

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

August, 2023

Roots for Equity

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Editor

AzraTalat Sayeed

Sub-Editor

Mujtaba Zaidi

Contributors

Yasir Iqbal

Imamuddin

Roots for Equity

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Preface

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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 remains 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 of what the editorial team considers the most important news items in this period. This is followed by 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 included 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 “Daily Dawn” and the “Business Recorder.” Please note, only the Sunday newspaper is used for news coverage from “The Daily 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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100,000,000,000	100 Billion	1 Kharab	ایک کھرب

Glossary

ADP	Abu Dhabi Ports
AFD	French Development Agency
AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
ACAC	Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee
AQLI	Air Quality Life Index
ADB	Asian Development Bank
APT	Average per Tonne
BHUs	Basic Health Units
BoR	Board of Revenue
BRACE	Building Resilience with Active Country-cyclical Expenditures
CDR	Carbon Dioxide Removal
CATIC	China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation
CCRI	Children's Climate Risk Index
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CDEP	Country-cyclical Development Expenditure Programme
EAD	Economic Affairs Division
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
EU	European Union
SIFC	Executive Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council
EFF	Extended Fund Facility
FRR	Fixed Rental Rate
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization (of the United Nations)
FEC	Foreign Exchange Component
FWO	Frontier Works Organisation
FY	Fiscal Year
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HWA	Hari Welfare Association
HCCI	Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry
IRSA	Indus River System Authority
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IsDB	Islamic Development Bank
KCCI	Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry
KWSC	Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LCs	Letters of Credit
LFSA	Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Activity

MAF	Million Acre Feet
MTBs	Market Treasury Bills
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MOC	Ministry of Commerce
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning
P&D	Planning & Development
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PIA	Pakistan International Airlines
PIBs	Pakistan Investment Bonds
PMD	Pakistan Meteorological Department
PRL	Pakistan Refinery Limited
P&DD	Planning and Development Department
PDMA	Provincial Disaster Management Authority
PARB	Punjab Agricultural Research Board
PHFMC	Punjab Health Facilities Management Company
RBOD	Right Bank Outfall Drainage
RHCs	Rural Health Centres
SAB	Sindh Abadgar Board
SBBU	Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University
SPI	Sensitive Price Index
SAU	Sindh Agriculture University
SCA	Sindh Chamber of Agriculture
SCAN	Sindh Climate Action Network
SHEC	Sindh Higher Education Commission
SIDHRC	Sindh Infectious Disease Hospital and Research Centre
SAAF	SME Asaan Finance
SBA	Stand-By Arrangement
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SLIC	State Life Insurance Corporation
Ecneec	Executive Committee of the National Economic Council
IMF	International Monetary Fund
TDAP	Trade Development Authority of Pakistan
TIR	Transports Internationaux Routiers
IPCC	UN's International Panel on Climate Change
UAE	United Arab Emirates
COP28	United Nations Climate Change Conference-2023
WFP	United Nations World Food Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization
WRI	World Resource Institute

IMF Conditionalities – the suffering of the people!

The impacts of the IMF conditionalities set in its Standby Agreement that was signed last month have become glaringly visible in this month, and strikes, street protests and rallies have been held across the country. In Kamoke, and many others areas in Punjab, people burnt their electricity bills raising slogans against the extreme hike in utility bills refusing to pay what they cannot afford. The situation was so volatile that in Islamabad, the Islamabad Electricity Supply Company, Iesco asked for police protection from consumers protesting inflated electricity bills.

Businesses represented by Karachi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KCCI) and Businessmen Group have also strongly protested against the ‘unbearable’ escalation in electricity tariffs. These bills were deemed unaffordable by neither the common person, nor traders or small industrialists. However, the caretaker government which took over the running of the government on August 17, 2023, is unable to provide any relief to the people or industry given the conditionalities agreed upon with the IMF. According to the caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar Pakistan’s fiscal space did not allow any subsidy or relief. The message given was that electricity consumers need to ‘manage their expectations’ that had been raised by the caretaker Prime Minister Kakar. It was clear that the country’s governors had little space (and maybe even interest) to protect the interest of the people and the dictate of the neo-colonial rulers had to be towed.

There has also a sharp rise in water utility bills, and the Punjab government has notified more than 400 percent increase in water utility bills for five major cities of the province. Similarly, the prices of petrol and diesel have hit a record high; fuel prices have jumped by nearly PKR 40/litre in just 15 days. Business leaders have stated that rise in fuel prices will result in closure of 50 per cent of industrial units, and trigger mass unemployment. Trade and industry are already struggling to survive the power tariff hikes of almost PKR10/unit, and cannot bear the increase of PKR17.50 and PKR 20/litre in prices of petrol and diesel, respectively.

In Karachi, traders have launched the “livelihood protection movement” against the soaring petrol and electricity prices. At a traders’ convention representatives of over a dozen of trade bodies agreed to step up the movement to save their businesses.

Similar impact is being felt in agriculture and food production where high fuel prices have increased all associated costs in production including transport. Expensive chemical agriculture inputs are heavily impacted due to currency depreciation as well as fuel prices. According to the Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB), prices of agricultural

inputs continued to rise; fertiliser price had increased by 15pc to 20pc over the last few months. The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) demanded at least PKR450 per maund for sugarcane crop given the sharp increase in agriculture input costs. They have rejected PKR 425/40 kilograms of sugarcane that is being proposed by sugar mills. It was also pointed out that though the government has not raised gas price for the fertilizer industry, farmers are still being forced to pay a high price for fertilizer.

Some good news was a good cotton crop as the pest attacks remained insignificant, and it is expected that a high cotton production will save billions of US dollars in cotton imports. An agriculture think tank, Agriculture Republic has pointed out that the textile industrial have lagged behind in ensuring that farmers get a good price, such as PKR 8,500 per 40 kilograms of cotton.

Another welcome news was availability of sufficient water in water canals after recent rains across the country, which included water being released downstream in the Kotri Barrage as well. The country's two major reservoirs Tarbela and Mangla are now almost full to capacity, turning into surplus the acute water shortage that marked beginning of the current Kharif season in April; it is expected that there is now sufficient water for this year as well as next year cropping season.

However, the feudal elite continue to amass irrigation water access for their own benefit. According to *DAWN*, farmers in the tail-end areas of Thatta district have unearthed numerous illegal cuts, outlets, barricades and pumping machines meant to block flow of Nari Chach (upper) irrigation channel to their areas. Farmers requesting anonymity as no doubt they feared the wrath of feudal power, claimed that the local irrigation officials and other employees were hand in glove with the influential landowners.

Inflation, measured by CPI, surged by 28.3 per cent in the first month of the current fiscal year mainly due to rising food and energy prices. Similarly, food inflation for July was 40.2pc and 41.3pc for urban and rural areas, respectively, whereas non-food inflation was 17.3pc in urban and 22pc in rural areas. Core inflation, which strips out food and energy, stood at 18.4pc in urban and 24.6pc in rural areas.

The rising hunger and poverty can be seen through reports on suicides that are being reported. In Mandi Bahauddin, a woman poisoned her three sons due to poverty, resulting in the death of two of them at the hospital, while the eldest one survived. A 28-year-old man hanged himself from a tree with a rope over poverty at in district Layyah. The man was the father of three girls and he was reportedly facing financial troubles. Police responded to a desperate call for help from a man at emergency 15 who told about hunger his family was going through for the last two days, warning of committing suicide. These tragic happenings are testimony to what the people are suffering.

While unable to provide relief to the people, the state is quite willing to take away livelihood and resources from the people. The Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Zaman has once again directed deputy commissioners to launch an operation against the illegal occupation of state land and encroachments. The Punjab government, through its various operations has claimed to have identified hundreds of thousands of acres of illegally occupied land. So, while, hundreds of thousands of agriculture land is the property of very power feudal elite as well as the defense forces, the landless farmers are being pushed off land. That 'might is right' is very evident in the policy arena in Pakistan. That indeed just and equitable land reforms are not considered a policy option is quite clear.

Voices have been raised by a number of organizations against the state's disregard for small and landless peasants including sharecroppers and agricultural workers in various agriculture, livestock and fisheries sector. Though various laws such as the Sindh Tenancy Act of 1955, Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 2015, Sindh Agriculture Worker Women Act of 2019 and Sindh Industrial Relation Act of 2013 are present, they are not being implemented. A large majority of peasants, particularly sharecroppers and rural workers, especially women cotton pickers faced abject poverty, crippling debt bondage and persistent malnutrition, while landlords were pushing extra costs on the peasants that further result in hunger and poverty.

Loans and debts abound!

The above dismal situation is partly based on the debt-ridden situation of Pakistan. As of 31st March 2023, Pakistan's total external public debt stood at \$85.18 billion, with a reduction of \$1.38 billion in total external public debt, as of December 2022.

The IMF stimulus package has resulted in inflows of foreign finance amounting to \$5.1 billion in July. According to the finance ministry's Economic Affairs Division, total foreign economic assistance received in July was \$2.89 billion compared to \$185.6 million of the same month last year, an increase of 1,454 per cent. This was in addition to \$1.2 billion released by the International Monetary Fund on July 13 as the first tranche of the \$3 billion Standby Arrangement (SBA) and \$1bn by the United Arab Emirates. The bulk - \$2bn — of foreign loans were from Saudi Arabia and a \$508 million guaranteed loan to Pakistan Air Force by China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation. The division said that out of the \$2.89 billion inflows, the bulk of \$2.08 billion were received for budgetary support or programme loans and about \$640 million as project aid.

Further, according to the Economic Affairs Division the government of Pakistan signed new loan agreements worth \$7.228 billion with development partners during the first three-quarters (July-March) of the fiscal year 2022-23, compared to \$11.321 billion during the same period of 2021-22.

Out of the total external public debt of \$85.18 billion, the government owed \$64 billion to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF. Meaning, more than two-thirds (i.e. 75 percent) of the total external public debt is on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16 percent (i.e. \$13.5 billion) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and seven percent (i.e. \$7 billion) of the total external public debt constitutes deposits from friendly countries (China and Saudi Arabia).

The government paid an amount of \$12.922 billion during the period July-March 2023 on account of debt servicing of external public loans. This consists of principal repayment of \$10.835 billion and interest payments of \$2.087 billion.

The above figures show the vast burden of debt that the country is under, and the impact of this colossal debt is borne by the people, that can be well seen under the conditionalities imposed by the IMF.

Wither Accountability?

According to the Asian Development Bank, soaring food and fuel prices and the coronavirus pandemic have pushed nearly 70 million more people in Asia into extreme poverty last year. This sentiment is also expressed by the Governor Jameel Ahmad, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). According to him, the global economic conditions have largely contributed to higher inflation in Pakistan, and matters have exacerbated due to the floods in Pakistan. However, only floods have not resulted in the accumulation of such a massive debt and the blame has to be shared with one after the other incompetent governments run by elite classes of our country who have borrowed without showing any productive gain. One also needs to ask the lending institutions how they carry out their monitoring and evaluation? Accountability of the funds given and received seem to be totally lacking; while the elite, including bureaucracy continues to live with plenty, the poor are coerced to pay a debt they had no hand in incurring. Such are the results of so-called capitalist democracy, a system that is much sprouted for safeguarding human rights, women rights, the rights of the working class, peasants and minorities, among others.

The utter disregard for accountability is seen in the actions of an outgoing government. Just a day before its term reaching completion Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet approved a huge number of programs and policies. A six-month extension of the Kissan Package worth PKR 158 billion was carried out. Also, a 'single-entity' export processing status to Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) in Waziristan for mineral exports and revival of modified SME Asaan Finance (SAAF) Scheme were granted as well as a 'gradual sovereign guarantee' for about \$3.475 billion worth of Chinese loans for a 1,200MW nuclear power plant were given. The ECC also approved the continuation of gas supply to two Punjab based fertiliser

plants of Fatima Group till Oct 15 and issuance of a ‘State Support Agreement’ to provide financing comfort to prospective foreign operator of Islamabad International Airport set to be outsourced shortly. Eight development projects worth PKR 174 billion were also approved that included a World Bank financed Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement Project of the Punjab Board of Revenue (BoR) worth PKR 26.44 billion. The Cabinet Committee on Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions approved the outsourcing of the Bulk and General Terminal at Karachi Port, East Wharf, to Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP) for 15 years.

The rapid agreement on development projects, including selling off national assets and privatization schemes have once again happened without any consultation with the people, the working class. The All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) is questioning the federal government for not disclosing plans for privatisation; the facade of public-private partnership is being used for outsourcing feeders. The union officials have stated that they will stand up and fight the government’s policy of privatisation of power utilities.

The so-called democratic right to protest is not looked upon favorably by the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) management and has lodged an FIR against its employees who were demanding askance at the proposed privatisation of the national flag carrier. It is indeed interesting that the common citizen is met with extreme resistance from the Police if she wants to lodge an FIR; however, it seems the PIA management has had to face no such difficulties. Such is the sorry tale of power and privilege in the country where the working class is criminalized for demanding rights, where the rich and the powerful run Scot free even in face of dire misdeeds.

The Persistent Mantra ...trade liberalization in agriculture

In spite of the massive failing of neoliberalism in bringing prosperity to the country, our rulers continue to propagate the firm belief that they hold in the neoliberal capitalism and corporate control. According to Ms. Tanzila Umi Habiba, the Special Assistant to the Chief Minister, modernizing agriculture could help in overcoming food and economic crisis. Modernizing means linking agriculture with the information technology sector. Academia also believes that our youth bulge could avail career opportunities by participating in joint ventures in the IT and agriculture sectors; they could use their innovating ideas in areas such agri-business, smart agriculture, GIS, remote sensing, and agricultural monitoring.

The Punjab Agricultural Research Board (PARB) has approved research projects worth PKR 900 million that include development of superior canola quality lines in rapeseed and mustard; in the presence of the interim Agriculture Minister SM Tanveer, a board meeting approved 40 research plans — 31 relating to agriculture and nine pertaining to livestock. Rich landlords euphemistically called ‘progressive

farmers' have called for research on the horticulture sector so that Pakistan could also engage in exports in this sector.

National and international experts are advocating for establishment of joint forums that include national agricultural institutions, policymakers, and breeders for the improvement of the country's livelihood and the food security. In context to seed, legislation and genetic inspection is being proposed to prevent defective seeds in the country and to certify imported seeds. Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) have agreed to work together for strengthening research and development, on agriculture in Sindh and Balochistan to promote sustainable agriculture and improve living standards of the farming communities.

Similar emphasis is by various international development organizations. A high-profile event organized by FAO for a USAID-funded project "Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Activity" (LFSA), was attended by the Secretary Agriculture, KP, Director Generals and high-level government officials from agriculture research, extension, livestock and dairy development along with representatives from USAID, UN WOMEN and farmers' representatives from Khyber and Mohmand districts. The project – a FAO collaboration with KP government, civil society organizations, the private sector will support 150,000 rural households including women farmers, over a period of four years. The aim is to improve livelihoods and food security of 150,000 households through agriculture-led growth in KP and flood-affected areas of Pakistan, adopting technological advancements for enhanced productivity and better livelihoods. The narrative is that the project will strengthen and modernize agriculture and livestock sectors, creating assets, and diversifying livelihood options.

Such ventures abound Pakistan's development history, but to no avail. One is left to wonder how these projects are designed and evaluated that there is failure after failure in creating better standards of living among rural communities. All new projects have the same ambitions with no reflection on what they have failed to deliver in more than 70 years of pursuing development projects based on capitalist enterprise.

Institutions like the FAO, US AID among others who espouse neoliberalism, and industrialized chemical agriculture forget that such agriculture production systems are dependent on water which is now a highly scarce resource. According to the World Resource Institute, increased water demand is based on number of factors including industries, irrigated agriculture, livestock and energy production.

Pakistan has been classified under the 'high' water stress category. This categorisation is part of a broader revelation that by 2050, an estimated \$70 trillion in GDP, equivalent to 31 per cent of the global GDP, will be vulnerable to high water stress. The world is facing an unprecedented water crisis, and the Water Risk Atlas finds that 25 countries, i.e. one-fourth of the world's population face high water stress, annually.

Given these circumstances, to invest in ventures that will require more and more modern industrial technology puts the entire planet at risk.

The new emphasis on livestock and dairy sector is blood-chilling as the context of Pure Food Laws in Pakistan is to wrest control over livestock and dairy from the hands of small and landless farmers, especially women farmers in compliance with the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Mechanisms of the World Trade Organization.

Trade – murky waters!

Trade liberalization has not been able to yield gainful results as yet as can be seen by the poor performance of Pakistan's exports in the last fiscal year.

Reports on exports on the last fiscal year were made available this month in August, and the overall picture is quite dismal. In FY23, the merchandise exports dipped by 12.71 percent to \$27.54 billion from \$31.78 billion in FY22, missing the \$32 billion target by a wide margin of \$4.46 billion. The government has projected an export target of \$30 billion for the current fiscal year. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, declining exports are aggravating fear about closure of industrial units, especially for clothing and textiles. However, apart from exports, imports also fell by 31 percent to \$55.29 billion in FY23 from \$80.13 billion in FY22. According to APTMA, textile exports in the period of January to July, 2023 stood at \$9.09 billion, down by 21 percent as compared to export earnings \$11.48 billion in the same period in 2022.

Similarly, rice export fell by 14 percent during the FY23 due to lower crop output from flooding. However, a positive outlook on rice exports in FY24 as a bumper crop is expected as well as a ban on rice exports by India.

Though Pakistan's vegetable exports reached its highest peak yet at 1.336 million tonnes in FY23 from 939,714 tonnes in FY22, which was a 42 percent increase in export volume. However, it still failed to fetch higher foreign exchange earnings which went down by 3 per cent to \$300 million in FY23 from \$310m in FY22 mainly due to a drop in average per tonne price (APT) from \$329 to \$224.6.

It is indeed remarkable that as consumers at home faced high sugar prices, sugar exports rose to a 100 percent in the first month of the current fiscal year. According to news, the previous PDM government had allowed sugar exports in February at the behest of influential political families. It is also questionable that under heavy pressure on foreign exchange reserves, 574 tonnes of sugar has been imported in July, showing an increase of over 20pc on a year-on-year basis. Under these conditions, it may be worth examining how our neighboring country India has dealt with in trying to improve domestic availability. According to news reports, India intends banning sugar mills from exporting sugar from October 2023. It has also with immediate effect,

imposed a 40% export duty on onion to help improve local supply to the Indian consumer.

However, on this side of the border, it is evident that there are efforts to increase agriculture exports. Pakistan held its 1st International Food and Agriculture Exhibition-FoodAg-2023, where more than \$410 million of export deals were finalised in agro-related products along with the signing of 10 memorandum of understandings (MoUs).

Of Trade Partnerships . . .

A Chinese food firm, Litong Foods is aiming a joint venture worth \$30 million with Pakistani Guard Agricultural Research and Services (Pvt.) Limited to export 5000 tons of dried chillies to China. Litong Foods and guard have already undertaken a project of sowing hybrid chilies in Multan, Punjab. Guard, in the past has also introduced Chinese long grain hybrid rice in Pakistan.

Pakistan and Iran have developed a five-year trade cooperation plan aimed at enhancing trade volume to \$5 billion and to finalize a free trade agreement among the two countries, as well as the completion of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline. They also came to an agreement to set fishermen from the two countries free and waive off any fine imposed by authorities of both countries for the release of their vessels.

The remarks of the Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam on CPEC, Gwadar and Chahbahar Ports portray a greater relationship between the two countries as well as the trilateral relationship with China. According to him the two ports Gwardar and Chahbahar are interlinked in terms of commerce and development, and “there is no element of conflict.”

The inaugural shipment from China to Afghanistan via the Khunjerab border in Gilgit-Baltistan, under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) Convention has been undertaken; expectations are that transit route would significantly reduce travel time, almost by 70 per cent and cut logistics costs by 30pc. There are hopes that the shortened passage through TIR coupled with Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement — between China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan — including the Belt and Road Initiative will help Pakistan to become a major hub of transit trade.

Climate Imperialism!

After the devastating monster monsoons of last year, the country is once again facing impacts of the monsoon season this year. All major rivers of Punjab have swollen due to heavy rains in different parts of the province as well as other parts of the country.

