

HAAL AHWAL

A Book of Selected News Summary

February, 2023

Roots for Equity

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Roots for Equity

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Preface

The *Haal Ahwal* was initiated in 2013 as an Urdu quarterly publication and came out with more than 20 journals till 2019. From 2020 onwards, due to Covid19's lockdown, and other resource gaps the publication was discontinued. The Urdu version of *Haal Ahwal's* was compiled as a fairly comprehensive resource bringing together current news and developments in the agriculture sector. Its aim was to provide readers with a chronological order of developments in various sub-sectors of agriculture and its interconnected domains to develop their understanding on the political economy of agriculture.

With the publication in hand, it's obvious that *Haal Ahwal* is being launched once again. However, after a gap of three years, it comes with some changes. The first most apparent is that, this time it's being published in English. The range of topics remain much the same, following the previous pattern of more coverage of Pakistan's domestic scene and sparingly international coverage. *Haal Ahwal* will now be on a monthly basis and not quarterly.

The publication covers a wide range of subjects, encompassing various aspects of agriculture and related fields. It delves into topics such as farmers, laborer, agricultural resources (including land, water, and inputs), seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural loans, agricultural machinery, and industrial production. News items on food and cash crops, fruits and vegetables, livestock, fisheries, and poultry are added. And then on more macro issues of neoliberal policies, trade, exports, imports, the corporate sector including agrochemical companies, food and fertilizer companies, corporate lobbies and foreign aid are also covered. Related issues such as environment, pollution, health and safety, climate change, and natural disasters, poverty, inflation, food security and people's and farmers resistance also have particular emphasis. All these topics will be covered more fully in the national context and where relevant to Pakistan, as part of international policies and politics. In addition, there is coverage of news on international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank; aid agencies such as the USAID and others as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Though the layout of the news items has been changed quite a bit, we are retaining our take on the news items covered under Points to Ponder, which is given in the very beginning of the publication. The next section is based on excerpts what the editorial team considers the most important news items in this period. This is followed by the table of contents making it easier for readers to look for their topics of interest. And then we have the meat of the publication based on abbreviated news items include in each sub-section. As was the case for the Urdu *Haal Ahwal*, two major newspapers have

been used for the news items included, namely the “Dialy Dawn” and the “Business Recorder.” Please note, only the Sunday newspaper is used for news coverage from “The News.”

At the end, we would like to add that comments and critique for making the resource more useful to our readers is very welcome.

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1,000,000,000	1 Billion	1 Arab	ایک ارب
10,000,000,000	10 Billion	10 Arab	دس ارب
100,000,000,000	100 Billion	1 Kharab	ایک کھرب

Glossary

ADB	Asian Development Bank
APTMA	All Pakistan Textile Mills Association
BMA	British Medical Association
BoIT	Board of Investment and Trade
CAA	Civilian Aviation Authority
CASA-1000	Central Asia-South Asia-1000
CCRI	Central Cotton Research Institute
CDB	China Development Bank
CDT	Democratic Labour Confederation
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CPI	Corruption Perceptions Index
CPP	Communist Party of Pakistan
DAP	Diabetic Association of Pakistan
DAP	Di-Ammonium Phosphate
DPC	Drug Pricing Committee
DRAP	Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan
DSCC	Deep Sea Conservation Coalition
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
EOBI	Employees Old Age Benefit Institution
EU	European Union
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organisation
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GDA	Grand Democratic Alliance
GLOF	Glacial Lake Outburst Flood
GST	General Sales Tax
IDF	International Diabetes Federation
IEA	International Energy Agency
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IGC	Inter-Governmental Commission
IGP	Inspector General of Police
IIA	Islamabad International Airport
IMF	International Monetary Fund

IMPAC	International Marine Protected Areas Congress
INGD	National Institute for Disaster Management
INGV	National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
IPU	Inter-Parliamentary Union
ISDS	Investor-State Dispute Settlement
KCF	Karachi Citizens' Forum
LHC	Lahore High Court
LPG	Liquefied Petroleum Gas
LSMI	Large Scale Manufacturing Industries
MMTs	Million Metric Tonnes
MNFS&R	Ministry of National Food Security and Research
MRPs	Maximum Retail Prices
NDFC	National Fertilizer Development Company
NIH	National Institute of Health
NPL	Nestle Pakistan Ltd
NRSP	National Rural Support Programme
Ogra	Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority
Passco	Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Service Corporation
PBF	Pakistan Business Forum
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PCCC	Pakistan Central Cotton Committee
PCE	Personal Consumption Expenditures
PCGA	Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association
PDP	Pasban Democratic Party
PHL	Power Holding Limited
PIA	Pakistan International Airlines
POF	Pakistan Ordnance Factory
PR	Pakistan Railways
PSM	Pakistan Steel Mills
Reap	Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan
RMT	Rail, Maritime and Transport union
SAFCO	Sustainable Actions to Access Financial Capital Opportunities
SAI	Sindh Abadgar Ittehad
SAU	Sindh Agriculture University
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan's

SCA	Sindh Chamber of Agriculture
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sepa	Sindh Environmental Protection Agency
SHC	Sindh High Court
SICVD	Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases
SNGPL	Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd
SPI	Sensitive Price Index
SRSO	Sindh Rural Support Organisation
SSGCL	Sui Southern Gas Company Ltd
SUP	Sindh United Party
TIFA	Trade and Investment Framework Agreement
TRDP	Thardeep Rural Development Programme
TSSA	Transport Salaried Staffs' Association
TUC	Trades Union Congress
UAF	University of Agriculture Faisalabad
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFC	United Nations Framework Convention
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UPH	Urban and peri-urban horticulture
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USC	Utility Stores Corporation
USTR	Office of the United States Trade Representative
WB	World Bank
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization (United Nations)
WPI	Wholesale Price Index

Points to Ponder!

As was to be expected, the crises facing Pakistan, have not ushered good tidings! From food and water crisis, to climate change and economic crisis all have impacted agriculture and food production, the lives and livelihood of the farmers and of course the common people, tremendously.

There is escalating food inflation, ranking the country as one of the highest in the world. The blame cannot be attributed to natural calamities or/and climate change but to our State's incompetency, that is unwilling to prioritize the economic and social needs of a self-reliant nation state and its people. The caretaker government's pontification includes remarks such as ' . . . reconstruction of the agriculture sector on scientific basis will not only utter (*sic*) a new era of export-led growth but also ensure food security in the country' However, the daily rigor facing the common man and woman is far away from such hyperbole. Among other failures, the country also faces acute drinking and irrigation water supply; the impacts have been felt especially in Sindh, where the Indus Delta has suffered grievous harm, the people of Dadu suffering from both water and energy crisis. Petroleum price rises have also raised the cost of agricultural production sharply. The export scenario was also bleak – the country's exports shrank for the fifth month in a row dropping by 15.42 percent year-on-year – in January with fears about the closure of industrial units, especially textile and clothing across the country. This phenomenon cannot be separated from the IMF conditionalities; the National Assembly (despite lacking quorum) passed the IMF-dictated Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023. On the behest of the IMF, the government has imposed PKR 170 billion worth of taxes, of which PKR 115 billion had already been imposed earlier. According to the Energy Minister, Dastgir Khurram, on further directions of the IMF, the government imposed additional surcharge of PKR 3.82 per unit on those using 300 units to fund power sector loans. On the opening day of the talks with the IMF, the government increased the price of liquified petroleum gas by 30 percent. The overwhelming need for the government to sign a deal with IMF must have been dictated by its very low level (\$3 billion) of foreign exchange reserves, an amount not even sufficient to cover controlled imports for just three weeks. And even under such intense economic crisis, the state has allowed the import of \$32 billion worth of agro-based commodities.

The continuous increase in petroleum prices puts intense pressure on the national industry, and therefore, it is no surprise that the country's production capabilities are being severely challenged. There was a decline in rice as well textile exports. The country's overall export during July-January 2022-23 was \$16.49 billion (provisional)

against \$17.73 billion over the corresponding period of the last year, showing a decrease of 6.99 percent. Pakistan's dependence on a handful of countries for exports, especially the US is of serious concern; it remains the largest export market for Pakistani products. According to the US State Department, a robust trade relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more important than ever to bolster Pakistan's economic stability. It is also worth noting that the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) ministerial meetings have resumed after a seven-year gap. TIFA, recognizing the critical key role of private sector is based on promoting trade and investment between the two countries; given the slump in our production, the inability to diversify our exports, as well export destinations, such trade agreements can only harbor further economic deterioration.

While TIFA, and in general neoliberalism concurs that foreign direct investment, meaning multinational corporations are beneficial for engaging parties, such beliefs are challenged. A key concern is the corporate sector's priority of maximizing its profits, uncaring of the impacts it brings to the people, the economy, or the environment. For instance, in Pakistan, in face of more than 1,100 daily deaths from diabetes-related complications, as well hundreds of limb amputations, multinational companies are offering \$200 million worth of investment in the country, to prevent authorities from raising taxes on sugary drinks. The FBR is under immense pressure from different political interest groups making an effort to stop the 17 percent Federal Excise Duty on sugary beverages. According to the International Diabetes Federation (IDF), the cost of diabetes management has increased by more than \$2,640 million in Pakistan in 2021.

Another stark example of corporate sector's criminal behaviour is the Reko Diq partnership that has been reinitiated. Barrick Gold Corporation, a Canadian mining corporation, has paid the first \$3 million to the Balochistan government, as part of the new deal. However, the history is that Barrick had registered a case against government of Pakistan under the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) system, when the Baloch government had resisted the former agreement with Barrick. In response, Barrick had claimed \$US 8.5 billion in damages as part of the ISDS mechanism. According to sources, the project has been resumed after the new deal has been made, resolving some outstanding damages as claimed by the company. It should be pointed out that the government of Pakistan implements hunger-inducing IMF conditionalities for much less than the amount claimed by Barrick – so one can say that such terrible austerity measures as forced upon by the IMF are undertaken to pay back the corporate sector for its cut throat investment agreements, which most states swallow hoping to attract foreign direct investment.

Engro Fertilizer corporations was able to earn profits worth PKR 16 billion in 2022, a decrease in its profits by 24% last year, but however still very profitable. At the same

time, the increased cost of fertilizers in the market has been borne by the peasantry, the small and landless farmers. A chemical fertilizer, DAP as well as urea were being sold in the black market; the fixed rate for urea under government directives were unavailable.

Similarly, FrieslandCampina, a dairy corporation from Netherlands that has bought 51% shares in the Engro dairy business, reported a PKR 2.4 billion profit for 2022. Therefore, while the country reels under a huge debt of US\$126 billion dollars, the corporate sector, even under a heavy burden of taxes was still able to generate taxes.

Unethical practices of corporations are not limited to a particular country but is a global phenomenon. A particular example is of \$55 billion infant baby formula industry, that promotes itself through misleading claims not backed by solid rigorous scientific evidence.

While the country reels under billions of dollars of bone-crushing debt, the collusion of bureaucrats, industrialists and academia continue to put emphasis on highly expensive modern imported technologies as the panacea for improving agricultural policies; while meetings and consultations with so called 'progressive farmers' have taken place the small and landless farmers as an entity find no place in policy formulation. It is indeed ironic that there have been demands from the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture to declare an agriculture emergency, and that the 'government should not agree to the imposition of new taxes on farm sector on its negotiations with International Monetary Fund.' Such statements provide much to be pondered up by the people of Pakistan; the common person is being buried alive under taxes and inflation but the richest segment of society, the intensely rich feudal class remains outside the ambit of state taxation, with the IMF hand in glove protecting the elite segments of Pakistani society, even though it does make statements that ask for taxing the rich.

One can also see the anomalies in the system where hundreds of Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) employees have not received salaries for eight months, while the textile private sector, namely the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) is financing PKR 100 crores to increase cotton production and for research. APTMA wants administrative control over CCRI, a government body, and while the power tussle continues, it has stopped its funding to CCRI. This is indeed quite a drastic manifestation of private sector imposing its political will over public institutions – in a sector which has and is the backbone of Pakistani foreign exchange earnings. And one needs to understand that while corporations are able to maintain their profit margins, the working class loses as closure of industry means intensification of joblessness.

It should be pointed out that cotton production estimates for this year indicate an alarming reduction of 2.6 million bales with total production being predicted to be 5 million bales, with 7 million bales to be imported. One needs to remember, the current crisis is a result of relying on genetically modified cotton seeds that are environmentally disastrous, highly expensive as well as unable to cope with the hot climate of Pakistan, which is heating up further based on global warming. At the same time, constant climate crises events have had a deleterious impact on cotton production. Unfortunately, there is still much faith in research and development of climate resilient varieties and technologies. There is much food for thought on what recourse should be taken by the government? Or is it really a moot point as the government is totally under the impositions of foreign entities that have overriding authority in making and implementing public and private sector policy?

International aid, in the name of climate change and women empowerment is also aimed toward promoting corporate interest. For instance, the European Union, as part of the post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction aims to increase agricultural value chains. 'Women-led' livelihood programs have also been initiated by the Asian Development Bank that support climate-resilient rice seeds; though the report does not mention if the seeds are hybrid or GMO seeds, one way or another, these seeds are market-controlled and invariably based on promotion of agro-chemical corporations in the agriculture and food sector. It is not clear how the project is 'women-led' as the project grant stipulates only that it will provide women with durable farming tool kits for their farm activities, as well as protective footwear for safer rice transplanting; the role of these women in decision making for project development and implementation is unclear.

So on one hand, we see international organizations promoting neoliberal market-oriented policies in the name of helping communities suffering from climate change, while on the other hand the World Bank manages a Climate Warehouse, which is based on promoting trading carbon credits: meaning that corporations with 'larger carbon footprint' in rich industrial countries can continue with carbon emissions while supporting 'protection' of environment friendly initiatives in poor countries like Pakistan. However, it is entirely unethical because emissions are creating intense catastrophe in climate vulnerable countries like Pakistan which cannot be reversed by carbon trading. Major corporation and banks, such as Walt Disney and JP Morgan Bank have already been accused of purchasing carbon credits for forest protection that were not under threat; some in the US have been earning mega returns up to \$53 million in similar projects. Oil and gas corporations continue with methane emissions despite high energy prices; they release the same amount of methane every single day that occurred based on the Nord Stream explosion.

About 127,000 acres of land in five districts of Punjab will be provided for corporate farming for a maximum of 30 years; however, the entities who receive land under this project will not be awarded proprietary rights over land; areas of focus will include research in forests and livestock. The word corporate farming in itself means highly chemical and capital-intensive agriculture production, a system that is viable only for rich farmers and the corporate sector. Nothing new in the fact, that the state apparatus remains blind to the demand of small and landless farmers for just and equitable distribution of land!

Government policies that are based on promoting neoliberalism and corporate interest disregard environmental pollution including water and air pollution. The Sukkur High Court has observed that Indus River is highly polluted. Industrial run-off, municipal wastewater, and hospitals' waste all are being dumped in the river. Apart from rivers, globally, oceans and marine ecosystems face pollution; activists demand that existing and emerging industries that threaten deep ocean are unequivocally rejected. That something is seriously wrong is indicated by whales being washed up dead in different coastal areas such as Cyprus, and Sri Lanka.

The toll of environmental degradation and pollution is borne by society. According to the UN, one in three children worldwide do not have access to clean drinking water, one in three schools have no basic sanitation. Clean drinking water and handwashing facilities are key to protecting children against infectious diseases.

In urban areas, especially megacities like Karachi air quality is toxic, with the city ranking among the most polluted and unlive-able cities, globally. While there are no measures taken to check air or any other form of pollution, there is also negligence on part of government authorities in investigating harm caused to the public. For instance, the death of 19 people in Kemari, Karachi has not been scientifically investigating; initially it had been believed that the cause of death were toxic emissions from factories in the area.

PIMS administration points out that a company hired at PKR 1.4 million to incinerate medical waste has been unlawfully selling infectious material such as blood bags and syringes for use in further recycled production. All this in face of the fact PIMS itself has an incinerator that could burn 100 kg of waste per hour.

Nationally and internationally, there is a mounting debt crisis, inflation, and climate emergencies. The cumulative impact is seen through a number of indicators such as rising number of climate calamities from cyclones to snow storms, avalanches and flooding. In addition, there are also many different natural disaster events; the Earthquake in Turkiye and Syria are one such example, which has left thousands dead,

and millions in unsafe situations facing stark weather conditions and hunger; the situation in Syria is exacerbated by the sanctions placed on it by the US.

Maternal mortality figures have been rising, with more than 287,000 maternal deaths in 2020.

Inflation and climate crisis go hand in hand resulting in global hunger. According to the World Food Program (WFP), there will be 345.2 million people food insecure in 2023, an increase of almost 200 million people since early 2020. Wars and conflicts in different regions of the world are the main drivers of hunger. With more than 240 million people in various countries such as Afghanistan, Haiti, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen in need of humanitarian aid, many close to famine, the UN is unable to generate enough funds to reach all in need.

Food prices, such as for onion have escalated due to a combination of climate crisis and the Ukraine war. The level of economic crisis can be judged by the number of bailout programs being negotiated by the IMF with various countries including Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Argentina.

That the people globally are suffering is more than obvious. There have been massive demonstrations against inflation and price hikes for most essential public utilities and food items not only across Pakistan but in other countries. These include Sri Lanka as well as ongoing strikes and protests in France, Germany and the UK.

The national and global economic, social and environmental situation is indicative of a mass unrest, much of which of course can be attributed to the brutal exploitative, extractive mechanisms of Monopoly Capital.

NEWS EXCERPTS

National News

Agricultural Production Resources

- Pakistan is amongst the countries facing highest food inflation in the world and this grave food inflation in an agricultural country is nothing but the negligence of our rulers.
- Federal Minister for Planning Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said that the agriculture sector was the government's top priority. The reconstruction of agriculture sector on scientific basis will not only utter a new era of export-led growth, but also ensure food security in the country.
- University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that climate changes have started playing havoc with the sector and we have to develop climate resilient varieties. He said that due to excessive usage of pesticide, the agricultural fruit and vegetables are becoming toxic. He said that the UAF in collaboration with Washington State University was working on wheat climate resilient varieties.
- Sindh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor (SAU) Dr Fateh Marri said through development of the agricultural sector and modern technology, export and food security could be ensured. He said that 90 percent of water could be saved with hydroponics and modern agricultural methods, adding that the urban agriculture should be adopted instead of canal agriculture.
- Gohar Ejaz announced to set up a fund worth Rs100 crore on behalf of the APTMA Foundation to increase the production of cotton and for research.
- The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will open its office in Pakistan very soon to lead the Living Indus Initiative programme for which the UNEP and the government are in negotiations with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for an indicative funding of \$25 million.
- Most parts of Sehwan city and other parts of Dadu district have been without drinking water for 10 days and people are seen desperately travelling long distances all the day in search of water.
- Many villages in Sehwan taluka are also facing an acute shortage of water.
- People of Bhan Syedabad also complained about water scarcity hitting the town for over a week.

Agricultural Inputs

- The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) has questioned an expenditure of around \$32bn on the import of agro-based commodities in the year 2021-22, and said that had the farming community been given such financial support, the country would not have been facing threat of default today.
- Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) general secretary Zahid Bhurgari said that seed and fertiliser as well as pesticides should be provided to farmers for the cultivation of cotton at subsidised rate. He urged the federal government to declare agriculture emergency and said the government should not agree to imposition of new taxes on farm sector in its negotiations with International Monetary Fund.
- The Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizer price have once again crossed Rs10,000 level as within the past one month, it has witnessed an increase of Rs1,500 per bag and reached Rs10,886 per bag from Rs 9,386 per bag.
- Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Vice Chancellor Dr Fateh Marri has said that SAU planted 300 different wheat varieties for expansion and to develop new varieties under guidance of agricultural scientist Kaleri. The VC visited experimental field established in varsity's Latif Farm where he was briefed about over 25,000 different commodity lines of wheat.

