sindh province is set to challenge the bill in judicial courts. Sindh Minister for Energy Imtiaz Ahmed Shaikh said: "Approval of the controversial bill cannot avert the ongoing gas crisis in the country and the government is creating a hostile situation between the provinces."

Fourth, an indirect IMF angle. In its Article IV consultation report, the IMF had put forward a condition to rationalize domestic prices to phase out the circular debt of the power and gas sector. This has always been an IMF condition, and this time, the assessment has included indicative targets of ineffective revenue mobilisation and sustainable debt management. There was no direct call for legislation; however, Pakistan has initiated the reform. This initiative will also enable cross-subsidisation and targeted subsidies for consumers. Pakistan has conceded its inability in targeted subsidization. Still, the bill will provide the platform to devise mechanisms in developing effective utilisation of subsidies given by the government through targeted subsidies.

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## PR Short Notes

### POLITICS

#### PPP begins long march against PTI government

On 27 February, the Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, accompanied by other PPP party leaders, launched the ‘Awami Long March’ at the Mazar-e-Quaid against the PTI government. Bilawal, calling it a “final push” against the “weakened and unjust” government at the Centre raised a 38-point charter of demands and called for a nationwide and unified movement of all opposition parties to remove the PTI government. (Imran Ayub, [“Bilawal kick-starts march to dislodge PM Imran,” Dawn, 28 February 2022](#))

During a press conference he said, “We are very much hopeful that the establishment would remain neutral. And if the establishment stays neutral, Imran Khan is not going to win this no-trust move. The opposition must struggle for a one point agenda — get rid of Imran Khan. And for that purpose we should be on one page and have a joint strategy.” (Imran Ayub, [“If establishment stays neutral, Imran can’t survive no-trust move: Bilawal,” Dawn, 28 February 2022](#))

#### Interior minister claims that opposition is in a deadlock over no-confidence motion

On 27 February, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed claimed that the opposition is in a deadlock over their plan of bringing a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan. Similarly, federal Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry said, “We have been hearing for the last 15 to 20 days that the no-trust move was around the corner, but in reality that is beyond their power as they lack the capacity to bring the motion.” ([“Sheikh Rashid claims opposition in deadlock over no-trust move,” Dawn, 28 February 2022](#))

#### Jl to meet PML-Q leaders

On 28 February, Dawn reported that the Jamaat-e-Islami has contacted the PML-Q

leadership. Further, the report said that the JI leaders plan to visit the Lahore residence of Chaudhrys of Gujrat to inquire after the party president Shujaat Hussain. ([“Jamaat-e-Islami leaders likely to call on Chaudhrys,” Dawn, 28 February 2022](#))

#### PM Khan should dissolve assemblies and resign voluntarily, says Bilawal

On 28 February, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari while addressing the march in Hyderabad said that Prime Minister Imran Khan should dissolve assemblies and resign voluntarily before the PPP workers reach in Islamabad along with a no-confidence resolution. He said, “This march has already caused the ‘puppet’ prime minister to betray signs of ghabrahat [nervousness],” adding, “Why are you fleeing, you coward? Make announcement of fresh election as PPP is up to the challenge. When people will be offered choice they will definitely reject the ‘selected’, he thundered amid applause from the crowd.” (Mohammad Hussain Khan, [“Bilawal wants PM Imran to resign before jiyalas land in Islamabad,” Dawn, 1 March 2022](#))

#### ‘Options’ open ahead of no-confidence move, says MQM-P

On 28 February, MQM-P Convener Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui stated that the party’s options in the opposition’s expected motion of no-confidence remains opened, adding that they have various options when it comes to the move. Siddiqui said that inflation is a big problem in the country, urging PM Khan to look seriously into the matter saying, “If the government shows some seriousness, we will stand by it.” ([“MQM-P says ‘options’ open ahead of no-confidence move,” Dawn, 1 March 2022](#))

PM to visit PML-Q during Lahore visit; Shujaat awaits a reply from Shehbaz  
On 1 March, Dawn reported that Prime Minister Imran Khan is expected to pay a visit to the PML-Q during visit to Lahore. Meanwhile, PML-Q president Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain on his meeting with

Shehbaz Sharif said, “We asked Shehbaz Sharif some questions during a discussion on the proposed no-confidence movement, but the answers are still awaited.” (Mansoor Malik, “[Shujaat awaits reply from Shehbaz after crucial meeting](#),” *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

### INTERNAL

#### Pakistan witnessed a surge in offences against women last year, says The News

On 1 March, The News International reported that official data showed that 34,000 women registered complaints regarding different types of offences last year across Pakistan, except for Balochistan. The report stated that most of the cases of rape were reported in Punjab and cases of honour killing of women and burning them, came from Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (“[Pakistan witnessed surge in offences against women last year](#),” *The News International*, 1 March 2022)