The Sutlej and Chenab burst its banks, water inundating villages as well as agricultural land spreading over hundreds of acres. Areas in Bahawalpur, Okara,

Vehari and Khanewal among others have been heavily impacted. Mudhouses collapsed leaving people once again without shelter. Flash floods in Balochistan left eleven people dead, as well as destruction of houses.

By the end of the month nearly 400,000 persons and 20,000 livestock had been shifted to safer locations. The ongoing floods triggered by monsoon resulted in the deaths of 213 people, injuring 313, destroying 5,754 houses and killing 1,256 livestock during the current rainy season that started on June 25, 2023. This catastrophe is in face of impacts still being felt from last year floods. According to UNICEF, there were still eight million people, around half of whom are children, who continue to live without access to safe water in flood-affected areas, whereas over 1.5 million children require life-saving nutrition interventions in the flood-affected districts.

On one hand the people are suffering from fossil fuel emissions of rich industrial countries, and on the other hand industrial practices have resulted in various forms of pollution. Government of Gilgit-Baltistan has made a much-needed decision to impose a complete ban on single-use plastic throughout the region; such a step needs to be taken across the country, as plastic pollution intensely harms all life forms including marine life, destroys agricultural production harming human health and the environment. Similar actions by the people internationally can also be seen. For instance, in Ecuador, the people have voted to stop an oil drilling project in an Amazon reserve.

According to an Air Quality Life Index report published by University of Chicago, air pollution in urban centers of Pakistan, such as in Lahore, Kasur, and Sheikapura could reduce at least four years of life expectancy. The report identifies that the entire 240 million population of Pakistan resides in regions where the yearly average of particulate pollution surpasses the guidelines set by the World Health Organization.

The disregard for the environment can be seen at the national and international level; Japan has now started releasing treated radioactive water in the Pacific Ocean from its damaged Fukushima power plant. In response China has announced a blanket ban on all aquatic products from Japan. However, this will not save marine ecosystem from harm.

It is interesting to see that for countries like the United States, who are basically largely accountable for fossil fuel emissions, their efforts are spent in trying not to bring about changes in their highly destructive production and consumption system but to find ways to clean up the emissions after they have been emitted. The US government has announced that it will spend up to \$1.2 billion for two pioneering facilities to vacuum carbon out of the air. Similarly, a new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has been created by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to facilitate financing for developing countries to enhance their ability to protect, restore

and ensure sustainable use of natural resources. It is again ironical that the countries that are responsible for destroying biodiversity in their own backyard as well as in our countries also create these grand funding schemes to save what they are willfully destroying. It is important to note that world temperature is constantly increasing. According to European Union climate observatory data, in the first week of August, the temperature of the oceans' surface rose to 20.96 degree Celsius, rising from 20.95C in March 2016. This was a new temperature record, and could have further implications for the Earth climate, marine life and coastal communities.

The Right to Fight: Fight for our Rights!

The constant misery faced by the people on various fronts has resulted in an overall environment of confrontation in the country, with people standing up resisting the many forms of violations that they are facing at the hand of the governing elite. Flawed governance policies of Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC) under the administrative control of Primary and Secondary Health Care Department (P&SHC) has led to closure of nearly 1,000 primary health units, with thousands of medical and paramedical staff going on strike demanding their rights. As is the norm, instead of their demands being addressed, they were given 'warning letters'. Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) employees have also been holding demonstration at the Allama Iqbal International Airport, Lahore outsourcing of major airports of the country.

In Nagarparkar, Sindh, there have been protests against the Sindh government plans to auction off 5,000 acres in the Parkar region for granite extraction, while in Balochistan, hundreds of female students at a government college have been protesting against continued absence of teachers at the facility, that has left it basically non-functional.

Another dastardly incident was a mob attack on 19 churches in Jaranwala, Faisalabad based on information that two people had defile the Quran. Religious extremist reactions routinely end in death and destruction of minorities with state forces showing total failure to control such acts of vandalism. People across the country have stood up to call for the protection of religious minorities, including a Minority Rights March which held a candle vigil and protest in Karachi.

Given the wide scale of chaotic disruptions in socio-economic lives of the people, the way out of course is to demand for a change in our economic system. A system change is drastically needed that upholds basic principles of human rights, full fills basic needs such as food, water, health and shelter, and of course must include right to decent livelihood. Just and equitable distribution of resources will surely lead to a more humane society, cooling not only our overheated planet, but also bring relief and dignity in the lives of the human civilization, as well as living-beings.

NEWS EXCERPTS

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National News

Agricultural Production Resources

- Hari Welfare Association (HWA) president Akram Ali Khaskheli said that although Sindh had introduced several laws aimed at protecting the rights of peasants and rural workers, they remained unimplemented.
- Dr Yaseen Morojo, a lecturer at SBBU, said that rural women were marginalised and deprived of fundamental rights, and there was no health and safety measure, and awareness for cotton picker women. They were paid less than minimum wages.
- Haleema Kolhi, a peasant, said that Landlords charged unnecessary and extra costs on fertiliser, pesticides and seeds, holding them in debt bondage. She said the peasants producing wheat were facing hunger; they were producing cotton, but their children were living in poverty.
- Country's two major reservoirs Tarbela and Mangla are now almost full to capacity, turning into surplus the acute water shortage that marked beginning of the current Kharif season in April.
- For the first time in over half-a-decade history, the country's three reservoirs (Mangla, Tarbela dams and Chashma Barrage) attained their maximum capacity on a single day putting total water storage at the highest 13.443 million acre-feet (MAF).
- Eastern rivers — Ravi, Beas and Sutlej — flowed with sufficient water after a gap of more than a decade and enough water is available in the system downstream of these rivers, reducing the need for discharges from Mangla dam.
- Influential landowners had resorted to divert the flow to their own lands and deprive them and many other farmers of their due share in water.

Agricultural Inputs

- Financial institutions disbursed Rs1.776 trillion under agriculture financing during the previous fiscal year.
- The outstanding portfolio of agriculture credit also grew 10pc to Rs760 billion by the end of June compared to Rs691bn by the end of June 2022.
- Ms. Tanzila Umi Habiba, the Special Assistant to the CM said that we have to convince our farmers that there is no other way except modern technology and modern agriculture to double production now and secure food in the future.

- National and international experts have emphasized the establishment of a joint forum based on national agricultural institutions, policymakers, and breeders for the improvement of the country's livelihood and the protection of food, while it has been proposed to ensure legislation and genetic inspection to prevent defective seeds in the country and to certify imported seeds.

Agricultural Outputs

- SAU and FAO have agreed to join hands to promote shared progress and advancement in agricultural endeavors across the Sindh and Balochistan regions of Pakistan,
- Unprecedented 1.429 million bales of cotton arrived in the ginning factories by July 31 as no significant pest threat to the crop from any cotton-growing belt was reported. The total domestic output may exceed 10m bales after a break of 12 years.
- Agriculture Republic, an agricultural think tank, has called upon the Punjab government to invest in the farmers and development/import of potential seed to increase per acre yield of the cotton crop Co-founder of the Agriculture Republic Aamer Hayat Bhandara regretted that the industrial stakeholders of cotton had never ensured that the growers get support price of Rs 8500 per maund.
- Government of Sindh, has fixed the minimum price of Sugarcane @ Rs.425/- per 40-Kg for the crushing season 2023-24.
- Cotton arrival data is facing a credibility crisis as some ginning factories are allegedly underreporting their purchases, raising doubts about the size and health of the crop.
- The provincial Agriculture Department has asked district administrations to verify the buying records of ginning factories in South Punjab, where cotton arrivals are reported to be lower than expected. They estimated that at least 300,000 bales have not been reported by the ginners in Punjab.

Trade

- Merchandise exports fell for the 11th month in a row in July, plunging by 8.6 per cent year-on-year to \$2.05 billion,
- At the same time, imports also plunged by 26.44pc to \$3.66bn in July from \$4.98bn in the corresponding month last year.
- The trade deficit decelerated by 43pc to \$27.54bn in the previous fiscal year from \$48.35bn in the preceding fiscal year.

- Pakistan and Iran chalked out a five-year trade cooperation plan aimed at doubling trade volume to \$5 billion, prioritising removing trade impediments and finalising a free trade agreement.
- Emphasising the completion of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline.
- In a significant downturn, Pakistan's exports to the Middle East fell by 12.62 per cent to \$2.332bn in FY23 compared to \$2.669bn in the preceding year.
- Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam emphasized that both Gwadar and Chahbahar Ports are interlinked in terms of commerce and development, and "there is no element of conflict."
- The inaugural shipment from China to Afghanistan via the Khunjerab border in Gilgit-Baltistan, under the Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) Convention.
- This transit route would significantly reduce travel time, almost by 70 per cent and cut logistics costs by 30pc.
- The country's textile exports registered a decline of 15 percent and remained \$1.31 billion during July 2023.
- APTMA data revealed that the country's textile exports during the first seven months (Jan-July) of the calendar year 2023 stood at \$9.09 billion, down 21 percent compared to exports of \$11.48 billion reported in January-July 2022.
- The country's rice export fell sharply, ie, 14 percent during the last fiscal year (FY23) due to lower crop output because of flooding.
- Amid fluctuations in domestic rates, the country's vegetable exports hit an all-time high of 1.336 million tonnes in FY23 from 939,714 tonnes in FY22.
- Over \$410 million of export deals were finalised in agro-related products along with the signing of 10 memorandum of understanding (MoUs) at Pakistan's 1st International Food and Agriculture Exhibition-FoodAg-2023.
- First month of the current fiscal year despite soaring retail prices, showed data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.
- The PDM government had allowed sugar exports in February reportedly at the behest of influential political families. Despite the domestic market facing skyrocketing retail prices, sugar exports have continued to rise, leaving many to question the government's decision.
- Amid a looming foreign exchange crisis and a drop in local production, Pakistan made a record import of 1.344 million tonnes of pulses worth \$946 million during FY23,

International Aid / Loan

- Pakistan has received \$ 10.33 billion out of \$ 10.953 billion as loans and \$ 550.4 million in grants for flood relief from various countries, as well as, from private donors and international financial institutions.

- Pakistan’s foreign financing inflows rose by more than 27 times to \$5.1 billion in July compared to less than \$186 million a year ago.
- The government of Pakistan signed new loan agreements worth \$7.228 billion during the first three-quarters (July-March) of the FY23.
- Out of the total external public debt of \$85.18 billion, the government owed \$64 billion to multilateral and bilateral development partners , more than two-thirds (i.e. 75 percent) of the total external public debt is on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16 percent (i.e. \$13.5 billion) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and seven percent (i.e. \$7 billion) of the total external public debt constitutes deposits from friendly countries (China and Saudi Arabia).
- The government paid an amount of \$12.922bn during the period July-March 2023 on account of debt servicing of external public loans. This consists of principal repayment of \$10.835bn and interest payments of \$2.087 billion.
- The country borrowed \$2.890 billion from multiple financing sources during the first month (July) of the current fiscal year 2023-24.
- The government had budgeted \$2.4 billion from IMF for the current fiscal year 2023-24 and received \$1.2 billion as the first tranche of the \$3bn stand-by arrangement (SBA) in July 2023, if the IMF inflows is added, the total inflows would reach \$4.09bn during the first month of the current fiscal year.
- The government has budgeted \$17.619 billion from multiple financing sources for the current fiscal year including \$17.384 billion loans and \$234.60 million grants.
- For sale of Government of Pakistan Market Treasury Bills (MTBs) and received bids worth Rs 3.25 trillion for sale of 3-, 6- and 12-month Tbills.
- The FAO, under the USAID-funded project “Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Activity” (LFSA), Aims to impact and improve livelihoods and food security for the targeted 150,000 households through agriculture-led growth in KP and flood-affected areas of Pakistan. The project’s goal is to restore “cropping systems”.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

- The staff level agreement on the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF reached on 29 June 2023 provided a comfort level to multilaterals/bilaterals and resultantly inflows improved during the first month of current FY23-24.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) disbursed \$22.59 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$2.086 billion for the FY 2023-24.
- Pakistan has requested the Asian Development Bank for \$300 million loan for the Kurram Tangi Integrated Water Resources Development project.

Policy

- Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah called for urgent and resolute measures for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Sindh Water Policy to ensure a sustainable and water-secure future.
- Agriculture experts called for effective strategies and policies to address the vulnerabilities of the agriculture sector owing to natural disasters, including early-warning systems, contingency plans and risk financing mechanisms.
- A day before its term completion, the government extended over Rs158 billion Kissan Package for another six months, continuation of gas supply to two Punjab based fertiliser plants of Fatima Group till Oct 15 and issuance of a ‘State Support Agreement’ to provide financing comfort to prospective foreign operator of Islamabad International Airport set to be outsourced shortly.
- The outgoing government approved another eight development projects involving an estimated cost of about Rs174 billion.
- The Cabinet Committee approved the outsourcing of the Bulk and General Terminal at Karachi Port, East Wharf, to Abu Dhabi Ports for 15 years.
- The Punjab Agricultural Research Board (PARB) has approved research projects amounting to Rs900 million. These projects encompass the development of superior canola quality lines in rapeseed and mustard, a board meeting approved 40 research plans — 31 relating to agriculture and nine pertaining to the sub-sector of livestock.

Environment

- Two weeks have passed since the devastating flood in Chitral River swept away two centuries-old Chinar (maple) trees flanking the royal fort but the locals still widely bewail the loss of the old trees, which they call part and parcel of their heritage.
- Province (Sindh) has reported 247,799 malaria cases from January till August.
- The total number of dengue cases reported from January to Aug 29 reached 1,042 across the province (Punjab).
- In order to prevent hazardous impacts on human health and environment, the Gilgit-Baltistan government has decided to impose a complete ban on single-use plastic throughout the region.
- A rise in air pollution in Pakistan, particularly in highly polluted urban centres, could lead to a potential reduction of up to 4 years in life expectancy,
- The entire 240m population of Pakistan resides in regions where the yearly average of particulate pollution surpasses the guidelines set by the WHO.

Socio-Economical Condition

- Federal government has planned to borrow Rs 11.09 trillion from the domestic banking system during the next three months (August-October) of FY24.
- Pakistan's total debt and liabilities surged by 29 per cent, or Rs17.332 trillion in FY23 to reach Rs77.104tr during FY23, compared to Rs59.772tr in FY22.
- The gross external debt of the country declined by \$6 billion during the same fiscal year, reaching \$124.3bn compared to \$130.3bn in FY22.
- Percentage of GDP, total debt and liabilities reached 91.1 per cent, up from 89.7pc in FY22. Excluding liabilities, the total debt of the country in FY23 stood at \$72.991tr, compared to Rs56.837tr in FY22.
- The data indicates that domestic debt rose to Rs38.8tr in FY23, up from Rs31.085tr in the previous fiscal year.
- The former government left behind a massive fiscal deficit — the difference between income and expenditure — of 7.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) while concluding the fiscal year 2022-23 on June 30, significantly higher than its claim of 7pc, that total revenue increased by about 20pc to Rs9.634tr in FY23 when compared to Rs8.035tr a year earlier, while total tax revenue improved by 16pc to Rs7.82tr.
- The health department in collaboration with World Health Organisation established Nutrition Stabilisation Centre to provide specialised treatment to children suffering from malnourishment.
- A woman poisoned her three sons due to poverty, resulting in the death of two of them at the hospital, while the eldest one survived in Malakwal police precincts, Mandi Bahauddin.
- The govt collected Rs75bn in July 2023 on account of petroleum levy (PL).
- Police responded to a desperate call for help from a man at emergency 15 who told about hunger his family was going through for the last two days, warning of committing suicide.
- Inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), surged by 28.3 per cent in the first month of the current fiscal year mainly due to rising food and energy prices.
- Food inflation for July was 40.2pc and 41.3pc for urban and rural areas, respectively, whereas non-food inflation was 17.3pc in urban and 22pc in rural areas.
- Core inflation, which strips out food and energy, stood at 18.4pc in urban and 24.6pc in rural areas.
- The Punjab caretaker govt has notified a more than 400percent increase in the water utility bills for five major cities of the province, including Rawalpindi.

Climate Change

- Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority’s chairman has said that climate change has become a serious challenge for Pakistan as it is having negative impact on all areas of environment besides water.

Climate Disasters

- At least 11 people were killed and over 400 houses collapsed in different districts of Balochistan due to downpour and flash floods.
- The Sutlej has burst its banks at Minchinabad following which water has entered into 44 villages and flooded agricultural land spreading over hundreds of acres.
- Dozens of villages have been inundated while crops grown over hundreds of acres of land destroyed after River Chenab burst its banks at Rangpur. Crops over hundreds of acres were submerged by water and a large number of people had to leave their homes in Muzaffargarh.
- Around 220 acres of land were destroyed in Bahawalpur, 20,275 acres in Okara, 19,061 acres in Vehari, 9,000 acres in Khanewal, 816 acres in Nankana and 5,762 acres in Layyah. Overflowing water from river Ravi submerged crops over hundreds of acres in villages falling in Kamalia and Pirmahal tehsils.
- Pakistan has evacuated some 378,426 persons and shifted to safer places owing to flooding in the Sutlej River which now is in medium flood level. Moreover 20,319 livestock have also been evacuated. The ongoing floods triggered by monsoon so far have resulted in the deaths of 213 people, injuring 313, destroying 5,754 houses and killing 1,256 livestock during the current rainy season that started on June 25, 2023.

Resistance

- The ‘flawed’ policies, termination of contracts of hundreds of employees and appointment of a ‘controversial’ senior medical officer (BS-18) as CEO of the Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC) on look-after basis has led to closure of nearly 1,000 primary level health units of Punjab.
- A large number of people from across Thar gathered in the hilly town of Nagarparkar to participate in a protest against repeated attempts by the Sindh government functionaries to auction off 5,000 acres in Parkar region for extraction of granite.
- Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) employees held a demonstration on the Allama Iqbal International Airport premises against bifurcation of their department and outsourcing of major airports of the country.

- Minority Rights March organisers held a candle vigil and protest at Karachi's Teen Talwar against the Jaranwala incident. The vigil was attended by activists, social workers and people from the Christian community as well as people from all walks of lives.
- Hundreds of girls studying at a government-run college in Balochistan's Barkhan town have been protesting for the past two days as teachers remain absent for several months, rendering the institution almost non-functional.
- Traders are going to start a "livelihood protection movement" against the soaring petrol and electricity prices from August 18, warning that they will not pay bills if the recent fuel price hike was not withdrawn.
- People held a protest at City Chowk in Kamoke against high prices of electricity, burnt bills and raised slogans against the government for raising the rate of utility.
- Iesco had to seek police protection for its staff and property fearing adverse reaction from electricity consumers in different localities in the garrison city who were out to protest against the inflated bills.
- People took to the streets against exorbitant power bills in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa complaining the increase in electricity tariff amid record inflation has added to their misery.
- People across Punjab, including the provincial metropolis, have continued venting their anger at the high rates of electricity, taking to the streets in massive demonstrations and burning their electricity bills en masse, refusing to pay them.
- The leadership of Businessmen Group and KCCI, while referring to Caretaker PM's meeting scheduled in Quetta with representatives of power sector, stated that the Karachi Chamber once again strongly protests the unbearable rise in electricity tariff as it was neither affordable for the common man nor for any trader or small industrialist.
- With the nationwide protests over massive power bills growing, the caretaker government has failed to come up with any relief measures as it tries to strike a balance between avoiding drawing the IMF's ire and causing more citizens to blow a fuse. The interim set-up expressed helplessness on how to address the issue, even on spreading electricity bills in instalments unless the International Monetary Fund cleared it.
- In a reality check following almost week-long consultations, caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar told senators and the electricity consumers to `manage (their) expectations` raised by caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar for relief in excessive power bills, saying the country's fiscal space did not permit any subsidy or relief.

International News

Agricultural Production Resources

- Pakistan has been classified under the ‘high’ water stress category. This categorisation is part of a broader revelation that by 2050, an estimated \$70 trillion in GDP, equivalent to 31 per cent of the global GDP, will be vulnerable to high water stress.
- world is facing an unprecedented water crisis, and the Water Risk Atlas finds that 25 countries — one quarter of the world’s population — are currently exposed to extremely high water stress annually. Globally four billion people, half of the world’s population are exposed to water stress for at least one month a year.
- The most water-stressed regions are the Middle East and North Africa, where 83pc of the population is exposed to extremely high water stress, and South Asia, where 74pc is exposed.