Agricultural Outputs

- The provincial government is going to fix the support price of the new crop of sugar cane at Rs450 per 40 kg.
- The SCA president noted that prices of agricultural inputs and tractors had also increased like those of petroleum products and all other commodities and machineries and this had affected growers in terms of higher production cost.
- Over 1100 employees including known cotton scientists at Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) are facing immense economic trouble due to the non-provision of salaries for the last eight months and situation can cause brain drain.
- An alarming reduction of 2.6 million bales in cotton production is estimated this season. The total production will be around 5 million bales and about 7 million bales of cotton will have to be imported.
- Pakistan Central Cotton Committee have been protesting against nonpayment of their salaries for the last eight months.

Non Agricultural Production

- The Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) output has declined by 3.68 per cent during the first half (July-December) of 2022-23 when compared with the same period of last year.

Trade

- Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed by 31.97 percent to \$19.632 billion during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year 2022-23.
- Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisarski said that the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Poland has reached over €723 million.
- A robust trade relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more important than ever to bolster Pakistan's economic stability.
- The country's exports shrank for the fifth month in a row dropping by 15.42 per cent year-on-year to \$2.21 billion in January raising fears about the closure of industrial units especially textile and clothing across the country.
- In January trade deficit fell 22.71pc to \$2.64bn on a year-on-year basis.
- The import of services posted a negative growth of 30.28pc to \$3.88bn in July-December against \$5.57bn in the corresponding period last year.
- The exports of textile and clothing fell 14.83 per cent in January to \$1.32 billion compared to \$1.55bn in the same month last year.
- The country's textile group exports declined by around 8.17 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year 2022-23.
- Amid a global economic slowdown, Pakistan's exports of rice posted a negative growth of 15.82 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year mainly due to the flood devastation of paddy fields in Sindh.
- Country's textile group exports witnessed a decline of 14.83 percent in January 2023 on a year-on-year basis.
- Rice exports declined by 15.82pc during the first seven months of 2022-23.
- The country's overall exports during July-January 2022-23 totaled \$16.499 billion (provisional) against \$17.739 billion during the corresponding period of last year showing a decrease of 6.99 percent.
- The exports in January 2023 were \$2.244 billion (provisional) as compared to \$2.313 billion in December 2022 showing a decrease of 2.98 percent and by 14.15 percent as compared to \$2.614 billion in January 2022.
- With a bilateral trade volume of \$12 billion, the US remains the largest export market for Pakistani products.

Corporate Sector

- Barrick Gold Corporation has paid the first \$3 million to the Balochistan government as part of the new Reko Diq partnership.
- Multinational companies are offering a few hundred million dollars' investment in a bid to prevent the authorities from raising taxes on sugary drinks.
- Health experts said that the beverage industry was trying to give “a lollypop of \$200 million investments” to the country for not jacking up the taxes.
- As per international diabetes federation (IDF), the cost of management of diabetes increased to more than \$2,640 million in Pakistan in 2021.
- 127,000 acres of land would be made available for (corporate) farming in five selected districts (of Punjab). Land can be given for a maximum of 30 years for corporate farming and those who get land for farming will not get ownership rights.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

- The Asian Development Bank has approved emergency assistance of \$5 million for climate-resilient seeds for staple crop cultivation, and women-led livelihood to meet basic household needs in flood-hit areas of Balochistan.
- Despite clearly lacking quorum, the National Assembly after a lackluster debate passed the IMF-dictated Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023, seeking to impose additional Rs170 billion taxes.
- Mr Dastgir said an additional surcharge of Rs3.82 per unit would also be imposed on those using above 300 units to fund power sector loans under the insistence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Environment

- An estimated 128,000 lives were lost every year in Pakistan due to poor air quality while the average Pakistani life expectancy was going down by 4.3 years.
- According to the WHO, approximately seven million premature deaths take place in the world annually because of air toxicity. It is also the primary agent of climate change and reduces the feasibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals SDGS.
- An average of 400,000 children is diagnosed with cancer every year, and more than \$116 billion is spent annually on cancer. Lung cancer in men while breast cancer in women has become major cause of death.

- The Sukkur bench of the Sindh High Court has observed that Indus river water has become completely polluted and is no more fit for human consumption nor even for any living thing for that matter.

Socio-Economic Condition

- Fiscal deficit has been recorded at two per cent of the GDP or Rs1,683 billion during the first six months of the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan’s agricultural output per worker has been stagnant for three decades, lagging all other countries, and it has expanded at an annual rate of less than 0.7 per cent, while the South Asia average has been four times the rate, a World Bank report says.
- A bunch of Pakistan's biggest companies have halted operations in the past months as they ran out of raw materials or foreign exchange, or both, compounding the troubles of an economy that's trying to avert a debt default.
- The provincial cabinet set a wheat procurement target for crop 2022-23 at 1.4 million metric tonnes (MMTs) at a rate of Rs4,000 per 40kg.
- The annual consumer inflation hit 27.6 per cent last month, the highest in 48 years, as prices of food and transport continued to remain elevated.
- Inflation in urban and rural areas increased to 24.4pc and 32.3pc year-on-year, respectively.
- Core inflation, which doesn’t include volatile food and energy prices, also slightly rose to 15.4pc in urban areas and 19.4pc in rural areas.
- The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) inflation on YoY increased to 30.5per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 27.8per cent a month earlier and 20.9per cent in January 2022.
- The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased to 28.5 per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 27.1 per cent a month earlier and an increase of 24 per cent in January 2022.
- The National CPI for January 2023 is increased to 2.88 per cent over December 2022 and increased to 27.55 per cent over the corresponding month of the last year, i.e., January 2022.
- The government and International Monetary (IMF) are said to have agreed on reducing power subsidy by 45 per cent to Rs 300 billion from July 2023 onwards.

Climate Change

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has developed a plan to market through the World Bank its carbon credits on account of generating clean hydel and solar power without polluting the environment.

Resistance

- Activists of the Sindh United Party (SUP) and component parties forming the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) staged a hunger strike in Qasimabad against price-hike.
- A large number of taxi drivers took out a procession in Jhuddo town in protest against recent hike in the price of petroleum products.

International News

International Aid / Loans

- The Central Asia-South Asia-1000 (CASA-1000) is reportedly facing a delay of two years as the World Bank and USAID have withdrawn their funding after regime change in Afghanistan.
- The project, after completion, would provide a transmission line to transmit electricity from Kyrgyzstan, across Tajikistan and Afghanistan to Pakistan. A study is also being conducted by M/s Hitachi to look into the option of flow of surplus energy from Pakistan to the Central Asian Republics in the winter season.
- UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has announced \$250 million for the United Nations Global Emergency Fund to help the most vulnerable people in some of the most forgotten crises.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

- The International Monetary Fund has signed off on a \$4.7 billion support loan package for Bangladesh
- Argentina's government is in final talks with International Monetary Fund officials to ease foreign exchange reserves targets for 2023 under the country's \$44 billion program.

- The World Bank has offered a lifeline to three private banks in bankrupt Sri Lanka, lending them \$400 million to finance imports of essential food and medicines with an IMF bailout stall

Environment

- At least 11 pilot whales were saved after they became stranded near the shore on Sri Lanka’s west coast.
- The Cyprus government is investigating how seven whales mysteriously washed up dead on the rugged shoreline of the island’s north coast,
- There were reports another three whales from the same species had been found dead on beaches further east in the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus.
- The vast majority of health claims used to advertise baby formula worldwide are not supported by rigorous scientific evidence, a study said, leading researchers to urge the breast milk substitutes be sold in plain packaging
- Daniel Munblit, an honorary senior lecturer at Imperial College London and an author of the new study, said ‘We are very much against inappropriate infant formula marketing, which provides misleading claims not backed up by solid evidence`.
- Every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth.
- The report, “Trends in Maternal Mortality”, released by WHO, Unicef, UNFPA, the World Bank and UN Population Division, reveals “It is unacceptable that so many women continue to die needlessly in pregnancy and childbirth. Over 280,000 fatalities in a single year are unconscionable.”
- There were an estimated 287 000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020.

Socio-Economic Condition

- Only 47 per cent of hunger funding needs through the UN humanitarian system are met, leaving a hunger funding gap of 53 per cent.
- Approximately 828 million people, one in 10 worldwide, are undernourished and as many as 50 million people in 45 countries are on the verge of famine.
- Yet, after working for more than 40 years across 50 nations, We know that closing the hunger funding gap is a critical step,” said Director of External Relations, Action Against Hunger, Eric Bebernitz.
- The Institute of International Finance report estimated that the nominal value of global debt declined by some \$4 trillion, bringing it fractionally back under the \$300 trillion threshold breached in 2021.

- One in three children worldwide does not have access to clean drinking water while at school, impacting their health and ability to learn, the United Nations said. “Globally, almost one in three schools has no drinking water from an improved source,” the UN cultural agency UNESCO said in a new report.
- United Nations has indicated that 345.2 million people will be food insecure in 2023. This is an increase of almost 200m people since early 2020.
- An estimated 43.3m people in 51 countries are in emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity in 2023, including severely food insecure.
- In 2023, at least 846,000 people are expected to experience catastrophic conditions. This is an increase of 74,000 people compared to 2022, where 772,000 were estimated to be in catastrophic conditions.

Climate Change

- For Sian Owen, director of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), ‘it is crucial that both existing and emerging industries that threaten our deep ocean are quickly and unequivocally rejected and that we sustainably manage the remaining 70pc.’
- Carbon credits are already widely used. According to various estimates, the number of tons of CO2 they represent (with one credit equivalent to one ton) could increase tenfold by 2030, to around two billion tons.
- Oil and gas companies are not doing enough to cut methane emissions the International Energy Agency (IEA) said, despite high energy prices making abatement measures mostly pay for themselves.
- Methane is responsible for around 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the Industrial Revolution.
- The IEA estimates that \$100 billion — less than three percent of the income of oil and gas companies worldwide last year — would be enough to achieve a 75 percent reduction in methane emissions.

Natural Disasters

- A major earthquake struck Turkiye and Syria, killing more than 3,600 people and flattening thousands of buildings as rescuers dug with bare hands for survivors. Dozens of nations have pledged aid since the 7.8-magnitude quake.
- Almost 26 million people have been affected by the deadly earthquake that ravaged Turkiye and Syria this week, the WHO said.
- Overall number of deaths in Turkiye and neighbouring Syria to more than 50,000.

- The two major earthquakes which hit Turkey caused about \$34.2 billion in direct physical damage.

Resistance

- Protests against French President Emmanuel Macron`s plan to reform the pension system gathered momentum with more than 1.27 million people in the street.
- Half a million workers went on strike in Britain, calling for higher wages in the largest such walkout in over a decade, closing schools and severely disrupting transport.
- Up to half a million British teachers, civil servants, and train drivers walked out over pay in the largest coordinated strike action for a decade.
- Protested outside Shell`s London headquarters, arguing that the group is “profiteering from climate destruction”.
- Moroccan trade union activists protested in the capital Rabat and other cities to denounce surging costs of food and fuel, defying a government ban against marches.
- Tens of thousands of junior doctors in England will take strike action for three days.

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

PDP assails rulers over high food inflation in agri country

Pakistan is amongst the countries facing highest food inflation in the world and this grave food inflation in an agricultural country is nothing but the negligence of our rulers, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor. He said wheat flour crisis is once again resurfacing in the country, especially in Punjab province, the grain basket of Pakistan. He said we have not only to import wheat but also pulses, cooking oil and other edibles. He said we also import urea and other agro inputs. He said it is a shame that an agricultural country is dependent on imports to meet its food needs. He said the food inflation is rising with every passing day but the government is least concerned to tackle this sensitive issue.

Altaf Shakoor said the successive governments have failed to make dams and water reservoirs to make a green in the country. He said China and Saudi Arabia are making their deserts green, but in Pakistan our rulers are turning our fertile lands barren due to poor irrigation and water storage policies. He said if drip irrigation system is used we can make every inch of our land green and productive. He said due to failure to make dams we face floods in one season and droughts in the other. He said this is nothing but mismanagement of our natural resources.

PDP Chairman said if we just improve our agricultural sector we can easily break the debt trap of IMF, World Bank and other international lenders easily. We have huge youth bulge, vast lands, flowing rivers, sunny weather and what not. All the factors that are needed for progress and prosperity are already there, but the corrupt ruling mafia is not interested to use these productive factors in a right combination to make Pakistan a self-sufficient country in agricultural products.

Altaf Shakoor demanded drastic land reforms and distributing idle state lands amongst landless peasants. He asked to abolish feudal estates and fiefdoms. He said it is high time to modernize our cropping systems by using drip irrigation and other latest agri-technologies. He asked for opening more modern agriculture colleges and technical diploma institutions in the width and breadth of the country to train our rural youths in modern agriculture techniques.

He asked the government to provide solar panels to poor farmers on free of cost basis for their tube-wells to boost crop production. He said soft loans for purchase of seed and fertilizer should be given to the farmers of flood hit areas. He said with coordinated efforts we can reduce neck breaking food inflation in Pakistan and make our country self-sufficient in food grains and other edibles. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023*
Page 3)

Agriculture sector government's top priority, says minister

Federal Minister for Planning Development, and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal said that the agriculture sector was the government's top priority. The reconstruction of agriculture sector on scientific basis will not only utter a new era of export-led growth, but also ensure food security in the country, he said, adding that the University of Agriculture Faisalabad being the mother of all agricultural institution should take a lead to reform the sector with tangible research work, community service and transforming the researches into goods and services.

University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Iqrar Ahmad Khan said that the researches should be reached to the farming community, stakeholders and industry for the knowledge based economy. He said that although the country was among the top producers of the different agricultural goods, we are very low in per acre production compared to the rest of the world. He added that climate changes have started playing havoc with the sector and we have to develop climate resilient varieties. He said that commodities were not matching the world regulatory framework of fit for export. He said that due to excessive usage of pesticide, the agricultural fruit and vegetables are becoming toxic. He asked the UAF to develop the proposal for the establishment of a Maximum Residue Limit lab. He added that the agriculture sector was confronting with different challenges including water scarcity, technology, low per acre production, water scarcity, climate changes etc. He said that biotech, data scientist and innovation, adaptation of modern trends were the need of the hour. He said that milk was the fifth largest producer of milk in the world. The dairy industry could not be exploited for export items without value addition. He said that floriculture has a huge potential. He said that the university was bringing breakthrough in the wheat and soybean in the country for enhancing the production and food security. He said that the UAF in collaboration with Washington State University was working on wheat climate resilient varieties. (*Business Recorder, February 19th, 2023 Page 5*)

Experts call for promoting urban agriculture

Agricultural experts have called for promoting urban and modern agriculture for food security while mentioning that farm sector offers solution to poor economic conditions of the country. They said the agriculture sector should be focused for the export of agriculture products. Addressing the opening ceremony of a two-day training programme on hydroponics under title of the "Sustainable Food Production Under Climate Change", Sindh Agriculture University Vice Chancellor (SAU) Dr Fateh Marri said it would be difficult to get quick economic results from the industry and services sectors in the current situation, but through development of the agricultural sector and modern technology, export and food security could be ensured. He said that 90pc of water could be saved with hydroponics and modern agricultural methods, adding that

the urban agriculture should be adopted instead of canal agriculture. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2023 Page 15*)

Innovation in agriculture needed to tackle food insecurity, climate change, moot told

Speakers at an international conference underscored the need to look for wild crops, landraces and alternative plant species to tackle climate change and growing food insecurity. Local and international experts participating in the conference shared how climate change was adversely affecting agricultural productivity and damaging life and property across the world, highlighting the need for innovative solutions to improve crop production and livestock management and overcome challenges posing a threat to food security as conventional methods had proven to be short-lived and expensive. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 13*)

1.1 # Farmers

Naqvi forms task force to resolve farmers' issues

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has announced steps in order to expeditiously resolve the problems of cultivators and farmers of Punjab. The Caretaker CM granted an approval to establish a task force for the improvement of agricultural sector, increase in agricultural production and easy access to the market. He took a briefing from a 50-member delegation of progressive farmers during a meeting with them at CM office. The delegation of progressive farmers held a detailed meeting with caretaker CM Mohsin Naqvi and submitted their recommendations for better cultivation of cotton, wheat, sugarcane, corn and other fields. Livestock and fish farmers also put forth their problems and recommendations. It was agreed during the meeting to undertake effective measures and promote research for maximum production of agricultural commodities, livestock and fish.

Gohar Ejaz announced to set up a fund worth Rs100 crore on behalf of the APTMA Foundation to increase the production of cotton and for research. The Task Force will submit its recommendations within seven days regarding increase in agricultural production, usage of new seeds, easy access to the market and other related matters. The caretaker CM directed to expedite lumpy skin vaccination campaign and ordered to formulate recommendations to resolve problems of fish farmers. (*The News, February 5th, 2023 Page 2*)

1.2 # Land

SC allows KP govt appeal in forest land case

The Supreme Court has held that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Forest Ordinance, 2002 was a beneficial piece of legislation, enacted to preserve ecological significance, the

integrity of the ecological system and in public interest to promote the understanding of environmental significance. Reduction in forest and tree cover harms ecosystems and consequently the animals, birds and insects dependent on them and results in the loss of biodiversity, observed Justice Qazi Faez Isa in a judgment he wrote.

The appeals were moved by the KP government as well as some private parties, which had asserted ownership rights to lands situated in the former State of Swat, acceded to Pakistan on Nov 3, 1947 and its accession was accepted by Mohammad Ali Jinnah in his capacity as the Governor General of Pakistan. The Supreme Court allowed the appeals moved by the KP government but dismissed the appeals moved by the private parties. Justice Isa regretted that Pakistan had been denuded of its forests and not enough has been done to protect the remaining forests. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 3*)

Land acquisition: Landowners should get market price, orders SC

The Supreme Court has held that landowners must get the fair value of land acquisition, stressing proper legislation and methodology to calculate potential value and market value, so that it is neither arbitrary nor left to the whims of the collector. A three-member bench of the apex court, had dismissed appeals of the Federation of Pakistan and Military Estate Officer against the judgment of Lahore High Court (LHC), Rawalpindi Bench, of March 24, 2022. The court issued a written order in the matter. “Where the State opts to acquire land, for public purpose, then the Constitutional protection to property rights must be meaningful, because compulsory acquisition of land means the loss of economically productive property,” says the judgment authored by Justice Ayesha A Malik.

The basic facts are that land measuring 29,199 Kanals 18 Marlas was acquired from three villages in District Attock such that land measuring 27,510 Kanals 13 Marlas from Burhan, 1,630 Kanals 2 Marlas from Jallo and 37 Kanal 12 Marla from Islamgarh for the purposes of the extension of Pakistan Ordnance Factory (POF) I. (*The News, February 19th, 2023 Page 1*)

High court orders status quo in SICVD land allotment case

The Sindh High Court (SHC) has ordered status quo in respect of the allotment of 40 acres of land proposed to be handed over to the Sindh Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (SICVD) for setting up its Karachi centre in Landhi by the provincial government. The interim order came on a lawsuit of farmers who challenged the allotment of land to the SICVD for the purpose of construction of its head office to accommodate in-patients, out-patients, clinics, doctors’ and nurses’ residences, and administration block in Landhi. The counsel said the plaintiffs were in possession of the total 96 acres of land for agriculture purposes since the 1980s, and restraining orders had already been passed by the court in respect of the same land.

After the preliminary hearing of the lawsuit, a single SHC bench headed by Justice Mohammad Faisal Kamal Alam issued notices to the land utilisation secretary, the SICVD, the District Korangi deputy commissioner and others, telling them to file their comments on March 3. The court in the meantime directed the parties to maintain status quo, with the plaintiffs not to be dispossessed from the suit land. The bench also appointed the court's Nazir as commissioner for the site's inspection after serving notices to the defendants. (*The News, February 19th, 2023 Page 14*)

1.3 # Water

UNEP to open office for Living Indus project in Pakistan

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) will open its office in Pakistan very soon to lead the Living Indus Initiative programme for which the UNEP and the government are in negotiations with the Green Climate Fund (GCF) for an indicative funding of \$25 million. The Living Indus is an umbrella initiative and a call for action to lead and consolidate initiatives to restore the ecological health of the Indus within the boundaries of Pakistan, which is the most vulnerable to climate change.