#### PAF celebrates the creation of Number 28 Multirole Squadron

On 28 February, Pakistan Air Force tweeted “Today marks the date when elite ‘No 28 Multirole Squadron’ of Pakistan Air Force, equipped with Pakistan’s Pride JF-17 Thunder, was raised at PAF Base Samungli. The squadron was raised on 28 February 2018 to strengthen Pakistan’s security along its western borders.” JF-17 is an aircraft Pakistan has developed in collaboration with a China-based aerospace company. (“[PAF remembers creation of JF-17-equipped No 28 MR Squadron](#),” *The Express Tribune*, 1 March 2022)

#### Favorable treatment meted to PTI bank accounts on issue related to funds and remittances

On 28 February, a national daily reported that a private bank delayed the sharing of the data sought by ECP. The information and records of funds and remittances to PTI were shared through scrutiny committee report this year in last week of January. However, the private bank which delayed

the data sharing is now defunct and ‘remittances received in foreign currency accounts’ continue to remain a secret. (Iftikhar A Khan, “[Bank delayed revealing PTI’s foreign donations until 2018 polls](#),” *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

#### Black day march in Pakistan against cyber law gathers steam

On 28 February, Balochistan High Court (BHC) admitted a petition against the amendment in PECA law, which was filed by the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ) and Balochistan Bar Council. Islamabad High Court rejected a similar petition last week, suggesting that parliament would be the right place to challenge the positions. Present on the occasion Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) president Shahzada Zulfiqar, BUJ President Irfan Saeed said, “We will take the PECA amendment ordinance to its logical conclusion as the PFUJ and the entire journalist community, political parties, lawyers, [Human Rights Commission of Pakistan] and civil society rejected it.” On the political tussle on the PECA amendment, National Assembly Opposition Leader Shehbaz Sharif said his party would table a resolution against repealing the controversial law. He gave the assurance after the Joint Action Committee (JAC) of media representatives called on him and sought his support. (Zulkernain Tahir, “[Cyber-gag law under fire in court, on the streets](#),” *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

#### Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) for railways approved

On 28 February, the Senate Standing Committee on Railways cleared PSDP 2022-23 for railways worth USD 263 million. Good governance and revenue generation were the main aspects of PSDP. Meanwhile the railway minister, Azam Khan Swati suggested monetization of railways land assets of around 186,000 acres of land through the formation of a regulatory body to improve and streamline the accountability of the assets. (Waqas

Ahmed, "[Senate panel okays uplift scheme of railways.](#)" *The Express Tribune*, 1 March 2022)

### PM Khan meets with PML-Q leadership

On 1 March, Prime Minister Imran Khan met with Chaudhrys of the PML-Q leadership. During the meeting, the PML-Q ensure that they would still support PM Khan and his government in these tough times. Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi while speaking to PM Khan said, "Shehbaz Sharif (the PML-N chief) came to inquire after my health a few days ago and offered the chief ministership (of Punjab) to Ch Pervaiz Elahi (in exchange for voting against Imran Khan)," adding, "However, we know them well and do not trust them. He had offered us the same slot (in the nineties) but backed off after winning the elections. The excuse was that his father did not agree to the proposal. (Ahmad Fraz Khan, "[Chaudhrys move to soothe PM Imran's nerves, say they don't trust Sharifs.](#)" *Dawn*, 2 March 2022)

### Bilawal accused PM Khan of being apathetic to the problems facing the people

On 1 March, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while addressing a crowd at Khairpur criticized and accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of being apathetic to the problems of the people. Further, he said, "The new Pakistan is not accepted by the people because there is no return for the labour of common man, no return for the crops of growers, no return for the educational degrees because the youth cannot get jobs," adding, "this puppet government for the last three years has been saying that he [Prime Minister Imran] cannot provide jobs to the youth of the country. Every promise by Imran Khan proved to be false whether it was 1 crore [10 million] jobs or 50 lakh [five million] houses."

On the PPP's long march he announced that his long march would enter Punjab in a day's time adding, "we will enter Islamabad and remove this undemocratic puppet in a democratic manner" which he described as

the no-confidence motion. ("[Bilawal touts Jiyala power as long march continues.](#)" *The Express Tribune*, 2 March 2022)

### PM deceiving IMF and the people by announcing "fake" relief packages, says Shehbaz

On 2 March, Shehbaz Sharif criticized Prime Minister Imran Khan for deceiving the IMF and the public by announcing "fake" relief packages. Further, he hoped that PM Khan would not take a U-turn on the reduction in prices of petrol and electricity, saying, "Imran is playing a game equivalent to a Ponzi scheme where the IMF is being manipulated to please the people and the people exploited to please the Fund." ("[Shehbaz hopes PM Imran doesn't take U-turn on package.](#)" *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

### Next three days are "important" as the opposition makes decision of no-confidence, says Fazl

On 2 March, Maulana Fazlur Rehman stated that the next three days are "important" as the joint opposition makes a decision on submitting a vote of a no-confidence motion against the government or requisitioning the session of parliament. He claimed that the opposition has the required numbers to pass the no-confidence motion adding that they had been trying to get the support of more than 180 members in the 342-member lower house of parliament. (Amir Wasim, "[Next three days crucial, says Fazl about no-trust move.](#)" *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