Agricultural Outputs

- Japan started releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, a polarising move that prompted China to announce an immediate blanket ban on all aquatic products from Japan.
- Japan exported about \$600m worth of aquatic products to China in 2022

Trade

- India is expected to ban mills from exporting sugar in the next season beginning October, halting shipments for the first time in seven years, as a lack of rain has cut cane yields, three government sources said.

International Financial Institutions (IFIs)

- The findings of a study conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reveal that the world collectively spent around \$7 trillion on fossil fuel subsidies in 2022, which amounts to nearly 7.1 per cent of the global GDP.
- As per the data available for Pakistan, the IMF notes that the country provided \$28 billion in implicit and \$17bn in explicit subsidies in 2022.

Environment

- Ecuadoreans have voted to stop an oil drilling project in an Amazon reserve, referendum hailed.

- A new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has been created by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to facilitate financing for developing countries — which are often the most bio-diverse — to enhance their ability to protect, restore and ensure sustainable use of natural resources.
- The number of new Covid-19 cases reported worldwide rose by 80 per cent.
- The US government said it will spend up to \$1.2 billion for two pioneering facilities to vacuum carbon out of the air.

Socio-Economical Condition

- Amid record-high temperatures globally, a study reveals that a few days of searing heat can be enough to prevent billions of people already living hand-to-mouth on daily wages from putting food on the table.
- Soaring food and fuel prices and the coronavirus pandemic pushed nearly 70 million more people in developing Asia into extreme poverty last year.
- The Manila-based lender defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 a day based on inflation-adjusted 2017 prices.
- The ADB estimated that the pandemic pushed 75-80 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020, compared to its pre-pandemic projections.
- The world's oceans set a new temperature record, raising concerns about knock-on effects on the planet's climate, marine life & coastal communities.
- Unicef estimates that 76 per cent of children under-18 in South Asia — 460 million — are exposed to extreme high temperatures

Climate Change

- Climate change threatens to exacerbate conflict in fragile nations across the globe and lead to increased deaths, IMF said.
- Unicef estimates that 76 per cent of children under-18 in South Asia — 460 million — are exposed to extreme high temperatures.
- Climate change threatens to exacerbate conflict in fragile nations across the globe and lead to increased deaths, IMF said.

Resistance

- Hundreds of South Korean activists gathered in central Seoul to protest against Japan's plan to release treated radioactive water from the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean.

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Caretakers call for ‘crisis session’ as protests spiral [P. 47]

PM summons urgent meeting on electricity bills [P. 47]

Cabinet empowered to fix power bills mess [P. 47]

Govt fails to douse anger as citizens burn power bills [P. 48]

Caretakers rule out relief in power bills [P. 48]

USD Exchange Rate List

Date	Day	USD	PKR (≈)
1 st August	Tuesday	1	288
7 th August	Monday	1	287
15 th August	Thursday	1	292
21 th August	Monday	1	297
28 th August	Monday	1	302
31 th August	Thursday	1	306

NATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

1.1 # Land

Man, nephew killed in clash over farmland

A man and his nephew were killed and as many were wounded when rival groups of Jatoi clan fought over a five-acre piece of agricultural land in riverine area of Bagirji town. (*Dawn, August 3rd, 2023, Page 15*)

Two brothers, mother shot dead over land dispute in Bannu

Two brothers and their mother were killed and as many injured by their relatives over a property dispute in Bannu district. (*Dawn, August 6th, 2023, Page 8*)

First-ever survey of lands begins in Thar

Sindh government has undertaken the massive work of survey of desert lands in Tharparkar district, a huge exercise which even British colonial rulers had shied away from carrying out. Sindh Minister for Revenue and Relief Makhdoom Mehboob uz Zaman, told that in the first phase, desert lands in Kaloi and Islamkot talukas would be surveyed. An amount of Rs11 million had already been released to the authorities concerned. He said that they would need more funds for the exercise for which they would approach the Sindh government functionaries. The surveying teams would conduct the survey with the help of experts and available tools and the process would be completed within stipulated time. (*Dawn, August 10th, 2023, Page 15*)

CS orders action against illegal land occupation

Punjab Chief Secretary Zahid Akhtar Zaman yet again directed deputy commissioners to launch an operation against the illegal occupation of state land and encroachments. The Punjab government has severally launched operations against the recovery of state land and claimed to have identified hundreds of thousands of acres of illegally occupied state land. (*Dawn, August 17th, 2023, Page 2*)

1.2 # Peasants

Activists decry govt disregard for peasants` rights

Participants in a policy dialogue have expressed serious concern over government's utter disregard for the rights and well-being of sharecroppers, landless peasants and rural farm workers, livestock and fisheries sectors in Sindh. Hari Welfare Association (HWA) president Akram Ali Khaskheli said that although Sindh had introduced

several laws aimed at protecting the rights of peasants and rural workers, they remained unimplemented. He referred to Sindh Tenancy Act of 1955, Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act of 2015, Sindh Agriculture Worker Women Act of 2019 and Sindh Industrial Relation Act of 2013. Unfortunately, these laws remained dormant and a large majority of peasants, particularly sharecroppers and rural workers, faced abject poverty, crippling debt bondage and persistent malnutrition. Although district vigilance committees responsible for overseeing the enforcement of the Sindh Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, had been established and notified in 19 out of 29 districts, they remained dysfunctional.

Dr Yaseen Morojo, a lecturer at the Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University (SBBU), said that rural women were marginalised and deprived of fundamental rights, and there was no health and safety measure, and awareness for cotton picker women. They were paid less than minimum wages, while literacy ratio among rural women was very low; there was dire need to educate girls. Haleema Kolhi, a peasant, said that her colleagues were living in miserable conditions and they did not have houses to reside. She said that there was no transparent and proper accounting system of crop expenditure and income. Landlords charged unnecessary and extra costs on fertiliser, pesticides and seeds, holding them in debt bondage. She said the peasants producing wheat were facing hunger; they were producing cotton, but their children were living in poverty.

The participants advocated implementation of laws through localised mechanisms which were crucial to ensure equitable dispensation of justice and protection of rights to the impoverished peasants and rural workers who often found themselves marginalised by powerful landlords, contractors and influential groups such as agriculture-input selling mafias. (*Dawn, August 25th, 2023, Page 15*)

1.3 # Water

Growers question rotation plan despite availability of water in canals

A meeting of the Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) called for putting an end to the rotation system considering availability of sufficient water now flowing in canals after recent rains across the country. It noted that a fair quantum was being released downstream Kotri Barrage as well. The meeting observed that farmers of tail-end areas were also satisfied over early arrival of water this year. Growers of the Khairpur East system pointed out that most of the 65,000 acres at the tail of the system was not even cultivated in Kharif. SAB leaders also noted that prices of agricultural inputs continued to rise and those of almost all fertilisers had increased by 15pc to 20pc over the last few months. (*Dawn, August 7th, 2023, Page 15*)

Rice growers to get adequate water as situation improves, say barrage authorities

Although water level in Indus is currently showing a declining trend and the status of ‘medium flood’ has changed to ‘low flood’, managements of the Guddu and Kotri

barrages appeared satisfied that they will now be able to ensure adequate flows in the canals that feed rice cultivation areas, besides allowing post-Kotri releases. The shortage at Kotri Barrage was reported in the May-June period when rice growing areas were supposed to be provided water under the Water Apportionment Accord 1991. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 15*)

Improvement in water supply cheers up farmers, boosts crop prospects

In a good omen to crop output in both current and next cropping season, the country's two major reservoirs Tarbela and Mangla are now almost full to capacity, turning into surplus the acute water shortage that marked beginning of the current Kharif season in April. The total storage in two dams is now above 13.1 million acre feet (MAF), only a few thousand feet below the maximum conservation capacity and that too mostly because of operational and precautionary reasons to keep some space for unexpected flash flows amid rain and thunderstorm forecasts. There is no shortage at all, except maybe somewhere because of carrying constraints in the irrigation system like canal limitations at the tail-end in provinces; rather we have surplus water in the system and more rains are still expected. That would be good sign for Rabi crops after many years. (*Dawn, August 15th, 2023, Page 9*)

Historic water availability to boost agri, hydel production

For the first time in over half-a-decade history, the country's three reservoirs — Mangla, Tarbela dams and Chashma Barrage — attained their maximum capacity on a single day putting total water storage at the highest 13.443 million acre-feet (MAF). This raises hopes for bumper crops both in the current Kharif and coming Rabi season. It may be recalled that Kharif season had started with 37pc anticipated water shortage with 27pc shortages in early Kharif and about 10pc in late Kharif. There will be no shortage in the late Kharif.

Eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas and Sutlej) flowed with sufficient water after a gap of more than a decade and enough water is available in the system downstream of these rivers, reducing the need for discharges from Mangla dam. From now onwards, all inflows would have to be released into the rivers and canal system. The flows in eastern rivers are also a sign of climate change that weather and flow patterns have differed after a gap of 10-15 years, giving a warning to the people downstream to keep safe distances from old river beds. Indian reservoirs on Sutlej and Beas are now again nearing maximum levels at Bhakra and Pong storages. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 9*)

Influential landowners accused of water theft

A group of farmers having their lands in the tail-end areas of Thatta district have unearthed numerous illegal cuts, outlets, barricades and pumping machines meant to block flow of Nari Chach (upper) irrigation channel to their areas. They approached Dawn with pictures of such barricades and identified the sections along the tributary,

lamenting that influential landowners had resorted to divert the flow to their own lands and deprive them and many other farmers of their due share in water. Requesting anonymity for obvious reasons, the aggrieved farmers claimed that the local irrigation officials and other employees were hand in glove with the influential land owners. A large number of civil society and political activists gathered around the group of farmers, and expressed their outrage over the treatment being meted out to owners of small pieces of agricultural land and farmers. They said such practices on the part of the influential landowners tantamount to economic murder of the tail-end growers. (*Dawn, August 20th, 2023, Page 15*)

Land acquisition completed for Dasu Dam: WAPDA chief

Chairman WAPDA Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (retd) has said that the pace of construction work will be further accelerated on Dasu Hydropower Project as long-delayed process of land acquisition has substantially been completed. The Chairman said that the issue of acquiring the land was the major obstacle in the way to speedy implementation of the project. (*Business Recorder, August 23rd, 2023, Page 10*)

Plans to protect Sukkur Barrage, restore Manchhar

Sindh Minister for Planning & Development (P&D) Mohammad Younus Dagha directed the irrigation department secretary to prepare plans for reducing the risks to the structure of the Sukkur Barrage, flooding of cities and villages on the right bank of Indus River and to rehabilitate Manchhar Lake. Briefing on the progress of the Right Bank Outfall Drainage (RBOD) project, the secretary informed that it was a sick scheme and the toxic effluent of the right bank irrigation continued to be discharged in the Manchhar Lake. The meeting was informed that there was no project/plan presently under execution which could improve the situation. Those areas which were severely affected during the floods of 2011 and 2022 would continue to remain vulnerable unless some schemes were undertaken to divide the flood planes into various zones with independent discharge systems into the river. Minister Dagha directed the irrigation department to take urgent steps to prepare plans for: (i) revision and reactivation of the RBOD project which ensures rehabilitation of Manchhar Lake; (ii) flood water drainage channel to divert the water in the upper right bank region directly into the Indus River and (iii) escape channel upstream Sukkur Barrage to divert flood water into the Nara desert. (*Dawn, August 28th, 2023, Page 15*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

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Banks lend record Rs1.78tr to agriculture sector

Financial institutions disbursed Rs1.776 trillion under agriculture financing during the previous fiscal year, which was 25 per cent higher year-on-year and was around 97.6pc of the agriculture credit target set by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The

outstanding portfolio of agriculture credit also grew 10pc to Rs760 billion by the end of June compared to Rs691bn by the end of June 2022. Among the various initiatives, SBP's Champion Bank Model and Agriculture Credit Scoring Model played a key role in supporting financial institutions in extending agriculture financing, particularly in the underserved areas where significant growth was registered in 2022-23. Besides, the strategic guidance of the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) coupled with rigorous monitoring of financing by the State Bank provided further support in accelerating agriculture finance. The last ACAC meeting, held in December 2022, brought the industry's focus to the potential of Islamic banking to meet farmers' needs. "As a result, Islamic agriculture financing also grew significantly during the year. (*Dawn, August 10th, 2023, Page 9*)

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery

Food security: SACM underscores need for modernising agriculture

Ms. Tanzila Umi Habiba, the Special Assistant to the CM has termed that by modernizing agriculture we can prevent food and economic crisis, while by linking agriculture with the IT sector we can promote modern agriculture. She said that we have to convince our farmers that there is no other way except modern technology and modern agriculture to double production now and secure food in the future. Dr. Fateh Marri, Vice Chancellor of SAU said that there is a large number of youth in the country, and there are innumerable career opportunities in the joint ventures of IT and agriculture sectors. He said that the graduates are promoting Agri-tech, and have developed many new ideas in their projects, which are related to agricultural development, agri-business, smart agriculture, GIS, remote sensing, and agricultural monitoring. (*Business Recorder, August 7th, 2023, Page 5*)

2.3 # Fertilizer

Crackdown on hoarders, black marketers of fertilizers launched

Punjab Agriculture Department has launched a crackdown against those involved in black marketing or over-pricing of fertilizers and other agricultural inputs and arrested 13 such people during the last two days. As many as 40 FIRs have also been launched against such elements and a fine of Rs1.781 million has also been imposed on dealers found involved in price hike. (*Business Recorder, August 24th, 2023, Page 2*)

2.4 # Seed

Experts for joint efforts to further promote seed sector

National and international experts have emphasized the establishment of a joint forum based on national agricultural institutions, policymakers, and breeders for the improvement of the country's livelihood and the protection of food, while it has been

proposed to ensure legislation and genetic inspection to prevent defective seeds in the country and to certify imported seeds. A two-day seminar titled “Seed Sector: Challenges and Options” has started under the co-hosting of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) and with the support of the Sindh Higher Education Commission (SHEC). (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 5*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

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SAU, FAO agree to join hands to enhance agri output

SAU and FAO have agreed to join hands to promote shared progress and advancement in agricultural endeavors across the Sindh and Balochistan regions of Pakistan, so that the farming community of backward areas can improve their life style through sustainable agriculture, while this collaborative effort is aimed at strengthening research, development, and capacity-building programs within the Sindh region. (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 5*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

Record 1.43m cotton bales produced until July 31

Unprecedented 1.429 million bales of cotton arrived in the ginning factories by July 31 as no significant pest threat to the crop from any cotton-growing belt was reported. Due to a record production during the first two months (June-July) of the cotton season this year, the total domestic output may exceed 10m bales after a break of 12 years. The data shows that textile mills have bought 1.285m bales from the ginning factories, and 7,500 bales have so far been exported against 4,900 last year, while 136,000 bales are still lying with the ginning factories. It is expected that due to insignificant pest attacks, the country will reap at least 10 million bales of white gold this year saving billions of dollars on the import of cotton and edible oil. Pakistan imported cotton worth around \$2bn last year. (*Dawn, August 4th, 2023, Page 9*)

Punjab govt urged to help increase per acre yield of cotton crop

Agriculture Republic, an agricultural think tank, has called upon the Punjab government to invest in the farmers and development/import of potential seed to increase per acre yield of the cotton crop Co-founder of Agriculture Republic Aamer Hayat regretted that the industrial stakeholders of cotton had never ensured that the growers get support price of Rs 8500 per maund. They had least contributed in cotton crop value-chain development starting from the seed. They should learn from the rice value chain where the main stakeholders were promoting sustainable agricultural practices, safe export quality grains and introducing measures/practices to increase per acre yield for export purposes. (*Business Recorder, August 8th, 2023, Page 2*)

20pc of early sown cotton reaches ginning units

The secretary was told that an area of 0.933 million acres is under cotton cultivation in Dera Ghazi Khan Division and is at the productive stage. In the division, the attack of white fly and pink bollworm has been observed in some places, but it has not reached the economic threshold level, while teams of extension and pest warning are taking remedies. He was further told that 20 per cent of the early sown cotton has been picked and so far over 85,000 bales of cotton have reached the ginning factories. There are 30 ginning factories in the division. (*Dawn, August 14th, 2023, Page 8*)

Sindh fixes sugarcane minimum price at Rs425/ maund

Government of Sindh, has fixed the minimum price of Sugarcane @ Rs.425/- per 40-Kg for the crushing season 2023-24. (*Business Recorder, August 19th, 2023, Page 8*)

Cotton arrivals underreported in Punjab, raising crop size doubts

Cotton arrival data is facing a credibility crisis as some ginning factories are allegedly underreporting their purchases, raising doubts about the size and health of the crop. The provincial Agriculture Department has asked district administrations to verify the buying records of ginning factories in South Punjab, where cotton arrivals are reported to be lower than expected. They estimated that at least 300,000 bales have not been reported by the ginners in Punjab. However, as per latest fortnightly arrival report released by the PCGA, as many as 636,684 bales of cotton are reported by buyers for ginning purposes from the province. (*The News, August 20th, 2023, Page 17*)

SCA demands Rs450 per maund sugarcane rate

SCA demanded at least Rs450 per maund for sugarcane crop, keeping in view of the ever increasing cost of inputs and crop cultivation. They rejected Rs425 per 40 kilogram price fixed for the crop from the growers by the sugar mills. The prices of seeds, fertilizer, pesticides, fuel and machinery have increased by leaps and bounds. They pointed out that the government had not increased the price of gas for the fertilizer industries but still the farmers were being extorted for expensive rates for bags of fertilizer. The farmers complained that the dealers selling fertilizer had also turned into a mafia which first stockpiled the supplies and then demanded higher than the factory rates for the bags. (*Business Recorder, August 28th, 2023, Page 3*)

4 # NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

5 # TRADE

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Exports dip 9pc in July, record 11th straight fall

Merchandise exports fell for the 11th month in a row in July, plunging by 8.6 per cent year-on-year to \$2.05 billion, showed data released by the Pakistan Bureau of

Statistics. The export proceeds are declining because of internal and external factors stoking up fears about the closure of industrial units, especially textile and clothing. On a month-on-month basis, the export proceeds declined 12.68pc in July. In FY23, the merchandise exports dipped by 12.71pc to \$27.54bn from \$31.78bn in FY22, missing the \$32bn target by a wide margin of \$4.46bn. The government has projected an export target of \$30bn for the current fiscal year.

At the same time, imports also plunged by 26.44pc to \$3.66bn in July from \$4.98bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, the imports declined by 13.15pc. The imports fell 31pc to \$55.29bn in FY23 from \$80.13bn in FY22. The government has projected an import target of \$58.69bn for FY24 against \$55.29bn in FY23, an increase of \$3.4bn or 8.14pc. The government has now relaxed the import restrictions and announced that the State Bank of Pakistan will not use any measures to slow down or restrict the opening of letters of credit (LCs) from July 1.