In order to tackle the brunt of extreme climate events, the ministry of climate change, led by Minister Sherry Rehman, has prepared a resilience plan that contains multifarious interventions to enhance the country's resilience and adaptation to climate change. The UNEP executive director said that the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, it was expected to conclude negotiations by the end of 2024. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2023 Page 5*)

Sehwan, many other areas without water for over a week

Most parts of Sehwan city and other parts of Dadu district have been without drinking water for 10 days and people are seen desperately travelling long distances all the day in search of water. The worst-hit areas included the place where the shrine of great sufi saint Lal Shahbaz Qalandar stands. Hundreds of devotees and other visitors have to buy bottled drinking water from shops. Many villages in Sehwan taluka are also facing an acute shortage of water. Residents of Sehwan and other towns complained that the municipal officials concerned were not responding to their complaints about water shortage. People of Bhan Syedabad also complained about water scarcity hitting the town for over a week. It was gathered that electricity loadshedding and outages had hampered operation of pumping stations ultimately leading to short supply of water to many areas. Due to the situation, supplies through tankers also stand disrupted as the operators could not find adequate water within the affected areas. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2023 Page 15*)

Wheat procurement target set at 1.4m tonnes: Climate resilient farming & water management

Adviser to the CM Manzoor Wassan, briefed the (provincial) cabinet about the project, ‘Transforming the Indus Basin with Climate Resilient Agriculture and Water Management’. He said its objective was to strengthen institutional and regulatory systems and make them climate-responsive, especially in the water sector. He added that climate information would be generated for use in response to climate disasters and decision-making. He said that the farming community’s adaptive capacity would be enhanced while creating awareness of the climate-change threats and risk reduction. He said it’s a Rs3.4 billion project being launched in collaboration with the Food & Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The cabinet approved the project and directed the agriculture department to sensitise assembly members about benefits of the project and start holding workshops in districts. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 13*)

Murad orders removal of all obstacles to K-IV

Water Resources Minister Syed Khursheed Shah assured the Sindh government that the federal government was making efforts to complete the long-awaited Greater Karachi Water Supply Scheme, commonly known as K-IV, by March 2024. The chief minister directed the chief secretary to get all the issues of land and court cases cleared so that the work on the project could be accelerated. Earlier, the authorities had claimed that the K-IV would be completed by the end of 2023, but later the deadline was extended to March 2024 as the project had suffered some serious issues.

Construction work on Phase One 260mgd surplus water supply project was to begin in 2016, and reach completion by 2018 at the cost of Rs25.5bn, which had to be paid equally by the federal and Sindh governments. However, construction work on the project was stopped in 2018 and now the cost of the project is stated to have increased up to 200 billion. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2023 Page 13*)

Water scarcity a national security threat, says Pakistan

“Pakistan’s national security is linked with its food security, which in turn is directly linked with water security,” argued Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Senator Faisal Saleem Rahman as parliamentarians from more than 60 countries gathered at the UN headquarters to discuss a major global issue — water scarcity. The two-day event, held in New York this week, was a joint initiative of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to raise support for a basic UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), access to clean water and sanitation. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2023 Page 12*)

River Indus diverted for work on Dasu project

Engineers working at the Dasu Hydropower Project site have succeeded in temporarily diverting the mighty Indus River flow so that digging can be started on a dry riverbed. Construction has now begun on the starter dam, leading towards the construction of the main dam of the Dasu Hydropower Project, which is being constructed in the Dasu town of Upper Kohistan district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The 4,320-megawatt Dasu Hydropower Project is planned to be completed in two stages, with an installed generation capacity of 2,160 MW each. Wapda is working on the first stage, which will generate 12 billion units a year once it is completed in 2026. The second stage, when implemented, will also provide 9bn units to the national grid. On completion, the Dasu power project will become the project with the highest annual energy generation in Pakistan, generating 21bn units a year on average. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 3*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Growers` body questions \$32bn import of agro-based commodities

The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) has questioned an expenditure of around \$32bn on the import of agro-based commodities in the year 2021-22, and said that had the farming community been given such financial support, the country would not have been facing threat of default today. The organisation called for imposition of `agriculture emergency` in the country and introduction of agriculture-friendly policies. It also stressed on a review of the existing policies and an end to black-marketing of fertilisers, seed sand other agriculture inputs.

The meeting observed that fertiliser was not available in Sindh at officially notified rate. The meeting pointed out that the cost of crop production had increased manifold with the recent rise in fuel prices. It recalled that the Sindh government had announced fixing of wheat support price at Rs 4,000 per 40kg but a notification to this effect had not been issued while the crop was now entering the final stage. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2023 Page 15*)

Govt urged to set up wheat procurement centres in March

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has urged Sindh government to start opening wheat procurement centres in the province from March 1 as the crop's harvest would begin from Feb 15 in lower Sindh. SCA general secretary Zahid Bhurgari said that seed and fertiliser as well as pesticides should be provided to farmers for the cultivation of cotton at subsidised rate. He called for issuance of notification for wheat support price of Rs4,000 per 40kg to end unrest among farmers. The Sindh government should ensure

the federal government granted subsidy to flood-hit farmers for cultivating cotton, he said.

He urged the federal government to declare agriculture emergency and said the government should not agree to imposition of new taxes on farm sector in its negotiations with International Monetary Fund (IMF). Price of diesel had been increased by Rs35 per litre, in addition to increase in the prices of pesticides and tractor, he said. Bhurgari said that shortage of pesticides was being reported which was alarming for agriculture sector. It was causing disappointment among growers. If subsidy for agriculture sector was withdrawn it would be destroyed, he said. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 15*)

2.1 # Fertilizers

Monthly urea offtake down 26pc in January

Urea sales in January are expected to be 617,000 tonnes, down 26 per cent from the preceding month. Citing provisional data from the National Fertiliser Development Centre, JS Global reported the offtake increased 3pc on a year-on-year basis last month. While major local players faced lower or negative growth, government-imported urea sales are expected to have helped meet demand during January, thanks to the end-of-December inventory, it said. Analysts expect a further drop in the urea offtake going forward as farmers are cash-strapped following the nationwide floods. In view of the liquidity shortages faced by the agriculture sector, the government recently announced a scheme of subsidised loans for small and medium-sized farmers. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2023 Page 9*)

DAP fertilizer price once again crosses Rs10,000 level

The Di-Ammonium Phosphate (DAP) fertilizer price have once again crossed Rs10,000 level as within the past one month, it has witnessed an increase of Rs1,500 per bag and reached Rs10,886 per bag from Rs9,386 per bag.

Shahzada Maan of Pakistan Kissan Itehad told that not only DAP prices had started going up but urea fertilizer was also not available on government fixed rates of Rs2,250 per 50kg bag. He said urea fertilizer is being sold in the black market at Rs3,200 to Rs3,300 per bag. He urged the government to take stern action against the fertilizer producers and dealers as the government was not only providing cheap gas to the fertilizer plants but also providing significant subsidy which was not being passed on to the farmers.

The country's overall nutrient offtake during the first six months of the ongoing year has witnessed an increase of 44.7 percent on year-on-year basis to 590,000 tons

compared to the same month last year, according to the National Fertilizer Development Company (NDFC). (*Business Recorder, February 11th, 2023 Page 1*)

Supply of fertilizers to farmers at fixed rates directed

Additional Secretary Agriculture (Task Force) Punjab Muhammad Shabbir Ahmad Khan has directed the officers of the department to ensure the supply of fertilizers to the farmers at fixed rates. He said all the officers should implement a zero-tolerance policy against over-charging, black marketing of fertilizers and continue their work without fear according to the provisions of the proposed law. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2023 Page 3*)

Action taken against fertilizer hoarders

Under directions of Secretary Agriculture Punjab Wasif Khurshid, action is being taken against dealers who are involved in hoarding, black marketing and selling fertilizers at exorbitant prices across the province. Agriculture Department is following zero tolerance policy to ensure supply of fertilizers to farmers at fixed rates. In this regard, action has been taken against those violating the Price Control Act, 1977 in Pattoki, Sahiwal, Okara, Habibabad, Chichawatni, Pakpattan, Chiniot, Faisalabad and more than 1.5 million fine imposed along with FIRs registration against them with in last 48 hours. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 16*)

2.2 # Industrial Production of Agriculture

SAU working to develop high-yield wheat varieties, says VC

Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Vice Chancellor Dr Fateh Marri has said that the university is working on producing new high-yield wheat varieties to try to meet Sindh farmers' demand for certified seeds. He said that for ensuring availability of certified wheat seeds for farmers of Sindh, a research was going on in an experimental field where the SAU planted 300 different wheat varieties for expansion and to develop new varieties under guidance of agricultural scientist Kaleri. The VC visited experimental field established in varsity's Latif Farm where he was briefed about over 25,000 different commodity lines of wheat.

Mr Kaleri briefed him that the best varieties could be obtained through research work according to the climate of Sindh and through crossing of hundreds of domestic and foreign wheat commodities. He said that complaints of rust were received in different wheat varieties, but research work would lead to rust-free varieties." (*Dawn, February 21st, 2023 Page 15*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Cash Crop

SUGARCANE

Cane support price to be fixed at Rs450 per 40kg

The provincial government is going to fix the support price of the new crop of sugar cane at Rs450 per 40 kg. Chief Minister's Adviser on Agriculture Manzoor Wassan said that the last price of sugar cane four months ago was fixed at Rs302 per 40 kg. He also said that the agriculture department would send a summary to the provincial cabinet for approval of the new support price for sugar cane. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2023 Page 13*)

COTTON

Low cotton production to put more burden on forex reserves

As the government scrambles to save every dollar amid a severe foreign exchange crunch, experts have raised the alarm that cotton would also need to be imported as its production has fallen short of the target. The textile sector has raised concerns that the country was facing an alarming decrease in cotton production which is unlikely to cross the five million bales mark. The figures by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) revealed the country produced over 4.76m bales by Jan 31, against over 7.42m bales produced by the same time last year a dip of 35.8pc or 2.66m bales. To meet the gap between demand and production, Pakistan will have to import around seven million bales of cotton to meet the needs of local textile industries. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2023 Page 9*)

'Spurious seeds hitting cotton yield in Sindh'

Cotton seed companies allege that unregistered players in the market are selling unprocessed and spurious seed in Sindh and coupled with other factors this is damaging crop yield in the province. "Almost 80 per cent of cotton seed requirements of Sindh are being met by mostly unregistered companies, which collect rapeseed from ginning factories in Punjab and sell it in Sindh without processing leading to irreparable loss to the growers," Matiari Seed Company chairman Nadeem Shah told the participants of a meeting held in Karachi for the revival of cotton crop in the province. The meeting was arranged by the Karachi Cotton Brokers Forum and Brokers Advisory Committee of the Karachi Cotton Association with KCA chairman Atif Dada in the chair. It was attended by proprietors of known cotton seed companies and growers. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 9*)

Cotton procurement price should be fixed at Rs15,000 per 40kg, says SCA

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has urged the provincial government to fix the cotton and mustard support price for the current season at Rs15,000, and Rs13,000

per 40kg, respectively. It also called for removal of all encroachments from the routes of natural waterways before the start of the next monsoon.

The SCA president noted that prices of agricultural inputs and tractors had also increased like those of petroleum products and all other commodities and machineries and this had affected growers in terms of higher production cost. The participating growers informed the meeting that government was spending over \$4.5bn on import of edible oil, and advised that local growers should be supported instead of spending that much foreign exchange on import of edible oil, cotton and wheat. The SCA president said government should offer Rs13,000 per 40kg to growers for oilseed crops to save foreign exchange. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2023 Page 15*)

Shabby conditions at CCRI: Cotton scientists facing serious challenges

Over 1100 employees including known cotton scientists at Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) are facing immense economic trouble due to the non-provision of salaries for the last eight months and situation can cause brain drain. Central Cotton Research Institute is one of the leading research institutions in the country which contributed scores of best cotton varieties. CCRI's role is significant in advancing and generating knowledge in cotton since its establishment. It gave high-yielding varieties with standard fibre quality characteristics like staple length, fineness and strength. The institute played an important role in enhancing productivity from 370 kg/hectare (1970) to 772 kg/hectare (current). The total budget of the institution is about Rs 800 million per annum.

According to sources in CCRI, under an act, it is the responsibility of All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA) to pay Rs 50 against one cotton bale. However, for the last many years, the APTMA is not allegedly paying the promised amount and it resulted in financial issues in CCRI, said sources. About the reason why APTMA is not paying dues, the sources stated that APTMA wanted administration control of the institution. Due to this crisis, the prime institution of cotton research underwent financial crises. Sources in APTMA informed that they were not satisfied with performance of CCRI and they wished to improve working of CCRI. Sources added that APTMA was ready to pay Rs 300/bale in case it gets administrative control of the institute.

Currently, the employees are under immense stress and young scientists are not ready to keep intact with CCRI. There is a threat of brain drain as the scientists are considering leaving the institution and searching for promising careers abroad. Sources in CCRI hinted that APTMA had to pay over Rs three billion to the research body. It also added that only 20% mills were paying regularly to the institution. The institution maintains the operational expenses by that amount. The employees are staging protest

demonstrations on daily basis but their demands have remained unattended so far. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 7*)

WEEKLY COTTON REVIEW

Local production facing shortfall of 2.5m bales

An alarming reduction of 2.6 million bales in cotton production is estimated this season. The total production will be around 5 million bales and about 7 million bales of cotton will have to be imported. At present, the import contracts of about 5.6 million bales have already been signed. There was increase in cotton price by Rs 1,500 per maund. The spot rate was also increased by Rs 1,500 per maund.

However, employees of Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC) have been protesting against nonpayment of their salaries for the last eight months. Domestic cotton stocks are decreasing day by day. Due to high rate of the US dollar, import will be difficult. In these circumstances, it is important to increase the production of cotton. Therefore, All Pakistan Textile Mills Association should develop a strategy to increase the production of cotton in collaboration with the relevant government agencies. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2023 Page 5*)

Spot rate decreased as market witnesses stability

Previous week witnessed stability in the rate of cotton. Stocks are declining day by day. In order to increase the cotton crop, the intervention price of Phutti should be increased. Substandard seeds and pesticides are affecting the crop yield. In preparation for the upcoming cotton season, cotton sowing has partially started in some cotton producing areas of Sindh. Cotton farmers believe that if active seeds are provided, they can adapt to the weather conditions and if antimicrobial active pesticides are provided, then the cotton crop for the next year 2023-24 will be better. It was observed that due to lack of proper implementation farmers are not fully benefiting from agriculture package. The staff of SAFC is complaining and protesting for the non-payment of salaries for the last 8 months. It said we can take benefit from the experiences of agricultural experts of Turkey, China and Australia to increase agricultural production, especially cotton production. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 5*)

Spot rate decreased by Rs2,000/maund

A significant reduction of Rs 2,000 per maund in the rate of cotton. Spot rate also reduced by Rs 2,000 per maund. The economy of the country is in severe crisis due to the very strict conditions of the International Monetary Fund. Government presented a mini-budget taking strict measures to meet the strict conditions of the IMF. Government has increased the prices of energy and petroleum products, GST were increased from 17% to 18% as well as abolished zero rating for export sector. Due to removal of energy concessions for export industries including textile sector and depreciation of rupee

against the dollar, the textile sector is again in a state of crisis. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 5*)

Prices fall amidst low business volume

The cotton market saw low business volume previous week. The delay in setting the intervention cotton support price by the government is affecting the crop. In the domestic cotton market, cotton prices continued to fall during the past week due to demand for cotton yarn and sluggish prices. Textile exports witnessed a massive increase of over 55 percent from \$12.5 billion in FY 2020 to \$19.5 billion in FY 2022 as a direct consequence of the competitive energy tariff. (*Business Recorder, February 27th, 2023 Page 5*)

4 # NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

Jul-Dec LSMI output down 3.68pc

The Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) output has declined by 3.68 per cent during the first half (July-December) of 2022-23 when compared with the same period of last year, says the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (*Business Recorder, February 16th, 2023 Page 1*)

4.1 # Fisheries

Four boats gutted in Fisheries fire

Four boats anchored at a berth in Fisheries were destroyed in a huge fire. An Edhi Foundation spokesperson said that boats parked at berth No. 7 near Kala Pani of Fisheries caught fire in the morning. They said that four boats were destroyed. The exact cause of the fire could not be ascertained till late in the night. However, the financial losses were estimated to be in ‘millions of rupees’, they said. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 13*)

‘Not a dry eye’ as fishermen released from Indian jails reunite with families

Twelve Pakistani fishermen arrived here after being released from Indian jails to a touching welcome from their families and well-wishers at the Edhi Centre near the Merewether Tower. Nine of the fishermen belong to Goth Chachjhan in Sujawal, and three to Machhar Colony, in Karachi’s Lyari area. Some of them had been in jail since 2009, some others since 2013 and a few since 2017.

Chairman of the Fishermen Cooperative Society Zahid Ibrahim Bhatti said that it was unfortunate that the poor fishermen on both sides of the border had to spend years behind bars for mistakenly crossing over into alien territory. “They are separated from their families who have difficulty making ends meet without their earning members.

We also try and support their families by helping getting some money and food rations to them but still it is not the same,” he said. After the release of these 12 fishermen, there are still 106 more Pakistani fishermen languishing in India’s Gujarat prisons. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 13*)

4.2 # Poultry

Poultry market: on the brink?

The poultry market has strange ways of sending price signals. Between first weeks of October and December 2022, Day Old Chick (DOC) prices slumped from peak of Rs 80 to Rs 15 per unit. Exactly a month later – with the change of calendar year - DOC prices had jumped back up to Rs85 per unit. Since then, prices have been range bound between Rs60 – Rs80, stuttering about without any clear direction. Meanwhile, the food security minister – possibly the only organic farming activist who is also a libertarian at heart – didn’t lose the opportunity to declare poultry feed as cancerous, also telling consumers to stop eating poultry to get local market prices to come down crashing.

Despite the minister’s best intention, that has not happened so far. According to PBS, broiler prices have crossed Rs400 per kg mark for the first time in history. In fact, measured by troughs, poultry prices have risen by 36 percent per annum over the past three years, thanks to astounding policy decisions by the federal governments, both the incumbents and the last one. The poultry industry may have been the only segment within agriculture sector that has not only performed well for the producers over the last 10 years, but has also delivered to consumers in the form of lower prices. (*Business Recorder, February 9th, 2023 Page 2*)

5 # TRADE

Jul-Jan trade deficit shrinks 31.97pc to \$19.632 YoY

Pakistan’s trade deficit narrowed by 31.97 percent to \$19.632 billion during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$28.859 billion during the same period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said.

The country’s exports during July-January (2022-23) were recorded at \$16.469 billion against the exports of \$17.739 billion in July-January of 2021-22, showing a decline of 7.16per cent, according to the trade data released by PBS. On a year-on-year basis, exports witnessed a decline of 15.42per cent and were recorded at \$2.211 billion in January 2023 against the exports of \$2.614 billion in January 2022.

The imports decreased by 22.53 per cent during the period under review by going down from \$46.598 billion last year to \$36.101 billion during the current year. The imports

also decreased to \$4.856 billion in January 2023 from \$6.036 billion in January 2022, showing negative growth of 19.55 per cent. The trade deficit narrowed by 22.71 per cent on a YoY basis to \$2.645 billion in January 2023 compared to \$3.422 billion in January 2022. (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2023 Page 1*)

Poland-Pakistan trade volume reaches €723m: envoy

Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisasrski said that the bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Poland has reached over €723 million and both countries are focusing on exploring more avenues of trade and investments in multiple sectors like information technology, food processing, and agriculture sector.

The Ambassador said Poland has been a reliable partner of Pakistan when it comes to gas exploration. Polish oil and gas exploration companies had invested millions of dollars in Pakistan during the last 25 years. The Polish companies have invested \$300 million in gas exploration and they are willing to do more. If Polish companies would explore more gas in Pakistan then it would be three times cheaper than the imported gas, he added. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 3*)

Closure of Torkham border enters fourth day

The continuous closure of the Torkham border forced drivers of over 50 trucks loaded with perishable food items to return to Peshawar as the border crossing remained closed for the fourth consecutive day. Most of the stranded transporters said they were running short of money as they had exhausted their limited financial resources while helplessly waiting for reopening of the border. The truckers said they also feared theft of trade merchandise and sabotage acts by miscreants.