### PPP declares 'war' on 'illegally elected' Imran Khan; Long march makes PDM redundant

On 2 March, Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari while addressing party workers in the Chowk Bahadurpur area on GT Road declared a 'war' against the 'illegally elected' Prime Minister Imran Khan. He added that the title of 'selected' that he had given to Mr Khan became the identity of the "thief of flour, sugar, fertiliser, gas and petrol." Further, during the march, he said, "We have entered

Punjab. The PPP was founded in Punjab and its Jiyalas are brave and loyal who never bowed before General Zia and General Musharraf.” (Irfanul Haq, Waseem Shamsi, [“Bilawal declares war on ‘illegally elected’ PM Imran,”](#) *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

Meanwhile, Punjab PPP general-secretary Syed Hassan Murtaza stated on the PDM said, “The PDM remained a vibrant platform until the PPP, the founder of the alliance, was part of it. After the [successful completion of the] Awami march, there will be no need for the PDM.” ([“Bilawal’s long march makes PDM redundant’,”](#) *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

#### **PDM and PPP reaches consensus on snap elections**

On 4 March, Dawn reported that the PDM and PPP have reached some consensus on the snap elections if they succeed in removing PM Khan through a no-confidence motion. Asif Ali Zardari after his meeting with Maulana Fazlur Rehman claimed that the draft of the no-trust move had been prepared and the final date for tabling it would be announced in the next couple of days. ([“PDM, PPP make some headway on snap polls,”](#) *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

#### **Bilawal asked PM Khan to resign in five days**

On 3 March, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari while addressing a gathering of the participants at Channigoth and Ahmedpur East lashed out at PM Khan and asked him to resign within five days or be prepared for a no-confidence motion. He said, “I want free and fair elections immediately. The PM has only two options: resign or face no-confidence move.” ([“Buoyant Bilawal asks Imran to quit within five days,”](#) *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

#### **Qureshi challenges PPP in ‘Haqooq-i-Sindh’ march in Sindh**

On 4 March, PTI vice-chairman Shah Mehmood Qureshi criticized the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) for creating instability and frustration in the country by resorting to

no-confidence motion. He said: “They are doing all this for the sake of powers, rather to escape accountability.” He claimed that the people of Sindh had given enough chances to PPP and expressed confidence that PTI would win many more elections in the next provincial assembly seats. ([“Qureshi promises Sindh will prosper under PTI rule,”](#) *Dawn*, 5 March 2022)

#### **Government decides to ‘partially’ close the Parliament House**

On 4 March, the government decided to ‘partially’ close the Parliament House next week for four days. According to the National Assembly Secretariat, the Parliament House is being closed for its ‘overdue’ renovation work that has not been done since 1994. This comes as the opposition plans to move a no-confidence motion against PM Khan in the National Assembly in the next few days. (Syed Irfan Raza, [“Parliament House closed amid plans for no-trust move,”](#) *Dawn*, 5 March 2022)

#### **INTERNAL**

#### **PPP submits report on ‘rigging’ to CEC**

On 1 March, PPP submitted a report on the alleged rigging in the 2018 general elections to the chief election commissioner. The party urged the ECP to ‘take punitive action’ against those involved in ‘glaring theft of the entire general elections.’ ([“PPP provides ‘confidential’ report on ‘rigging’ to CEC,”](#) *Dawn*, 2 March 2022)

#### **Petitioner demands PM Khan be put on notice over PTI controversial foreign funding case**

On 1 March, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) during a public hearing of the foreign funding case of PTI allowed PTI’s lawyers to defend and explain the case. The petitioner’s lawyer argued that ECP had dismissed a similar application filed by PTI. The petitioner, Akbar S Babar after obtaining the scrutiny report file claimed that PTI had consistently submitted

false certificates, false annual certificates and kept on receiving millions of dollars from ‘foreign companies and foreign citizens, including people from India.’ As per the scrutiny report, PTI received prohibited/foreign funding or funding without source and details that includes USD seven million dollars, a large chunk of which came from one offshore company alone. (Iftikhar A Khan, “[Call for putting PM Imran on notice for gross violations of funding laws.](#)” *Dawn*, 2 March 2022)

### COAS calls youth for inclusive security and stability

On 1 March, COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa visited Turbat, Balochistan where he was briefed on the security situation of Balochistan and border management measures. During his interaction at the University of Turbat, he urged the youths of Balochistan to join law enforcement agencies (LEA) in contributing to the security and stability of the area. The ISPR statement added that the true potential of the province would be realized through a comprehensive national effort. (“[COAS urges youth to join LEAs.](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 2 March 2022)

### Media bodies file petition against PECA Amendment

On 2 March, four media bodies from various print and online filed a separate petition in Islamabad High Court. The petition of Pakistan Broadcasters Association, All Pakistan Newspapers Society, Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors, and the Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors stated: “the fear of being dragged into criminal proceedings by the investigating agency on the complaint of any member of the public for alleged defamation of public officials are bound to chill free speech and fair comment.” Chief Justice Athar Minallah recalled that Federal Investigation Agency had provided standard operating procedures to exercise powers in relation to complaints under section 20 of PECA amendment. (“[Four media bodies](#)