The trade deficit decelerated 41.16pc to \$1.60bn in July from \$2.73bn over the corresponding month of last year, 43pc to \$27.54bn in the previous fiscal year from \$48.35bn in the preceding fiscal year. The exports started posting negative growth in July 2022, barring August when a slight increase was recorded because of the backlog of the preceding month. Export contraction is a worrisome factor, which will create problems in balancing the country's external account. The drop in textile and clothing, which constitutes over 60pc of total exports, was one of the main factors for the decline in overall exports in FY23. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Pakistan, Iran chalk out five-year trade plan

Pakistan and Iran chalked out a five-year trade cooperation plan aimed at doubling trade volume to \$5 billion, prioritising removing trade impediments and finalising a free trade agreement. An agreement was also reached to set fishermen from the two countries free and waive off any fine imposed by authorities of both countries for the release of their vessels. In his remarks, the Iranian foreign minister emphasised the enhanced bilateral cooperation in economy, trade and tourism. Emphasising the completion of the Pakistan-Iran gas pipeline. (*Dawn, August 4th, 2023, Page 1*)

Exports to Middle East dip 13pc in FY23

In a significant downturn, Pakistan's exports to the Middle East fell by 12.62 per cent to \$2.332 billion in FY23 compared to \$2.669bn in the preceding year. This decline is primarily attributed to a decrease in exports to the United Arab Emirates. The exports to Saudi Arabia increased while other countries of the region dipped, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. Despite a higher import value from the Middle East, Pakistan witnessed a 7.24pc decline in imports totalling \$17.488bn in FY23, down from \$18.853bn in the previous year. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 9*)

Iranian envoy for enhancing bilateral trade to \$5bn

Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Moghaddam emphasized the need for concerted efforts for the realization of the true potential of the economic opportunities to enhance bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran to \$ 5 billion. About the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as well as Gwadar Port of Pakistan and Iran's Chahbahar Port, the envoy said that both Gwadar and Chahbahar Ports are interlinked in terms of commerce and development, and "there is no element of conflict." He added that a new "World Order" is emerging, and it is going to have multiple poles of power. He said that the SCO and BRICS as new realities, and the myth of military dominance is eroding. He stressed for greater cooperation between 400 million people of Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in realising the ECO, and said that it is the gateway to Europe and beyond in terms of people-to-people contacts, trade, and tourism. Moghaddam noted that despite so much effort the volume of trade between the two countries is dismal. Presently, the trade is close to \$ 2 billion, and estimates say that it should be somewhere around \$ 5 billion. (*Business Recorder, August 24th, 2023, Page 3*)

Transit trade starts via Khunjerab Pass

The inaugural shipment from China to Afghanistan via the Khunjerab border in Gilgit-Baltistan, under TIR Convention. The initial shipment commenced its journey from China's Kashgar city. It entered Pakistan through the Khunjerab Pass and is destined for Kabul, Afghanistan. In June this year, a cargo of goods was dispatched from Sost Dry Port to Kazakhstan through the Khunjerab Pass as part of transit trade. This transit route would significantly reduce travel time, almost by 70 per cent and cut logistics costs by 30pc. The reduced time and cost of moving goods will help create positive trade diversion. The operationalisation of TIR along with Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (between China, Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan) and other regional transit and trade arrangements like One Belt One Road and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation corridors can help Pakistan become a major hub of transit trade. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 5*)

5.1 # Export

July textile exports down 15pc to \$1.31bn YoY

The country's textile exports registered a decline of 15 percent and remained \$1.31 billion during July 2023 compared to \$1.54 billion recorded in the same period last year. APTMA data revealed that the country's textile exports during the first seven months (Jan-July) of the calendar year 2023 stood at \$9.09 billion, down 21 percent compared to exports of \$11.48 billion reported in January-July 2022. On a month-on-month basis, textile exports slid 10.9 percent from \$1.47 billion reported in June 2023. The textile exports during June 2023 were also the highest monthly exports since September 2022. The country's textile exports had slumped to below \$1.2 billion in February 2023. (*Business Recorder, August 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

All-time high rice exports likely

The country's rice export fell sharply, ie, 14 percent during the last fiscal year (FY23) due to lower crop output because of flooding. However, the expected bumper crop and ban on rice export by India will help achieve all-time high rice exports during this fiscal year (FY23—in terms of value Pakistan earned \$ 2.14 billion foreign exchange against the export of rice during FY23 compared to \$2.51 billion in the same period of fiscal year 2022 (FY22), depicting a decline of \$ 364 million. Overall, in terms of volume rice export shrunk by 25 percent during the last fiscal year. The country exported 3.717 million metric tons of rice including basmati and other varieties during July-June of FY23 as against 4.97 million metric ton in corresponding period of previous year. (*Business Recorder, August 4th, 2023, Page 1*)

Chinese firm to import 5,000 tons of chillies from Pakistan

Chinese leading food firm “Litong Foods” is all set to enter into a joint venture with a Pakistani firm Guard Agricultural Research and Services (Pvt.) Limited to import 5000 tons of dried chillies. The \$30 million (around Rs9 billion) joint venture is likely to be signed under the business-to-business mode. It may be worth mentioning that the Guard Agricultural Research and Services already had the honor to introduce Chinese long grain hybrid rice in Pakistan which had increased rice production manifold especially in Sindh. (*Business Recorder, August 7th, 2023, Page 3*)

Regional exports plunge 21pc

Pakistan's exports to nine regional countries dipped 21.1 per cent in FY23 mainly driven by a drop in shipments to China, data compiled by the SBP. The country's exports to Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives dipped to \$3.331 billion — just 12pc of total exports of \$27.73bn in FY23. Pakistan's bulk of the regional exports share, which accounts for 60pc, is with China while the rest is with the remaining eight countries.

Exports to China declined 27.3pc to \$2.02 in FY23 from \$2.78bn in FY22. It was the first decrease in the post-Covid period. However, the imports also declined by 44.1pc to \$9.66bn from \$17.30bn during FY23. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan posted a negative growth of 9.97pc to \$521.99m in FY23 from \$552.78m in FY22. Pakistan's exports to Iran on the official channel remained at \$0.028m in FY23 against no exports last year. Pakistan carried out barter trade with Iran. Exports to India declined 74.53pc to \$0.329m in FY23 from \$1.292m in FY22. Exports to Bangladesh decreased 11.92pc to \$768.54m in FY23 from \$872.56m in FY22. Exports to Sri Lanka dipped by 24.4pc to \$283.77m from \$375.37m in FY22. Exports to Nepal declined by 58.7pc to \$2.84m from \$5.77m in FY22. Exports to the Maldives increased by 23.5pc to \$8.54m from \$6.91m. A marginal export worth \$0.048m to Bhutan was recorded in the FY23 against \$0.082m exports last year, indicating a decline of 41.46pc. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 9*)

Vegetable exports fetch lower price despite record volume

Amid fluctuations in domestic rates, the country's vegetable exports hit an all-time high of 1.336 million tonnes in FY23 from 939,714 tonnes in FY22. A jump of 42 per cent in export volumes failed to fetch handsome foreign exchange which shrank by 3 per cent to \$300 million in FY23 from \$310m in FY22 mainly due to a drop in average per tonne price to \$224.6 from \$329. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 9*)

Exporters clinch \$410m orders at TDAP expo

Over \$410 million of export deals were finalised in agro-related products along with the signing of 10 MoUs at Pakistan's 1st International Food and Agriculture Exhibition-FoodAg-2023. The three-day event, attracted visitors from 60 countries while a large number of B2B (business-to-business) meetings were also held. More than 221 exporters exhibited over 500 quality products, while over 600 international buyers from 60 countries attended the event including buyers from Nico Food, Diamond Star, Zensho Trading from Japan, Metro, Amzon and Hello Fresh from Germany, Vitana Food and Shana Food from Iran. The largest participation was from China comprising 150 plus buyers. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 9*)

Exports to EU fall despite GSP+ status

Exports to European Union (EU) dipped by over 4.41 per cent in FY23 due to a slump in demand for Pakistani goods in Germany and the Netherlands. The exports to the EU's 27 member countries amounted to \$8.188 billion during FY23 against \$8.566bn in the preceding fiscal year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. Exports posted a paltry growth in terms of euros. However, the decline in export was seen despite the Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme. The GSP+ scheme became effective on Jan 1, 2014, and it will remain available to Pakistan for the current fiscal year. The top export destinations for Pakistan are Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy and Belgium. (*Dawn, August 15th, 2023, Page 9*)

Exports of textiles, clothing shrink 11pc in July

Textile and clothing exports shrank 11.44 per cent during the first month of the current fiscal year due to higher production costs, liquidity constraints and lower global demand. In absolute terms, the value of textile and clothing exports fell to \$1.31 billion in July from \$1.48bn in the corresponding month last year, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Sugar exports continue despite rise in local prices

The export of sugar rose by an astonishing 100 per cent in the first month of the current fiscal year despite soaring retail prices, showed data compiled by PBS. As consumers grapple with high sweetener prices at home, sugar exports in July stood at 5,542 tonnes against no exports in the same month last year. The PDM government had allowed sugar exports in February reportedly at the behest of influential political

families. Despite the domestic market facing skyrocketing retail prices, sugar exports have continued to rise, leaving many to question the government's decision. Contrary to this, Pakistan imported 574 tonnes of sugar in July, showing an increase of over 20pc on a year-on-year basis. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Non-textile exports fall 9pc in July

The exports of non-textile products saw a decline of 8.99 per cent in the first month of the current fiscal year from a year ago, data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The start of the new fiscal year witnessed a continued downward trend in the export of value-added products, contributing significantly to the decline in the exports of non-textile products. Exports showed no growth since September 2022 on a year-on-year basis. In FY23, non-textile exports fell by 9.87pc to \$11.23 billion compared to \$12.46bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, August 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

Pakistan lags far behind in global agri-food exports, moot told

Experts and farmers have said that horticulture products worth \$250 billion are being exported in the world, but Pakistan is not benefitting from it due to a lack of quality and essential export requirements. They said academia, industry, farmers and organisations which were to set standards for exports needed to work together to improve quality of agricultural products. (*Dawn, August 25th, 2023, Page 15*)

Textile export: Govt sets \$25bn target

Caretaker Government set an ambitious target of \$25 billion in textile exports for the current financial year against the \$16 billion target for the last fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, August 31st, 2023, Page 1*)

5.2 # Import

Imports of pulses hit record \$946m

Amid a looming foreign exchange crisis and a drop in local production, Pakistan made a record import of 1.344 million tonnes of pulses worth \$946 million during FY23, surpassing the previous all-time high arrival of 1.266m tonnes (\$709 million) in FY21. In January 2023, importers held a protest outside the State Bank of Pakistan's head office against the non-clearance of over 6,000 containers of pulses at the port for the past two months, due to a dollar shortage and banks' reluctance to approve import documents. After resolving the crisis, with an improvement in dollar availability and the government's focus on averting any food shortage, importers rushed to boost their imports, fearing future problems. Additionally, low local production also encouraged them to increase imports. Despite massive imports, consumers saw a mixed trend in prices of various pulses. The average per tonne price of pulses in FY23 stood at \$703, compared to \$674 in FY22. (*Dawn, August 5, 2023, Page 9*)

SBP says it can't impose ban on import of any item

SBP has stated that it cannot impose a ban on import of any item as it falls under the domain of Ministry of Commerce. (*Business Recorder, August 28th, 2023, Page 1*)

Import of Russian crude oil suspended

The import of crude oil from Russia has been suspended after more furnace oil was produced than petrol from the Russian oil during the refining process. Pakistan Refinery had refused to process more Russian oil, as less petrol was being produced from it with 20 per cent more furnace oil compared to the Arabian crude oil. Benefit of import of Russian crude oil was limited with a bigger quantity of export of furnace oil at a lower price. Some sources also claimed that less kerosene and jet fuel for ships had been produced from the Russian oil, which was not beneficial for the country. (*The News, August 13, 2023, Page 1*)

PRL says Russian crude `technically, commercially feasible`

The Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) has said that it would again process Russian crude `when available at favourable commercial terms`, denying the impression that it has suspended the use of Russian crude oil because of processing issues. The refinery insisted that Russian crude was successfully processed and the `spot deal was technically and commercially feasible`. (*Dawn, August 14th, 2023, Page 5*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

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29 women, children fall unconscious after gas leak at factory in Karachi

Twenty-nine women and children fell unconscious and had to be taken to hospitals after leakage of ammonia gas in a factory at fisheries, ammonia gas started emitting from a leaked pipe at a private seafood company at fisheries, within the West Wharf area. The gas engulfed the neighbourhood affecting 29 women and children, who fell unconscious after inhaling it. (*Dawn, August 9th, 2023, Page 13*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

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Flood relief: \$10.33bn loans, \$550m grants received

Pakistan has received \$ 10.33 billion out of \$ 10.953 billion as loans and \$ 550.4 million in grants for flood relief from various countries, as well as, from private donors and international financial institutions as they pledged at the Geneva donors conference held in January 2023. Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq said that Pakistan has received a total of \$ 8,943.94 million out of \$ 8,962.72 million and \$ 18.78 million grant including the entire amount \$ 2,199.94 million as loan from the World Bank, \$ 1,544 million out of \$1,557.28 million as loan and \$13.28 million grant from the Asian Development Bank, entire amount of \$ 1,000 million from Asian Infrastructure Investment, entire amount of \$ 4,200 million from Islamic Development

Bank, and the entire amount of \$ 5.5 million as grant from United Nations. He said that Pakistan coalition government received \$ 1,386.1 million out of \$ 1,917.7 million and \$ 531.64 million as grant from various countries.

Ayaz Sadiq said the government has received \$ 6.6 million grant from Australia, \$ 360 million out of \$370 million as loan and \$ 10 million grant from France, \$ 94.35 million as a grant from European Union, \$ 100 million grant from the USA, \$ 11.67 million grant from the United Kingdom, \$ 3.79 million grant from Denmark, \$ 21.7 million loan out of \$24.9 million and \$ 3.2 million grant from Italy, \$ 91.1 million grant from Germany, \$ 1,000 million loan from Saudi Arabia, \$ 4.4 million loan out of \$ 77 million and \$ 72.6 million as a grant from Japan, \$ 18.12 million grant from Norway, \$ 18.2 million as a grant from Canada, and \$ 2 million as a grant from Azerbaijan. However, the amounts of pledges of loans, \$ 48 million from South Korea, \$ 25 million from Qatar, and \$ 0.1 million from Vietnam, are still awaited.

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar told the House that recently, on 12th July 2023, the government entered into a nine-month SBA of \$ 3bn, of which, \$ 1.2bn has already been disbursed. (*Business Recorder, August 1st, 2023, Page 12*)

Foreign financing soars by 27 times

Buoyed by the IMF stimulus, Pakistan's foreign financing inflows rose by more than 27 times to \$5.1 billion in July compared to less than \$186 million a year ago. In its monthly report on foreign economic assistance, the finance ministry's Economic Affairs Division said total foreign economic assistance in July amounted to \$2.89bn compared to just \$185.6m of the same month last year, showing an increase of 1,454 per cent. This was in addition to \$1.2bn released by the International Monetary Fund on July 13 as the first tranche of the \$3bn Standby Arrangement (SBA) and \$1bn by the United Arab Emirates, which are separately accounted for by the State Bank of Pakistan. The bulk — \$2bn — of foreign loans reported by the Economic Affairs Division came from Saudi Arabia's time deposit, followed by a \$508m guaranteed loan to Pakistan Air Force by China National Aero-Technology Import and Export Corporation. The remaining inflows in July included \$194m from multilateral agencies and \$114m from bilateral lenders. Another \$75m flowed in from overseas Pakistanis in Naya Pakistan Certificates. The government has estimated about \$17.62bn in foreign assistance in the budget for the current fiscal year, including \$17.39bn in loans and the remaining \$235m in grants. Total loan disbursements in July stood at \$2.88bn and grants at \$14.4m. The division said that out of the \$2.89bn inflows, the bulk of \$2.08bn were received for budgetary support or programme loans and about \$640m as project aid.

For the previous fiscal year (2022-23), the government budgeted \$22.8bn in foreign assistance but could actually materialise \$10.8bn throughout the year — only 46pc of the target — because of the suspension of the IMF programme. This \$11.8bn slippage

resulted in the depletion of foreign exchange reserves. Mainly because of this, the country's total external public debt slightly declined to \$85.2bn by the end of March this year from \$86.56bn by the end of 2022, the Economic Affairs Division said in its quarterly report for the January-March quarter. Of the total external public debt of \$85.18bn, the government owed \$64bn to multilateral and bilateral development partners, including the IMF, which meant more than three-quarters of the total external public debt, was on concessional terms with a longer maturity. Besides, 16pc (or \$13.5bn) of the total external public debt was from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and 7pc (\$7bn) constituted deposits from friendly countries like China and Saudi Arabia.

The division said net transfers to the government in July-March were negative by \$3.349bn, which meant the government had to pay more than the acquisition of new loans. Government during July-March could acquire \$900m in loans from foreign commercial banks and repay \$4.542bn. However, net transfers from multilateral development partners were up \$1.468bn, which reflected an improvement in the composition of external public debt as funds from multilateral development partners are concessional and have a longer maturity. The report said the govt paid \$12.92bn during July-March on account of debt servicing of external public loans. This consisted of principal repayment of \$10.84bn and interest payments of \$2.09bn. In the same period last year, the government paid \$9.44bn, including principal repayment of \$8.14bn and interest payments of \$1.3bn. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Jul-Mar FY23: New loan pacts worth \$7.228bn signed with development partners

The Division, "Third quarterly report on foreign economic assistance July-March 2022-23," which noted that the government of Pakistan signed new loan agreements worth \$7.228 billion with development partners during the first three-quarters (July-March) of the fiscal year 2022-23, compared to \$11.321 billion during the same period of 2021-22. However, a small portion (i.e. one-fifth) of the external public debt (commercial borrowings and bonds) entails higher interest rates.

The official data revealed that the main reasons for higher commitments during the fiscal year 2021-22 were the issuance of \$2 billion worth of Eurobonds in the international capital markets, larger commitments with foreign commercial banks, and obtaining a deposit worth \$3 billion from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (as a deposit). However, in July-March 2023 the government was able to make higher commitments with its multilateral development partners (\$5,289 billion) as compared to the corresponding period last year (\$2.440 billion). Out of the total new agreements, \$5.289 billion worth of financing agreements were signed with multilateral development partners, \$900 million with foreign commercial banks, and \$1.039 billion with bilateral partners.

During the first three quarters of the fiscal year 2022-23 (July-March 2023), out of the total commitments of \$7.228 billion, an amount of \$2.767 billion was earmarked as project financing, \$2.400 billion for program financing, \$1.161 billion was secured for commodity financing and \$900 million for budgetary support to meet the liquidity requirements of the government. During the period from July to March 2023, disbursements amounting to \$7.765 billion were received from multilateral and bilateral development partners as well as from financial institutions.

As of 31st March 2023, Pakistan's total external public debt stood at \$85.18 billion, whereas it was \$86.56 billion on 31st December 2022, showing \$1.38 billion reduction in total external public debt. Out of the total external public debt of \$85.18 billion, the government owed \$64 billion to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF. Meaning, more than two-thirds (i.e. 75 percent) of the total external public debt is on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16 percent (i.e. \$13.5 billion) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and seven percent (i.e. \$7 billion) of the total external public debt constitutes deposits from friendly countries (China and Saudi Arabia).

The government paid an amount of \$12.922bn during the period July-March 2023 on account of debt servicing of external public loans. This consists of principal repayment of \$10.835bn and interest payments of \$2.087bn. Whereas, in the corresponding period last year (i.e. July-March, 2022) the government paid \$9.436bn (principal repayment of \$8.137bn and interest payments of \$1.299bn). The largest payments were made to foreign commercial banks (\$4.865bn), followed by bondholders (\$1.392bn), Is DB commodity financing investors (\$1.246bn), China (\$1.110bn), and IMF (\$948 million). In July-March 2023, net transfers to the government were negative \$3.349bn. (*Business Recorder, August 22nd, 2023, Page 1*)

\$2.89bn borrowed from multiple financing sources in July

The country borrowed \$2.890 billion from multiple financing sources during the first month (July) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 compared to \$185 million borrowed during the same period of 2022-23, revealed the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) data. The government had budgeted \$2.4 billion from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the current fiscal year 2023-24 and received \$1.2 billion as the first tranche of the \$3 billion stand-by arrangement (SBA) in July 2023, however, the EAD data does not reflect it. If the IMF inflows is added, the total inflows would reach \$4.09 billion during the first month of the current fiscal year. The \$2.890 billion included \$2 billion received from Saudi Arabia under the head of time deposit during July 2023, the data further shows that the government had budgeted estimates of \$4.5 billion from the foreign commercial banks for the current fiscal year 2023-24, however, no money was received under this head in July.

The data further shows that the government has budgeted \$17.619 billion from multiple financing sources for the current fiscal year including \$17.384 billion loans and \$234.60 million grants. 2.206 billion from foreign commercial banks during the fiscal year 2022-23 against the budgeted foreign assistance of \$22.817 billion. However, the \$10.844 billion did not include the rollover of friendly countries' deposits amounting to \$6 billion (i.e. \$3 billion each from China and Saudi Arabia), and re-financing of Chinese loan of \$1.3 billion. The country received \$74.70 million under the head of "Naya Pakistan Certificate" during July 2023.