The local police and the security forces showed leniency by allowing traders, customs clearing agents and hundreds of daily wagers and porters to go to the border crossing despite a complete halt in trade activities. A group of labourers also demonstrated near the crossing, reiterating their demand for reopening the border and restoring their jobs. They called upon Islamabad and Kabul to initiate a meaningful dialogue for finding a permanent solution to the issues concerning cross-border movement of citizens, refrain from politicising petty border issues and allow bilateral trade to flourish without any hindrance. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2023 Page 8*)

Over 800 goods vehicles cross into Afghanistan as Torkham border reopens

Over 800 goods vehicles crossed over to Afghanistan as the bilateral trade resumed after six days hiatus due to the abrupt closure of the Torkham border by Afghan authorities late. Customs officials told Dawn that as many as 500 vehicles loaded with transit goods and 380 vehicles of Pakistani export items were already cleared by them prior to the closure of the border six days ago. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2023 Page 8*)

5.1 # Exports

Bangladesh's textile exports increasing while Pakistan's decreasing

Bangladesh is a large contributor to the global textile industry, with the RMG (ready-made garment) sector accounting for 84 percent of Bangladesh's exports. This comes on the back of the sector's rapid growth and modernisation over the past decade — as well as the strides it has made in improving conditions for the country's approximately four million garment workers. Bangladesh has surprised the market by consistently showing profits.

1257.6 miles away, Pakistan's industrial sector is fighting to live another day. Pakistan's export during Apr-Jun, 2022 amounted to \$ 8,432.09 million showing an increase of 2.52% over Jan-Mar, 2022, and by 27.43% over Apr-Jun, 2021. The textile export data for the last five years shows that volumetric textile exports are the primary driver with a double-digit increase in value-added items. Exports during July-Jun, 2022 stood at \$ 31,782.09 million. Pakistan while showing potential for increased export till June-July 2022, later took a nosedive for the worse. The country's exports of merchandise entered a negative growth in July. The export proceeds fell 5.17 percent to \$2.21 billion in the first month of the current fiscal year from \$2.34 billion in the corresponding month of last year, according to data from Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The textile sector last year exported goods worth \$19.3 billion and has further expanded capacity through an investment of \$5 billion to increase exports to \$25 billion. The expectation and goal were to increase textile exports to at least \$24 billion this year; however, this could not materialize. Pakistan's exports have started declining and will clock in at below \$1 billion per month for the rest of the year. The textile and clothing industry has grown to be the single largest manufacturing sector of Pakistan, employing almost over 38.5 percent of the manufacturing labor force. The textile and clothing industry is the backbone of Pakistan's economy; however, the sector is confronted with numerous challenges. (*Business Recorder, February 1st, 2023 Page 7*)

Exports fall over 15pc in January

The country's exports shrank for the fifth month in a row dropping by 15.42 per cent year-on-year to \$2.21 billion in January raising fears about the closure of industrial units especially textile and clothing across the country. On a month-on-month basis, export proceeds decreased by 4.41pc in January. In the first seven months (July to January) of 2022-23, exports were down 7.16pc at \$16.46bn compared to \$17.74bn in the corresponding period last year. The drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the export target this fiscal year.

In contrast, imports dipped 19.55pc to \$4.85bn in January compared to \$6.03bn over the corresponding month of last year. In seven months, the imports fell 22.53pc to

\$36.10bn this year from \$46.59bn over the corresponding period last year. Between July and January FY23, trade deficit decelerated 31.97pc to \$19.63bn from \$28.86bn over the corresponding months of last year.

In January trade deficit fell 22.71pc to \$2.64bn on a year-on-year basis. In the previous fiscal year (2021-22), Pakistan not only achieved its export target but also exceeded the psychological barrier of \$30bn, as proceeds rose 26.6pc to \$31.85bn from \$25.16bn a year earlier. However, the import bill also jumped 43pc to cross \$80bn in 2021-22, up from \$56.12bn a year ago. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2023 Page 9*)

Export of services grows in IHFY23

The export of services grew nearly three per cent in the first half of the current fiscal year from a year ago mainly driven by information technology. In absolute terms, the value of export of services reached \$3.52 billion in July-December from \$3.43bn in the corresponding months of last year. In December, the export of services dipped by 3.16pc to \$667.17m from \$688.93m over the corresponding month of last year. The export of services grew 17.20pc to \$6.968bn in 2021-22 from \$5.945bn in the preceding year.

The services export target was set at \$10bn while commodities at \$35bn for 2022-23. The highest-ever growth in IT-related services pushed up the overall export figure. The services sector has emerged as the main economic growth driver by contributing 61pc to GDP in 2020-21 from 56pc in 2005-06.

The import of services posted a negative growth of 30.28pc to \$3.88bn in July-December against \$5.57bn in the corresponding period last year. Import of services in December fell by 44.45pc to \$619.40m this year from \$1.11bn over the last year. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2023 Page 9*)

Textile exports fall for fifth consecutive month

The exports of textile and clothing fell 14.83 per cent in January to \$1.32 billion compared to \$1.55bn in the same month last year. The overall export proceeds shrank for the fifth consecutive month in a row. The drop shows the government would find it difficult to achieve the export target this fiscal year leading to more pressure on foreign exchange reserves of the country. No official statement was issued from the commerce ministry to explain the reasons for the decline in export proceeds Commerce Minister Naveed Qamar since taking responsibility for the ministry has constantly been on foreign tours. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2023 Page 9*)

Jul-Jan textile group exports down 8.17pc YoY

The country's textile group exports declined by around 8.17 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 and remained at \$10.039 billion as compared to \$10.933 billion during the same period of last year, the Pakistan

Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. The data of exports and imports released by PBS revealed that the country's textile group exports witnessed a decline of 14.83 percent in January 2023 on a year-on-year basis and remained at \$1.321 billion when compared to \$1.551 billion during the same month of last year. On a month-on-month (MoM) basis, the textile group registered 2.53 percent negative growth compared to \$1.356 billion in December 2022. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2023 Page 8*)

Rice exports shrink 16pc to \$1.08bn

Amid a global economic slowdown, Pakistan's exports of rice posted a negative growth of 15.82 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year mainly due to the flood devastation of paddy fields in Sindh. In value, the total rice exports dipped to \$1.08 billion in July-January this year from \$1.28bn in the corresponding months of last year. The stagnation in export proceeds, especially of basmati rice, is mainly because of several reasons particularly the under-invoicing of rice to Afghanistan and Iran under the barter trade system.

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (Reap) Chairman Chela Ram Kewlani told Dawn that the data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) did not show the basmati rice exports to Iran and Afghanistan. However, he said the crop of long-grain white rice (non-basmati rice) has witnessed a 40pc reduction in Sindh. As a result of this production loss, Mr Kewlani said that the non-basmati exports decline is justified. However, he did not agree with the government statistics showing a decline in the value and quantity of basmati exports.

The PBS data showed that basmati exports in quantity fell by 22.95pc to 316,055 tonnes in 7MFY23 from 410,207 tonnes over the corresponding months of last year. The non-basmati rice exports fell by 24.94pc to 1.62 million tonnes in 7MFY23 from 2.17m tonnes over the corresponding months of last year. Despite a substantial decline in exports, the prices of basmati and non-basmati increased unprecedentedly in the domestic market. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2023 Page 9*)

Spot rate decreased by Rs2,000/maund

The country's textile group exports declined by around 8.17 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 and remained at \$10.039 billion as compared to \$10.933 billion during the same period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said.

The data of exports and imports released by PBS revealed that the country's textile group exports witnessed a decline of 14.83 percent in January 2023 on a year-on-year basis and remained at \$1.321 billion when compared to \$1.551 billion during the same month of last year.

Rice exports declined by 15.82 percent during the first seven months of 2022-23 and remained \$1.083 billion compared to \$1.286 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. The country's overall exports during July-January 2022-23 totaled \$16.499 billion (provisional) against \$17.739 billion during the corresponding period of last year showing a decrease of 6.99 percent.

The exports in January 2023 were \$2.244 billion (provisional) as compared to \$2.313 billion in December 2022 showing a decrease of 2.98 percent and by 14.15 percent as compared to \$2.614 billion in January 2022. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 5*)

Pakistan looks to export mangoes, software to US

The United States and Pakistan will hold their first ministerial-level meeting on trade in Washington which, Islamabad hopes, will gain greater access to the US market for its mangoes and software. US Trade Representative (USTR) "Ambassador Katherine Tai will host a meeting under the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA) with Pakistan's Minister of Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar" in Washington.

With a bilateral trade volume of \$12 billion, the US remains the largest export market for Pakistani products. According to the USTR's office, Pakistan exported more than \$5.9bn worth of goods to the US in 2022. Pakistan also imported more than \$3.17bn worth of goods from the US. In 2021, Pakistan exported \$5.27bn of goods to the US while imports totalled \$3.61bn. In 2020, exports totalled \$3.89bn, and imports stood at \$2.91bn. In all these years, Pakistan's exports to the US were higher than its imports. (*Dawn, February 23th, 2023 Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Barrick makes initial payment of \$3m to Balochistan govt

Barrick Gold Corporation has paid the first \$3 million to the Balochistan government as part of the new Reko Diq partnership. After the signing of agreements and completion of legal process last month, Barrick and the Government of Balochistan recently agreed upon the timetable for the disbursement of committed funds to the province. During peak construction the project is expected to employ approximately 7,500 people and once in production it will create around 4,000 long-term jobs. The company plans to finish the Reko Diq feasibility study update by the end of 2024, with 2028 targeted for first production. Subject to the updated feasibility study, Reko Diq is envisaged as a conventional open pit and milling operation, producing a high-quality copper-gold concentrate. It will be constructed in two phases, starting with a plant that will be able to process approximately 40 million tonnes of ore per annum which could be doubled

in five years following first production from phase one. With its unique combination of large scale, low strip and good grade, Reko Diq will be a multi-generation mine with a life of at least 40 years. (*Business Recorder, February 1st, 2023 Page 12*)

6.1 # Fertilizer Companies

Engro Fertilisers` profit rises

Engro Fertilisers Ltd posted earnings of Rs6.4 billion in October-December 2022, up 3.8 per cent from a year ago, a stock notice said. The fourth-quarter result took the full-calendar year income to Rs16bn, down 24pc from the preceding 12-month period. According to Alfalah CLSA Securities Ltd, a tax reversal of Rs0.89bn led to the rise of 53pc in the quarterly earnings on a sequential basis. Meanwhile, Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan Ltd reported its profit for 2022 clocked in at Rs2.4bn, up 36.6pc. It said the business environment remains challenging amid rising inflation, foreign exchange constraints, devaluation, higher finance cost and the imposition of super tax. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 9*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

EU to fund 3 new programmes to support inclusive green growth

President Pak-British Friendship Council North West Chapter Muhammad Arbab Khan said the European Union will fund three new development programmes worth €87 million to support inclusive green growth in Pakistan. Talking to Chairman UK-Pakistan Joint Business Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq, he said the programmes are part of the European Union's support to Pakistan in post-flood rehabilitation and reconstruction and are designed in close cooperation with the federal and provincial governments. He said these projects will focus on Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Gilgit Baltistan (GB), and Balochistan and aims at improving agricultural value chains, providing access to clean energy and enhancing the availability of the skilled labour force. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2023 Page 13*)

FAO working for increase in yield, encouraging women's role

Florence Rolle, who heads the Sindh chapter of Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), has said that her institution is offering its services in farm sector's development in the province and encouraging women's participation in the process. Ms Rolle said that establishment of a centre for expansion of per-acre yield, agribusinesses and various other programmes for students would be completed soon with Sindh Agriculture University (SAU)'s support. Representatives of other stakeholders, including industrial concerns and academia, called for promoting agriculture technology to develop value-

added agri-businesses and create opportunities for women's participation in agriculture and information technology. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2023 Page 15*)

7.1 # China

China to invest in nuclear energy

China has expressed its willingness to boost investments in Pakistan's nuclear energy sector and the two countries are set to hold talks in the near future. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2023 Page 3*)

China okays \$700m for Pakistan, says Dar

Soon after the completion of all prior conditions set by the International Monetary Fund for the revival of the \$7bn bailout programme, Finance Minister announced that the Board of China Development Bank (CDB) approved a \$700 million credit facility for Pakistan hoping inflows from other multilateral lenders and friendly countries. Mr. Dar said the amount expected to be received this week will shore up the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) foreign exchange reserves which have dwindled to \$3bn, not sufficient to even cover three weeks of controlled imports. Pakistan is required to build its forex reserves to a minimum of \$10bn to cover the import bill of two months. Pakistan expects inflows from China, Saudi Arabia and UAE soon after the signing of the staff-level agreement. (*Dawn, February 23th, 2023 Page 9*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB again offers funding for ML-1

Amid delays in financing arrangements with China for the \$10 billion Karachi-Peshawar railway line, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has re-emerged as a funding contender for the mega project. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 9*)

ADB okays \$5m for Balochistan's flood-affected areas

The Asian Development Bank has approved emergency assistance of \$5 million for climate-resilient seeds for staple crop cultivation, and women-led livelihood to meet basic household needs in flood-hit areas of Balochistan. The ADB financing will support rural farm households in four districts of Nasirabad division. The aid will provide 60,000 out of a total of 188,000 households in the target districts with climate-resilient rice seed. The seeds will be sown on 54,000 hectares in the province. The damage and losses in the agriculture sector in the country were primarily in crops, with 82 per cent damaged or lost, followed by livestock (17pc), and fisheries and/or

aquaculture (1pc). About 1.78m hectares of agricultural land have been damaged, and 0.8 million livestock are estimated to have perished. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2023 Page 5*)

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Govt rolls out first measures as IMF mission begins talks

On the opening day of make-or-break talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government increased liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) price by 30 per cent and finalised a minimum of Rs6 per unit average increase in electricity rates between now and August. This was on top of an earlier hike in petroleum rates by up to 16pc, a rise of one percentage point in the central bank's policy rate, and the removal of an exchange rate cap that led to over 14pc depreciation.

Still, the visiting IMF mission, led by Mission Chief to Pakistan Nathan Porter, sounded adamant on upfront, calibrated and strong measures to bridge the daunting fiscal gap between Rs2 trillion to Rs2.5tr. The finance and power ministries have jointly finalised the `revised circular debt management plan` based on a circular debt of Rs2.253tr as of June 30, 2022. Payables to power producers had already gone beyond Rs1.25tr. Under the plan, the government would address about Rs952bn worth of debt management during the current fiscal year, including Rs675bn worth of additional subsidies. About Rs200bn additional funds would be recovered from consumers through the increase in base tariff on top of outstanding quarterly adjustments from the last year.

This means the government would raise the power tariff by Rs3.21 per unit in the first quarter (February March), followed by another 70-paisa increase in the March-May period and then a Rs1.64 hike in the June August quarter. This would yield about Rs80bn until August. Another Rs90bn would be charged through the recovery of deferred fuel cost adjustments and markup on the existing loans parked in Power Holding Company. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 1*)

Tax the rich, subsidise the poor, IMF asks Pakistan

Pakistan must ensure that its high earners pay taxes and only the poor get the subsidies if it wants to function as a country, the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) managing director has said. Kristalina Georgieva said, "I want to stress that we are emphasising two things. Number one, tax revenues. Those who can, those that are making good money [in the] public or private sector need to contribute to the economy. Secondly, to have a fairer distribution of the pressures by moving subsidies only towards the people who really need it," she said. "It shouldn't be that the wealthy benefit from subsidies. It should be the poor [who] benefit from them," she said, adding that IMF was very clear that it wanted the poor people of Pakistan to be protected. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 1*)

NA passes IMF-dictated finance supplementary bill

Despite clearly lacking quorum, the National Assembly after a lackluster debate passed the IMF-dictated Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2023, seeking to impose additional Rs170 billion taxes with minor. In his winding up speech on the finance (supplementary) bill, generally known as the mini-budget, the minister informed the house that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) initially wanted the government to raise more than Rs800bn from tax and non-tax measures and that it took him and his team 10 days to convince the Fund to bring it down to the minimum level of R170bn. Before presentation of the bill in the parliament on Feb 15, the government had already implemented Rs115bn worth of taxes through two notifications issued on Feb 14. Now, after a formal assent by President Arif Alvi, the remaining Rs55bn tax measures would come into effect. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2023 Page 1*)

Govt to recover up to Rs14.23 per unit in fuel cost from consumers

Energy Minister Khurram Dastgir Khan told the parliament that the government would recover Rs9.90 to Rs14.24 per unit outstanding fuel costs from consumers of less than 300 units in an 8-month staggered schedule. Mr Dastgir said an additional surcharge of Rs3.82 per unit would also be imposed on those using above 300 units to fund power sector loans under the insistence of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). (*Published in Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 9*)

8.3 # World Bank

WB downgrades \$200m locust emergency project

The World Bank has downgraded the \$200 million locust emergency and food security project for Pakistan to “highly unsatisfactory”, as project activities have not yet commenced. The project is expected to close on June 30, 2023. Counterparts are identifying interventions to be implemented in the period prior to project closing. (*Business Recorder, February 22nd, 2023 Page 12*)

9 # POLICY

Paracetamol: govt to allow increase in price

The government is all set to increase the price of paracetamol tablets on demand of manufacturers of paracetamol products who have sought the increase to offset the sharp increase in raw materials. Drug Pricing Committee (DPC) of Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) constituted on August 5, 2013 is empowered to fix and review maximum retail prices of drugs subject to approval by the federal government. (*Business Recorder, February 1st, 2023 Page 12*)

MNCs planning to prevent proposed increase in taxes on sugary drinks: experts

In a country where more than 1,100 people are dying daily due to complications of diabetes, while hundreds are getting their lower limbs amputated, multinational companies are offering a few hundred million dollars' investment in a bid to prevent the authorities from raising taxes on sugary drinks, leading health experts and diabetologists warned.

A report carried in The News said that with the first round of technical level talks with the IMF completed, there is another proposal for raising the Federal Excise Duty rate on sugary beverages up to 17 per cent from the existing rate of 13 per cent through a proposed mini-budget. However, the report said, "The FBR has been facing immense pressure from the diplomatic corps in this regard. Another aspect is that sugar is being used in these beverages so the sweetener owners who enjoy political connections irrespective of political divide will also make last-ditch efforts to block this proposal at any stage."

Health experts said that the beverage industry was trying to give "a lollypop of \$200 million investments" to the country for not jacking up the taxes. The civil society rejects such tactics which are meant to play with the health of people of Pakistan and building a tremendous burden on the health sector and the economy of the country, they said.

"As per International Diabetes Federation (IDF), the cost of management of diabetes increased to more than \$2,640 million in Pakistan in 2021. Sugary drinks are among the major risk factors of diabetes, heart diseases, liver and kidney diseases and various types of the cancers," said Prof Dr Abdul Basit, general secretary of the Diabetic Association of Pakistan (DAP). "IDF has recently written a letter to policymakers in Pakistan, requesting an increase in the federal excise duty on all type of sugary drinks to reduce the disease burden and saving precious lives," he added.