[challenge Peca in IHC.](#)” *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

### Audit report of Establishment Division reveals un-economic spending, PM order forensic audit

On 2 March, Public Accounts Committee (PAC) examined the audit report of the Establishment Division for 2019-20. The exchequer of the country suffered a loss of PKR 48 million on the purchase of stationery and store items by the Establishment Division. Establishment Division Secretary Afzal Latif informed PAC, “The prime minister has perused the case and advised for forensic audit before taking action against the officials responsible for wrongdoing.” (Malik Asad, “[PM Imran orders forensic audit of Establishment Division scam.](#)” *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

### Vaccination: Targeted drive covers 70 per cent or 7.9 million students

On 2 March, the Ministry of National Health Services Sajid Shah told a national daily that vaccine drive for students was done on a priority basis to be done in a span of six months. The age group of students targeted was from 12-17 years. The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has now decided to roll another vaccine drive for children in the age group between five and 11 years (numbering 43.7 million). (Ikram Junaidi, “[70pc targeted students fully vaccinated: NHS official.](#)” *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

### PML-N submits a resolution against PECA Ordinance

On 3 March, PML-N information secretary, Marriyum Aurangzeb submitted the resolution to the National Assembly Secretariat, seeking to disapprove the PECA ordinance aimed at curbing the press freedom on online platforms. She informed a national daily that a standing committee on Information and Broadcasting had decided to requisition a meeting to discuss on PECA ordinance. Earlier Shehbaz Sharif had

assured support to a delegation of press bodies. (Amir Wasim, "[PML-N resolution seeks disapproval of Peca ordinance](#)," *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

### Federal Shariat Court told that Transgender law does not violate the Islamic code

On 3 March, the Federal Shariat Court was told that the Transgender Persons (Protection of Right) Act 2018 does not violate the injunctions of Islam or encourage gay rights in Pakistan. A transgender representative contended that the claims of the petitioners who challenging the act for being against Islam were 'frivolous and malicious' adding that it was an attempt to abuse the constitutional jurisdiction of the court and an attempt to make the law controversial. ("[Transgender law not against Islamic code](#)," *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

### AEMEND joins the collective struggle against PECA Ordinance

On 4 March, the Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND) rejected the PECA Amendment declaring it unconstitutional in its annual meeting. The public statement read as, "It is after all the responsibility of the government to ensure a free and safe environment for journalists to perform their duties without any pressure." AMEND also called for the strengthening of the news channels code of conduct, journalist training and strengthening of role of editors. AEMEND is an autonomous guild of editors and directors of mainstream TV channels in Pakistan. ("[AEMEND rejects PECA tweak](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 5 March 2022)

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## PROVINCES

### Balochistan: Five-day anti-polio campaign begins in provinces

On 28 February, a five-day was launched in all the 34 districts of Balochistan for which preparations have been completed. Coordinator of the Emergency Operation Centre, Balochistan, Hameedullah Nasar

said, "We have adopted strict security measures to prevent any unforeseen situation. Personnel from Balochistan Levies Force, police and Frontier Corps would be deployed to protect the polio workers," adding, "As the routine immunisation (RI) is an important pillar of polio eradication initiative, we are trying to provide adequate resources not only for vaccination against childhood vaccine preventable diseases but also working for the expansion of RI service delivery in remote areas to boost coverages." ("[Polio eradication drive begins in Balochistan today](#)," *Dawn*, 28 February 2022)

### Sindh: Karachi world's fourth-largest polluted city

On 27 February, IQAir organisation in a new investigative report stated that Karachi has turned out to be the world's fourth-largest polluted city as its air quality index has surged to an unhealthy level of 193. According to the report, PM2.5 concentration in Karachi has been recorded 11.8 times higher this month which is above the WHO annual air quality guideline value. The report blamed the rise in pollution to the negligence of the federal and Sindh governments towards environmental reforms. ("[Karachi world's fourth largest polluted city: report](#)," *Dawn*, 28 February 2022)

### Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: 240 Afghan arrested for entering Pakistan without valid travel documents

On 28 February, the police stated that 240 Afghan nationals were arrested after they entered South Waziristan without valid travel documents. According to the Gomal Bazaar police the arrested persons also included 26 women and many children. ("[240 Afghans arrested over illegal entry in Dera Ismail Khan](#)," *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

### Balochistan: Three people killed in blast on Quetta's Fatima Jinnah Road

On 2 March, three people were killed and 24 people were injured in a blast near a police

van at Quetta's Fatima Jinnah Road. The deceased included a deputy superintendent of police (DSP). Following the attack, Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Abdul Qudoos Bizenjo said, "Cowardly terrorists targeted innocent citizens in a terrorist attack," adding, "Efforts are being made to disrupt peace in Quetta and the province under a planned and well-thought-out conspiracy." (Ghalib Nihad, "[3 dead, more than 20 injured in blast on Quetta's Fatima Jinnah Road](#)," *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