The country received \$193.64 million from multilaterals and \$113.88 million from bilateral during July 2023-24. The non-project aid was \$2.250 billion including \$2.083 billion for budgetary support and project aid was \$640.11 million. The country received \$508.34 million under the head of guaranteed CATIC (PAF). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) disbursed \$22.59 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$2.086 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24. China disbursed no money in July, however, the government has budgeted \$18.54 million for the current fiscal year. Saudi Arabia disbursed \$100 million against the budgeted \$600 million under the head of oil facility during July 2023-24. The USA disbursed \$8.17 million in July against the budgeted \$21.60 million for the fiscal year. Korea disbursed \$4.85 million and France \$0.56 million during July 2023.

The IDA disbursed \$82.71 million in July against the budgeted \$1.489bn for the current FY and IBRD \$3 million against the budgeted \$840.36 million. DB disbursed \$67.23 million in July against the budgeted \$500 million for the current FY and AIIB disbursed \$11.74 million, while IFAD disbursed \$6.38 million against the budgeted \$42.68 million for the current FY. (*Business Recorder, August 22nd, 2023, Page 1*)

Govt borrows over Rs2trn

The federal government borrowed over Rs 2 trillion through sale of short-term security papers. The SBP, on behalf of federal government, conducted auction for sale of Government of Pakistan Market Treasury Bills and received bids worth Rs 3.25 trillion for sale of 3-, 6- and 12-month Tbills. The 3-months MTBs fetched bid amounted to Rs 2.504 trillion, 6-months Rs 370 billion and 12-month TBills received bids worth Rs 374.6bn. Out of received bids, the federal government raised Rs 2.074 trillion including non-competitive bids of Rs 74bn against the target of Rs 2.25 trillion and maturity of Rs2.469 trillion. (*Business Recorder, August 24th, 2023, Page 1*)

7.1 # Countries

France allocates 3m euros to support UNICEF response

The Government of France has allocated about \$3.27 million euros, to support UNICEF's humanitarian response in flood-affected areas of Sindh. This vital funding will strengthen primary healthcare and immunisation services in the most affected

districts in Sindh province, targeting 1.9 million children and women, Abdullah Fadil, UNICEF representative in Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, August 17th, 2023, Page 7*)

President for increased Saudi investment in Pakistan

President Dr Arif Alvi has called for further strengthening bilateral ties with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) by investment in Pakistan in different sectors such as IT, renewable energy, industrial and infrastructure development, and the hospitality sectors. (*Business Recorder, August 22nd, 2023, Page 7*)

7.2 # USAID

FAO organises ‘baseline validation workshop’ under USAID-funded project

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), under the USAID-funded project “Livelihood and Food Security Improvement Activity” (LFSA), conducted a Baseline Validation Workshop to validate the findings for the project’s targeted areas. The validation workshops are integral parts of the Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning (MEAL) framework of FAO as they provide practical opportunities for project teams to review, discuss, and validate findings with key stakeholders of the important studies and use the evidence created for setting benchmarks, adaptation and continuous improvement.

Director Generals (DGs) and high-level government officials from the line departments of agriculture research, extension, livestock and dairy development, and on-farm water management attended the event. Representatives and staff from USAID Pakistan, UNWOMEN, FAO, and farmers’ representatives from Khyber and Mohmand districts were also part of the event. Under the said project, FAO in collaboration with the Government of KP, civil society organizations, the private sector, and all relevant stakeholders, will support 150,000 rural households including those consisting of women farmers, over a period of four years.

The project aims to impact and improve livelihoods and food security for the targeted 150,000 households through agriculture-led growth in KP and flood-affected areas of Pakistan. The project’s goal is to restore “cropping systems” and encourage the adoption of technological advancements for enhanced productivity and better livelihoods. This will be achieved through strengthened and modernized agriculture and livestock sectors, creating assets, and diversifying livelihood options. (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 16*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

IMF SBA gives comfort level to multilaterals, bilaterals: MEA officials

The staff level agreement on the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reached on 29 June 2023 provided a comfort level to

multilaterals/bilaterals and resultant inflows improved during the first month of current fiscal year 2023-24. This was stated by senior officials at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, which was seconded by economist Dr Kaiser Bengali. Dr. Bengali said the successful conclusion of SBA with IMF provided a short-term comfort level to multilaterals/bilaterals and that was one of the reasons behind the increase in inflows. Cash deposits from friendly countries were another reason behind the good inflows in July.

IMF has projected Pakistan's gross external financing needs at \$28.361 billion for fiscal year 2023-24 which is 8 percent of GDP. However, officials stated that it would depend on the continuation and successful completion of IMF SBA. "If the country fails in implementing the agreed policies and actions under the SBA, the country would face significant challenges in meeting the financing needs projected for the current fiscal year," officials stated.

Against the budgeted \$7.5 billion from foreign commercial banks, only \$2.206 billion materialized i.e. a shortfall of \$5.266 billion was registered during the fiscal year 2022-23. Further the government had budgeted \$2 billion from issuance of Sukuk bonds, but failed to meet the target after all the credit agencies including Moody's and Fitch downgraded the country's ratings due to the stalled IMF Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme. For the current fiscal year the government has budgeted \$4.5 billion from foreign commercial banks and \$1.5 billion from issuance of bonds.

The June 2023 foreign inflows were \$2.231 billion (including \$1.306 million from commercial banks), \$491.69 million in May, \$358.61 million in April and \$358.71 million in March 2023. The country received \$193.64 million from multilaterals and \$113.88 million from bilaterals during July 2023-24. The non-project aid was \$2.250 billion including \$2.083 billion for budgetary support and project aid was \$640.11m. The country received \$508.34 million under the head of guaranteed CATIC (PAF).

Asian Development Bank (ADB) disbursed \$22.59 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$2.086 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24. China disbursed no money in July, however, the government has budgeted \$18.54 million from China for the current fiscal year. Saudi Arabia disbursed \$100 million against the budgeted \$600 million under the head of oil facility during July 2023-24. USA disbursed \$8.17 million in July against the budgeted \$21.60 million for the fiscal year. Korea disbursed \$4.85 million and France \$0.56 million during July 2023. IDA disbursed \$82.71 million in July against the budgeted \$1.489 billion for the current fiscal year and IBRD \$3 million against the budgeted \$840.36 million. IsDB (Short-term) disbursed \$67.23 million in July against the budgeted \$500 million for the current fiscal year and AIIB disbursed \$11.74 million, while IFAD disbursed \$6.38 million against the budgeted \$42.68 million for the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, August 23rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Pakistan seeks \$300m ADB loan for water project

Pakistan has requested the Asian Development Bank for \$300 million loan for the Kurram Tangi Integrated Water Resources Development project which aims to improve energy, water and food security in the country. The ADB is expected to approve the loan in 2024, according to the project document released by the bank. The proposed project will directly contribute to the two strategic pillars of Pakistan's National Poverty Reduction Strategy: "Increasing productivity and value addition in agriculture" and "Integrated Energy Development Programme".

Wapda prepared a feasibility study of the Kurram Tangi Project in 2004 to store and regulate the floodwater for subsequent uses for agriculture, hydropower, and ecosystems and reduced flood risks. Due to funding constraints, the project's implementation was divided in two phases. Construction of the first phase started in 2016 with the government financing \$72m and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) providing \$81m. The project is expected to be completed next year. (*Dawn, August 28th, 2023, Page 3*)

9 # POLICY

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9.1 # Agricultural Policy

Murad stresses urgency of steps to put Sindh Water Policy in place

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah called for urgent and resolute measures for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the Sindh Water Policy to ensure a sustainable and water-secure future. The chief minister said that the National Water Policy was approved in April 2018 and since then the need of having a policy document of our own for our indigenous issues and solutions was direly felt. "As our global population continues to grow and demand for water is increasing, it has become evident that effective water management and governance are of paramount importance," he added. He said that the challenges regarding water availability, distribution and quality were multifaceted and complex. The aspired water policy should help establish a harmonious balance between human needs, environmental preservation and economic development. (*Dawn, August 4th, 2023, Page 13*)

Effective strategies sought to address agri sector's vulnerabilities

Agriculture experts called for effective strategies and policies to address the vulnerabilities of the agriculture sector owing to natural disasters, including early-warning systems, contingency plans and risk financing mechanisms. Khan Faraz, former Secretary, Pakistan Tobacco Board and agriculture expert said that agriculture is the largest source of export revenue, contributing 23 percent to the nation's GDP. Over 40 percent of Pakistan's labour force, including a majority of working women, works in agriculture. More than 63 percent of the population lives in rural areas and relies heavily on agriculture. More than half of agriculture's GDP comes from

livestock (roughly 12 percent of the country's GDP). Additionally, it offers many rural households with income security, particularly those with weak land rights. He further said that crop diversification, efficient water management and agriculture practices that are resilient and adaptable to the changing climatic conditions are necessary. (*Business Recorder, August 26th, 2023, Page 3*)

9.2 # Developmental Policy

Federal govt approves mega project for GB

The federal government has approved a mega project for Gilgit-Baltistan to address climate change impacts and overcome electricity shortage in the region. The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (EcneC) meeting recently approved the rural development and climate resilient project worth over Rs16 billion. The project is supported by AFD (French Development Agency), European Union and the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) and is estimated to cost Rs16.26bn with foreign financing amounting to Rs1.1 billion. The responsibility for implementing the project lies with the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) in partnership with (AKDN). The scope of the project includes various aspects of community support such as providing drinking water supply, sanitation facilities with treatment plants, climate-resilient and energy-efficient housing, and micro hydro power projects. Meanwhile, the Executive Committee of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has recommended development of 245 megawatt three hydro power projects in Gilgit-Baltistan. Now, the recommendation will be presented in the apex committee of SIFC headed by the prime minister for approval. (*Dawn, August 7th, 2023, Page 4*)

Rs158bn Kissan Package extended for six months

A day before its term completion, the government extended over Rs158 billion Kissan Package for another six months, approved a 'single-entity' export processing status to Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) in Waziristan for mineral exports and revival of modified SME Asaan Finance (SAAF) Scheme. The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet which also approved a 'gradual sovereign guarantee' for about \$3.475bn worth of Chinese loan for a 1,200MW nuclear power plant, continuation of gas supply to two Punjab based fertiliser plants of Fatima Group till Oct 15 and issuance of a 'State Support Agreement' to provide financing comfort to prospective foreign operator of Islamabad International Airport set to be outsourced shortly. (*Dawn, August 9th, 2023, Page 9*)

EcneC clears eight projects of Rs174bn

the outgoing government approved another eight development projects involving an estimated cost of about Rs174 billion. EcneC approved a World Bank-funded project of the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives titled "Resilient

Housing Reconstruction and Restoration in all districts of Balochistan for Rs43.4bn. The committee also approved the Rs26.44bn Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement Project of the Punjab Board of Revenue (BoR). The project is fully financed by the World Bank. The meeting also approved a project of the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs & Gilgit Baltistan titled “Establishment of Regional Grids in Gilgit-Baltistan Phase-I” with a rationalised scope and cost of Rs9.149bn with foreign exchange component (FEC) of Rs1.679bn. A project submitted by the Ministry of Water Resources, namely the Construction of Awaram Dam (Revised) was also submitted for approval. The project was approved at a cost of Rs23.579bn without FEC. Another project of the Ministry of Water Resources regarding “Construction of Panjgur Dam in District Panjgur, Balochistan” was also approved by the Ecneec at a revised cost of Rs22.341bn without FEC. A project of the Government of Sindh regarding “Construction/Re-construction of Existing Schools in Sindh affected under Rain/Flood 2022 in Sindh (1800 units)” was also approved at a cost of Rs12.338bn with a 50:50 cost-sharing basis. (*Dawn, August 10th, 2023, Page 9*)

9.3 # Neo-Liberal Policies

Karachi Terminal outsourced to ADP for 15 years

The Cabinet Committee on Inter-Governmental Commercial Transactions approved the outsourcing of the Bulk and General Terminal at Karachi Port, East Wharf, to Abu Dhabi Ports (ADP) for 15 years. The committee approved the recommendations of the negotiating committee subject to conditions that the concessioner will pay \$25 million non-refundable/non-adjustable upfront as goodwill. The UAE government-owned firm will pay another \$25m upfront adjustable against revenue sharing in the next seven years with \$3m per annum for the first five years and \$5m in the next two years. For modernising the terminal, the concessioner will start development work in September. It was also decided that all liabilities regarding the Karachi Dock Labour Board will be the responsibility of ADP. The committee recommended the commercial agreement as amended to the federal cabinet for its approval. (*Dawn, August 10th, 2023, Page 9*)

Wapda CBA vows to foil ‘clandestine’ privatisation plan

The All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) hit out at the federal government for hiding its plans for privatisation behind the tags of public-private partnership and outsourcing of feeders. Central president of the union said that the union would strongly resist the government’s policy of privatisation of power utilities. Unchecked and frequent increase in power tariff in line with IMF’s agreement had broken the back of the poor, who could not even afford to pay their bills regularly. The CEO directed the departments concerned to resolve all the issues and meet the union’s demands. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 15*)

PIA lodges rioting FIR against employees protesting over proposed privatisation

The management of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has lodged an FIR against its own employees for organising a protest at the airline's head office against the proposed privatisation of the national flag carrier. The employees' associations, however, announced that they would hold country-wide protests on Monday (today) for fulfilment of their demands. (*Dawn, August 28th, 2023, Page 13*)

9.4 # Research & Technology

Rs900m agri research projects approved

The Punjab Agricultural Research Board (PARB) has approved research projects amounting to Rs900 million. These projects encompass the development of superior canola quality lines in rapeseed and mustard, with a particular focus on elevating their productivity in the Potohar region. Presided over by interim Agriculture Minister SM Tanveer, a board meeting approved 40 research plans — 31 relating to agriculture and nine pertaining to the sub-sector of livestock. (*Dawn, August 5th, 2023, Page 9*)

Experts for more research in agri sector

The experts and progressive farmers have said that horticulture is being exported worth 250 billion dollars in the world, but we are not benefiting from it due to a lack of quality and essential export requirements, while academia, industry, farmers and organisations related in setting standards for exports have need to work together to improve quality, to promote the agriculture products to progress in exports. (*Business Recorder, August 26th, 2023, Page 9*)

10 # ENVIRONMENT

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Chitralis bewail loss of precious Chinar trees

Two weeks have passed since the devastating flood in Chitral River swept away two centuries-old Chinar (maple) trees flanking the royal fort but the locals still widely bewail the loss of the old trees, which they call part and parcel of their heritage. (*Dawn, August 7th, 2023, Page 9*)

10.1 # Health

Sedentary lifestyle, junk food blamed for rise in heart diseases among youths

Attributing an 'imbalanced lifestyle' to an alarming rise in cardiac diseases amongst the youth, medical experts have stressed the need of taking precautionary measures to avert the lethal disease. (*Dawn, August 7th, 2023, Page 14*)

Vaccine-preventable diphtheria claims 29 lives this year at one Karachi hospital

As many as 29 deaths from diphtheria, a highly contagious but vaccine-preventable bacterial infection, are reported at just one hospital in the metropolis that saw a

significant number of such infections during the current year. 29 deaths were recorded at the Sindh Infectious Disease Hospital and Research Centre (SIDHRC), where at least eight patients are presently under treatment. The majority of patients aged between one year and 14 years. (*Dawn, August 21st, 2023, Page 13*)

Lack of funds forces suspension of free treatment again in KP

The State Life Insurance Corporation (SLIC) has suspended free treatment of patients except emergencies on Sehat Card Plus owing to non-payment of its dues by the government. “The SLIC, which is implementing the free treatment programme on behalf of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, has been asking the authorities concerned to pay Rs5 billion to it so it can be able to continue the services till September”. According to them, the government is required to pay a total of Rs18 billion to the insurer in lieu of the liabilities of the previous and current year but the former is yet to make the payment owing to which the free health services have been again suspended temporarily. “The government has paid only Rs3 billion to SLIC this year,” they said. Since launch of the programme, more than 2.3 million patients have received free services, costing Rs58 billion. (*Dawn, August 23rd, 2023, Page 8*)

Dengue surveillance teams identify 26,000 hotspots in Lahore as cases rise

As 26,000 dengue hotspots have been identified by surveillance teams in Lahore, the number of dengue positive cases has touched 270, of them 30 were reported. (*Dawn, August 25th, 2023, Page 2*)

Alarming surge in malaria cases in Sindh termed ‘tip of the iceberg’

Despite experiencing a largely dry August so far, the province of Sindh is seeing growing numbers of malaria cases this month in every division, particularly lower Sindh. Sources blamed the situation on failure on the part of local administrations in draining out water still standing in several districts of lower Sindh almost a year after the floods hit the province. Poor sanitation conditions took a huge toll on public health every year affecting countless people and costing the government billions of rupees every year.

Official figures showed that 286,317 cases of high fever were reported at health facilities in the province this month. Of them, 64,519 patients tested positive for malaria — an increase of 31 per cent as compared to last month, which saw 49,112 cases. Province (Sindh) has reported 247,799 malaria cases from January till August. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 13*)

Patients in Lahore suffer as Jinnah OPD closed in protest over police-guards row

The confrontation between the Lahore police high-ups and the employees of the Jinnah Hospital over registration of a criminal case against some security guards of the healthcare facility has resulted in problems for the poor patients. The doctors, nurses,

paramedics and other hospital employees closed down the OPD of the Jinnah Hospital for an ‘indefinite period’ in protest against the police raids for the arrest of the facility’s security guards. On the other hand, the high-ups of Lahore police, the hospital and the health department are playing the role of silent spectators, ignoring the plights of the patients (Punjab). (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 2*)

67 more test positive for dengue virus

Sixty-seven more people tested positive for dengue fever across Punjab during the last 24 hours as the province is apparently heading fast towards the dengue outbreak in absence of anti-dengue activities and proper surveillance by the health authorities. It is the highest number of positive cases of dengue disease reported since January this year. The total number of dengue cases reported from January to Aug 29 reached 1,042 across the province. (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 2*)

10.2 # Pollution

GB to go plastic-free from 25th

In order to prevent hazardous impacts on human health and environment, the Gilgit-Baltistan government has decided to impose a complete ban on single-use plastic throughout the region. According to a notification issued by the GB home department, import and manufacturing of all kinds of single-use plastic bags, bottles and other items across the region have also been banned. The government also placed a ban on use of bottled water at government offices, meetings, seminars, workshops, etc., violators would be fined up to Rs10,000. (*Dawn, August 19th, 2023, Page 3*)

FCCI to collaborate with PHA to help reduce environmental pollution

FCCI will make collaborated efforts with Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) to arrest environment pollution and covert Faisalabad into a lush green city of the country. (*Business Recorder, August 28th, 2023, Page 7*)

Air pollution cuts lifespans in Pakistan by up to 4 years

A rise in air pollution in Pakistan, particularly in highly polluted urban centres, could lead to a potential reduction of up to four years in life expectancy, according to the latest Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) report. The annual report from the University of Chicago’s Energy Policy Institute indicates that those living in cities such as Lahore, Sheikhpura, Kasur and Peshawar could stand to lose up to four years of their lives. As per the index, which quantifies the influence of air pollution on life expectancy, particulate pollution stands as the second most significant peril to public health in Pakistan, with cardiovascular diseases being the primary concern. The rise in the pollution will also increase the occurrence of several mental health disorders like chronic anxiety, seasonal depression and mood sicknesses, the report predicts.

On a global scale, South Asia bears the brunt of severe repercussions. Bangladesh, India, Nepal, and Pakistan — home to nearly a quarter of the global population — are listed as the global epicentre of pollution, as indicated by annualised, population-weighted averages of fine particulate matter, detected through satellites.

According to the report, the entire 240 million population of Pakistan resides in regions where the yearly average of particulate pollution surpasses the guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO). These standards suggest that annual average concentrations of particulate matter (PM) 2.5 should not exceed five micrograms per cubic metre, while 24-hour average exposures should not exceed 15 micrograms per cubic metre more than three to four days per year. Around 98.3 per cent of the country's populace lives in areas where the annual average particulate pollution level exceeds Pakistan's national air quality standard as well as WHO guidelines for air pollution. According to the report, residents of Punjab, Islamabad, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are projected to experience a decline in life expectancy ranging from 3.7 to 4.6 years on average if current pollution levels persist.