The research from Mexico, South Africa and Peru shows that taxing sugary drinks will reduce the consumption of unhealthy beverages and increase the consumption of healthier alternatives like water and unsweetened milk. Research confirmed that taxes on sugary drinks have no net negative impact on the economy or on joblessness in those countries which increased the taxes. (*The News, February 5th, 2023 Page 13*)

Cabinet approves rules for corporate farming under CPEC

The provincial interim cabinet approved rules and regulations for corporate farming under the CPEC project. Under the plan, 127,000 acres of land would be made available for farming in five selected districts. "Corporate farming will help in agricultural research, food security, and forest and livestock research. Land can be given for a maximum of 30 years for corporate farming and those who get land for farming will not

get ownership rights,” the CM said. The CM ordered the formation of a committee with a task to recommend a foolproof method of targeted flour subsidy. The cabinet also approved procuring wheat from Passco [Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 2*)

Export processing zone in North Waziristan: plan given final touches

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (BoIT) has given final touches to the plan of establishing an export processing zone for copper mining and processing project in North Waziristan. A 1500 acres of mining lease has been acquired through the provincial government. Over 11,000 tons of copper will be extracted and processed daily from this lease. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 13*)

Pakistan seeks breakthrough in high-level US trade talks

Pakistan is looking for breakthroughs in agriculture and information technology during the first ministerial level meeting of a US-Pakistani trade and investment body in seven years, Pakistan’s commerce minister said. Commerce Minister Syed Naveed Qamar will meet with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and other senior US officials under the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA). Qamar told Reuters the meeting would strengthen ties between the two countries that had been strained in recent years by political tensions, and could help boost bilateral trade in goods and services, which the Pakistani embassy said now totalled about \$12 billion. Pakistan also hoped to attract more US investment, with a particular focus on IT and pharmaceuticals, after a long lull during which China became the dominant investor, he said. (*Business Recorder, February 23rd, 2023 Page 1*)

\$1bn deal signed with Uzbekistan to boost trade

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have signed an agreement to increase bilateral trade by almost \$1 billion, the finance ministry said. The trade agreement was inked at the conclusion of the 8th Session of Pakistan-Uzbekistan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade-Economic and Scientific-Technical Cooperation held in Tashkent. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar headed Pakistan’s delegation. The meeting mainly focused on bilateral economic cooperation in various sectors including commerce and trade, banking, industries and production, investment, textile industry, energy, oil and natural resources, transportation and communication, agriculture and tourism and culture development. The minister welcomed Uzbekistan to explore the areas of automobiles, information technology and natural minerals. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 9*)

Pakistan, US seek to optimise trade, economic ties

A robust trade relationship between the United States and Pakistan is more important than ever to bolster Pakistan’s economic stability, says the US State Department as the two allies look for new options to go beyond strategic engagement and defence ties.

They concluded the 9th meeting of the council of the US-Pakistan Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), which focused on boosting agricultural and digital trade. The meeting was chaired by US Trade Representative Katherine Tai and Pakistan’s Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar.

Mr Price pointed out that the US was also a leading investor in Pakistan for the past two decades, with investments increasing to 50pc in the past year. The joint statement on the TIFA talks said that the two teams engaged in trade- and investment-related issues and concerns, including agriculture, digital trade, intellectual property protection and enforcement, labour rights, good regulatory practices, and women’s economic empowerment. The US appreciated the efforts by Pakistan to improve worker rights and protections and strengthen its intellectual property regime. Both sides affirmed the importance of an effective intellectual property regime, achieving high labour standards, and following good regulatory practices. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 9*)

10 # ENVIRONMENT

10.1 # Atmosphere

City’s toxic air quality termed biggest public health threat

Highlighting their concerns over the city’s poor air quality, experts called upon the government to make the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency (Sepa) effective and set up a mechanism to check and ban release of hazardous emissions in the city. They expressed these views at an event — How can we improve the increasingly toxic air quality of Karachi — organised by the Karachi Citizens’ Forum (KCF) held here at the PMA House.

The speakers regretted that Karachi stayed in the highest rank of the most polluted and unliveable cities of the world, in addition to being in the top 10 places with very high toxic air quality. As Karachi was not enveloped in a Lahore like smog, citizens and environmental authorities live in a state of denial of its toxic air quality, they said. “It takes a tragedy like the Keamari and deaths to raise alarm. The toxic air quality of Karachi, and especially inhalation of particulate matter, is the number one public health threat and a silent killer,” said KCF’s Dr Qaiser Sajjad.

“Air pollution is linked to so many illnesses including cancer, gastrointestinal disorders and cardiovascular and kidney diseases. It’s high time that the government take notice of the situation and start implementing measures to improve air quality,” said Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro of the Pakistan Medical Association.

Citing some estimates, the speakers said an estimated 128,000 lives were lost every year in Pakistan due to poor air quality while the average Pakistani life expectancy was going down by 4.3 years. “According to the WHO, approximately seven million premature deaths take place in the world annually because of air toxicity. It is also the primary agent of climate change and reduces the feasibility of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals SDGS,” said Nargis Rahman of the KCF. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2023 Page 13*)

10.2 # Health

World Cancer Day: Up to 50pc of cancers are preventable: experts

Emphasizing the need for international cooperation to reduce the burden of cancer, health professionals said that 30 to 50 percent of cancer can be prevented by adopting a comprehensive strategy. These views were expressed by the President of the General Cadre Doctors Association Punjab and Public Health Consultant Dr Masood Shaikh while addressing a public seminar at a local hospital. According to him, cancer is treatable, if diagnosed at early stage. An average of 400,000 children is diagnosed with cancer every year, and more than \$116 billion is spent annually on cancer. Lung cancer in men while breast cancer in women has become major cause of death. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2023 Page 3*)

Indus river water no longer fit for human consumption, says SHC

The Sukkur bench of the Sindh High Court has observed that Indus river water has become completely polluted and is no more fit for human consumption nor even for any living thing for that matter. It said that release of municipal wastewater, industrial runoff and hospitals’ waste had made the river water highly contaminated, hence, administrators were ordered to affix penaflex near treatment plants in district headquarters and taluka headquarters cautioning that the river water was not fit for human consumption unless boiled. The division bench comprising Justices Salahuddin Panhwar and Abdul Mobeen Lakho directed chief secretary of Sindh to form a committee comprising secretaries of health, irrigation, public health engineering, industries, planning & development and Sindh Environmental Protection Agency that would ensure that polluted water was not disposed of into the river. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2023 Page 15*)

Pims infectious waste ends up in market

A vendor hired by the Pims administration to incinerate medical waste on the hospital premises has been involved in the sale of this infectious material, such as discarded syringes and blood bags, in the federal capital in cahoots with hospital employees. Though this material can be used to manufacture toys, shoes and other products, the

management is gravely concerned that the used syringes and glucose bags can be reused by the buyers, which would result in HIV/AIDS, cancer and hepatitis outbreak.

It is worth mentioning that the management hired a company that gets around Rs1.4 million per month to collect the hospital waste and incinerate it on the premises to avert recycling of the infectious waste. Such type of waste would result in the spread of various diseases i.e. HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and cancer. It is worth mentioning that in 2018 Pims received an incinerator that could burn 100kg of waste in one hour.

Across the globe, incinerators are used to burn such waste. Ideally, an incinerator should have primary and secondary chambers to dispose of hospital waste and also process the smoke produced as a result. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 4*)

KEMARI INCIDENT

Experts insist toxic emissions caused deaths in Karachi's Keamari

As flawed investigation into the Keamari tragedy continues, officials are anxiously waiting for the results of a laboratory report that may conclusively explain how 19 lives were lost last month in the area. The bereaved family (of a three-year-old child) had told health officials that the child had developed cough and fever three to four days before his death [on Jan 31] and had also stopped taking meals. The boy developed breathing problems that night and died within minutes.

In their remarks, the experts stated: “Blackish deposits of variable intensity were observed over both knees, interior surface of ankles, dorsal aspect of both feet, involving toes and planter surfaces, these couldn’t be removed despite repeated washings. Full thickness skin removed from right ankle (unwashed) (sent) for histopathology and chemical analysis.”

Sources stated that there were serious lapses in the investigation from day one. For instance, they said, no serious effort was made to collect evidence/traces of environmental pollution, which was initially highlighted as the cause of multiple deaths.

Information gathered from multiple sources revealed that the health department couldn’t carry out a single detailed autopsy when reports about the deaths were flashed in the media. Hence, a critical source of evidence was lost. Secondly, the Sindh Environmental Protection Agency collected air quality samples after the factories, blamed for toxic emissions, were sealed. Thirdly, there was no effort to analyse the material and waste being used and generated by the factories and see how they could affect human lives,” a source privy to the case’s developments said, pointing out one of the nearby factories produced iron ore that caused harmful gases.

Meanwhile, the National Institute of Health, Islamabad, has released its report of the samples collected during a survey by the provincial health department. The virology lab of NIH detected four cases of measles (among children), a case of dengue fever in a woman while nothing suspicious could be detected in the sixth sample. (*Published in Dawn, February 3rd, 2023 page 13*)

Police register 10 new FIRs, seal five factories in Keamari deaths case

A day after the Sindh High Court ordered the Inspector General of Police (IGP) to register cases pertaining to 18 deaths in Keamari deaths and launch a proper probe, police lodged 10 FIRs, sealed five factories for allegedly releasing hazardous emissions and sought court permission for exhumation of the bodies of the victims. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 13*)

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

Pakistan`s corruption perception score falls to worst level in 10 years

Although Pakistan managed to maintain its ranking in Transparency International`s Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) in 2022, its overall score fell to the lowest level since 2012. Pakistan ranked 140 out of 180 countries a position unchanged from 2021. However, its overall CPI score fell to 27 out of 100. Last year, the score was 28 out of 100. Pakistan is among the 10 nations whose CPI score has significantly declined since 2017. Among the biggest declines are Luxembourg (77), Canada (74), the United Kingdom (73), Austria (71), Malaysia (47), Mongolia (33), Pakistan (27), Honduras (23), Nicaragua (19) and Haiti (17). (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 12*)

Sindh cabinet approves wheat procurement from March 15

The provincial cabinet has decided to start wheat procurement from March 15 at a rate of Rs4000 per 40 kg, besides approving Rs58.7 billion for relief work. The general administration department told the cabinet that during the floods and unprecedented rains, Rs58.7 billion were released, including Rs27,648.452 million for relief and rehabilitation, Rs8,390 million for a subsidy to farmers on Rabi Crop 2022-23, Rs1000 million for provision of fodder, Rs14,150.3 million for the repair of Irrigation works, Rs3,628.63 million for the survey or damages and related works, Rs3925.952 million for KMC and DMCs to repair bus routes and other works and Rs985.405 million for purchase of medicines. (*Business Recorder, February 7th, 2023 Page 3*)

First Six Month: Fiscal deficit swells to 2pc of GDP

Fiscal deficit has been recorded at two per cent of the GDP or Rs1,683 billion during the first six months of the current fiscal year, according to the Finance Ministry. A summary of consolidated federal and provincial fiscal operation for July-December

2022-23, showed that total revenue stood at Rs4,698 billion against the total expenditure of Rs6,382 billion during the first six months of the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, February 9th, 2023 Page 1*)

Farm output per worker stagnant for three decades in Pakistan: report

Pakistan's agricultural output per worker has been stagnant for three decades, lagging all other countries, and it has expanded at an annual rate of less than 0.7 per cent, while the South Asia average has been four times the rate, a World Bank report says. The sector's sluggish productivity performance can be linked to distortions — created in part by state interventions — that have led to concentration of resources on four major crops (cotton, sugarcane, wheat and rice), increasing the advantage of big landowners and banks (insiders) at the expense of small farmers, consumers and future generations (outsiders), and contributed to environmentally unsustainable practices, the report said.

Titled, "From Swimming in Sand to High and Sustainable Growth", the report says Pakistan's agriculture sector is both heavily subsidised and regulated. While the policy concerns that originally inspired public interventions in the sector are important, the policy design and de facto implementation of those policies have benefited large landowners (insiders) at the expense of small farmers (outsiders).

Citing an example, the report said the government has a wheat procurement system whereby it procures a proportion of the total crop output at a fixed procurement price (or support price). But this programme introduces an allocative distortion that reduces productivity, resulting in a structural oversupply of wheat (as support prices have been above import parity) that benefits large farmers (and banks), crowds out credit to the private sector (as wheat procurement is financed with bank loans that could be directed to private sector financing), at the expense of consumers and taxpayers, and generates fiscal costs for the government.

Similarly, sugarcane, a water-intensive crop, benefits disproportionately from the underpricing of water, and other subsidy inputs (such as fertilisers, credit for equipment or machinery), but requires minimum support prices to make its cultivation financially viable.

Pakistan's water insecurity is driven by poor water management and governance in the irrigation sector. In its current form, the irrigation tariff cannot be used as an instrument to induce crop changes or increase in water use efficiency, nor does it support adequate cost-recovery for operations and maintenance of the irrigation infrastructure. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2023 Page 1*)

11.1 # Food

Nexus of food dept, millers seen behind rising flour prices

While harvest of new wheat crop is still a month's away, flour prices continue to increase. The Sindh food department has started releasing wheat crop procured at a lesser rate last year for consumers at an exceptionally higher price. People are unable to get whole wheat flour at the government notified rate. Flour prices still hover around Rs130 per kilo despite the fact that the official price for chakki flour is set at Rs107 per kg and flour mills' rate at Rs98 in January. The commodity is being sold at Rs150 to Rs160 per kilo for the last couple of months, which is attributable to hoarders' supply of wheat in open market at an exorbitant rate. Since 2017-18, the food department didn't meet procurement target of 1.4m tonnes. It procured 0.9m tonnes in 2021-22. Grain wasn't procured in 2018-19. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2023 Page 13*)

Govt urged to set up wheat procurement centres in March

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has urged Sindh government to start opening wheat procurement centres in the province from March 1 as the crop's harvest would begin from Feb 15 in lower Sindh. SCA general secretary Zahid Bhurgari said in a statement issued here the other day that seed and fertiliser as well as pesticides should be provided to farmers for the cultivation of cotton at subsidised rate. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 15*)

Wheat procurement target set at 1.4m tonnes

The provincial cabinet set a wheat procurement target for crop 2022-23 at 1.4 Million Metric Tonnes (MMTs) at a rate of Rs4,000 per 40kg. Food Minister Mukesh Kumar Chawla informed the cabinet said that four million tonnes of wheat has been grown this year which is a good crop despite the fact that lands were damaged by heavy rains and floodwaters. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 13*)

PBF wants wheat support price in Punjab to be increased to Rs3900 per maund

The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) demanded that Punjab government may revise the wheat support price to Rs 3,900 per maund from Rs 3000 per maund for the procurement season of 2023. After the Sindh government raised the price of wheat to Rs 4,000 per maund an upward revision of the support price is inevitable for Punjab. Wheat smuggling from Punjab to Sindh has been encouraged by a difference of Rs 1,000 between Sindh and Punjab. As the grain market remained stable due to the uniform price of Rs 2,200 per maund in Punjab and Sindh last year. It is important to note that the cost of production minus profit for wheat cultivation in Punjab is Rs 2,965 per 40 maund.

On import of wheat issue, PBF Vice President, Jahanara Wattoo said unfortunately Pakistan has become an importer of wheat for a number of years. Over six million tonnes of wheat were imported into the country over the past three years for \$6 billion,

or \$2 billion per year on average. Over a million tonnes have been imported thus far this fiscal year at a cost of \$500 million, and the process is continuing. The sad fact that Pakistan now imports wheat is that the country has a 70% agricultural population.

Jahanara Wattoo also said government may also needs to regulate its seed industry and guarantee input supply to ensure availability, and farmers will take care of the rest. However, the wheat seed industry, like that of cotton and other crops, is in complete disarray. There are currently over fifty seed varieties on the market. Before losing their strength and disappearing from the market, some seed varieties spread to 60–70 percent of crop areas. Neither the entrance nor the exit doors of the seed market have been properly inspected. This must end, she added. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 3*)

Call for increasing wheat support price

Growers have urged the provincial governments of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to follow Sindh province and fix the support price of wheat for 2023 session. (*Business Recorder, February 26th, 2023 Page 2*)

Punjab raises wheat support price to Rs3,900/40kg

Punjab government increased the minimum wheat procurement price to the highest level of Rs3,900/40kg from last year's price of Rs2,200/40kg bringing it up to the market level. Since the government has fixed wheat price at almost the same level as the open market, it is expected there would not be any spike in the price of chakki atta in the next season, especially if administrative checks remain in place.

Wheat crop cultivation area remained almost unchanged this year at 16.2 million acres from last year's 16 million acres. However, it is lower than the targeted 16.5 million acres this year. Government expects crop productivity to be at around 20 million metric tonnes, the same level as last year, although it would be a million less than the target of 21 million metric tonnes. (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 17*)

11.2 # Food Scarcity

Increase in subsidised flour quota demanded

The local body representatives demanded of the government to increase the quota of subsidised wheat flour in line with the needs of the residents. Chairman of the Shergar village council Ijaz Ahmad told reporters that record inflation had squeezed the people's purchasing power, so more subsidised flour should be supplied to union councils to the relief of the residents. `We want the government to double flour quota for each union council to the benefit of all residents,` he said. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2023 Page 8*)

Wheat target missed due to heavy rains, floods: official

The country has missed the wheat sowing target by four percent for the Rabi season 2022-2023 due to heavy rains and floods in the country. “Wheat has been sown over 21.94 million acres’ area against the set target of 22.58 million acres for the year 2022-23,” said Wheat Commissioner of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) Imtiaz Ali Gopang, while briefing the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research. Senator Syed Muzaffar Hussain Shah said that the country is spending \$6 billion on the import of wheat and cotton. The spending of foreign exchange would further increase in the upcoming years as the area of sowing both wheat and cotton crops are shrinking, he said. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2023 Page 3*)

Concern expressed over growing food insecurity

Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) says in developing nations like Pakistan, food security is a major concern. With a population of more than 200 million and an annual growth rate of 3%, it ranks sixth in the world. As a result, demand for food is constantly rising. PBF Vice President, Jahanara Wattoo said more than 48% of the population of Pakistan is food insecure, according to the World Food Programme. Food insecurity is highest in the former Fata (67.7%), closely followed by Balochistan (61.2%) and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), where it is highest at 56.22%.

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) discovered severe food insecurity in 10 Pakistani districts necessitating immediate action, and crisis-level food insecurity in 28 other districts. Food insecurity has also been severe in the Thar region of Sindh due to the ongoing drought. In a similar vein, Pakistan’s analysis of its food security reveals an alarming situation: The availability of food for residents of 56 districts is extremely limited.

Over seventy percent of the population is either directly or indirectly involved in the 22 million hectare agriculture industry. Only 6% of the total land under cultivation is dedicated to horticultural crops, 3.5% to fruits, 2% to vegetables, and 0.5 percent to ornamental plants. With an intensive farming pattern, horticulture is relatively manageable and productive, particularly for geo-sensitive regions and farmers with small landholdings. When compared to conventional crops, farmers’ net returns per unit of land area are significantly higher, and it can provide substantial income to farmers facing economic risk.

Similarly Urban and peri-urban horticulture (UPH) must be considered an essential component of the agricultural production system in order to meet the ever-increasing food demand of urban areas, with an emphasis on creating employment, food security, and income for the poor in urban areas.

However, by introducing technologies that individual families can manage, UPH can provide the opportunity closer to consumption areas. Supply chain management is required for each horticultural product. Quality isn't good because of conventional farming, using too many inputs, and problems before and after harvest.

As a result, new horticultural technologies like integrated disease and pest management, organic cultivation using biological resources, kitchen gardening, minimal or zero tillage, high-density planting, bio-fertilization, fertigation, drip irrigation, protected cultivation like greenhouses and tunnels, and the use of hybrid seeds and improved cultivars can significantly boost Pakistan's fruit and vegetable production. (*Business Recorder, February 26th, 2023 Page 3*)

Two held for hoarding subsidised wheat flour

Chakesar tehsil assistant commissioner Mohammad Hamid Siddiqui sealed shops and godowns of two flour dealers for hoarding the subsidised wheat flour bags, and got them arrested. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2023 Page 9*)

11.3 # Inflation

Govt sees spike in inflationary pressures

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation on a year-on-year basis for January is forecast in the range of 24-26pc. Yet the ministry appeared to be still underestimating the inflation as it already reached about 25pc last month and the impact of subsequent increases in interest rate, devaluation and increase in energy and fuel rates was yet to translate into CPI. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 9*)

Inflation jumps to 48-year high of 27.6pc in January

The annual consumer inflation hit 27.6 per cent last month, the highest in 48 years, as prices of food and transport continued to remain elevated amid economic turmoil. On a month-on-month basis, the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which measures the overall change in consumer prices based on a representative basket of goods and services over time, rose 2.9pc in January.