#### **Sindh: Explosion at Engro coal-based power plant**

On 2 March, an explosion occurred in a coal conveyor belt of the 330MW Unit 1 of the plant situated in Tharparker district of Sindh. A national daily reported that the power plant was under scheduled outage where one of the units was already shut down for maintenance whereas the other was operational. Five people got injured and are reported to be in stable condition. ("[Five injured in Tharparker power plant explosion](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 3 March 2022)

#### **Balochistan: PM's special aide on Power and Natural Resources for Balochistan quits**

On 2 March, Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind, PM special assistant on Power and Natural Resources for Balochistan. This is the second time he has submitted his resignation as before the resignation was not accepted earlier. Sardar Rind's spokesman shared that he had neither been consulted nor invited to any meeting held in Islamabad for discussion on the issues. (Saleem Shahid, "[PM Imran's 'prodigal' aide from Balochistan quits](#)," *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

#### **Islamabad: 200 protesters booked for setting up camp to protests against enforced disappearance**

On 3 March, the police booked 200 students and other rights activists who had set a camp outside the National Press Club to protest against the disappearance of a student from Khuzdar in Balochistan. An FIR was

registered at Kohsar police station on various charges, including "criminal conspiracy, rioting, unlawful assembly, disobedience, defamation, intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace and assault." ("[Over 200 protesters booked in Islamabad](#)," *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

#### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Policeman wounded in an attack on polio teams near Peshawar**

On 3 March, a team of polio vaccinators was attacked and the policeman, Tilawat Shah, accompanying them was injured after the attackers failed to target the polio team. He was shot four times, a police officer of the circle informed. The counter-terrorism department and police have taken up the incident. ("[Cop injured in attack on polio team on outskirts of Peshawar](#)," *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

#### **Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Blast in Peshawar Mosque leave around 30 dead**

On 4 March, a hospital official claimed that following a blast inside a mosque in Peshawar's Kocha Risaldar at least 30 bodies were brought to the Lady Reading Hospital, while over 50 people were injured. According to the Capital City Police Officer (CCPO), two attackers tried to enter a mosque in the city's Qissa Khwani Bazaar and fired at the policemen standing guard. Following the attack, a blast took place in the mosque. ("[At least 30 feared dead, 50 injured in Peshawar mosque blast: officials](#)," *Dawn*, 4 March 2022)

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## **ECONOMY**

#### **PM Khan announces relief measures of approx. USD 1.35 billion**

On 28 February, PM Khan while addressing the nation through a televised address reduced the average prices of petrol and diesel and PKR five per unit cut in the electricity rates. The additional burden by the government was decided on the risks of an 'unprecedented' increase in domestic fuel prices and hence inflation. The amount USD

be sourced through four avenues; first, a reduction in development expenditure, second, diversion of dividends of government-owned corporate entities, third, unspent funds out of USD 1.4 billion emergency support extended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), fourth, a cushion provided in the Rs550bn mini-budget announced by the government in December. The government officials claimed that it would not cross the target set for the fiscal deficit as was committed to IMF in recent discussions. (Khaleeq Kiani, [“PM Imran’s relief measures to cost Rs237bn in four months,”](#) *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

### Revenue collected up by 31 per cent in the first 8 months of the current financial year

On 28 February, the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) reported that it had collected approx. USD 21.603 billion exceeding the target for the first eight months of approx. USD 20.121 billion. The government has a committee to raise approx. USD 34.77 billion. Compared to the target of last year of USD 16.64 billion, this year has been intensive in terms of tax collection. On the composition of revenue, the customs collection stood at USD 3.54 billion, Income Tax collection contributed around USD 7.52 billion, while sales tax contributed maximum of approx. USD 9.4 billion. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, [“Rs3.8 trillion collected in July-February,”](#) *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

### Fuel cost adjustment process leads to Rs5.95/unit tariff hike for January

On 28 February, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) approved an increase in tariff for ex-Wapda distribution companies (Discos) to make up for the target of PKR 58 billion. The hike was demanded by Discos as there was shortage of lower availability of hydropower and insufficient LNG cargoes. On behalf of Discos, Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has claimed the consumers were charged a reference fuel cost of PKR 6.5124

per unit in January, but the actual cost turned out to be PKR 12.62 per unit, hence an additional charge of about PKR 6.10 per unit to consumers. (Khaleeq Kiani, [“Rs5.95/unit tariff hike for January approved,”](#) *Dawn*, 1 March 2022)

### Two-week review meeting with IMF to begin on 4 March

On 1 March, a national daily reported about the scheduled seventh review meeting between Pakistan and IMF. The recent relief measures announced by PM Khan would also be discussed in the meeting. The latest USD six billion extended fund program (EFF) has been the hardest in terms of conditionalities and performance indicators. High officials in finance ministry claimed that the relief package would have neither any negative impact on the budget deficit nor the ongoing IMF program but conceded that government did not have the capacity to disburse subsidy more effectively (targeted subsidy). A retired official, Dr. Khaqan Najee, however, claimed that general subsidy can have ‘substantive fiscal implications.’ (Mehtab Haider, [“Completion of 7th Review: Pakistan-IMF talks to start on 4<sup>th</sup>,”](#) *The News International*, 2 March 2022)

