

DECEMBER 2021 - JANUARY 2022

BI-MONTHLY MEDIA MONITOR

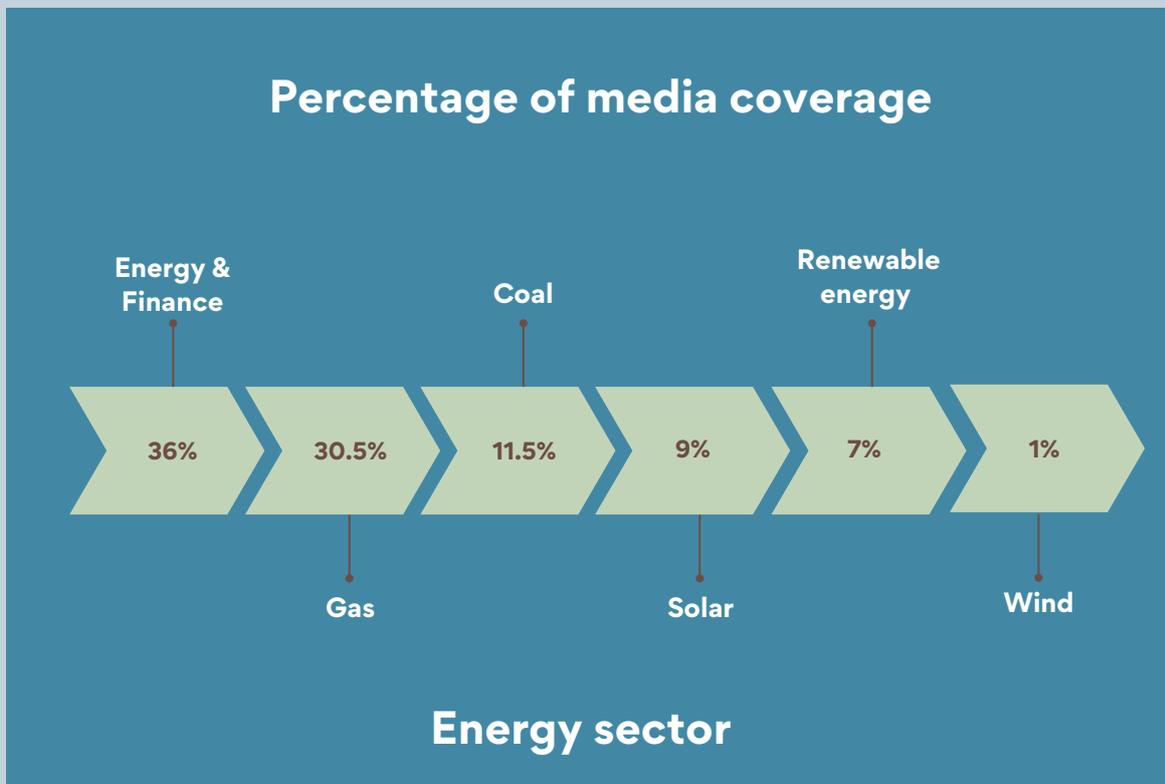
AN E-PUBLICATION OF POLICY RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR EQUITABLE DEVELOPMENT

Pakistan's energy sector

The previous year had been a rough one for Pakistan's energy sector and it hit another snag right at beginning of this new year. In a rather unexpected move, the government slapped a 17% general sales tax on solar power equipment, sending ripples through the renewable energy industry and causing a media frenzy.

At a time when Pakistan is struggling to produce cheap and clean energy, the government's decision of imposing a massive tax on solar panels was heavily criticized both in the media and the energy sector. There were several news reports and op-eds in the media pointing out the gravity of this decision and its severe impacts on consumers, private developers and the nascent solar industry of Pakistan.

In another major news, the first layer of coal has been extracted from Thar Coal Block I. Provincial government of Sindh made the announcement of the extraction of the huge coal reserves, terming it as a 'milestone achievement'. During a time when most countries of the world have pledged to quit coal, the media quoted the government as claiming that this extraction will help Pakistan tackle its energy needs.



Thar coal project was also under the Supreme Court's attention in December for alleged corruption by the authorities. Media reports revealed that the top court has ordered National Accountability Bureau to probe the matter, as the people of Thar continue to suffer to this day due to the unavailability of basic amenities and clean drinking water.