Furthermore, the AQLI report reveals that between 1998 and 2021, the average annual particulate pollution in Pakistan experienced a surge of 49.9pc, leading to a reduction of 1.5 years in life expectancy. The report further details that if Pakistan were to adhere to the WHO guideline, inhabitants of Karachi could potentially gain three years in life expectancy, while those in Lahore might gain eight years and residents of Islamabad could see an increase of around five years in life expectancy.

Bangladesh has been ranked as the most polluted country in the world according to the index. Additionally, the report points out that since 2013, India has been responsible for approximately 59pc of the global rise in pollution. People residing in Bangladesh, where the average PM2.5 levels measured 74 micrograms per cubic metre, could experience an extension of 6.8 years in life expectancy if these levels were aligned with the WHO guideline of 5 micrograms per cubic metre. Meanwhile, New Delhi holds the inauspicious title of “world's most polluted megacity”, characterised by an annual average particulate pollution level of 126.5 micrograms per cubic metre, AFP reported. Conversely, China has made significant strides in combatting air pollution since 2014. The country has witnessed a notable reduction of 42.3pc in air pollution levels between 2013 and 2021. If these improvements are maintained, the average Chinese citizen could potentially gain an additional 2.2 years of life. In the US, measures like the Clean Air Act decreased pollution by 64.9pc since 1970, adding 1.4 years to life expectancy. However, rising wildfires, tied to climate change, trigger pollution surges from the American West to Latin America and Southeast Asia, the report stated. (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 1*)

Govt plans to borrow Rs11.09trn from banks

Federal government has planned to borrow Rs 11.09 trillion from the domestic banking system during the next three months (August-October) of FY24. The federal government will raise this amount through the auction for security papers including long-term Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs) Fixed Rate, PIBs Floating Rate, GoPljaraSukuk Fixed Rental Rate (FRR) and short-term Government of Pakistan Market Treasury Bills (MTBs). (*Business Recorder, August 8th, 2023, Page 1*)

Rising poverty, food insecurity, inflation continue to haunt Pakistanis, says MoF

Pakistan continues to face five major and persistent economic challenges, resulting in rising poverty and social vulnerabilities, said the Ministry of Finance. In its first quarterly performance report to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) on \$1.5bn Building Resilience with Active Country-cyclical Expenditures (BRACE), the Ministry of Finance said the financial progress remained satisfactory on Country cyclical Development Expenditure Programme (CDEP) in the quarter ending Dec 31, 2022 as 41.5pc of the budget for the fiscal, under social protection, was utilised. It said the current expenditures increased by 30pc to Rs6.061 trillion in July-December FY23 against Rs4.676tr in the comparable period of the last year.

The bulk of this rise stemmed from a sharp rise in mark-up payments which grew by 77pc driven by higher servicing on domestic and foreign debt due to a higher level of interest rates. Public Sector Development Programme (federal and provincial) grew by just 4.5pc during the first half of the current fiscal year. Total expenditures grew by 19.8pc to Rs6.382tr in July-December FY23 against Rs5.328tr in the same period of the previous year. Total revenue, during the first half of FY23, grew by 18.8pc to reach Rs4.699tr against Rs3.956tr in the same period of last year. The major contribution to this growth came from a 26.4pc increase in non-tax collection, while tax collection grew 17pc.

The report said a set of persistent challenges continue to haunt the national economy. On top of the list are the high fuel prices also aggravated by steep exchange rate depreciation. After fuel prices, edible oil has the most impact on GDP and household consumption, but it is almost double for the poor. Due to the relatively higher elasticity of oil with its price, demand shock is greater than wheat and almost double in poor households. Third is the persistent challenge of rising poverty.

The post-Disaster Needs Assessment Report of the 2022 floods has already warned that the national poverty rate may increase by 3.7-4pc by pushing 8.4-9.1 million more people into poverty due to devastating calamity. Another key challenge remains record inflation. It said the rising inflation, particularly food inflation — the highest in the history of Pakistan —, increase in administered prices of petroleum products,

electricity, and gas and continuous depreciation of the country's currency have a negative impact on household consumption which will lead to greater poverty, particularly in rural areas. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 9*)

Total debts, liabilities jump by 29pc in FY23

Pakistan's total debt and liabilities surged by 29 per cent, or Rs17.332 trillion in FY23 to reach Rs77.104tr during FY23, compared to Rs59.772tr in FY22. However, the gross external debt of the country declined by \$6 billion during the same fiscal year, reaching \$124.3bn compared to \$130.3bn in FY22. The SBP reported that as a percentage of GDP, total debt and liabilities reached 91.1 per cent, up from 89.7pc in FY22. Excluding liabilities, the total debt of the country in FY23 stood at \$72.991tr, compared to Rs56.837tr in FY22. This represents a growth of 28.4pc, compared to 24.7pc in the preceding fiscal year FY22. As a percentage of GDP, the debt was 86.2pc, compared to 85.3pc in the previous fiscal year. The data indicates that domestic debt rose to Rs38.8tr in FY23, up from Rs31.085tr in the previous FY.

The impact of this substantial debt and liabilities on the economy is evident from the debt servicing, which reached Rs9.819tr in FY23, compared to Rs5.578tr in FY22. This reflects a year-on-year growth of 76pc and a percentage of GDP at 11.6pc, compared to 8.4pc in FY22. The data reveals that interest payments on debt amounted to Rs5.935tr, compared to Rs3.331tr in the previous fiscal year. The size of GDP in FY23 significantly increased to Rs84.657tr, compared to Rs66.623tr in FY22. While the size of external debt decreased during the year FY23, the external debt servicing increased by almost 25pc.

However, the debt servicing increased by \$5.7bn to \$20.8bn in FY23 from \$15.1bn in the preceding year. Due to a high degree of political and economic uncertainties in FY23, the government faced challenges in borrowing from commercial banks and other sources. By the end of FY23, the government struggled to secure an IMF loan, resulting in a Standby Arrangement of \$3bn for nine months. This arrangement facilitated inflows from Saudi Arabia and the UAE and enabled the rollover of some Chinese loans. The detail shows that Pakistan paid \$16.39bn as a principal amount and \$4.420bn in interest on external debts. In FY24, the country is projected to spend around Rs7.3tr on debt servicing, including both interest and principal amounts. This constitutes 50.5pc of the total budget outlay of Rs14.46tr. The significant debt servicing leaves little room for the government to allocate funds towards development projects and other expenditures. The government's main recourse is to borrow from both domestic and foreign sources. (*Dawn, August 17th, 2023, Page 9*)

Cost of living sees big jump in first two days of new set-up

The cost of living has gone up significantly during the first two days of the current interim government as the prices of sugar and steel bar have witnessed sharp spikes.

Rising transportation cost due to a jump of Rs20 per litre in diesel rate, the rupee's depreciation against the dollar and hoarding, have all combined to torment an already hard-pressed consumer. *Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 9*

FY23 ended with 7.7pc deficit, not PDM's claimed 7pc

The former government left behind a massive fiscal deficit — the difference between income and expenditure — of 7.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) while concluding the fiscal year 2022-23 on June 30, significantly higher than its claim of 7pc, according to official accounts. Fiscal Operations Data, released by the Ministry of Finance put the overall fiscal deficit at Rs6.521 trillion during FY23 (7.7pc of GDP). While passing the current fiscal year (FY24) budget in June, the government had claimed the overall fiscal deficit at Rs5.94tr (7pc of GDP), showing a gap of about Rs580bn. Both documents are available on the ministry's website. Similarly, the previous government had claimed the primary deficit, defined by gap between income and expenditure other than interest payments, at 0.5pc of GDP, equivalent to Rs421bn in absolute numbers for FY23, but the latest official data showed the primary deficit was as wide as Rs690bn or 0.8pc of GDP.

The Centre estimated Rs459bn provincial cash surplus while presenting the FY24 budget to contain the fiscal deficit for FY23, but they provided only Rs155bn, leaving a shortfall of about Rs304bn, while the remaining gap of about Rs385bn was on the part of the federal government. This manifested a massive 83pc increase in debt servicing cost over a period of one year. The debt servicing cost that stood at Rs3.18tr or 4.8pc of GDP in FY22 jumped to Rs5.83tr or 6.9pc of GDP in FY23.

The data showed that total revenue increased by about 20pc to Rs9.634tr in FY23 when compared to Rs8.035tr a year earlier, while total tax revenue improved by 16pc to Rs7.82tr. Federal tax revenue rose by 17pc to Rs7.169tr in FY23, while prov revenue inched up just 6pc to Rs650bn. The growth in both federal and prov revenues at 17 and 6pc, respectively, dwarfed against a massive 29pc rate of inflation during that year. The total expenditure on the other hand increased by 22pc to Rs16.155tr in FY23, while current expenditure rose by 27pc to Rs14.58tr. To meet the fiscal deficit, the govt had to rely on massive domestic borrowing of Rs7.2tr during the year ending on June 30, 2023, while about Rs680bn external debt was retired chiefly because of lower borrowing available from abroad due to suspension of the IMF programme. The share of direct taxes increased to 3.9pc of GDP in 2022-23 or Rs3.27tr, up from 3.4pc of GDP or Rs2.28tr of FY22. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 12*)

11.1 # Food

WFP, Sindh govt ink MoU on food supply system

A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and the Sindh food department was inked at the office of the

excise director general's office. Sindh is the country's second largest wheat producing region with an annual production of 4.043 million tonnes as recorded in 2020-21 also. The department maintains a supply of over 1.2 million tonnes of wheat through its 1,457 storage units in the province. The WFP will provide a financial assistance of \$400,000 for the project. (*Dawn, August 4th, 2023, Page 14*)

Pakistan joins call to revive grain deal

In a global debate on famine and conflict-induced global food insecurity, Pakistan joined other nations in calling for the revival of food supplies from Ukraine but also underlined need to focus on other conflicts as well. (*Dawn, August 5th, 2023, Page 5*)

Rainwater damages tonnes of wheat in Sehwan godown

Stagnating rainwater damaged millions of rupees worth wheat at food department's godown in Sehwan town where 40,000 bags of wheat were also found adulterated with dust and stones, complained citizens. (*Dawn, August 5th, 2023, Page 15*)

11.2 # Food Scarcity

Centre set up in Peshawar to treat malnourished children

The health department in collaboration with WHO established Nutrition Stabilisation Centre to provide specialised treatment to children suffering from malnourishment. The centre will play a crucial role in providing specialised treatment to severely acute malnourished children with complications. Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the centre boasts a play area, lactation management room, and a well-furnished ward to ensure the best possible care for the children. The WHO has provided the centre with essential equipment and supplies. (*Dawn, August 3rd, 2023, Page 8*)

11.3 # Poverty

Private schools defying policy of 10pc free enrolments for poor students, PA told

Sindh Education Minister Syed Sardar Shah informed the provincial assembly that all private schools were bound to enroll 10pc poor students free of cost under the law, but many of them were not complying with it. The minister said that it was the responsibility of the provincial government to provide education to a child aged five to 16 years as it was a constitutional binding that children should be given free education. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 13*)

Three months on, over 1.2m students remain without free textbooks

About 1.2 million of total 4.4 million students enrolled in 48,636 govt schools across the province have not yet received free textbooks even after passage of entire three months of their academic year, while 3.1 million have been given incomplete set of books. They said that the board's chairman Agha Sohail Ahmed was earlier embroiled in corruption allegations during his previous tenure as head of the institution. He was

alleged to have deliberately sanctioned publication of far less number of books than were actually required. His motive behind this designed scarcity appeared to skim a significant amount of funds. They said that with a budget of Rs2.45bn, ample resources should have been available to provide books to all 4.4 million students but the board's efficiency had plummeted due to alleged corruption of over Rs1bn and it miserably failed to perform its basic function. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 15*)

Woman poisons 3 sons over poverty in Mandi Bahauddin's Malakwal

A woman poisoned her three sons due to poverty, resulting in the death of two of them at the hospital, while the eldest one survived in Malakwal police precincts, Mandi Bahauddin. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 2*)

Suicide (over poverty)

A 28-year-old man hanged himself from a tree with a rope over poverty at in district Layyah. The man was the father of three girls and he was reportedly facing financial troubles. A WhatsApp voice message of the deceased about inflation, poverty and lack of income has also appeared. (*Dawn, August 21st, 2023, Page 2*)

Govt collects Rs75bn PL in July

The federal government collected Rs 75bn in July 2023 on account of Petroleum Levy, a key source of revenue as it is not part of the divisible pool, due to an increase in the levy to Rs55 per litre on petrol. (*Business Recorder, August 22nd, 2023, Page 1*)

Starving man in Muzaffargarh dials 15 for food, gets help

Police responded to a desperate call for help from a man at emergency 15 who told about hunger his family was going through for the last two days, warning of committing suicide. A daily labourer by profession, he was jobless for long. Inflation had made the conditions worse for him. He told police that he, his wife and four children had nothing to eat for the last two days. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 2*)

11.4 # Inflation

Inflation clocks in at 28.3pc in July on costly energy

Inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), surged by 28.3 per cent in the first month of the current fiscal year mainly due to rising food and energy prices. However, it recorded a marginal deceleration from 29.4pc in June. On a month-on-month basis, the CPI inflation increased by 3.5pc in July. The July inflation was mainly fuelled by a 39.88pc increase in electricity charges while gas prices saw a surge of 62.82pc and wheat flour 102.43pc on a year-on-year basis. The International Monetary Fund has forecast the average CPI for FY24 to be 25.9pc, a significant easing out from the previous year's 29.6pc. The government has projected an annual inflation target of 21pc for the current fiscal year. According to the latest IMF report,

inflation is expected to dip below 20pc only in the fourth quarter of FY24. In FY23, the annual inflation remained at 29.18pc and surpassed its budgetary target of 11.5pc owing to the unprecedented rupee depreciation, increase in domestic taxes and rising global commodity prices. Inflation was recorded at 12.15pc in FY22. Inflation had stayed above 20pc from June last year to January. It then hit 31.6pc in February, crossed 35pc in March, escalated to 36.4pc in April and 37.97pc in May and 29.4pc in June. The reading was 24.93pc in July 2022.

Food inflation for July was 40.2pc and 41.3pc for urban and rural areas, respectively, whereas non-food inflation was 17.3pc in urban and 22pc in rural areas. The non-perishable food items saw an increase of 42.14pc in July while perishable food items witnessed an increase of 23.51pc. Core inflation, which strips out food and energy, stood at 18.4pc in urban and 24.6pc in rural areas.

High fuel prices have increased production and transportation costs, making food more expensive. The costly fertiliser has also made it difficult for farmers to afford. Although international prices for agriculture-related commodities began decreasing in the third quarter, currency depreciation and high fuel prices have prevented this from being reflected in domestic markets. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Over 400pc hike in water tariff

The Punjab caretaker government has notified a more than 400 per cent increase in the water utility bills for five major cities of the province, including Rawalpindi. The new rates will come into effect from July 1. Earlier, five marla houses were paying Rs120 for water and now this price has been increased to Rs500. The Punjab finance department's resource mobilisation committee in a meeting last month decided to increase the water rates. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 4*)

Global conditions contributed to higher inflation in Pakistan: SBP

SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad has said that global economic conditions have largely contributed to higher inflation in Pakistan. "World economy remained under pressure in near past that also resulted in an increase in inflation in Pakistan and these conditions were further aggravated due to floods and delay in IMF program review," he said. Nine-month Stand-by Arrangement agreed with the IMF has improved foreign reserves of the country and largely resolved near term issues pertaining to the external sector of the economy. (*Business Recorder, August 15th, 2023, Page 12*)

Govt increases petrol price to record high

The prices of petrol and diesel hit a record high, as the newly installed caretaker government raised fuel prices by up to Rs20 per litre, another second massive hike in a fortnight that is likely to further stoke inflation, which had cooled over the past two months. The latest jump by the outgoing government on Aug 1. This means that fuel prices have jumped by nearly Rs40 per litre in just 15 days.

At present, the general sales tax on all petroleum products is zero, but the government is charging a petroleum development levy of Rs55 per litre on petrol and Rs50 per litre each on HSD fuel. The government is also charging about Rs18-22 per litre customs duty on petrol and high-speed diesel. Petrol and high-speed diesel are major revenue spinners for the government, with their monthly sales touching about 700,000 to 800,000 tonnes. (*Dawn, August 16th, 2023, Page 1*)

Hike in fuel prices to trigger joblessness

Reacting to a major increase in petroleum prices by the interim government, business leaders warned that the decision will cause the closure of 50 per cent of industrial units and trigger mass unemployment. They said trade and industry, which are already struggling to survive the power tariff hikes of almost Rs10 per unit, cannot bear the increase of Rs17.50 and Rs20 per litre in the prices of petrol and diesel, respectively. (*Dawn, August 17th, 2023, Page 9*)

Another increase in sugar, flour prices shocks consumers

Already struggling to find ways to pay inflated electricity bills, consumers suffered another shock due to a further hike in the prices of sugar and different varieties of flour. Just two days after the takeover of the new caretaker government, consumers had seen a Rs8 per kg rise in wholesale prices of sugar to Rs153 per kg, thus pushing up the retail rates up to Rs160 per kg and up to Rs170 per kg in online stores. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

Another fuel price hike on the cards

There might be a big rise upto Rs20 per ltr in the cost of petrol and high-speed diesel due to the rupee losing its value against the US dollar and a slight change in oil prices internationally. The price of petrol could go up by over Rs10 per ltr and HSD by Rs20 per ltr in the first half of September. (*Business Recorder, August 30th, 2023, Page 12*)

11.4.1 # Weekly Inflation Report

Weekly inflation soars to 29.8pc on energy price hike

Weekly inflation recorded a year-on-year surge of 29.83 per cent for the week ending on Aug 3 due to a sharp rise in petroleum and food prices. On a week-on-week basis, the short-term inflation, measured by the SPI, rose 1.30pc, the second-highest increase in the past two months. The SPI has been decelerating for the last eight weeks due to a small drop in petroleum prices in June. In May, the SPI stayed above 45pc for three weeks after hitting an all-time high at 48.35pc on May 4. According to the latest IMF forecast, the average Consumer Price Index for the current fiscal year is projected to be 25.9pc from the previous year's 29.6pc. (*Dawn, August 5th, 2023, Page 9*)

Weekly inflation rises to 30.8pc

The short-term inflation continues to rise with a year-on-year increase of 30.82 per cent for the week ending on Aug 10 largely attributed to a surge in electricity charges. On a week-on-week basis, the short-term inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose 0.69pc, and shows no signs of slowing down, causing concern for economists and consumers alike. The electricity tariff for Q1 was raised by 1.75pc. After eight weeks of deceleration, the SPI has reversed its trend and is now on the rise. This change is largely due to an increase in petroleum prices in July, which followed a small drop in June. The upward trend of the SPI is expected to continue as petroleum prices remain high. In May, the SPI stayed above 45pc for three weeks after hitting an all-time high at 48.35pc on May 4. The rupee depreciation, rising petrol prices, sales tax and electricity bills are among the key contributors to this inflationary trend.

According to the latest IMF forecast, the average Consumer Price Index for the current fiscal year is projected to be 25.9pc from the previous year's 29.6pc. The govt has been taking harsh measures — hikes in fuel and power tariffs, withdrawal of subsidies, market-based exchange rate and higher taxation, under the IMF programme to generate revenue for bridging the fiscal deficit, which may result in slow growth and higher inflation in coming months. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 9*)

Short-term inflation rises 27.5pc

The short-term inflation rose 27.57 per cent on a year-on-year basis for the week ending on Aug 17 largely due to a surge in petroleum prices. It, however, decelerated from the preceding week's 30.82pc. On a week-on-week basis, the weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose 0.78pc, showing a rising trend for the past four consecutive weeks. The petrol price was raised by 6.40pc and diesel by 7.29pc. (*Dawn, August 19th, 2023, Page 9*)

Short-term inflation stays above 25pc

The short-term inflation saw a 25.34 per cent increase on a year-on-year basis for the week ending on Aug 25 due to a surge in the prices of kitchen items. It, however, decelerated from the preceding week's 27.57pc. On a week-on-week basis, the weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose 0.05pc, showing a rising trend for the past five consecutive weeks. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 9*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

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Climate change poses serious threat to country: Sida chief

Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority's chairman, Kabool Mohammad Khatian, has said that climate change has become a serious challenge for Pakistan as it is having negative impact on all areas of environment besides water. He said the trees were planted easily but it was difficult to nurture them over a long period of time.