### Gas shortage in the country enables K-Electric to raise power tariff

On 1 March, National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) approved - Electric request to increase power tariff by Rs2.90 per unit on account of fuel cost adjustment for the month of January. This means the consumers would have to pay extra PKR 300 million for their pockets. Efforts are underway to establish gas provision from Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) to K-Electric. ([“K-Electric allowed raising power tariff by Rs2.90 per unit,”](#) *The News International*, 2 March 2022)

### Trade deficit to further widen by USD 31 billion: PBS monthly report projection

On 2 March, the Pakistan Bureau of

Statistics (PBS) released its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook February 2022 which contained all the information on figures and trends of export, import, remittances etc. The export remained stagnant at around USD 2.5 billion while imports for the month stood at USD 5.9 billion. The trade deficit peaked in FY2018 at USD 37.7 billion and saw a dip in the next years before taking an upward trajectory from FY21. The exports were mostly semi-finished while imports saw a surge due to increased demand for vehicles, machinery and vaccines. The government is also importing wheat, sugar and palm oil to maintain strategic reserves. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, "[Trade deficit widens to \\$32bn](#)," *Dawn*, 3 March 2022)

#### Seventh round of reviews talks with IMF to begin from today

On 3 March, The Express Tribune reported that the preparations and discussion point for the seventh review talks on a tranche of USD 6 billion extended fund program. The discussions will further release of USD 960 million loan, so far the IMF has disbursed only USD 3 billion out of USD 6 billion packages. Ashter Perez, IMF Resident Representative said: "The authorities and the IMF will discuss recent developments, the merits of the recently adopted relief and industrial promotion packages, and other measures to promote macroeconomic stability, during the upcoming mission,". Except the recent tax amnesty announced Pakistan has satisfactorily worked towards establishing a prudent macroeconomic framework. For the first time, IMF delegation will virtually meet officials from Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to discuss about tax and macroeconomic policies in the country. (Shahbaz Rana, "[Pakistan, IMF to begin talks today](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 4 March 2022)

#### Cabinet approves setting up a body to review oil policy

On 4 March, Petroleum Division tabled a proposal to review oil policy, the Cabinet

Committee on Energy (CCOE) after clarification gave a go-ahead to establish the body. Gas production is dropping by six per cent each year and revamped efforts are needed for exploration and production in oil and gas sectors. PTI government has claimed that previous governments had preferred expensive imported gas over indigenous gas. The petroleum division had reduced share of incremental revenue in the project and restricted dividend payments. ("[Body formed to review oil policy](#)," *The Express Tribune*, 5 March 2022)

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#### EXTERNAL

#### EU Ambassador and delegation assure support for the extension of GSP status

On 27 February, Special Representative of the European Union for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore and EU Ambassador in Pakistan Androulla Kaminara during a meeting with Punjab Governor Chaudhry Sarwar gave assurance of their full support in the extension of GSP Plus status for Pakistan. Additionally, during the meeting, the matters related to bilateral ties between Pakistan and EU, trade promotion and the extension of GSP Plus status were discussed. ("[EU delegation supports GSP Plus extension](#)," *Dawn*, 28 February 2022)

#### Chaman border reopens, resuming trade Pak-Afghan trade

On 27 February, trade resumed between Pakistan and Afghanistan after the Chaman-Spin Buldak border which was closed after clashes between the two countries' forces was reopened. The border was reopened after a delegation of ulema from Chaman headed by tribal elder Molvi Haji Faizullah Nourzai held negotiations with Kandahar Governor Yousef Wafa and other Taliban leaders. A spokesperson for the Ulema delegation said, "Our negotiation remained fruitful and resulted in opening of the border," adding, "both sides regretted the clashes which caused loss of lives from both sides." (Saleem Shahid, "[Pak-Afghan trade](#)")

[activities resume as Chaman border reopens,](#)” *Dawn*, 28 February 2022)

### **Pakistan and India to hold talks on water issues**

On 28 February, The Express Tribune reported that Pakistan and India will hold talks in Islamabad from 1 March to discuss water issues between the two countries. According to the report, the meeting would be held through the 117th session of the Permanent Indus Commission (PIC) in which a 10-member delegation of Indian water experts will arrive in Lahore via the Wagah border to resolve bilateral water disputes. The Indian delegation will be led by Indian Commissioner for Indus Water Pradeep Saxena while Pakistan will be represented by Indus Water Commissioner Commissioner Mehr Ali Shah. (“[Pakistan-India water talks to start tomorrow,](#)” *Dawn*, 28 February 2022)

### **FM Qureshi speaks with Ukrainian foreign minister**

On 28 February, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi during a telephonic conversation with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba highlighted the “importance of de-escalation” in his conversation with his as Kyiv battles a Russian invasion. Meanwhile, the Foreign Office spokesperson said, “Foreign Minister Qureshi shared Pakistan’s perspective in detail, reiterating serious concern at the situation, underscoring the importance of de-escalation, and stressing the indispensability of diplomacy.” (“[Qureshi underscores de-escalation in talks with Ukrainian counterpart](#),” *The News International*, 28 February 2022)

