**Energy, power, revolution**

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The past few days have been spent by repeatedly going over three questions that may appear to be not linked to each other. The first of them came from the head of the Karachi Stock Exchange. The second sought to correct the record about a pragmatic politician who might have been momentarily painted as some kind of a rebel and the third one that speaks about who should be actually publicly ruling Pakistan.

Talking to one of the most well-meaning anchors of our times, the KSE chief tried to give an example to highlight the extent and severity of the blow delivered to Pakistanis in the form of their latest electricity bill. In his expert opinion, unlike the past when people were forced to borrow on occasions such as a wedding in the family, now, they are asking for loans to pay off their electricity bills.

The guy compelled by circumstances to seek loans-for-utility bills has surely taken his time reaching the stock exchange kings – the area in and around the bourses known to be forever inhabited by the more affluent. Local accounts of the less fortunate and the more ordinary would ‘reveal’ that this particular loan-seeker has been around since as far back as the memory will take you.

In any case, this is the news from territory occupied by those who can supposedly afford it. The search is once again on to charge the privileged. If there is one voice that stresses on the absolute need for a blanket ban on pensions in the state sectors, another calls for an end to the system which allows a percentage of government employees to enjoy free electricity. Numbers are flashed, and the jugglers behind them come up with all kinds of explanations to convince the audience that they are sincere to the majority.

There is no doubt that certain sections of people are more severely hit by this electricity-bill bomb that has been dropped on Pakistani consumers. But just as it should not have come as a surprise to anyone – given that this was imminent ever since we signed that agreement with the all-powerful lender – vain are the expert attempts to search for and locate that resourceful pool of rich Pakistanis who can defuse the situation by paying ransom for masses upon masses of Pakistanis whose freedoms and futures their under-duress leaders have pledged to global money-lenders.

It is indeed this perceived universality of the pain and anguish caused by the bijli ka bill that has even the 'khaata peeta' or supposedly well-to-do people in the country to egg on agitators who cannot and will not pay – ignoring that as the more resourceful lot, they are cast as the villains by the very revolt they are trying to promote. Even away from those out to literally blaze a rebellious trail, there is no shortage of innocent dreamers out there who wish to see an edifice of revolution constructed upon the ashes of the inflated, offensive electricity bills received by consumers all across the country. Only they have little knowledge who will bring about that revolt and how. Who will be the leader?

This is after all a land of part-time revolutionaries – as brought out for the umpteenth time by a statement about a certain Mian Nawaz Sharif ascribed to one of his closest aides – the second observation of the three mentioned at the outset here. It clarifies that Mian Sahab was never a revolutionary but someone who wanted to work in harmony with the establishment. This is first and foremost an answer to the transparently flattering Shehbaz Sharif remark about his close ties with the kingmakers over the years. But just as the statement strives to restore Mian Sahab’s status as ‘the candidate’ for receiving the establishment’s blessings for a future selection for the post of prime minister, it is submerged by the all-too-simple and naive promises that all that this troubled nation required was an election as a panacea for its ills.

What and how much can an election contested by politicians destined to work within the decided parameters bring? It won’t be able to force a change of heart on the part of the powerful and the supposedly wise who have prescribed this course of economic sufferings and hardships for the people of Pakistan – let alone the thought that a politician elected in the much-sought general poll will be able to address the power imbalance that is at the core of the debilitating basic conflict in the country.

This is where the third and the last statement referred to at the beginning of this piece raises its head to clinch the argument. It discredits all politicians and appeals directly to the one man who can bring an actual difference to take charge. So long as he is viewed as a competitor in this power race, others have little chance. This is where the change has to begin.

The writer is a senior journalist.