Sindh Action Climate Network (SCAN) head M. Parkash advocate said that the purpose of this network was to respond to challenges of the climate change. The network created awareness among people about the problem, its consequences, losses and how to respond to it. He said that SCAN would strive for introducing legislation on climate change. The network had also representation of different religious groups, who sensitised people and communities on the gravity of the problem, advantages of tree plantation and harms of water wastage. (*Dawn, August 24th, 2023, Page 15*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

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11 die, 400 houses collapse amid rains in Balochistan

At least 11 people were killed and over 400 houses collapsed in different districts of Balochistan due to downpour and flash floods over the last one week. The province remained cut off with other areas of the country as heavy rains and flash floods triggered landslides and damaged bridges, blocking highways. Dams in Panjgur, Washuk, Kharan, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, Lasbela, Hub, Dera Bugti, Kohlu, Barkhan, Sibi and Bolan were filled up by rain-and floodwater and spillways of Mirani, Hub and other dams were opened for releasing the extra water, which submerged several villages situated in low-lying areas. (*Dawn, August 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

Water level continues to rise in all major rivers

A man died while six others sustained injuries in flood-related incidents in Punjab as all the major rivers in the province were swollen due to continuous monsoon rains. All major rivers of Punjab continued to rise as heavy rains kept lashing different parts of the province as well as the country. According to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) report, medium level flood was reported at Guddu and Sukkur and low at Taunsa in the Indus while all other rivers including Chenab, Ravi, Jhelum and Sutlej were reportedly flowing normally.

The Sutlej has burst its banks at Minchinabad following which water has entered into 44 villages and flooded agricultural land spreading over hundreds of acres. At most of the places, walls of mud houses have collapsed adding to the miseries of the people. The affected farmers have said that water has taken away all their belongings so much that now they are without shelters and have nothing to eat. They have appealed to the government to waive off their taxes. They have also requested the government to draw up a comprehensive plan for their rehabilitation. They demanded that the government give them subsidies on fertilisers, seed and pesticides. Dozens of villages have been inundated while crops grown over hundreds of acres of land destroyed after River Chenab burst its banks at Rangpur. Crops over hundreds of acres were submerged by water and a large number of people had to leave their homes in Muzaffargarh. Three villages were destroyed in Bahawalpur, 77 in Okara, 40 in Jhang, 5th in Muzaffargarh, 33 in Khanewal, 8th in Nankana, and 65 in Layyah.

Around 220 acres of land were destroyed in Bahawalpur, 20,275 acres in Okara, 19,061 acres in Vehari, 9,000 acres in Khanewal, 816 acres in Nankana and 5,762 acres in Layyah. Overflowing water from river Ravi submerged crops over hundreds of acres in Kamalia and Pirmahal tehsils. (*Dawn, August 3rd, 2023, Page 2*)

High flood in Sutlej poses threat to districts along its banks

The Flood Warning Centre (FWC) has issued an urgent alert as the River Sutlej at Ganda Singh wala has a high flood situation. According to FWC's report, the river's water levels have surged significantly and are expected to remain at this critical state. (*Dawn, August 19th, 2023, Page 2*)

Sutlej witnesses 'worst flooding in three decades'

Sutlej River surged to "extremely high levels" at Ganda Singh Wala Barrage, resulting in the evacuation of hundreds of families from 72 villages in Kasur and Chunian, while three people drowned in floodwater in Kasur while trying to find higher ground. Many people and animals were stranded in the floodwater as the administration failed to move them out of their houses. (*Dawn, August 20th, 2023, Page 1*)

378,426 evacuated as Sutlej River swells

Pakistan has evacuated some 378,426 persons and shifted to safer places owing to flooding in the Sutlej River which now is in medium flood level. Moreover 20,319 livestock have also been evacuated. The ongoing floods triggered by monsoon so far have resulted in the deaths of 213 people, injuring 313, destroying 5,754 houses and killing 1,256 livestock during the current rainy season that started on June 25, 2023. Out of a total of 5,754 damaged houses, 2,019 are completely destroyed and 3,736 are partially damaged. (*Business Recorder, August 29th, 2023, Page 1*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

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5.8 magnitude quake jolts parts of Punjab, KP

Light tremors were felt in Islamabad and many areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The impact of the quake felt was negligible in the federal capital but heavy tremors were felt in Peshawar, Dir, Malakand, Bajaur, Swat, Kohat, Mansehra, Bannu, LakkiMarwat, Dera Ismail Khan, Mirpur, Chiniot, Parachinar, Nankana Sahib, Sahiwal, Chichawatni and Battagram. The Met office reported that the seismic activity of 5.8 magnitude occurred at an extreme depth of around 195km, which mitigated the impact.

A PMD official said any activity of magnitude 5 or above and at a depth of 50km to 60km is considered serious. There were nine earthquakes recorded on Saturday (*dated 5th August, 2023*) in the region including one each in Balakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; one in Azad Kashmir; and the rest were in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. But their

impact was negligible, as most of them were either too deep or less in intensity. According to the Indian news channel NDTV, tremors were also felt in the Indian capital and its surrounding areas, northern parts of the country and held Kashmir. (*Dawn, August 6th, 2023, Page 14*)

15 # RESISTANCE

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After protests, KWSC agrees to restore 10 water connections in North Karachi, Surjani

Following strong protests from political parties and civil society against disconnection of water supply to several areas in district Central, the Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation (KWSC) agreed to restore 10 of the total 81 connections on “formal requests of the public representatives and executive engineer concerned”. A couple of days ago, the KWSC had claimed to have disconnected dozens of “illegal connections” from K-III in North Karachi and Surjani Town. Residents, however, said that their connections were legal and they were regularly paying water bills and that the KWSC deliberately did not disconnect illegal connections to commercial and industrial units as well as illegal settlements. (*Dawn, August 1st, 2023, Page 13*)

Primary healthcare edifice crumbles after lay-offs

The ‘flawed’ policies, termination of contracts of hundreds of employees and appointment of a ‘controversial’ senior medical officer (BS-18) as CEO of the Punjab Health Facilities Management Company (PHFMC) on look-after basis has led to closure of nearly 1,000 primary level health units of Punjab. There are reports that thousands of medics including anaesthetists, gynaecologists, pathologists, radiologists, pharmacists, charge nurses, technicians, security guards and other employees shut down the health facilities and went on strike to press the government to address their demands. The PHFMC was running 1,396 rural health centres (RHCs) and the basic health units (BHUs) in 14 districts of Punjab including Lahore, Faisalabad, Hafizabad etc. The PHFMC is a private limited company registered under section 42 of the Companies Ordinance 1984 and it operates through a CEO. The employees were demanding immediate removal of the company’s CEO, holding him responsible for introducing ‘flawed’ policies which caused termination of the contracts of over 800 employees of PHFMC.

The closure of a large number of hospitals has led to suspension of all kinds of operations/surgeries and other treatment facilities to thousands of local poor and deserving patients. The crisis further intensified when the authorities issued ‘warning letters’ to the doctors and other employees on strike of more departmental punishments instead of addressing their ‘legitimate’ demands. The second reason [for the strike] was that the employees wanted 35 per cent increase in their take-home salary which was also not a fair demand. The health minister said the company had

offered them a ‘reasonable’ increase but they refused to accept it and went on strike to ‘blackmail’ the authorities concerned. “Out of total Rs5.7 billion budget of the company, Rs4.8bn is spent on salaries,” he said adding that it was not possible to run a large number of health facilities with the remaining amount. The minister said he has nothing to do with the appointment of a regular CEO as it is an issue of the company. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 2*)

Govt's indecision on Karoonjhar Hills mining leads to more protests in several towns

The Sindh government’s vacillation on the issuance of permits for mining and quarrying for granite at picturesque Karoonjhar Hills sparked protests in a number of towns as the Mines and Minerals Development Department withdrew the second ‘open auction’ for the grant of mining permits in Nagarparkar within a week. The department had earlier cancelled a public auction on July 25 under public pressure but reissued the auction notice to be held on Aug 1 for ‘small scale’ mining permits across Sindh and rescheduled it later for Aug 4. The auction was, however, cancelled again over public outcry.

A large number of people from across Thar gathered in the hilly town of Nagarparkar to participate in a protest organised by Awami Tehreek against repeated attempts by the Sindh government functionaries to auction off 5,000 acres in Parkar region for extraction of granite. The protesters marched on different thoroughfares before staging a demonstration at Miskeen Jahan Khan Khoso roundabout. They demanded complete ban on the extraction of granite and gravel at all 108 points across the region. Meanwhile, a similar protest was staged in Diplo town. Activists of Sindh Sabah staged a demonstration outside local press club (Hyderabad) against auction of Karoon-jhar Hills. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 15*)

Protesters demand job offer letters

A large number of candidates who had qualified an IBA-held job test for the posts of (primary school teacher) PST and (junior school teacher) JST staged a demonstration in Jacobabad in protest against the education department’s failure to give them job offer letters. The demonstrators raised slogans against the taluka education department which, they said, had not started even the recruitment process yet to employ the successful candidates in Thull taluka. (*Dawn, August 4th, 2023, Page 15*)

Protests over move to auction Karoonjhar Hills spread to many towns

Activists and lawyers’ organisations staged protests in several Sindh towns in protest against provincial government’s move to auction granite extraction from Karoonjhar Hills. In Hyderabad, activists staged a demonstration outside local press club where they accused PPP government of selling off Sindh’s natural resources. (*Dawn, August 5, 2023, Page 15*)

Demo against outsourcing of airports

Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) employees held a demonstration on the Allama Iqbal International Airport premises against bifurcation of their department and outsourcing of major airports of the country. Holding banners and placards, the employees said they would not allow privatisation of the CAA and demanded increase in salaries. The National Assembly just before completing its term passed the Pakistan Airports Authority Bill 2022, and the Pakistan Civil Aviation Bill 2022, to bifurcate the role of the CAA — one for regulating civil aviation activities in the country and the other for providing civil aviation services and developing aviation infrastructure. The government has decided to begin the 25-year outsourcing of operations and land assets at Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports. It says the operations of these hubs will be run in a public-private partnership to ‘boost foreign exchange’. The CAA employees said their economic murder would not be allowed by this ‘anti-state decision’. They said the protest across the country would continue till the government withdrew its decision. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 2*)

Minorities speak up against discrimination

For the first time in the country, minorities marched for their rights on National Minority Rights Day at the Frere Hall. There were members of the minority communities as well as those who empathise with them. All chanted slogans, all held up placards and all marched. This was accompanied by chanting of slogans against discrimination, about all human beings having equal rights, deserving equal respect. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 13*)

Protest against lawyer`s kidnapping causes traffic mess

A large number of people took to street and blocked both tracks of Motorway near Sohrab Goth in protest over the recent kidnapping of a lawyer. The protest was organised in response to the abduction of lawyer HikmatullahMehsud in the Katcha area (riverine). The abductors demanded a ransom of Rs10 million for his release. The protest concluded with assurances from the district administration and police that they would arrange a meeting with the inspector general of police (IGP) to discuss the matter. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 14*)

Several held as people protest delay in construction of bridge

The police resorted to baton charge and arrested several people, who were protesting against the prolonged delay in construction of Munda Headworks bridge. Scores of residents blocked the Tangi-Shabqadar Road in Abazai area to demand early construction of the bridge. The Tangi police and district administration officials tried to convince the protesters to open the road, but they refused, prompting the police to baton-charge them. Several people were arrested and sent to lock-ups. The local residents strongly condemned the police baton charge and arrest of ‘peaceful’ protesters. They demanded immediate release of those arrested. They said they had

repeatedly contacted the district administration officials to construct the bridge, but in vain. It merits a mention here that the Munda Headworks bridge was washed away during the floods last year, causing difficulties to the people of surrounding areas, including TangiAbazai, in crossing the river. (*Dawn, August 16th, 2023, Page 8*)

PIA ‘disowns’ officers association as ‘pen-down strike’ begins

The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) management distanced itself from the officers association (SASA) amid a “symbolic pen-down strike” announced by employees for an increase in salaries and against the restructuring of the national airlines. SASA, however, rejected the statement issued by the PIA management, saying the tactics of the management would not deter the association from its protest. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 4*)

Protesters decry unabated extraction of granite from Karoonjhar Hills

A large number of poets, writers, rights activists, lawyers, members of civil society and general public gathered in the hilly town of Nagarparkar to express solidarity with leaders and workers of the Karoonjhar Sujag Forum for their efforts to save the hills from miners and corporate sector. Shopkeepers also joined in after shutting down their business centers on the call of the forum. They said that it would be grave injustice to inflict any more damage to any point of the hills and called upon the high-ups of the government to make concerted efforts to get the region included in the World Heritage Sites for its effective protection and preservation. They made it clear that any move to auction off the hills would also be resisted in future as well, adding that each and every pebble of the hills would be protected. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 15*)

Specialist doctors protest unfair policy

Specialist doctors of the Sindh health department held a demonstration outside the local pressclub (Hyderabad) to press their demand for promotion on a merit and seniority basis and withdrawal of a notification regarding management cadre. They alleged that injustices were being committed against senior doctors serving in the health department. They said that besides being denied promotion on time, they were not paid special incentive allowance while their seats were not being increased. (*Dawn, August 20th, 2023, Page 15*)

Candle vigil held at Teen Talwar against Jaranwala incident

Minority Rights March organisers held a candle vigil and protest at Karachi against the Jaranwala incident. The vigil was attended by activists, social workers and people from the Christian community as well as people from all walks of lives. The protesters raised slogans against the Jaranwala attackers and held placards on which ‘stop misuse of blasphemy law’ was inscribed. For the third consecutive day, Christian community gathered outside the Karachi Press Club demanding protection for their holy places and an end to mob attacks. (*The News, August 20th, 2023, Page 16*)

Rallies against Jaranwala tragedy held in many towns of Sindh

Members of the Christian community, along with their Muslim supporters and activists of various civil society organisations, held protest rallies and demonstrations in almost all district headquarters in Sindh to condemn the Jaranwala (Faisalabad) tragedy in which churches and houses of the minority community were ransacked and torched by fanatics. (*Dawn, August 21st, 2023, Page 15*)

WAF holds protest demo against killing of maid

Women’s Action Forum staged a protest in front of the Hyderabad Press Club against the brutal killing of ten-year-old Fatima in Ranipur. A large number of women including representatives of political and social organizations, lawyers, writers and students participated in the protest. (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 3*)

Rally taken out against murder of journalist

A rally was taken out against the brutal killing of a journalist Jan Mohammad Mahar started from Qazia Waah Bridge culminated at Aiwan-e-Sahafat after passing through Badin Press Club. Civil society, grower body, social worker Ittehad, motorcycle association, nationalist organizations, citizens and large number of journalists participated. They chanted slogans against the murder of journalist and demanded immediate arrest of culprits. (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 7*)

Protest over teachers’ absence in Barkhan

Hundreds of girls studying at a government-run college in Balochistan’s Barkhan town have been protesting for the past two days as teachers remain absent for several months, rendering the institution almost non-functional. The protesting students held placards and banners inscribed with their demands and chanted slogans against the teachers for their absenteeism. “Despite protesting for the past two days, no representative from the education department or local administration has appeared to address our concerns,” (*Dawn, August 25th, 2023, Page 5*)

Civil society in Karachi demands special courts to try child labour, abuse cases

A large number of people gathered in front of the Karachi Press Club to condemn the murder of nine-year-old housemaid in Ranipur. They demanded that the government constitute special trial courts to keep a check on the growing violence against children and child labour. A large number of women, children, and members of civil society attended the protest. The protesters demanded that the laws against child labour be made more effective and strictly implemented. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 13*)

Police thrash protesting relatives of ‘missing persons’

Police resorted to baton charge scores of people protesting against increasing cases of enforced disappearances of Baloch people on the main Mauripur Road. The Baloch Yakjehti Committee, Voice for Baloch Missing Persons and relatives of the missing

persons organised the protest demonstration. The organisers alleged that the police had detained several protesters. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 13*)

15.1 # Protest: Energy

Trader to launch protest drive against rising energy prices

Traders are going to start a “livelihood protection movement” against the soaring petrol and electricity prices from August 18, warning that they will not pay bills if the recent fuel price hike was not withdrawn. The movement is being started from the megacity’s Bolton Market on August 18 to press the government to reverse the fresh hike in the power and fuel prices. At a traders’ convention representatives of over a dozen of trade bodies agreed to step up the movement to save their businesses. (*Business Recorder, August 13th, 2023, Page 5*)

Public protests against power tariff hike in Gujranwala, Toba Tek Singh

People held a protest at City Chowk in Kamoke against high prices of electricity, burnt bills and raised slogans against the government for raising the rate of utility. On receiving electricity bills this month, the tempers of the citizens went high and they took to the streets, carrying placards. They rejected the expensive electricity while marching towards the city square where they set the electricity bills on fire. Traffic remained suspended for some time due to the protest.

TOBA TEK SINGH: The Jhang District Bar Association members organised a rally in protest against the recent raise in electricity price. They marched to the DC office and entered the compound by unlocking the gate. They shouted slogans against the government and demanded withdrawal of the hikes in the power tariffs. They declared that they would not pay the bills. In Jhang, the citizens held a rally on the Gojra Road, blocking traffic for 30 minutes against the high rates of power. They burnt their bills and declared their intent to abstain from paying the bills for August. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 2*)

Iesco seeks police protection against agitating consumers

Iesco had to seek police protection for its staff and property fearing adverse reaction from electricity consumers in different localities in the garrison city who were out to protest against the inflated bills.

The protesters appeared at Committee Chowk, carrying electricity bills, banners and placards inscribed with different slogans and demand to withdraw the increase. They marched on Murree Road causing disruption to traffic. Police were also present on the route of the marchers to avert any untoward situation. The protesters, however, dispersed peacefully after reaching outside the Rawalpindi Press Club. Fearing strong retaliation, the Iesco authorities in Rawalpindi requested the City Police Officer to deploy police at their offices to avoid any unpleasant situation.

In Islamabad, hundreds of residents staged a protest against the increase in electricity bills at Koral, Khanna and Iqbal Town. As many as 250 residents of the surrounding areas of Khanna, carrying electricity bills and placards inscribed with different slogans appeared on Islamabad Expressway and blocked traffic on the main artery. Due to the protest, commuters had to face problems as the road was blocked. However, later the protesters dispersed peacefully.

Likewise, more than 100 residents blocked roads at Koral and Iqbal Town areas against inflated electricity bills. The protesters shouted slogans against the increase and demanded withdrawal of the increase. The protesters said the increase in bills and high inflation had made their lives difficult. Later, the protesters dispersed peacefully.

The electricity consumers blocked main roads in Attock and tried to enter the deputy commissioner's office to register their protest against inflated electricity bills. They also staged protests in Taxila, Wah and Pindigheb.

Shopkeepers, traders and members of civil society also staged a protest in Basti Chowk in Wah Cantonment. Carrying placards and banners inscribed with different slogans, they said the electricity bills were unacceptable for traders' community and salaried class.

Trader leaders from across Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) assembled and vowed to go ahead with their planned protest programmes to force the government to meet their demands, the main one related to "cruel electricity tariff." Thousands of electricity bills were torched in Rawalakot during a massive protest. AJK government had announced "suspension" of the implementation of the increase in power tariff until the "next orders" besides forming a seven-member committee to look into the issue and give its recommendations for its final solution. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 4*)

Widespread protests in KP against exorbitant power bills

People took to the streets against exorbitant power bills in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa complaining the increase in electricity tariff amid record inflation has added to their misery. They blocked roads, set fire to power bills and announced they would challenge the "injustice" by the public utility in the court of law. Members of the business community in Peshawar demonstrated in Gulbahar, Kohati Gate, Shaheen Muslim Town, Paharipura and Warsak Road areas for the fourth consecutive day. People from other walks of life joined them and demanded immediate withdrawal of fuel price adjustment from power bills and refund of that amount.