### **Uzbek president to arrive in Pakistan for a two-day visit**

On 1 March, the Foreign Office said in a statement said that the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev will pay an official visit to Pakistan from 3-4 March on the invitation of PM Khan. According to the statement, the Uzbek president will be

accompanied by a high-level delegation, comprising the foreign minister, other members of the cabinet, senior government officials, and business and media personnel. The visit would be the first since President Mirziyoyev assumed office in 2016. (“[Uzbek president to arrive in Islamabad for two-day visit on Thursday,](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 2 March 2022)

### **Pakistan and Uzbekistan to sign a preferential trade agreement**

On 3 March, the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev is going to arrive in Pakistan for a two-day visit. The preferential trade agreement (PTA) is a progression in increasing cooperation between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. During PM Khan's visit to Uzbekistan in July 2021, a trade transit agreement was signed. The PTA is signed on trade of 37 goods with lower duties ranging from 20 per cent to 100 per cent. Anti-dumping and countervailing measures are part of the agreement. A clause on balance of payment crises and emergency measures are also to be mentioned in the PTA. The agreement is to remain in force for five years and is extendable further. (Shahbaz Rana, “[Pakistan, Uzbekistan to sign PTA,](#)” *The Express Tribune*, 3 March 2022)

### **Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev wraps up his optimistic Pakistan tour**

On 4 March, Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed and released joint declaration on ‘Next Steps in Strategic Partnership between Pakistan and Uzbekistan.’ The visit by Uzbeki president marked the 30 years of diplomatic relation between the two countries. Tashkent and Islamabad agreed to increase collaboration in science and youth affairs. The countries signed MoUs on pilgrimage tourism. President of Pakistan elaborated the trans-Afghan railway as part of Vision Central Asia policy of Pakistan. Earlier this week both countries has signed preferential trade agreement. (“[Uzbek president winds up ‘productive’ Pakistan tour,](#)” *Dawn*, 5 March 2022)

## JUDICIARY

### IHC declares any marriages under the age of 18 years as unlawful

On 1 March, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) in a written order declared that any marriages under the age of 18 years as unlawful. This came as the court order directives to hand over a 16-year-old girl to her mother in an early marriage case. According to the order, Judge Sattar observed that a girl under the age of 18 cannot marry on her own will, while her relatives also cannot proceed with an agreement to the same effect, adding that the legal age for puberty is 18 years and that the same could not be decided on the basis of physical changes that emerge at the age. ([“IHC declares marriages under 18 'unlawful'”](#), *The Express Tribune*, 2 March 2022)

### Supreme Court dismisses Faisal Vawda’s request to stay Senate poll

On 1 March, a three-judge supreme court bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial disregarded repeated pleadings of counsel for Faisal Vawda to stay the Senate elections, scheduled for March 9, on the seat that fell vacant after his lifetime disqualification. Faisal Vawda was disqualified for not revealing his dual citizenship which is prohibited under Article 62 (1)(f) of the Constitution. (Nasir Iqbal, [“Faisal Vawda’s request to stay Senate poll turned down”](#), *Dawn*, 2 March 2022)

### CJP concerned about pending cases in courts

On 5 March, Dawn reported that the Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial has expressed concern over reports that cases pending in courts across the country have accumulated claims involving over Rs3 trillion, including cases involving Rs2.5 trillion were pending with tax commissioners while a total of 58,937 cases involving Rs950 billion were pending in appellate tribunals. (Nasir Iqbal, [“Reports about cases worth Rs3tr pending with courts irk CJP”](#), *Dawn*, 5 March 2022)

## ON FATF

### Pakistan retained on the ‘grey list’

On 4 March, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) announced that it has retained Pakistan on its grey watch list. However, the FATF noted Islamabad’s “persistent political commitment” to implement its action plan and recognized the “significant progress” made by Pakistan in completing the required action items. According to the FATF statement, “Since June 2018, when Pakistan made a high-level political commitment to work with the FATF and APG to strengthen its AML/ CFT regime and to address its strategic counter-terrorist financing-related deficiencies, Pakistan’s continued political commitment has led to significant progress across a comprehensive CFT action plan,” adding, “Pakistan has completed 26 of the 27 action items in its 2018 action plan.” ([“FATF retains Pakistan on grey list”](#), *The Express Tribune*, 5 March 2022)

## ON SPORTS

### Full Australian squad named for Pakistan tour

On 7 February, Cricket Australia (CA) has named the squad of players who will be touring Pakistan, the team comprises the same members who won the Ashes recently. The only addition is spinner Ashton Agar. Australian Cricketers' Association chief Todd Greenberg said “It’s a very important tour. The players completely understand our contribution to the global game and we don’t have an expectation that we can sit here and expect teams to tour our country and not contribute ourselves.” ([“Pak vs Aus: Full-strength squad named for Pakistan tour”](#), *The News International*, 8 February 2022)

