

BI-MONTHLY MEDIA MONITOR

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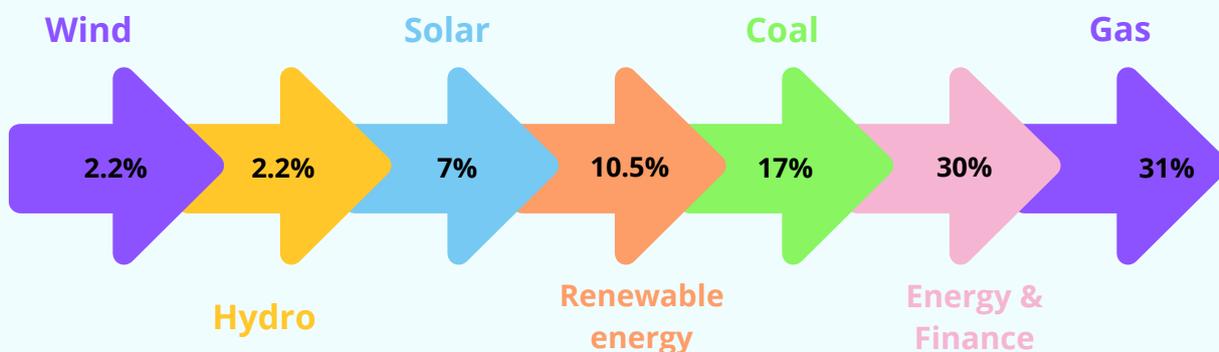
February - March 2022

Energy sector of Pakistan

The troubled gas industry of Pakistan's energy sector continued to take up a majority of the media coverage share in the last two months. As the gas crisis continues to hit the residents, businesses and power plants, Prime Minister Imran Khan made a visit to Russia in February to advance the Russian-built gas pipeline project - one of the major news highlights related to the industry.

Pakistan's energy sector is navigating its way through an extremely rough patch. It is going through a very challenging period since the last few years now. With barely any favorable policies or plans for the sector, there isn't much being done to bring the sector out of the crisis. In addition to that, the ongoing political turmoil in the country, particularly in the previous two months, has taken up all the media attention – due to which there has been relatively lesser coverage of the energy sector by the media in these months.

Percentage of media coverage given to each category in Energy Sector



Among all the political debate and the media's meager discussion on the poor performing energy sector – the voices of the victims of Pakistan's energy policies are not being heard. An analysis of the news reports from the these two months shows only 5% of media coverage was given to the victims. Although there has been a decent discussion around matters related to coal (which received the third most

coverage in these two months) there was almost little to no talk regarding the victims of Thar coal projects and other various energy sector-related developments.

The government is another actor in the energy sector which continues to receive the highest coverage by the media. The news reports mainly consist of official government meetings and energy-related projects initiated by the government. As per one such news highlight, the World Bank disbursed \$3.4 billion to the government for various projects including the Program for Affordable & Clean Energy, whereas more funds are expected in the future.

The media has also always given ample coverage to financial matters of the energy sector and this time around a similar pattern of news coverage was observed. According to a news report, circular debt of gas distribution companies has topped Rs1,200 billion. Another news report revealed that the circular debt has swelled to Rs2.358 trillion in the first seven months of this fiscal year.

In some positive news for the consumers, it was reported that National Electric Power Regulatory Authority rejected power distribution companies' request for collection of Rs28b from consumers on account of quarterly adjustments. Remaining of the consumer-oriented news was mainly related to the changing power and gas tariffs, similar to the preceding months.

Percentage of media coverage to actors in Energy Sector



Renewable energy, on the other hand, was again given a very small share of the media coverage in February and March but there was a better focus of the media on solar energy as compared to earlier. Over the two months, only one new initiative related to renewables was announced. This new project, an initiative of two private companies, is expected to add 500MW to the national grid.

For this issue, we analyzed over 200 media reports published in six daily newspapers and news websites of Pakistan namely Dawn, Business Recorder, Express Tribune, Pakistan Today, Geo News and Samaa Digital.

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