Inflation in urban and rural areas increased to 24.4pc and 32.3pc year-on-year, respectively. Core inflation, which doesn't include volatile food and energy prices, also slightly rose to 15.4pc in urban areas and 19.4pc in rural areas. Consumer prices have risen sharply over the past several months, with annual inflation staying above 20pc since June last year. Year-on-year inflation of 27.6pc in January was the highest since May1975, when it stood at 27.8pc, according to the investment firm Arif Habib Limited. The CPI figure was higher than the government's expectation of 26pc, which itself was more than double the budgeted 11.5pc target. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2023 Page 1*)

Jan food prices rise 43pc YoY

CPI-based inflation hits 48-year high. The Consumer Price Index-based inflation increased to 27.6 per cent on a year-on-year basis in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 24.5 per cent in the previous month and 13 per cent in January 2022. On a month-on-month basis, CPI increased to 2.9per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 0.5 per cent in the previous month and an increase of 0.4 per cent in January 2022.

The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) inflation on YoY increased to 30.5per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 27.8per cent a month earlier and 20.9per cent in January 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 1.3per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 0.2 per cent a month earlier and a decrease of 0.8 per cent in January 2022.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased to 28.5 per cent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 27.1 per cent a month earlier and an increase of 24 per cent in January 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 1.8per cent in January 2023 as compared to a decrease of 0.7 a month earlier and an increase of 0.6 per cent in the corresponding month of last year, i.e., January 2022.

The National CPI for January 2023 is increased to 2.88 per cent over December 2022 and increased to 27.55 per cent over the corresponding month of the last year, i.e., January 2022. (*Business Recorder, February 2nd, 2023 Page 1*)

Consumers brace for new wave of price spirals

Already hard-pressed amid surging prices of almost all essentials, the government added fuel to consumers' misery by increasing the General Sales Tax (GST) to 18 per cent from 17pc along with federal excise duty. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2023 Page 9*)

USC hikes prices of various items

The Utility Stores Corporation (USC) increased the prices of various items, including formula milk for children, diapers, soap and other goods. The notification on the price hike had been issued. According to the notification, the USC brands across the country had increased their prices and the price increase will be implemented immediately. (*The News, February 19th, 2023 Page 12*)

11.3.1 # Inflation: Energy Sector

Govt approves power tariff hike to pacify IMF

Moving swiftly to meet prior meet of the IMF programme, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet approved imposition of a special financing surcharge of Rs3.39 per unit in average power tariff, in addition to quarterly tariff adjustments of

up to Rs3.21 per unit for one year and recovery of pending fuel cost adjustments of up to Rs4 per unit for about three months. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2023 Page 1*)

Gas tariffs to be raised for consumers of SNGPL, SSGC

Gas tariffs will have to be raised by Rs 98 per mmbtu for SNGPL consumers and Rs 109.91 per mmbtu for SSGC consumers to meet the International Monetary Fund ninth review prior condition of zero increase in gas sector circular debt for the remaining four months of the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, February 11th, 2023 Page 1*)

IMF grudgingly agrees to 45pc power subsidy slash

The government and International Monetary (IMF) are said to have agreed on reducing power subsidy by 45 per cent to Rs 300 billion from July 2023 onwards to protect vulnerable segments from the existing subsidy of Rs 550 billion earmarked for 2022-23. This understanding was reached during recent negotiations between Pakistani authorities and IMF Mission, which has left for Washington without declaring the ninth review a success. (*Business Recorder, February 11th, 2023 Page 1*)

11.3.2 # Inflation: Food

Tetra milk, formula prices raised

Manufacturers have increased the prices of various milk products including baby formula. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2023 Page 9*)

Chicken price rises to Rs700 per kg in Karachi

The price of chicken in Karachi has increased sharply and it is being sold at Rs700 per kg. After mutton and beef, chicken is also going out of the reach of the middle class, as the rate of live chicken has reached to Rs500 per kg. In Rawalpindi, Islamabad, and some other cities, the price of chicken has also reached an all-time high, with a kilogram of poultry meat being sold for Rs700-705. Meanwhile, in Lahore, the second most populous city in the country, the price of chicken meat is hovering between Rs550-600 per kg. The government has launched an investigation to ascertain the cause of the feed shortage. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 5*)

Consumers face uphill battle against skyrocketing food prices

Flour mills while refusing to sell the commodity at the government-agreed ex-mill rate of Rs95 per kilo, increased the price of flour No.2.5 to Rs105 per kg only a few days ago. The rates of fine and super fine flour have also been increased by Rs5 per kg to Rs125. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2023 Page 13*)

11.3.3 # Weekly Inflation Report

Weekly inflation highest since mid-September

Prices rose at the fastest pace in the outgoing week in more than four months, mainly led by increases in food and fuel rates. As a result, short-term inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), was recorded at 34.5 per cent on a year-on-year basis for the week ended on Feb 2, rising from 32.6pc in the previous week. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2023 Page 9*)

Weekly inflation remains high

Weekly inflation remained at an elevated level compared to a year ago, driven by high prices of onions, chicken, eggs, diesel and petrol. Short-term inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), was 34.83 per cent year-on-year during the week ended on Feb 9, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said. The 34.83pc overall jump in prices is the highest annual rise since the week ended Sept 15, 2022, when the SPI inflation was 40.6pc. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2023 Page 9*)

Weekly inflation surges to 38.4pc

Prices rose significantly in the outgoing week, both on on-year and on-week bases, mainly led by onions, chicken, cooking oil and a massive jump in fuel prices. As a result, short-term inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), jumped to 38.42 per cent on a year-on-year basis for the week ended on Feb 16, rising from 34.83pc in the previous week, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. The hike in prices is the highest annual rise since the week ending Sept 15, 2022, when the SPI inflation was 40.6pc. In January, annual inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) spiked 27.55pc — the highest increase since May 1975. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2023 Page 9*)

Weekly inflation crosses 40pc for first time in five months

Consumer prices rose significantly in the outgoing week on the back of onions, chicken, eggs, rice, cigarettes and fuel, driving the weekly inflation to over 40 per cent for the first time in over five months. As a result, short-term inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), jumped to 41.54 per cent on a year-on-year basis for the week ended on Feb 23, rising from 38.42pc in the previous week. Meanwhile, the headline inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was recorded at 27.6pc in January. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 1*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

KP plans to market carbon credits through World Bank

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has developed a plan to market through the World Bank its carbon credits on account of generating clean hydel and solar power

without polluting the environment. Carbon credit, a permit which allows a country or organisation to produce a certain amount of carbon emissions, can be traded globally with other companies with larger carbon footprint.

The World Bank is overall supervising this operation globally under the Paris Agreement. The Climate Warehouse is a global public metadata layer empowering a new global carbon market infrastructure through a decentralised information technology platform built on block chain technology, under the umbrella of the World Bank. It aims to mobilise climate action toward the Paris Agreement objectives by enhancing transparency and environmental integrity of carbon credit transactions and international carbon markets.

The Kyoto Protocol was adopted in 1997, which entered into force in 2005. Currently, there were 192 parties to the Kyoto Protocol, which operationalises the United Nations Framework Convention (UNFC) on climate change by committing industrialised countries and economies in transition to limit and reduce greenhouse gases (GHG) emissions in accordance with agreed individual targets. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2023 Page 9*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

Snowfall, avalanches cut off GB, Chitral villages

Two villages in Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have been cut off from other areas for the past 15 days due to heavy snowfall and avalanches, according to locals. The access roads to Darkut village in the Ghizer district of GB and Broghil village in KP's Chitral district are blocked, leaving locals stranded and without food, medicine and other necessary items. According to the GB chief secretary, Darkut village received heavy snowfall from Feb 13-17. The situation was worsened by a strong downwind which resulted in slab avalanches at various places between Umalsat and Darkut. Darkut is a remote area with 250 households that are facing serious difficulties. Around 15km north of Darkut, 280 households in Broghil village of upper Chitral are facing a similar shortage of food and medicines as the road leading to the area has been blocked due to heavy snowfall. A local, Sher Amin, told Dawn that the road connecting Broghil village with Chitral and Ghizer has been blocked for the last two weeks. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2023 Page 3*)

13.1 # Flood

Flood-hit people to get money for reconstruction of damaged houses from Feb 8

Sindh Chief Secretary Dr Muhammad Sohail Rajput has said that the flood affected people will start receiving money from Feb 8 for the reconstruction of their houses. Dr

Rajput said that the houses would be constructed in collaboration with implementation partners such as National Rural Support Programme (NRSP), Sindh Rural Support Organisation (SRSO), Thardeep Rural Development Programme (TRDP), Support Foundation and HANDS. He further said that a survey had been completed, according to which 2.058 million houses had been partially or completely damaged by rains and floods in the province. He also informed the participants that the World Bank (WB) had committed \$500 million for the housing project, Sindh government was giving \$250m while the federal government had also promised to provide equal contribution of \$250m. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 14*)

Early flood warning systems being installed in GB

Early warning and radar systems under the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) Project are being installed in over 200 valleys across Gilgit-Baltistan, Chief Secretary Mohyuddin Ahmed Wani said. The chief secretary said the equipment would be installed at 211 locations, spread over 16 valleys and 10 districts of GB. “The system will help communities build resilience and save lives in case of any disaster induced by climate change.” According to the United Nations Development Project, installation of the system would go a long way in building up resilience among local communities against natural disasters. According to Met Office, Gilgit-Baltistan has over 5,000 glaciers and countless glacial lakes. Some of them have been declared “most dangerous”. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 3*)

13.2 # Heatwave

Heatwave ruled out

Rejecting social media speculations about an incoming heatwave, the Met department has stated that daytime temperatures may, however, rise to 32-34 degrees Celsius in the city between Feb 17 and 18. The department recorded 15 degrees Celsius and 32.5 degrees Celsius as the minimum and maximum temperature, respectively, on Thursday in the city. “What’s being experienced in the southern parts of Sindh right now is an extension of the warm weather conditions currently prevailing in India’s Rajasthan,” explained chief meteorologist Dr S. Sarfaraz, adding that brief episodes of warm weather couldn’t be categorised as a heatwave. According to him, there is no specific definition of a heatwave as the phenomenon varied from region to region. “What we can say generally is that a heatwave occurs when the temperature remains above five degrees Celsius than the average [maximum] temperature of the month for at least five consecutive days. Having said this, there is no doubt that the weather is getting warmer every year worldwide.” (*Dawn, February 17th, 2023 Page 13*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

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15 # RESISTANCE

Protests held in several Sindh towns against price hike, inflation

Activists of the Sindh United Party (SUP) and component parties forming the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA) staged a hunger strike in Qasimabad against price-hike. Protest demonstrations were also held in several other towns of the province. GDA and SUP activists gathered at Nasim Nagar Chowk in Hyderabad to raise their voice against unemployment and increase in the electricity, gas and fuel prices.

Demos in Mirpurkhas Various social and religious organisations held demonstrations against price-hike in various towns of Mirpurkhas district.

The Shehri Action Committee organised a big demonstration in Mirpurkhas city which was attended by scores of civil society activists. They strongly condemned the federal government for effecting a record Rs35 increase in petrol and diesel prices and demanded an immediate withdrawal of the hike.

Another demonstration was organised by the Qaumi Awami Tehreek in Mirwah Gorchani town and led by Kirar Lebari, Shoukat Nohani and Majeed Bughio. The participants were carrying banners and placards against the federal government.

Similar protests were held in Kot Ghulam Mohammad, Jhuddo, Naokot, Sindhri and other towns. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 15*)

Taxi drivers protest hike in POL prices

A large number of taxi drivers took out a procession in Jhuddo town in protest against recent hike in the price of petroleum products. The protesters marched on roads carrying banners and placards and raising slogans against the federal government before converging on town committee office where their leaders made speeches condemning the government for dealing a serious blow to their livelihood. They demanded the federal government immediately withdraw the recent hike in the fuel prices and also reduce prices of essential commodities. Police later dispersed the protesters. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2023 Page 15*)

Protest against `enforced disappearances` held

A number of people, including women and children, staged a protest outside the Karachi Press Club against `enforced disappearances` in Balochistan and Sindh. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2023 Page 14*)

Thousands pour onto streets demanding restoration of durable peace in KP

Thousands of people poured onto the roads for the third day in different towns of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, condemning the brutal attack on the Malik Saad Shaheed Police Lines in Peshawar and resurgence of militancy in the province. The peace rallies were held in Mohmand, Malakand, Lakki Marwat and other areas under the slogan of Ulasi Pasoon (public uprising). The peace marchers were mostly youngsters, who were holding white flags, placards and banners, demanding of the government to eliminate the militancy and ensure sustainable peace.

In Lakki Marwat, the local residents took out a peace rally. The rally appeared from Shaheed Abid Ali Chowk and converged at Qazi Ishfaq Chowk on the main bust stand in the Lakki city after marching on Tajazai-Lakki Road. The participants were holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans, highlighting their demands for peace and harmony.

In Malakand, workers of political parties and civil society activists came out on the streets in Batkhela to demand establishment of durable peace on their soil. The participants carried white flags, banners and placards and marched from Zafar Park to the old bus stand, chanting slogans for restoration of peace. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2023 Page 9*)

Labour leaders vow to resist ban on unions, privatisation of national assets

Leaders and workers of various major trade unions held a meeting in Labour Hall to condemn government's alleged moves to ban their organisations in the country and to renew their resolve to continue opposing privatisation of national institutions, including Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM), Pakistan Railways (PR) and Civilian Aviation Authority (CAA).

The meeting condemned government's "anti-workers' steps and noted with concern that the present federal government was taking initiatives against workers on the pretext of International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditionalities. The meeting observed that national enterprises, which were the country's vital assets, were being sold away at throw away prices. It deplored that labour unions were being banned to stifle workers' voice. The meeting also condemned employers for depriving contractual workers of their rightful wages and not regularising their services. It resolved to take practical steps to resist the possible ban on trade unionism. Courts would be moved and agitation was also an option, it added. The meeting demanded an immediate 100pc increase in salaries to commensurate with the price hike.

The meeting called for reimbursement of pension to retired PTCL workers and demanded that minimum remuneration of daily wage earners and contractual employees

be fixed at Rs50,000 per month. It also demanded an end to contract system and urged the government to bound down the private sector to implement government's notification regarding minimum wage. It stressed that workers' group insurance should be implemented in line with Supreme Court's orders. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2023 Page 15*)

Punjab flour millers announce strike

The Punjab Flour Mills Association has announced to go on strike from Monday (today) against the suspension of the wheat quota of over 100 flour mills by the province's food department. The differences between the flour mills association and the Punjab food department have intensified after the government's move of suspending the wheat quota. Chairman Punjab Flour Mills Association in his statement said the flour mills will not receive wheat from government quota from tomorrow. The Punjab flour mills chairman further said the supply of wheat in the market will be hampered during the strike. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 12*)

Suspension of subsidised flour distribution protested

Residents of Tarkha Faqirabad, Gulshanabad and Shamsuddin Korona areas blocked the Farooq-i-Azam Chowk in Charsadda Bazaar to protest suspension of subsidised wheat flour distribution. Before staging a sit-in at the main thoroughfare, the protesters marched on the Charsadda city roads, chanting slogans against the government and the district administration. The protesters threatened to bring their women and children on roads if wheat flour quota was not restored forthwith. They condemned the food department officials for cancelling flour quota. They were of the view that the poor people were already facing multiple crises, including spiraling price inflation, electricity loadshedding and unemployment, and the rulers had further pushed the poor segments of society against the wall by suspending subsidised wheat flour quota. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2023 Page 8*)

Power protesters block road in Mohmand

Hundreds of people took to streets and blocked Peshawar-Bajaur Highway in Ghalani to protest prolonged power outages. The protestors opened the road to traffic when Wapda authorities assured them of smooth supply of electricity to the district headquarters. The protesters said that 22-hour loadshedding was being observed in Ghalanai and adjoining areas while the remaining parts of the district were without electricity. They said that the Wapda authorities claimed to have spent Rs21 billion to improve supply of electricity to tribal districts during the last six months but people were suffering from loadshedding. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2023 Page 8*)

Women, children hold demo against rising price hike

Scores of women and children held a protest outside the Karachi Press Club against price hike and acute gas shortage and government's mute response to these issues. Holding banners inscribed with anti-government slogans, the protesters demanded immediate relief for the poor. Some of the placards read as "Prime Minister, when would you sell your clothes to make flour affordable for the common man" and "We want roti not speeches". Talking to Dawn, protesters, most of them housewives residing in different areas of the city, shared how challenging it had become to make ends meet in the face of steep hike in prices of basic commodities. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2023 Page 14*)

Farmers hold sit-in for release of water in Dajil Canal

Despite the assurances by the commissioner and the irrigation chief engineer to local farmers a fortnight ago, water was not yet released in the Dajil Canal that has been largely dry since January this year. The canal, which is the only source of irrigation and potable water for the local farmers and their livestock, was closed after the massive floods in the south Punjab. In December, last year, the irrigation department had released water in the canal, but due to the poor condition of its banks which were damaged during the floods, it was closed in the start of January. Because of the closure of the canal, people and their livestock depending on its water, had been facing a drought-like situation. The canal closure is also affecting the crops in the area, which are being destroyed for lack of irrigation, local farmers deplore.

Around a fortnight ago, a delegation of farmers had met with the DG Khan commissioner and chief engineer, who had assured them that water would be released in the the canal, but to no avail. Forth last couple of days, the affected farmers have been camping outside the local irrigation department offices, demanding early release of water in the canal. They are demanding supply of potable water immediately on humanitarian basis. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 8*)

Protest against razing of structures in Bannu market

Residents of Myrakhel town in Bannu district blocked the Bannu-DI Khan Road to protest the demolition of structures in the cattle market. The villagers assembled near the police station building and closed the busy road to vehicular traffic. The protesters raised slogans against the administration, alleging the municipal authorities had declared the market illegal and ordered its demolition. An official, however, said the cattle market was established on private land where illegal taxes were being collected from traders. He said action was inevitable to stop the illegal activity. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 9*)

Demo held against govt's `anti-poor policies`

Activists of the Communist Party of Pakistan (P) staged a demonstration outside the local press club (Hyderabad) in protest against price hike and what they termed anti-poor policies of the government dictated by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Leading the protest, Iqbal, Azhar, Nawaz Khaskheli and others said the Pakistani rulers would have to face the consequences of price hike, which was the result of the IMF-inspired policies. The ruling elite of the country had pushed people to price hike ruthlessly, they added. Warning that the Pakistani rulers would have to pay a price for it, they said people would lose patience and working class would take to the streets to demolish that tyrannical capitalist system for their own survival. They said the Pakistani elite got loans from the IMF to meet their unnecessary expenses and filled their coffers. They stated that the masses had been made scapegoats by rising prices of petroleum products and increasing taxes etc.

Prices of commodities had gone beyond the reach of the common man, they said, adding that it had become impossible for people to buy fuel. They demanded that minimum wages of workers should be fixed at Rs40,000 per month and old age allowance of Rs20,000 be given to them. Calling for recovering taxes from generals, judges and civil bureaucracy, they said their expenses should be cut along with other non-development expenditures. They said that subsidy should be given to people on edibles whose prices should be capped at the 2018's prices. They also opposed privatisation policy. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 15*)

Wapda union warns govt against blindly accepting IMF conditions

The All Pakistan Wapda Hydroelectric Workers Union has advised the federal government to take wise decisions instead of kowtowing to the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) conditions and framing anti-labour policies. Union president Abdul Latif Nizamani said the workers rejected government's policy of outsourcing power utilities and distribution feeders. Mr Nizamani accused the federal government of not sustaining the pressure being mounted by the IMF. On March 9, thousands of Wapda workers would assemble at D-Chowk in Islamabad and stage a sit-in, he warned.

