**Game changers**

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Pakistan has been mired in crises for the past many decades, and the masses have borne the brunt of these crises, which have not been of their making. They are always placated with the promise of better days and asked to sacrifice for a better future.

Promising better days, politicians have always come up with various semantics to keep the people hopeful. One such present word is ‘game changer’ which has been used ad nauseam for the last decade or so. When motorways were built, it was promised that they would be game changers, and usher in an era of prosperity and economic activity. However, more than a decade later, ever-increasing toll taxes are making travel ever-expensive for ordinary masses on motorways.

Similarly, metros were promised as a ‘game changer’ in the infrastructure of the respective cities. But first, their exorbitant construction cost and now their operational cost bearing heavily on the federal and provincial exchequers. And subsidies, running in billions of rupees, have to be provided to run these metros. The subsidy is the money collected from a few hundred thousand taxpayers in this country of more than two hundred million.

[Rain with wind-thundershower, snow over high mountains expected: PMD](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Oct-2022/rain-with-wind-thundershower-snow-over-high-mountains-expected-pmd)

CPEC, a project of $60 billion was announced around a decade back. Its first phase consisted of infrastructure development, while the second phase consisted of developing special economic zones (SEZs) along the CPEC to help industrialise the country. Since the inception of CPEC, every successive government has taken credit for it and has described it as a ‘game changer’ for the economy and industry of the country. However, when the first phase of the CPEC was completed, no upturn in the economy was visible in terms of increased industrial production, more jobs, and more revenues for the government.

Now, in the second phase of CPEC, cash-strapped federal and provincial governments are struggling to establish and populate SEZs. Federal and provincial governments had bet on FDI in general and Chinese investment in particular in SEZs, both of which are not materializing at the moment, which has put on hold the dream of rapid industrialisation of the country.

Presently, to add to the repertoire of ‘game changer’ projects in Pakistan, PM has termed the Thar coal project as a ‘game changer’, as the government could save up to $6 billion as expenditure on fuel imports amidst the soaring prices of the commodity. PM has also hoped that cheaper energy production via the Thar coal mines project would immensely impact development across Pakistan. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has also termed the project a ‘game changer’. However, Pakistan is already facing the effects of global warming, and the world over coal-powered projects are being shut down in favour of more environmentally friendly options. PM has advocated cleaner, greener energy for Pakistan, and hence his advocacy for solar power for energy-strapped Pakistan. Pakistan is presently suffering from catastrophic floods attributed to global climate changes. Thus, it is not clear how this affinity for energy generated through coal could be justified.

[NASA’s Webb telescope captures view of Pillars of Creation](https://www.nation.com.pk/20-Oct-2022/nasa-s-webb-telescope-captures-view-of-pillars-of-creation)

In sum, the word ‘game changer’ has become a cliché. Successive governments have spent an exorbitant amount of money and loans on their pet ‘game changers’ with no quantifiable output for the masses and the economy. The need is to roll out more thought-out and planned projects with rationalized, quantifiable outputs and take a critical review of existing ‘game changer ‘projects.