## ON UKRAINE

### Pakistan abstains from UNGA resolution on Ukraine

On 2 March, Pakistan’s UN Ambassador Munir Akram during the UNGA emergency session on Ukraine said “Pakistan is

committed to the fundamental principles of the UN Charter: self-determination of peoples, non-use or threat of use of force, sovereignty and territorial integrity of States, and pacific settlement of disputes,” adding, “Equally, Pakistan upholds the principle of equal and indivisible security for all. These principles must be consistently and universally respected.” This statement came as 141, voted for the resolution demanded that Moscow stop fighting and urged it to immediately withdraw its military forces, while Russia and four other countries voted against the resolution and 35 states, including Pakistan, abstained. (Anwar Iqbal, [“Pakistan ‘remains neutral’ as UNGA censures Russia,” Dawn, 3 March 2022](#))

### 1,463 Pakistanis evacuated from Ukraine; FO criticised EU envoys statements on Ukraine

On 4 March, the Pakistan Embassy in Ukraine stated that 1,463 Pakistanis were evacuated from Ukraine. evacuated from the war-hit country. The embassy stated that eight citizens were at the Ukraine-Hungary border waiting for the evacuation and around 30 Pakistanis were in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Sumy and Kherson. Previously, the embassy said that 98 per cent Pakistani citizens had been evacuated from Ukraine. ([“1,463 Pakistanis evacuated from war-hit Ukraine,” The Express Tribune, 5 March 2022](#))

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar criticised the statements released by ambassadors of the European Union and other countries about the Ukraine situation stating that it was against diplomatic norms. He said, “The embassies of European countries should have avoided the inappropriate reaction. This attitude is unacceptable and Pakistan has conveyed its concern to the embassies.” ([“EU envoys statements on Ukraine against diplomatic norms: Pakistan,” The Express Tribune, 5 March 2022](#))

## ON INDUS WATERS

### India agrees to provide more data on western river projects

On 2 March, the two commissioners of the Permanent Commission on Indus Waters (PCIW) completed discussions on all agenda items after a three-day meeting. It was also decided that they would finalise the minutes of the huddle on 3 March. Additionally, India has agreed to look into Pakistan’s several objections and agreed to substantiate its viewpoint on the objections with additional data and convey its response within two weeks. ([“India agrees to give more data on western river projects,” Dawn, 3 March 2022](#))

### India and Pakistan pledge to live up to spirits of the Indus Water Treaty

On 3 March, the 117th meeting of the Indus Water Treaty Commission concluded on a positive note. The Indian side agreed to arrange inspection tours for under-construction dams on the Chenab River, provide advance information on them and resume the annual advance exchange of flood-related information. The dispute on the Pakal Dal Hydropower project was conveyed and both sides agreed to resume the dispute resolution at the commissioner level. (Khaleeq Kiani, [“Pledge reaffirmed to implement Indus Waters Treaty in its true spirit,” Dawn, 4 March 2022](#))

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## ON INDIA

### 10-member Indian delegation arrives to attend annual PCIW in Islamabad

On 1 March, Dawn reported that a senior official of the office of Pakistan’s Commissioner for Indus Waters said, “The Indian delegation entered the country via Wagah border (Lahore) and then reached Islamabad. The delegation, headed by Indian Commissioner P.K. Saxena, includes three female officers.” The official added “There is no plan for any field visit/inspection by the Indian delegation members during their stay in Pakistan as they have come to

participate in the meeting only.” ([“Pakistan to raise objections over 10 Indian hydro projects,” Dawn, 1 March 2022](#))

### **IHC observes that Kulbhushan Jadhav has right to fair trial**

On 3 March, the IHC observed that since Kulbhushan Jadhav is a human being, he cannot be denied the right to a fair trial. Meanwhile, the court called on the Government of India to an official of its mission in Pakistan to attend hearings of the review petition filed against Jadhav’s conviction. ([“Kulbhushan Jadhav has right to fair trial, says IHC,” Dawn, 4 March 2022](#))

### **Trade with India is the need of the hour, says PM aid**

On 28 February, The Express Tribune citing PM Adviser on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood statement that “Trade with India is the need of the hour and beneficial to both countries ... it should open now,” states that the adviser’s initiative to reopen trade with India is indeed the need of the hour. The report says that this would in turn help improve Pakistan’s economic growth and balance of payments through savings on freight and make our industry more competitive. ([“Normalising trade with India,” The Express Tribune, 28 February 2022](#))

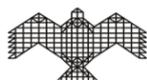
## **ON GILGIT BALTISTAN**

### **BNP Senators seek the representation of GB in parliament**

On 28 February, four senators from the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) submitted a private member’s bill to the Senate Secretariat, seeking an amendment to the Constitution to grant provisional status to Gilgit-Baltistan and representation in both houses of parliament. Senator Kauda Babar said, “We feel that it is the need of the hour to heal the people of GB.” (Jamil Nagri, [“Balochistan senators seek representation of GB in parliament,” Dawn, 1 March 2022](#))



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