Instead of making wise decisions, it (govt) was bowing before the IMF conditions and framing what he called anti-labour policies, he said. He believed that with anti-labour policies, the government had pushed thousands of labourer in the quagmire of unbearable price hike with sharp rise in oil, gas, electricity tariff. Such a situation had compounded the difficulties of the poor and middle class, according to Mr Nizamani. The rigid government policies would not be beneficial for the workers as it was quite unwise to outsource the benefit-earning 11 KV feeders and power companies. (*Dawn, February 23th, 2023 Page 15*)

Miners protest ‘discrimination’ by EOBI

Coalmine workers staged a demonstration outside local press club (Hyderabad) in protest against ‘discriminatory’ attitude of Employees Old Age Benefit Institution’s (EOBI) towards their issues. Habibullah Coal Mining Lakhra workers’ union president Jehangir Karamat and general secretary Haji Gul Zahir, who organised the protest, told a press conference later at local press club that EOBI officers were meting out step-motherly treatment to coalmine workers. The officers demanded illegal gratification and bribe and only the worker who paid them bribe could get fringe benefits, including pension. The workers who did not pay the bribe were not accepted as workers, they said. They said that recently a coalmine worker had died but he was not treated as coalmine worker by the EOBI. The institution claimed on the basis of their own definition of law that pension would be given at the attainment of 60 years of age and not at 55, they said. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 15*)

Sanitation staff go on strike at Islamabad airport

Due to a strike by contractual sanitation employees at Islamabad International Airport (IIA), dustbins were overflowing in the departure lounges with foul smell emanating from the premises. The staff stopped working after the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) asked them to work under a private contractor, said the protesters. The contractual employees chanted slogans against the CAA, demanding withdrawal of the orders to work under the private contractor. The protesters said the CAA had flouted the orders of the employees rehabilitation committee of parliament. The parliamentary committee had prohibited dismissal of contractual employees. ‘We don’t believe in the contractual system,’ the protesters said, adding they would continue the protest until their demands were accepted. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2023 Page 4*)

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5 # TRADE

Russia's bank to suspend trading in euros

Russian online bank Tinkoff, run by TCS Group Holding, said on Sunday (February 26) it would suspend trading in euros from Monday (February 27) following the imposition of a further set of European Union (EU) sanctions. The EU agreed a 10th round of punitive measures late on Friday (February 24) to punish Russia for invading Ukraine. (*Business Recorder, February 27th, 2023 Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

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7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

UN announces \$250m for most vulnerable people

With a record number of people needing humanitarian aid around the world, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has announced \$250 million for the United Nations

Global Emergency Fund to help the most vulnerable people in some of the most forgotten crises.

A statement from the United Nations described the unprecedented 2022 floods in Pakistan as an 'underfunded crisis', and said the new funds would bolster the humanitarian response to combat protracted food insecurity in DR Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Honduras, Kenya, Lebanon, Madagascar and the impact of climate change in Pakistan. The \$250 million allocation from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) will help people in 19 countries. This includes 8 countries Afghanistan, Burkina Faso, Haiti, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen that are home to more than 20 million people and just one step away from famine. In 2022, the UN and its partners reached nearly 160 million people, but the surge in humanitarian needs is fast outpacing the ability to respond. This year, to meet the basic needs of 240 million people, nearly \$54 billion is required, but it is anticipated that less than half of that amount will be raised. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2023 Page 5*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

8.1 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF okays \$4.7bn for Bangladesh

The International Monetary Fund has signed off on a \$4.7 billion support loan package for Bangladesh to help it cope with soaring energy and food costs that have sparked huge protests. Bangladesh and other South Asian countries dependent on fossil fuel imports were hit hard by sharp cost-of-living increases following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The IMF package makes \$476 million immediately available to the government but commits it to tax hikes and bringing down the number of bad loans in the banking sector. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 9*)

Drought-hit Argentina in talks with IMF

Argentina's government is in final talks with International Monetary Fund officials to ease foreign exchange reserves targets for 2023 under the country's \$44 billion program. The move comes as the South American commodities exporter is facing the worst drought in 60 years, which has pummeled soy, corn and wheat crops, compromising already weak foreign exchange reserves. Discussions include the impact of the drought on 2023 goals for net reserves. (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 18*)

8.2 # World Bank

CASA-1000: WB, USAID withdraw funding

The Central Asia-South Asia-1000 (CASA-1000) is reportedly facing a delay of two years as the World Bank and USAID have withdrawn their funding after regime change in Afghanistan. NTDC/CASA officials gave a presentation on the project, which covered the geographical spread and updated progress of the different sections of the project implemented in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The project, after completion, would provide a transmission line to transmit electricity from Kyrgyzstan, across Tajikistan and Afghanistan to Pakistan. A study is also being conducted by M/s Hitachi to look into the option of flow of surplus energy from Pakistan to the Central Asian Republics in the winter season. Regarding progress, the forum was informed that with respect to Pakistan physical progress on converter station is 74.4% and transmission line is 67.3 %, highlighting the progress to be 7% ahead. Chief Engineer CASA-1000 informed that a request has been made to the World Bank to either waive off the interest on the \$185 million loan for Pakistan or convert it into a grant since the project delay is due to the situation in Afghanistan. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 1*)

World Bank lends \$400m to three Sri Lankan banks

The World Bank has offered a lifeline to three private banks in bankrupt Sri Lanka, lending them \$400 million to finance imports of essential food and medicines with an IMF bailout stalled. The World Bank's private sector funding arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), is lending the trio the funds with Sri Lanka's economic crisis still rumbling on. The South Asian nation of 22 million has been enduring severe hardships since it ran out of foreign exchange to finance essential food, fuel, medicines and fertiliser in late 2021. It defaulted on its debt in April 2022.

Months of protests forced the president to resign in July and the new government of Ranil Wickremesinghe sought a \$2.9 billion rescue from the IMF a month later. But authorities say it is being held up because Sri Lanka's main bilateral creditor China has not yet provided financial assurances. The IFC said its loan arrangement with Commercial Bank of Ceylon, Nations Trust Bank and Sampath Bank will "support the private sector with critical financing, contributing to the country's urgent need to stabilise the economy". (*Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 9*)

9 # POLICY

No News

10 # ENVIRONMENT

11 stranded pilot whales saved in Sri Lanka

At least 11 pilot whales were saved after they became stranded near the shore on Sri Lanka's west coast. A navy team aided the rescue effort alongside local fishermen who raised the alarm when they spotted the pod after midnight near the resort village of Kudawa. "There were 14 of them and three were dead on coming ashore," wildlife officer Eranda Gamage told. "They had to be taken into the deeper seas to drop them there so that they would not come back to the shore. The navy took them in their boats and dropped them." Pilot whales -- which can grow up to six metres long and weigh a tonne -- are highly social. (*The News, February 12th, 2023 Page 10*)

Seven whales wash up dead in Cyprus

The Cyprus government is investigating how seven whales mysteriously washed up dead on the rugged shoreline of the island's north coast, authorities said. There were reports another three whales from the same species had been found dead on beaches further east in the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. It is the largest number of whale deaths recorded on the eastern Mediterranean island, where whales are occasionally sighted but are by no means common. (*The News, February 12th, 2023 Page 11*)

10.1 # Health

Most baby formula health claims not backed by science: study

The vast majority of health claims used to advertise baby formula worldwide are not supported by rigorous scientific evidence, a study said, leading researchers to urge the breast milk substitutes be sold in plain packaging.

The study comes a week after a group of doctors and scientists called for a regulatory crackdown on the \$55-billion formula industry for 'predatory' marketing which they said exploits the fears of new parents to convince them not to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is widely recognised to have huge health benefits for babies. The World Health Organisation and the US CDC recommend breastfeeding exclusively during the first six months of a newborn's life. However that recommendation is followed for less than half of infants globally, according to the WHO.

Daniel Munblit, an honorary senior lecturer at Imperial College London and an author of the new study, said researchers were not on a 'crusade' against infant formula, which should remain an option for mothers who cannot or choose not to breastfeed. 'But we are very much against inappropriate infant formula marketing, which provides misleading claims not backed up by solid evidence,' Munblit said. Munblit and an international team of researchers looked at the health claims made for 608 products on

the websites of infant formula companies in 15 countries, including the United States, India, Britain and Nigeria.

The most common claims were that formula supports brain development, strengthens immune systems and more broadly helps growth. Half of the products did not link the claimed health benefit to a specific ingredient, according to the study published in the BMJ journal. Three quarters did not refer to scientific evidence supporting their claims.

Of those that provided a scientific reference, more than half pointed to reviews, opinion pieces or research on animals. Just 14 per cent of the products referred to registered clinical trials on humans. However 90pc of those trials carried a high risk of bias, including missing data or the finding not supporting the claim, the study said. And nearly 90pc of the clinical trials had authors who received funding from or had ties to the formula industry, it added.

‘Distressing’ the most commonly cited ingredient was polyunsaturated fatty acids, which is in breast milk and is considered important for brain development. However there is no evidence of any added benefit when the ingredient is added to baby formula, according to a Cochrane systematic review. Munblit said the health claims were mostly used to advertise premium formula products, which could be ‘distressing’ for parents who are misled into believing the ingredients are essential but cannot afford them.

The study comes after a series of papers were published in the Lancet journal last week calling for global policy makers to end exploitative formula marketing. WHO infant health specialist Nigel Rollins, an author of one of the Lancet papers, said busy parents ‘lack the time to properly scrutinise claims’ about infant formula. The new study showed that ‘governments and regulatory authorities must commit the necessary time and attention to review the claims of formula milk products, Rollins said in a linked BMJ editorial. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2023 Page 10*)

‘A woman dies every two minutes during pregnancy, childbirth’

Every two minutes, a woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth, according to the latest estimates released in a report by United Nations agencies, which emphasised that the world must significantly accelerate progress to meet global targets for reducing maternal deaths, or else risk the lives of over one million more women by 2030.

The report, “Trends in Maternal Mortality”, released by WHO, Unicef, UNFPA, the World Bank and UN Population Division, reveals alarming setbacks for women’s health over recent years, as maternal deaths either increased or stagnated in nearly all regions of the world. “It is unacceptable that so many women continue to die needlessly in pregnancy and childbirth. Over 280,000 fatalities in a single year are unconscionable,” said UNFPA Executive Director Dr Natalia Kanem.

In two of the eight UN regions — Europe and Northern America, and Latin America and the Caribbean — the maternal mortality rate increased from 2016 to 2020, by 17 per cent and 15pc, respectively. Elsewhere, the rate stagnated. The report notes, however, that progress is possible. Two regions — Australia and New Zealand, and Central and Southern Asia — experienced significant declines (by 35pc and 16pc, respectively) in their maternal mortality rates during the same period, as did 31 countries across the world.

The report, which tracks maternal deaths nationally, regionally and globally from 2000 to 2020, shows there were an estimated 287 000 maternal deaths worldwide in 2020. This marks only a slight decrease from 309,000 in 2016 when the Sustainable Development Goals came into effect. While the report presents some significant progress in reducing maternal deaths between 2000 and 2015, gains largely stalled, or in some cases even reversed, after this point.

Inequities related to income, education, race or ethnicity further increase risks for marginalised pregnant women, who have the least access to essential maternity care but are most likely to experience underlying health problems in pregnancy.

In total numbers, maternal deaths continue to be largely concentrated in the poorest parts of the world and in countries affected by conflict. In 2020, about 70 per cent of all maternal deaths were in sub-Saharan Africa. In nine countries facing severe humanitarian crises, maternal mortality rates were more than double the world average. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2023 Page 3*)

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONDITION

AI poses 'serious risk' for human rights, says UN

The United Nations rights chief warned that recent advances in artificial intelligence posed a grave threat to human rights and called for safeguards to prevent violations. This week more than 60 nations including the United States and China called for regulating AI in defence to ensure it “does not undermine international security, stability and accountability”. There have been increasing concerns over things such as AI-guided drones, ‘slaughterbots’ that can kill with no human intervention and the risk that artificial intelligence could escalate a military conflict.

“I am deeply disturbed by the potential for harm of recent advances in artificial intelligence,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said. “Human agency, human dignity and all human rights are at serious risk. This is an urgent call for both business and governments to develop quickly effective guardrails that are so

urgently needed,” he said. “We will follow this closely, provide our specific expertise and ensure that the human rights dimension remains central to how this goes forward,” Turk said. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2023 Page 11*)

UN humanitarian system meets less than half of hunger funding need: report

Only 47 per cent of hunger funding needs through the UN humanitarian system are met, leaving a hunger funding gap of 53 per cent, according to the Action Against Hunger 2023 Hunger Funding Gap Report. The report also found that countries experiencing the worst hunger crisis received less hunger funding (by the percentage of appeals filed) than countries with lower rates of hunger.

The report, based on 2022 data recorded this month, was driven from the United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) financial tracking service. This yielded a list of 13 countries, which are the focus of the report, including Pakistan. While overall funding rose slightly in 2022, support was spread even thinner as needs grew. In 2022, only 3 per cent of hunger programme needs were fully funded and the majority (65 per cent) of appeals were not even fulfilled to the halfway point. In 2021, seven per cent of hunger programmes were fully funded and 57pc were not funded halfway. Zero nutrition-related appeals were fully funded in 2022, down from 15pc in 2021.

Approximately 828 million people, one in 10 worldwide, are undernourished and as many as 50 million people in 45 countries are on the verge of famine. For the report, Action Against Hunger identified 13 countries that experienced “crisis” levels of hunger or worse in 2021 and analysed how much funding those countries subsequently received, both for ongoing and emergency hunger-related programmes in 2022.

The report draws on food insecurity data from 2021 to show what funding decisions are made after donors see where hunger is greatest. “Hunger is a complex issue and funding is just part of what it will take to end hunger in our lifetimes. Yet, after working for more than 40 years across 50 nations, including all of the countries analysed in this report, we know that closing the hunger funding gap is a critical step,” said Director of External Relations, Action Against Hunger, Eric Bebernitz. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2023 Page 3*)

Global debt sees first annual drop since 2015: IIF

The post-pandemic rebound in world growth and inflation last year meant the amount of debt sloshing around the global economy saw its first annual fall in dollar terms since 2015, a widely tracked study has shown. The Institute of International Finance report estimated that the nominal value of global debt declined by some \$4 trillion, bringing it

fractionally back under the \$300 trillion threshold breached in 2021. (*Business Recorder, February 23rd, 2023 Page 11*)

11.1 # Food Scarcity

33pc of school children lack potable water: UN

One in three children worldwide does not have access to clean drinking water while at school, impacting their health and ability to learn, the United Nations said. “Globally, almost one in three schools has no drinking water from an improved source,” the UN cultural agency UNESCO said in a new report. “One in three schools worldwide has no basic sanitation,” meaning a toilet and sewage system, the agency found, while “almost half of schools do not have handwashing facilities with water and soap”. Clean drinking water and handwashing facilities are key to protecting children against the likes of Covid-19, said school health and nutrition expert Emilie Sidaner. Schools without clean drinking water cannot prepare meals for students, contributing to child malnutrition, she said, adding that lack of running water and soap is also a major challenge for girls who “cannot go to school during their period.” (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 11*)

North Korea food shortage worsens amid Covid, but no famine yet

There’s little doubt that North Korea’s chronic food shortages worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and speculation about the country’s food insecurity has flared as its top leaders prepare to discuss the “very important and urgent task” of formulating a correct agricultural policy. Unconfirmed reports say an unspecified number of North Koreans have been dying of hunger. But experts say there is no sign of mass deaths or famine. They say the upcoming ruling Workers’ Party meeting is likely intended to shore up support for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as he pushes ahead with his nuclear weapons programme in defiance of intense US-led pressure and sanctions. An enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party is slated for late February. Its specific agenda is unknown, but the party’s powerful Politburo earlier said that a “a turning point is needed to dynamically promote radical change in agricultural development.” (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 10*)

Shortage of onions adds to global food crisis

The costs of wheat and grains have fallen in recent months, easing concern over access to some staples. But a combination of factors is now shaking up the vegetable market, the backbone of a healthy, sustainable diet. And at the sharp end of that is the humble onion. Prices are soaring, fueling inflation and prompting countries to take action to secure supplies. Morocco and Turkey have halted some exports, as has Kazakhstan. The Philippines has ordered an investigation into cartels.

Restrictions have also gone beyond onions to include carrots, tomatoes, potatoes and apples, hampering availability worldwide, the United Nations and the World Bank

warned this month. In Europe, empty shelves have forced UK supermarkets to ration purchases of some fruit and vegetables after a weak harvest in southern Spain and North Africa. Onions are the staple of cuisines across the world, the most consumed vegetable after the tomato (technically a fruit). About 106 million metric tons are produced annually. The jump in prices is a knock-on effect from disastrous floods in Pakistan, frosts damaging stockpiles in Central Asia and Russia's war in Ukraine. In North Africa, meanwhile, farmers have battled severe droughts and an increase in the cost of seeds and fertilizers. (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 12*)

345m people will be food insecure in 2023: WFP

On the basis of estimates from countries where it has operational presence and available data, the World Food Programme (WFP) of the United Nations has indicated that 345.2 million people will be food insecure in 2023. This is an increase of almost 200m people since early 2020. An estimated 43.3m people in 51 countries are in emergency or worse levels of acute food insecurity in 2023, including severely food insecure. In 2023, at least 846,000 people are expected to experience catastrophic conditions. This is an increase of 74,000 people compared to 2022, where 772,000 were estimated to be in catastrophic conditions.

Conflict remains the main driver of hunger in most of the world's food crises. In addition, forced displacement is expected to continue expanding, with UNHCR projecting about 117m people to be forcibly displaced or stateless in 2023, further aggravating food insecurity of affected people. Many conflicts around the globe persist into 2023; Yemen enters 2023 with a higher risk of returning to wide-scale conflict due to the non-renewal of the ceasefire. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2023 Page 5*)

11.2 # Inflation

Turkey inflation higher than expected at nearly 58PC

Turkish annual inflation dipped to 57.68 percent in January, official data showed, but was well above forecasts despite a favourable base effect that is expected to carry on until President Tayyip Erdogan seeks re-election in M0ay. (*The News, February 5th, 2023 Page 18*)

Fed's preferred inflation gauge up

A key indicator of US inflation rose in January, according to government data released, while spending bounced after retail sales were boosted by good weather. The Fed's preferred gauge of inflation, the Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) price index, rose 5.4 percent last month from January 2022, while consumption surged 1.8 percent from a month prior, according to Commerce Department data. (*Business Recorder, February 25th, 2023 Page 1*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Protecting 30pc of oceans a huge challenge for the planet

How do we go from protecting eight per cent of marine areas to 30pc in less than 10 years? This question is at the heart of a global forum in Canada this weekend aiming to save marine ecosystems under threat from overfishing, pollution and climate change. On the heels of the historic biodiversity agreement signed at COP15 in Montreal late last year, about 3,000 officials, scientists, NGOs and Indigenous groups are meeting in Vancouver for the fifth International Marine Protected Areas Congress (IMPAC5), which opened Friday and runs until Feb 9. Scientists have said the meeting is crucial for setting up a framework to reach the agreed target at COP15 of protecting 30pc of the planet's lands and oceans by 2030.

‘We must re-think our policies, economies, priorities, and processes in ways that reflect the important role nature plays in our own health, equity, well-being and economic sustainability,’ said host Canada, which has some of the world's longest coastlines. Covering almost three-quarters of the earth's surface, oceans are home to a quarter of known species and absorb 30pc of CO2 emissions from human activities. For Sian Owen, director of the Deep Sea Conservation Coalition (DSCC), ‘it is crucial that both existing and emerging industries that threaten our deep ocean are quickly and unequivocally rejected and that we sustainably manage the remaining 70pc.’ (*Dawn, February 5th, 2023 Page 10*)

Carbon credits: a contested tool to fight deforestation

Planting trees or safeguarding tropical rainforests have become popular tools for companies seeking to offset their carbon emissions and proclaim their commitment to the environment. However, recent scandals have cast a shadow over the carbon credit industry, revealing a landscape rife with opportunities for greenwashing. Walt Disney, JP Morgan Bank and other major corporations have been accused of purchasing carbon credits from forest protection projects in areas that were not actually at risk of deforestation.

Separately, a company responsible for managing 600,000 hectares of land in the United States has reportedly earned \$53 million over the past two years from carbon credits that did not significantly alter its forest management practices. None of these projects sequestered carbon beyond that which would have been absorbed by trees through photosynthesis in a business-as-usual scenario. Still, companies counted the resulting carbon credits towards their own reduction targets, allowing them to offset emissions in the carbon accounting of their operations.