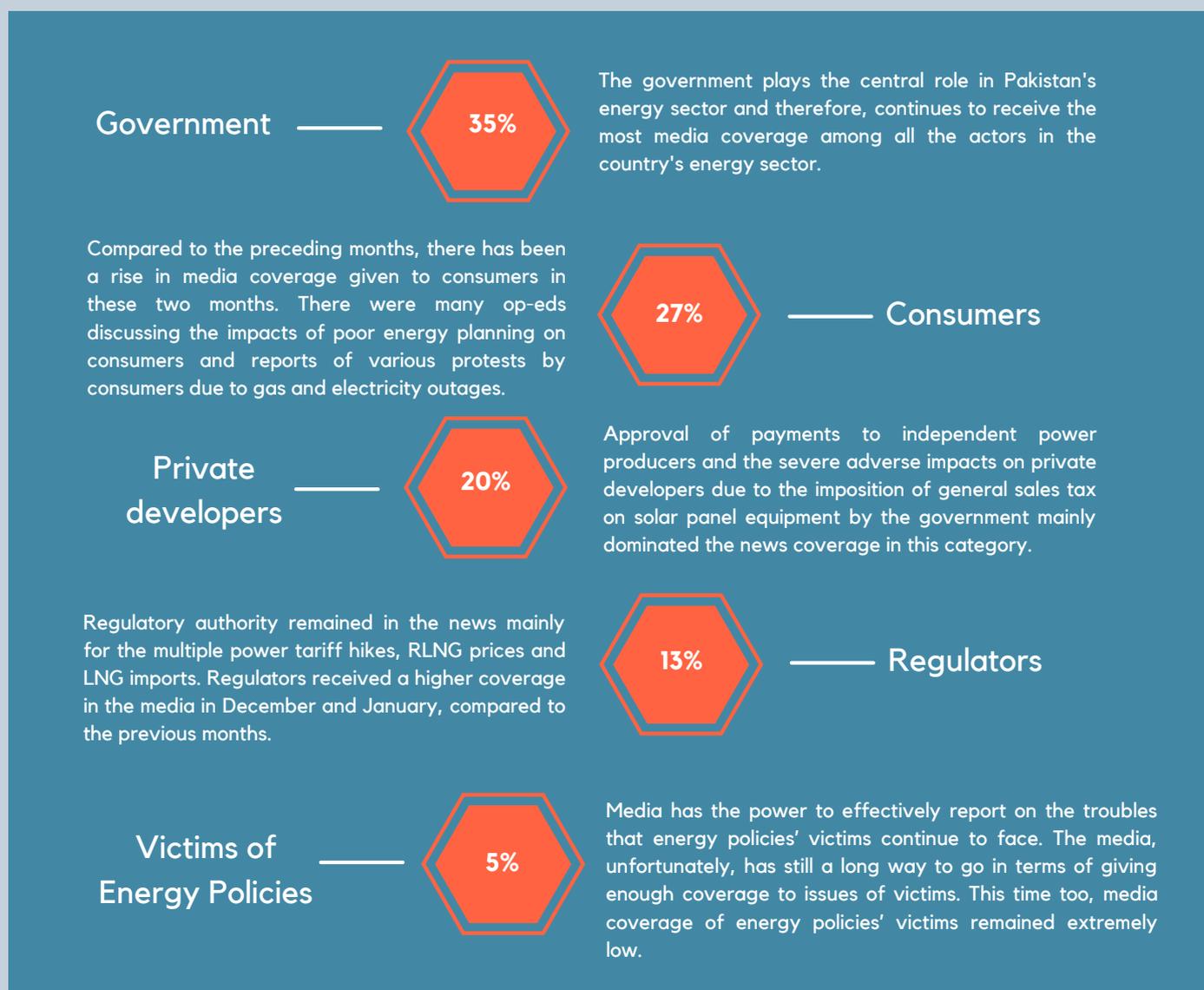
Financial matters of the energy sector once again took the lead in receiving the most media coverage. Power sector circular debt continues to remain the focused point of the media. According to news reports, the circular debt has been rising by Rs35 billion per month and is expected to further increase this year.

Meanwhile, World Bank approved \$195 million in financing for Pakistan's energy sector to improve electricity distribution and implement energy sector reforms for a better quality of service for consumers. Another news highlight was Pakistan receiving a \$300 million loan from the Asian Development Bank under the second sub-programme of ADB's Energy Sector Reforms and Financial Sustainability Programme, to expand renewable energy generation.

On the other hand, the ongoing gas crisis continued to cripple households, industries, refineries and the energy sector in these two months. The country's depleting natural gas resource made the most headlines in the media. The government had revealed that the country will be left with no gas resources in the coming years.

With the energy sector in shambles, renewable energy is the only way forward for Pakistan. Although the media has started giving decent coverage to renewable energy, there is still a great deal of potential to increase the media talk around clean energy sources such as solar and wind.

Actors in Pakistan's energy sector



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