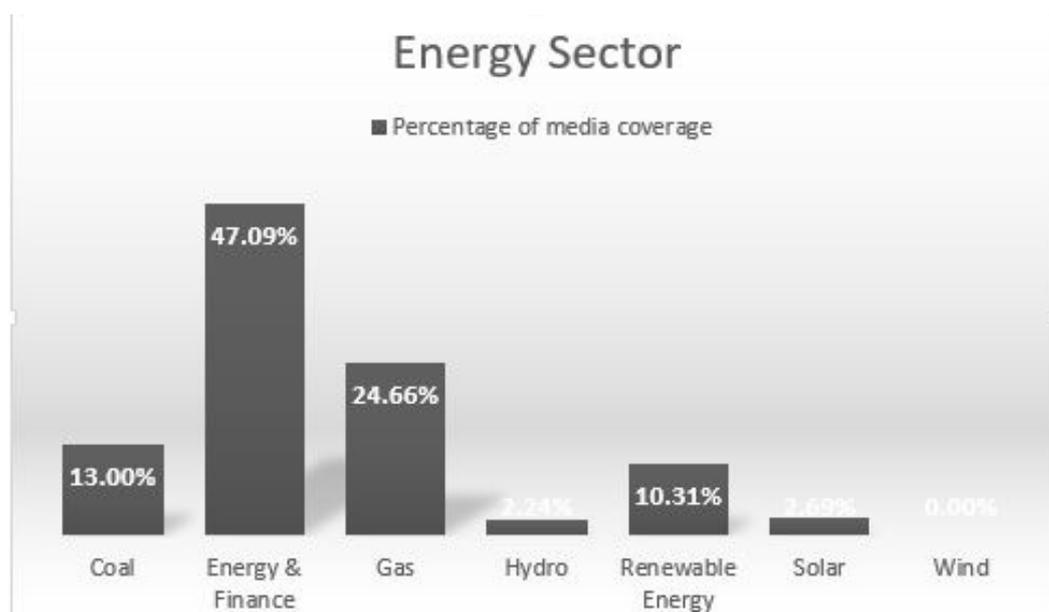


BI-MONTHLY MEDIA MONITOR

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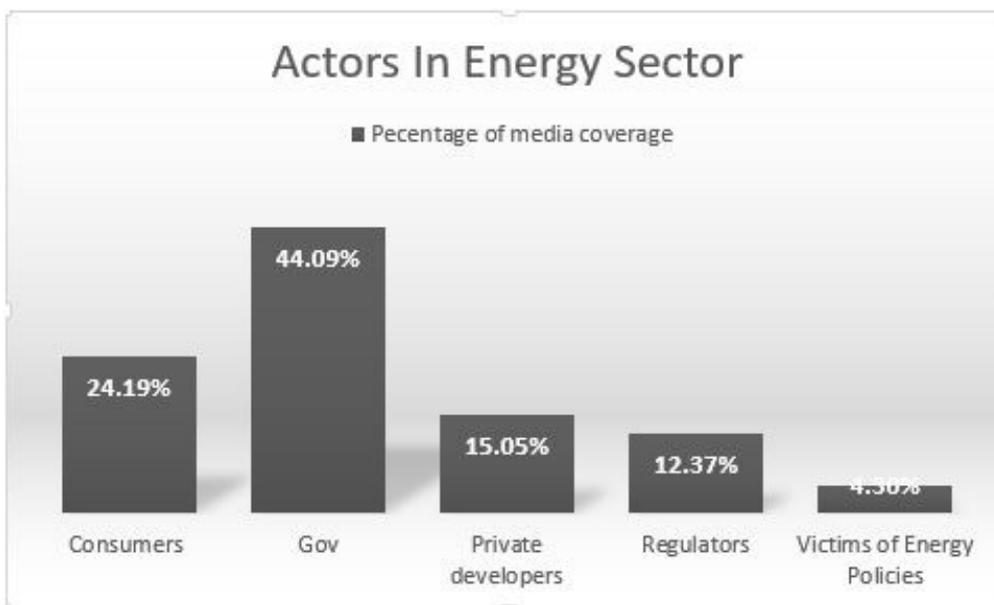
The energy sector of Pakistan saw two major news updates over the last two months. China finally announced the much-awaited decision to stop financing coal power projects overseas – a decision vehemently welcomed by clean energy activists around the world including Pakistan. However, on the other hand, Pakistan’s Cabinet Committee on Energy approved the controversial Indicative Generation Capacity Expansion Plan (IGCEP) 2021-30 amid criticism and pressure to meet its loan obligations towards World Bank.

An analysis of the news reports revealed various op-eds which termed the IGCEP plan ‘flawed’ for directing Pakistan’s energy future towards expensive fossil fuels and hydro power projects instead of renewable energy projects addition. Although the media is gradually giving more coverage to the growing discussion around phasing out coal and introducing clean energy projects, there is certainly a need for the media to further increase its focus on the two crucial matters. The growing circular debt remained the major point of discussion this time around again, with matters of energy and finance grabbing the focus of media. In September, a media report quoting the country’s energy ministry, revealed that the energy sector’s circular debt has soared to Rs2.28trn. The government has been feeling the heat of the rising circular debt, with the matter being under continuous scrutiny of the media and other various parties, such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and the members of the opposition.



Gas is another matter of the energy sector which, this time again, received the second most media coverage. News on purchase of expensive RLNG and LNG, the discussion around gas crisis ahead of the winter season along with the plans to speed up work on Pakistan and Russia’s Gas Stream Pipeline Project were the highlights of the gas sector.

Coal-related news developments surpassed news coverage given to renewable energy including solar and wind. First China-Pakistan Economic Corridor power transmission coal project (Matiari-Lahore transmission line) started its commercial operations, whereas Sindh government announced that the Rs10bn worth project, which will supply water to different Independent Power Producers (IPPs) working at Thar Coal Power Plants, will be soon completed.



\$397mn

have been approved by the World Bank as a budgetary support loan for Pakistan to finance schemes on clean energy.

Meanwhile, developments related to renewable energy include Alternate Energy Development Board's decision to ease regulations for installing solar and wind projects to promote renewable energy sources, Council of Common Interests' decision to include hydel power in renewable energy targets and approval of the infamous IGCEP that overlooked and reduced the ambition for renewable energy.

Similar to the preceding months, among all the actors in energy sector the government received the most media coverage. One of the major highlights was Pakistan and United States restarting energy dialogue to renew long partnership. According to media reports, the two governments reaffirmed their commitment to mitigate power sector emissions and help Pakistan reach its commendable target of 60% renewable power generation by 2030.

Consumer-related news also received ample space in the media in these months, which consisted of the usual updates on changes in power tariffs. In a more positive news, a media report highlighted that there has been a rise in demand among Lahore Electric Supply Company

consumers to shift towards solar power net metering connections.

Meanwhile, private developers and regulators received almost similar amount of media coverage. Matters related to the pending payments to IPPs remained the focus of the media, with one report suggesting that Rs131bn payments are expected to be made to 11 IPPs as first installment. On the other hand, a major news related to the regulators revolved around the IGCEP approval by NEPRA and changes in power and LNG tariffs.

Victims of energy policies once again received the least media coverage. There were reports on two separate incidents in which coal miners lost their lives. In the first incident, three coal miners were gunned down in Balochistan, which was termed as targeted killing as per the police. In the second incident, which was again reported from Balochistan, four coal miners lost their lives after inhaling poisonous gas in a coal mine. The media also gave coverage to a research study on the impacts of coal power generation on Tharis' land rights, which was conducted by Rural Development Policy Institute.