Leaders and experts from around the world will gather in the Gabonese capital Libreville on March 1 and 2 for the One Forest Summit. Co-chaired by France and

Gabon, the meeting will focus on improving financial instruments aimed at protecting the world's forests. Carbon credits are already widely used. According to various estimates, the number of tons of CO₂ they represent (with one credit equivalent to one ton) could increase tenfold by 2030, to around two billion tons. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 10*)

12.1 # Carbon Emission

Energy firms not doing enough to cut methane: IEA

Oil and gas companies are not doing enough to cut methane emissions the International Energy Agency (IEA) said, despite high energy prices making abatement measures mostly pay for themselves. In its latest annual Global Methane Tracker report, the IEA found that emissions from the energy sector rose slightly last year to 135 million tonnes, to just below the record set in 2019.

Methane is responsible for around 30 percent of the rise in global temperatures since the Industrial Revolution. As it has a faster and more powerful impact than carbon dioxide reductions, methane emissions may prove the best way to limit short-term global warming and rapidly improve air quality. The energy sector accounts for around 40 percent of total methane emissions attributable to human activity, second only to agriculture, and cost-effective solutions are available. “We estimate that around 70 percent of methane emissions from fossil fuel operations could be reduced with existing technology,” the IEA said in the report. While fossil fuel operations are reducing the amount of methane emitted per unit of energy and leaks into the atmosphere, overall emissions are still rising.

The IEA estimates that \$100 billion — less than three percent of the income of oil and gas companies worldwide last year — would be enough to achieve a 75 percent reduction in methane emissions. The IEA also noted that the explosions last year which destroyed the Nord Stream pipelines that carried Russian natural gas to Germany released a huge amount of methane into the atmosphere. “But normal oil and gas operations around the world release the same amount of methane as the Nord Stream explosion every single day,” it added.

The increased emissions come despite 150 countries having now joined the Global Methane Pledge to reduce methane emissions from human activity by 30 percent from 2020 levels by 2030. The IEA believes that methane emissions from the fossil fuel sector need to drop by 75 percent by 2030 to reach net zero by 2050, the target seen as giving a chance at keeping the mean increase in global temperature at well below two degrees Celsius as enshrined in the 2015 Paris Climate Accords. (*Business Recorder, February 22nd, 2023 Page 1*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Avalanches in Austria, Switzerland kill five

Avalanches in Austria and Switzerland have left five people dead, leading officials to warn of the risks posed by particularly unstable snow cover. Three of those killed were visiting Austria's Alpine regions. (*The News, February 5th, 2023 Page 11*)

Heavy snow snarls travel as winter storms hit US

Powerful winter storms lashed the United States, with heavy snow snarling travel across wide areas, even as unusual warmth was expected in others. Warnings of heavy snowfall were even issued for usually sunny areas near Los Angeles, as well as for more typical winter weather spots in the far north. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2023 Page 10*)

Cyclone lashes New Zealand, forces evacuations, power cuts

Residents in New Zealand's largest city of Auckland and the surrounding area are being told to brace for more heavy rain, flooding and gale-force winds, and some homes are being evacuated, as Cyclone Gabrielle nears the country's coast. New Zealand Prime Minister Chris Hipkins announced a \$7.25 million package to support community groups such as food banks and to groups impacted by the floods. (*Published in Dawn, February 14th, 2023 page 10*)

Mozambique floods kill four in capital area

Four people have died in floods following days of incessant rains in southern Mozambique, the country's institute for risk management said. The National Institute for Disaster Management (INGD) said the deaths happened around the capital Maputo, while 14,000 people were evacuated out of more than 30,000 people estimated to have been affected by the flooding. (*The News, February 12th, 2023 Page 10*)

Southern California delights in rare snowfall as winter storm intensifies

Heavy snow fell in southern California, as the first blizzard in a generation pounded the hills around Los Angeles, with heavy rains threatening flooding in other places. Meteorologists were divided over whether it was technically "snow" and the NWS offered a Twitter tutorial for Californians struggling to put a name to the unusual white stuff spoiling the view of palm trees. "Wondering what kind of frozen precipitation is falling from the sky in your area (assuming you are at a higher elevation)? Here is an informative graphic... that distinguishes between graupel and hail," NWS Los Angeles tweeted. Hail ('hard & solid') is "frozen raindrops of ice from thunderstorms," while graupel ('soft & wet') is "snowflakes that collect supercooled water droplets on the outer surface," the agency informed readers. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2023 Page 10*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquakes

Earthquake in Indonesian region kills four

At least four people were killed when an earthquake struck the capital of Indonesia's breakaway eastern region of Papua and crumpled a waterfront restaurant, officials said. The 5.1-magnitude quake hit on land just southwest of Jayapura city at a depth of 22 kilometres, the US Geological Survey said. Indonesia experiences frequent seismic and volcanic activity due to its position on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where tectonic plates collide. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 11*)

Mini quakes shut museums in Italy's Siena

The Italian city of Siena closed museums, schools and universities after a series of small earthquakes shook the famous Tuscan tourist destination. A 3.5 magnitude tremor struck but no immediate damage was reported. That was followed by some 20 smaller tremors overnight, according to Italy's National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV). Italy is prone to earthquakes. Deadly quakes in 2009 and 2016 killed approximately 300 people each. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 11*)

Magnitude 6.0 quake hits off Indonesia's Talaud islands

A magnitude 6.0 quake hit near Indonesia's Talaud islands at a depth of 11 km (6.8 miles), Indonesia geophysics agency BMKG said via Twitter. (*Business Recorder, February 12th, 2023 Page 8*)

Magnitude 6.1 quake shakes Japan's Hokkaido

A magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck off Hokkaido in northern Japan, the US Geological Survey and the Japan Meteorological Agency said. No tsunami warning was issued after the offshore quake, which shook the coastal cities of Kushiro and Nemuro. (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 10*)

TURKIYE AND SYRIA

Calamity-hit Turkiye, Syria mourn lives lost to quake

A major earthquake struck Turkiye and Syria, killing more than 3,600 people and flattening thousands of buildings as rescuers dug with bare hands for survivors. Dozens of nations have pledged aid since the 7.8-magnitude quake, which hit as people were still sleeping and amid freezing weather that has hampered emergency efforts. Multi-story apartment buildings full of residents were among the 5,606 structures reduced to rubble in Turkiye, while Syria announced dozens of collapses, as well as damage to archaeological sites in Aleppo.

The head of Syria's National Earthquake Centre, Raed Ahmed, called it "the biggest earthquake recorded in the history of the centre". The initial quake was followed by dozens of aftershocks, including a 7.5-magnitude tremor that jolted the region in the middle of search and rescue work. At least 1,293 people died across Syria, the government and rescuers said. Turkish government officials reported another 2,316 fatalities, putting the combined total at 3,609. More than 12,000 people were injured in Turkey, the disaster management agency said, while Syria said at least 3,411 people were injured. Turkey has declared seven days of mourning for the dead. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2023 page 1*)

Quake toll tops 7,300 as rescuers battle bitter cold

Rescuers in Turkey and Syria battled bitter cold in a race against time to find survivors under buildings flattened by an earthquake that killed more than 7,300 people. The destruction led to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declaring a three-month state of emergency in 10 southeastern provinces. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2023 page 1*)

Erdogan admits "shortcomings" as toll tops 12,000

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan conceded "shortcomings" after criticism of his government's response to the massive earthquake that has killed over 12,000 people in Turkey and Syria. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2023 Page 11*)

Cold, hunger, despair grip homeless as Turkey-Syria quake toll passes 20,000

Cold, hunger and despair gripped hundreds of thousands of people left homeless by earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, while hopes faded of many more people being found alive amid the ruins of cities. The 7.8-magnitude quake has killed nearly 20,000 people in Turkey and war-ravaged Syria, according to officials and medics in the two countries, flattening entire neighbourhoods. That surpasses the more than 17,000 people killed in 1999 when a similarly powerful quake hit Turkey's more densely populated northwest. Authorities say some 6,500 buildings in Turkey collapsed and countless more were damaged in the quake zone where some 13 million people live. The confirmed death toll in Turkey rose to 16,170. Turkish officials say some 13.5 million people were affected in an area spanning roughly 450 km from Adana in the west to Diyarbakir in the east. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2023 Page 11*)

Turkey, Syria quake could cost \$4bn

The earthquake that has devastated Turkey and Syria could cause economic losses exceeding \$4 billion, ratings agency Fitch said. "Economic losses are hard to estimate as the situation is evolving, but they appear likely to exceed" \$2 billion and could reach \$4 billion "or more", Fitch Ratings said. (*Business Recorder, February 10th, 2023 Page 14*)

Rescuers race against time as toll tops 23,000

Rescuers are racing against time to recover people from under the rubble as the death toll from the Turkiye-Syria earthquake crossed 23,000. According to the Turkish disaster management authority, the death toll in the country has risen to 20,213. More than 3,500 people have been killed by the quake in Syria, according to tallies by state media and a rescue service in the insurgent-held northwest of the conflict-divided country. According to the UN, 5.3 million people in Syria have been left homeless while another one million people are in urgent need of food. The UN's World Food Programme appealed for \$77 million to provide food rations and hot meals for 874,000 people affected by the deadly earthquake in Syria and Turkiye. The number in need of aid "includes 284,000 newly displaced people in Syria and 590,000 people in Turkiye," it said in a statement. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2023 Page 12*)

Nearly 26 million people affected by Turkiye-Syria quake, says WHO

Almost 26 million people have been affected by the deadly earthquake that ravaged Turkiye and Syria this week, the WHO said, warning that dozens of hospitals had been damaged. As the death toll from the quake rose above 25,000, the UN health agency launched a flash appeal asking for \$42.8 million to help it address the immediate, towering health needs. The World Health Organisation, which has already released \$16 million from its emergency fund, had previously said up to 23 million people could be impacted. But, that rose to nearly 26 million, with 15 million affected in Turkiye and nearly 11 million in war-torn Syria. Among them, more than five million people were considered to be particularly vulnerable, including close to 350,000 elderly people and over 1.4 million children. Meanwhile, Turkish authorities have arrested 48 people for looting or trying to defraud victims after a powerful earthquake hit Turkey, state media reported. (*The News, February 12th, 2023 Page 11*)

Death toll in Turkiye, Syria quake tops 33,000 as Turkiye starts legal action

The quake ranks as the world's sixth deadliest natural disaster this century, its death toll exceeding the 31,000 from a quake in neighbouring Iran in 2003. It has killed 29,605 people in Turkiye and more than 3,500 in Syria, where tolls have not been updated for two days. Turkiye said about 80,000 people were in hospital, and more than 1 million in temporary shelters. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2023 Page 12*)

Turkiye-Syria quake toll rises above 35,000

The toll from last week's earthquake in Turkiye and Syria rose above 35,000, as rescue teams started to wind down the search for survivors and the aid effort shifted to hundreds of thousands of people made homeless. The confirmed death toll rose to 35,224 as officials and medics said 31,643 people had died in Turkiye and at least 3,581 in Syria after the February 6 earthquake, the fifth deadliest since the start of the 21st century. (*Business Recorder, February 14th, 2023 Page 1*)

3 killed as fresh quake hits Syria, Turkiye border

Three people were killed after another earthquake struck the border region of Turkiye and Syria, just two weeks after the area was devastated by a larger quake which killed more than 47,000 people and damaged or destroyed hundreds of thousands of homes. Quake, this time with a magnitude of 6.4, was centred near the southern Turkish city of Antakya and was felt in Syria, Egypt and Lebanon. It struck at a depth of just two km. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2023 Page 11*)

Turkiye widens probe into building collapses as quake toll exceeds 50,000

Overall number of deaths in Turkiye and neighbouring Syria to more than 50,000. More than 160,000 buildings containing 520,000 apartments collapsed or were severely damaged by the disaster, the worst in the country's modern history. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2023 Page 11*)

29 buildings collapse as fresh quake jolts Turkiye

An earthquake, with a magnitude of 5.6 and depth of 6.15 km, shook southeast Turkiye, killing one person, injuring 110 and causing 29 buildings to collapse, Turkish authorities said, triggering frantic work to rescue several people believed trapped in rubble. There have been four fresh earthquakes in the region in the past three weeks, as well as 45 aftershocks with magnitudes between five and six. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2023 Page 11*)

WB estimates earthquakes caused \$34.2bn in damage in Turkey

The two major earthquakes which hit Turkey on Feb. 6 caused about \$34.2 billion in direct physical damage, but total reconstruction and recovery costs facing the country could be twice as high, the World Bank said. The bank estimates that the earthquakes would also shave at least half a percentage point off Turkey's forecast gross domestic product growth of 3.5% to 4% in 2023. (*Business Recorder, February 28th, 2023 Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

1.2m take to streets in France against pension reform

Protests against French President Emmanuel Macron's plan to reform the pension system gathered momentum with more than 1.27 million people in the street. The number of demonstrators increased slightly compared to a first round of protests on Jan 19, putting pressure on the government which is struggling to convince voters of the need for the changes. Two more days of strikes and protests were announced for Feb 7 and 11. Macron's plan to raise the age of retirement from 62 to 64 is a flagship policy

of his second term in office. He defended it as `essential` given forecasts for deficits in the coming years. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2023 Page 10*)

500,000 on strike in UK's largest walkout in 12 years

Half a million workers went on strike in Britain, calling for higher wages in the largest such walkout in over a decade, closing schools and severely disrupting transport. As Europe battles a cost-of-living crisis, Britain's umbrella labour organisation the Trades Union Congress (TUC) called it the `biggest day of strike action since 2011`. The latest strikes come a day after more than 1.27 million took to the streets in France, increasing pressure on the French government over pension reform plans.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has called for pay rises to be `reasonable` and `affordable` warning that big pay rises would jeopardise attempts to tame inflation. But unions have accused millionaire Sunak of being out of touch with the challenges faced by ordinary working people struggling to make ends meet in the face of low paid, insecure work and spiralling costs. Teachers and train drivers were among the latest groups to act, as well as border force workers at UK air and seaports. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2023 Page 10*)

UK's teachers and civil servants join mass strike on 'Walkout Wednesday'

Up to half a million British teachers, civil servants, and train drivers walked out over pay in the largest coordinated strike action for a decade, with unions threatening more disruption as the government digs its heels in over pay demands. The mass walkouts across the country shut schools, halted most rail services, and forced the military to be put on standby to help with border checks on a day dubbed "Walk Out Wednesday" by unions. According to unions, as many as 300,000 teachers are expected to be on strike, the biggest group involved, as part of wider action by 500,000 people, the highest number since 2011, when civil servants walked out en masse. (*Business Recorder, February 2nd, 2023 Page 3*)

Record Shell profit on soaring energy prices sparks outrage

British energy giant Shell unveiled record annual net profit of \$42.3 billion thanks to surging oil and gas prices, sparking outrage from green groups and unions as the UK endures a cost-of-living crisis. The post-tax figure, fuelled by the invasion of Ukraine by major energy producer Russia, was more than double the amount achieved in 2021, Shell's earnings statement revealed. Revenue rocketed 45 percent to a dizzying \$381 billion in 2022, mirroring huge gains by rivals. Environmental campaigner Greenpeace protested outside Shell's London headquarters, arguing that the group is "profiteering from climate destruction". (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2023 Page 12*)

France reels from another wave of pension strikes

Fresh strikes hit trains, schools and refineries in France over an unpopular pension reform pushed by President Emmanuel Macron, as opponents took to the streets for a day of protests. The third day of union-backed demonstrations since January 19 was set to test momentum for the protest movement that has vowed to block Macron's bid to raise the retirement age. Last week's demonstrations brought out 1.3 million people across the country while a first round on January 19 drew 1.1m protesters. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2023 page 12*)

UK ambulance, university staff walk out again over low pay

Ambulance workers in the UK staged the latest in a string of strikes over low pay, as university staff also stopped work. The walkout follows on Monday's biggest round of health service strikes yet when nurses and ambulance staff walked out for the first time on the same day. The strikes are part of a wave of industrial action that has seen workers in a range of sectors from lawyers to dock workers take industrial action over the past year. Health staff say wages that have not kept pace with inflation over the past decade, combined with the current cost of living crisis, have left them struggling to pay their bills. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2023 Page 10*)

Hundreds of flights axed in Germany after strike

Tens of thousands of travellers faced flight delays and cancellations as workers at eight airports in Germany went on strike for better pay. The full-day walkout, called by the Verdi trade union, prompted Germany's biggest carrier Lufthansa to cancel more than 1,300 flights alone at its busiest hubs, Frankfurt and Munich. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2023 Page 10*)

Moroccans defy ban to protest surging cost of living

Moroccan trade union activists protested in the capital Rabat and other cities to denounce surging costs of food and fuel, defying a government ban against marches. Morocco banned marches due to a "health state of emergency" put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic and still in force, according to a letter from the interior ministry to CDT. In Rabat, several dozen demonstrators surrounded by police officers chanted slogans against "the deterioration of purchasing power". Morocco has seen months of rising prices and growing calls for caps on energy firms' profits. Soaring costs of food in recent days have provoked stiff criticism from trade unions, the opposition and the media. Inflation peaked at 8.3 percent at the end of 2022, fuelled by the effects of the war in Ukraine and shifts in global supply chains, according to the World Bank. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2023 Page 10*)

Inflation-hit doctors announce strike to press UK authorities for pay hike

Tens of thousands of junior doctors in England will take strike action for three days from March 13 in a dispute over pay, the British Medical Association (BMA) said, adding to a series of walkouts by other staff in a strained health system. Junior doctors, who agreed in 2019 to an annual 2 per cent pay rise as part of a four-year deal, say that is now inadequate in light of much higher inflation.

While nurses have paused strikes scheduled for March as their union holds talks with the government, ambulance and other health workers are planning further strike action. Meanwhile, members of one of the rail unions involved in a series of strikes in Britain sparked by the cost-of-living crisis have voted to accept pay offers from train companies. Other unions, however, have announced fresh action in the coming weeks. The Transport Salaried Staffs' Association (TSSA) said its 3,000 members had voted overwhelmingly in favour of deals that include a two-year pay rise worth nine per cent.

The stoppages were part of a wave of industrial action that has included nurses, ambulance staff, teachers and civil servants. They have all clashed with the government, which insists the country cannot afford inflation-busting pay hikes. The TSSA is just one of the rail unions whose members have taken industrial action in recent weeks. ASLEF and the Rail, Maritime and Transport union (RMT) have also staged strikes. However, the RMT is expected to push ahead with its plans to hold four days of walkouts over the next two months, starting on March 16. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2023 Page 12*)

Hundreds rally in Tunis against 'racist' official stance

Hundreds of people took to the streets of the Tunisian capital to denounce President Kais Saied, accusing him of "racist" comments and hate speech against sub-Saharan migrants. Earlier this week, Saied said "hordes" of sub-Saharan migrants were causing crime and posed a demographic threat, sparking outrage in the North African country. (*The News, February 26th, 2023 Page 11*)

About Us

Roots for Equity was formed in 1997 and formally registered in 2000. The organization works with the most vulnerable, marginalized communities that include small and landless farmers, women and religious minorities in the rural and urban sector. The inequities in society are a result of the oppression and exploitative forces of feudalism, imperialist corporate hegemony often termed as globalization, and patriarchy.

We believe that a democratic base is essential for the social and economic development of the country. This is not possible without mobilization of communities themselves; no doubt only socially conscious and politically active communities can demand and achieve social justice. Roots remains committed to being an active part of communities' struggle to achieve political, social, environmental and economic justice.

Our Mission

Our mission is to strengthen communities and movements for attaining political, economic, social and environmental justice.

Our Vision

Our vision is a genuinely democratic society with its people free from inequities, marginalization and exploitation.

Our Objectives

- (i) Organizing and mobilizing grass root communities and movements for attaining basic rights;
- (ii) Action research in collaboration with impacted vulnerable communities on issues and impacts of globalization, patriarchy, and feudalism;
- (iii) Capacity building of grass root leaders and creating a grass roots knowledge base for attaining social justice;
- (iv) Engaging with people's organizations and movements to amplify the voices of the most marginalized sectors of our society, locally, nationally and internationally.

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