Locals set electricity bills on fire at Gulbahar Chowk during a protest against overbilling. Similar demonstrations were held in the Shaheen Muslim Town and Kohati Gate areas. Several parts of the country witnessed protests against soaring electricity prices, with people accusing distribution companies of massive overbilling.

Also in the day, scores of people took to the streets in Swat district against exorbitant power bills. A protest was staged by the civil society in Mingora, while the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party demonstrated in Matta. People from all walks showed up there in large numbers. Shouting slogans and carrying electricity bills, they blamed the Wapda, government and the International Monetary Fund for their misery and demanded an immediate relief from inflation. Protesters later burned down their electricity bills. Also, members of the All Swat Class IV Employees Association staged a rally against the rising power tariff. Mardan district, too, witnessed street protests against the exorbitant power bills. The residents of Gulibagh area blocked the Shamsi Road for several hours suspending traffic. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 8*)

People burn bills in Punjab to vent anger on high power tariff

People across Punjab, including the provincial metropolis, have continued venting their anger at the high rates of electricity, taking to the streets in massive demonstrations and burning their electricity bills en masse, refusing to pay them. Besides Lahore, furious consumers held protests against the hikes in electricity tariff in Bahawalnagar, Toba Tek Singh, Sahiwal and Chiniot among others. In the provincial metropolis, protest demonstrations were held at many places, including Hall Road and Kahna.

BAHAWALNAGAR: Scores of citizens and traders held protests across the district against the massive hike in electricity prices that has led to an increase in the cost of living and inflation rate. In Minchinabad, the Minchinabad Bar Association also observed a strike against the raise in electricity tariff. The schoolchildren also took to the streets to record their protest against the rising electricity prices.

TOBA TEK SINGH: Scores of shirtless minor students took out a procession at Hafizabad against inflated electricity bills and marched on various roads. They burnt power bills and shouted slogans against the government. At Adda 25 Pul in Shorkot tehsil, scores of people blocked the Multan Road for traffic to condemn the high power bills. On the Jhang Road in Shorkot, the locals staged a protest against the hike in electricity rates. They set tyres on fire on the road and blocked the traffic. The lawyers observed a complete strike at the same issue at Gojra, Kamalia and Pirmahal.

CHINIOT: Police foiled bids of the citizens to hold rallies against inflated electricity bills. Some rallies were taken out from various areas on the call of civil society and furniture workers associations against the inflated electricity bills at various places of Chiniot city. A furniture workers' protest held at Pipal Chowk near the City Police Station where the workers set their electricity bills ablaze in protest against ever-increasing electricity tariff which has made it impossible for them to feed their families. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 2*)

Amid widespread protests, Pesco orders removal of govt number plates from its vehicles

Fearing mob attacks amid widespread street protests, the Peshawar Electric Supply Company has ordered an immediate removal of government number plates from its vehicles. It also directed drivers not to put “non-essential” vehicles on the road to prevent possible damage to them by angry protesters.

Meanwhile, residents of Peshawar protested soaring electricity prices for the fourth consecutive day and set power bills on fire. The protests were staged in the Ganj Gate area and on the GT Road with participants setting fire to power bills shouting slogans against the government and Pesco. They announced that they wouldn’t pay “inflated” power bills unless the latter were corrected.

Mansehra: Power protesters blocked the Karakoram Highway in the district for over an hour. They shouted slogans against the government and Pesco over exorbitant electricity bills and demanded an immediate withdrawal of the recent power tariff hikes. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 8*)

Businesses criticise `unaffordable` tariff hike

As caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar meets power sector stakeholders in Quetta, businessmen have asked the PM to announce the withdrawal of what they term an unbearable rise in power tariff, to provide relief to the public at large, as well as the business community. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

Countrywide protests against electricity tariff hike continue

The protest demonstrations against inflated electricity bills continued across the country. People came out on the streets in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Toba Tek Singh, Tala Gang and other cities today to register their protest against the levy of additional taxes that had led to astounding increase in the power tariff. (*Business Recorder, August 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

KCCI, BMG reject hike in power tariffs

The leadership of Businessmen Group and (KCCI), while referring to Caretaker Prime Minister’s meeting scheduled in Quetta with representatives of power sector, stated that the Karachi Chamber once again strongly protests the unbearable rise in electricity tariff as it was neither affordable for the common man nor for any trader or small industrialist. (*Business Recorder, August 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

Lawyers protest against rising power bills

In a significant show of dissent, the District Bar Association of Muzaffargarh orchestrated a full-day strike and protested against the relentless surge in electricity bills and mounting inflation. District Bar Association Muzaffargarh demanded of complete elimination of taxes embedded in electricity bills and an immediate

reduction in the per-unit electricity rate. They also warned of intensified protests if these demands were not met timely. (*Business Recorder, August 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

Protests erupt in Karachi over skyrocketing electricity bills

People of Karachi have been holding demonstrations at various places across the city to protest against the skyrocketing increase in power bills and what they said is overcharging on the part of K-Electric. Protests have been erupting in all the districts of the city, and causing traffic jams and road blockages. People of the Korangi district blocked the road at the Bara Bazaar. Another protest was held in the East district on Nishtar Road near the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation workshop. A protest was also held in Nazimabad in the Central district. (*The News, August 27th, 2023, Page 13*)

Hike in power tariffs triggers protests across KP

The unprecedented increase in the power tariff has triggered protest and people in almost all districts and cities including the provincial metropolis are taking streets against manifold hike in their monthly electricity bills. The trading community and residents of the city take streets and burnt the copies of their electricity bills demanding of the government to abolish or cut the ratio of various taxes in the bills to decrease it to maximum level. (*Business Recorder, August 28th, 2023, Page 2*)

Electricity protesters block motorway

As the tempers are getting frayed against the soaring cost of electricity by the day across Punjab, the protesters blocked M-4 between Gojra and Toba Tek Singh. The public protests against the exorbitant electricity bills continued in various cities across Punjab, including Lahore, Bahawalpur, Toba Tek Singh, Okara, Mianwali, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan and Lodhran, besides other major and small cities across the province. A number of people, including women and children, participated in the demonstrations against the government for the unjustified hikes in bills, pressing the caretaker government to withdraw the recent hikes in the power tariff as well as imposition of extra taxes. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 2*)

Protesters besiege Rawalpindi Iesco office, torch power bills

A day after police officials were deployed in the garrison city for the protection of Iesco installations, hundreds of demonstrators, including women and children, in Rawalpindi surrounded a grid station in Bakra Mandi and set fire to their power bills in a protest against increase in electricity tariff. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 4*)

Shutter down observed in almost all areas of Hyderabad over inflated power bills

An effective shutter down strike was observed in almost all areas of Hyderabad in response to a call given by the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) against exorbitantly high power tariff, taxes, levies and fuel adjustment charges making electricity bills unbearable. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 15*)

Protests held against hike in electricity, fuel prices

Stationary protests held at the city's markets against the fuel oil and electricity prices hike. (*Business Recorder, August 29th, 2023, Page 3*)

Drive against inflated power bills intensifies

Enraged traders and their supporters torched electricity bills in several Sindh towns as a mark of protest against unusual rise in the rate of power and different tariffs and demanded the caretaker government take back all inflated bills to give some semblance of relief to masses. (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 17*)

15.1.1 # Government Response on Energy Crisis

Caretakers call for 'crisis session' as protests spiral

As protests erupt across the country prompted by inflated electricity bills on the back of a significant increase in the national average tariff, interim Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar has summoned an emergency meeting today in an apparent bid to chalk up a strategy to placate the angry public. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

PM summons urgent meeting on electricity bills

Caretaker Prime Minister has convened an urgent meeting today regarding electricity bills following recent protests of the people. According to the Prime Minister's Office, in the meeting, consultations will be held with respect to providing maximum relief to the consumers regarding electricity bills. The caretaker prime minister has directed the Ministry of Energy (Power Division) and the distribution companies to provide a detailed briefing in this regard. (*Business Recorder, August 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

Cabinet empowered to fix power bills mess

In light of protests against inflated electricity bills, the energy ministry has finalised a list of proposals to provide relief to the inflation-hit populace, which would be presented in a meeting of the federal cabinet for approval.

According to the insider, the government could convert these bills into instalments as well as adjusting some of the amounts in power bills of winter months because of low power consumption during one cold season. Similarly, some taxes may be reduced while one-slab benefit could also be extended to consumers. The facility of free electricity units enjoyed by Wapda and other institutions is also likely to be withdrawn.

Interim Prime Minister did not preside over the meeting. Instead, he asked the ministers for energy, finance, information and others to hold a meeting and come up with a solution that would be presented before the federal cabinet today (Tuesday). (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 1*)

Govt fails to douse anger as citizens burn power bills

With the nationwide protests over massive power bills growing, the caretaker government has failed to come up with any relief measures as it tries to strike a balance between avoiding drawing the IMF's ire and causing more citizens to blow a fuse. The interim set-up expressed helplessness on how to address the issue, even on spreading electricity bills in instalments unless the IMF cleared it.

Interim Information Minister Murtaza Solangi told that the government was engaging with the IMF regarding relief measures for electricity consumers and an announcement was expected soon. Some of the members of the cabinet even opposed the option of instalments and feared that below-target receivables in the power sector in the coming months could irk the IMF.

Meanwhile, nationwide protests over power bills entered the fifth day, with citizens taking to the streets, blocking roads and torching their bills as a sign of anger at rising electricity prices. (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 1*)

Caretakers rule out relief in power bills

In a reality check following almost week-long consultations, caretaker Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar told senators and the electricity consumers to `manage (their) expectations` raised by caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar for relief in excessive power bills, saying the country's fiscal space did not permit any subsidy or relief. The Senate committee demanded that immediate steps be taken to reduce electricity theft, end free electricity, and charging fuel costs older than six months should be done away with. Dr Shamshad said the privilege of free electricity was a decades-old policy that could not be withdrawn immediately as it could create legal challenges. (*Dawn, August 31st, 2023, Page 1*)

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15 # RESISTANCE

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Thousands protest over `enforced disappearances` in Bangladesh [P. 66]

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

World's \$70tr GDP vulnerable to high water stress: WRI

World Resource Institute's (WRI) 'Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas' have shed light on a concerning global trend. According to the updated framework, Pakistan has been classified under the 'high' water stress category. This categorisation is part of a broader revelation that by 2050, an estimated \$70 trillion in GDP, equivalent to 31pc of the global GDP, will be vulnerable to high water stress. This marks a significant increase from the \$15tr recorded in 2010. A substantial portion of this exposed GDP is concentrated in just four countries: India, Mexico, Egypt, and Turkiye, collectively accounting for more than half of the projected economic risk by 2050.

world is facing an unprecedented water crisis, and the Water Risk Atlas finds that 25 countries — one quarter of the world's population — are currently exposed to extremely high water stress annually. Globally four billion people, half of the world's population are exposed to water stress for at least one month a year. By 2050 that number could be closer to 60pc. Water is central to meeting the world's climate goals, feeding a growing population and meeting people's basic needs for survival. But the world is failing to prioritize water issues. As countries push for a just transition away from fossil fuels, they must also transform how they manage water.

The 25 countries currently exposed to extremely high water stress annually, meaning they use over 80pc of their renewable water supply for irrigation, livestock, industry and domestic needs. Even a short-term drought puts these places in danger of running out of water and sometimes prompts governments to shut off the taps. This scenario plays out in many places around the world, such as England, India, Iran, Mexico, and South Africa. Five most water-stressed countries are Bahrain, Cyprus, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman and Qatar. The water stress in these countries is mostly driven by low supply, paired with demand from domestic, agricultural and industrial use.

The most water-stressed regions are the Middle East and North Africa, where 83pc of the population is exposed to extremely high water stress, and South Asia, where 74pc is exposed. By 2050, an additional one billion people are expected to live with extremely high water stress, even if the world limits global temperature rises to 1.3°C to 2.4°C by 2100, an optimistic scenario. Global water demand is projected to increase by 20pc to 25pc by 2050, while the number of watersheds facing high year-to-year variability, or less predictable water supplies, is expected to increase by 19pc. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 9*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

China bans Japanese seafood after Fukushima water release

Japan started releasing treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, a polarising move that prompted China to announce an immediate blanket ban on all aquatic products from Japan. China is “highly concerned about the risk of radioactive contamination brought by... Japan’s food and agricultural products,” the customs bureau said in a statement. The Japanese government signed off on the plan two years ago and it was given a green light by the UN nuclear watchdog last month. The discharge is a key step in decommissioning the Fukushima Daiichi plant after it was destroyed by a tsunami in 2011.

However, China reiterated its firm opposition to the plan and said the Japanese government had not proved that the water discharged would be safe. Tokyo has in turn criticised China for spreading “scientifically unfounded claims.” It maintains the water release is safe, noting that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has also concluded that the impact it would have on people and the environment was “negligible.” Japan has requested that China immediately lift its import ban on aquatic products and seeks a discussion.

Japan exported about \$600m worth of aquatic products to China in 2022, making it the biggest market for Japanese exports, with Hong Kong second. Sales to China & Hong Kong accounted for 42 per cent of all Japanese aquatic exports in 2022. South Korean police arrested at least 16 protesters who entered the Japanese embassy in Seoul, although South Korea’s govt has said its own assessment found no problems with the scientific and technical aspects of the release. (*Dawn, August 25th, 2023, Page 12*)

4 # NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

5 # TRADE

India rice export ban puts market on edge for copycat curbs

India’s rice export ban has the world market bracing for similar actions by rival suppliers to avoid potential domestic shortages as sellers try to fill the 10 million tonne gap left by New Delhi, stoking concerns over already high global food inflation. India’s latest restrictions are almost identical to those it imposed in 2007 and 2008, analysts say, which triggered a domino effect as many other countries were forced to curb exports to safeguard local consumers. This time around the impact on supplies

and prices could be even more sweeping, as India now accounts for more than 40 per cent of global rice trade compared with around a 22pc share 15 years ago, ratcheting up pressure on rice exporting nations such as Thailand and Vietnam to follow suit.

The impact on prices of the world's most consumed staple has been swift, hitting 15-year highs, after India surprised buyers last month by imposing a ban on widely consumed non-basmati white rice sales to dampen price rises. New Delhi had already restricted lower-quality broken rice supplies in 2022. Limited supplies risk a further spike in the price of rice, and global food inflation, hitting impoverished consumers in Asia and Africa. Rice is a staple for more than 3 billion people, and nearly 90pc of the water-intensive crop is produced in Asia, where the emergence of dry El Nino weather threatens crops in key producing countries. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 9*)

Iran says oil exports surpass 1.4m bpd target

Iran's oil exports have surpassed the government's 1.4 million barrels per day target, the head of Iran's Plan and Budget Organisation said. Prior to the re-imposition of US sanctions in 2018, Iranian oil exports were about 2.8 million barrels per day. (*Business Recorder, August 14th, 2023, Page 1*)

WTO rules against China retaliatory tariffs on US imports

World Trade Organisation experts ruled that tariffs imposed by China on billions' worth of US imports in retaliation for Washington's steel and aluminium tariffs violated international trade rules. A WTO panel set up to help resolve one of numerous disputes within the tit-for-tat trade war between the world's two biggest economies found that China's "additional duties measure is inconsistent" with various articles of the GATT. Beijing indicated it was studying the ruling. Washington meanwhile hailed the decision, with Sam Michel, a spokesman for the US trade representative, saying it recognised that China "illegally retaliated with sham 'safeguard' tariffs". The case revolves around China's decision in April 2018 to impose tariffs on 128 US imports worth \$3 billion, including fruits and pork. That move came shortly after the administration of former US President Donald Trump announced steep tariffs on steel and aluminium imports from China and a number of other countries. (*Business Recorder, August 17th, 2023, Page 9*)

India imposes 40% export duty on onions with immediate effect

India will impose with immediate effect a 40% export duty on onions up to December 31 in an attempt to improve domestic availability of the vegetable. India's annual retail inflation rose sharply to a 15-month high of 7.44% in July from 4.87% the previous month. Food inflation, which accounts for nearly half of the overall consumer price basket, hit 11.51%. Retail food inflation was at its highest since Jan 2020. Prices of some of the most used vegetables in Indian kitchens have more than doubled in the last few months. (*Business Recorder, August 20th, 2023, Page 1*)

India set to ban sugar exports for first time in 7 years

India is expected to ban mills from exporting sugar in the next season beginning October, halting shipments for the first time in seven years, as a lack of rain has cut cane yields, three government sources said. India's absence from the world market would be likely to increase benchmark prices in New York and London that are already trading around multi-year highs, triggering fears of further inflation on global food markets. "Our primary focus is to fulfil local sugar requirements and produce ethanol from surplus sugarcane". (*Business Recorder, August 24th, 2023, Page 12*)

India expands curbs on rice exports with 20pc duty

India has imposed a 20pc duty on exports of parboiled rice with immediate effect, a move that could further reduce shipments from the world's largest exporter and lift global rice prices, which are already trading near their highest levels in 12 years. Last month, India surprised buyers by imposing a ban on exports of widely consumed non-basmati white rice, following a ban on broken rice exports last year. (*Business Recorder, August 26th, 2023, Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

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7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

Saudi Arabia okays \$1.2bn aid for Yemen

Saudi Arabia, which has led a years-long military coalition in Yemen, announced a \$1.2 billion grant for the war-scarred country's internationally recognised government, the latest attempt to prop up its economy. The money will help the government address its budget deficit and also fund salaries for civil servants and 'support for ensuring food security', (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 11*)

UN 'to help millions' amid funding cuts

The United Nations and its partners are aiming to reach 250 million people worldwide affected by conflict and other crises amid a shortfall in humanitarian funding. (*Dawn, August 20th, 2023, Page 5*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

Fossil fuel price reform would be boon for global GDP: IMF report

The findings of a study conducted by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reveal that the world collectively spent around \$7 trillion on fossil fuel subsidies in 2022, which amounts to nearly 7.1 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP). According to the IMF Fuel Subsidies Data: 2023 Update, explicit subsidies (undercharging for supply costs) account for 18pc of the total, while implicit subsidies (undercharging for environmental costs and forgone consumption taxes) account for

82pc. It notes that explicit subsidies have more than doubled since the last IMF assessment, reaching \$1.3tr in 2022 from \$0.5tr in 2020. The report attributes this to temporary price support measures, adding that if international prices continue to drop from their peak, these subsidies are expected to decrease. However, it sees implicit subsidies rising as the share of fuel consumption in emerging markets (where local environmental costs are generally larger) continues to climb.

As for Pakistan, the IMF notes that the country provided \$28 billion in implicit and \$17bn in explicit subsidies in 2022. Of the implicit subsidies, the largest share of \$17bn went to petroleum, with diesel and gasoline getting \$8.4bn and \$6.9bn, respectively. Under explicit subsidies, the country again spent a massive \$12.8bn in explicit consumer subsidies on natural gas. The East Asia and the Pacific regions account for nearly half of the global subsidy, while terms China remains the biggest subsidiser of fuels in absolute terms, followed by the US, Russia, EU, and India.

The report argues that fossil fuels are priced incorrectly in most countries. `The optimal price would reflect the full societal costs of fuel use their supply costs (e.g., labour, capital, raw materials); environmental costs, including carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions, local air pollution, and broader externalities associated with fuel use like road congestion; and general taxes applied to consumer goods.

Unfortunately, it notes, current prices are routinely set at levels that do not adequately reflect environmental dam-ages and, in some cases, not even supply costs. As a result, environmental damages like global warming costs and local air pollution deaths are far too large; governments rely extensively on more distortive taxes like taxes on work effort and investment and too little on more efficient ones like taxes on fossil fuels, or they do not adequately fund public investments; and, distributional objectives and poverty reduction objectives are undermined, as most of the benefits from in efficiently low fossil fuel prices accrue to better off households.

The report notes that fully reforming fossil fuel prices by removing explicit fuel subsidies and imposing corrective taxes, such as a carbon tax, would reduce global carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions by 43 per cent below `business as usual` levels in 2030 (34 percent below 2019 levels). This would be in line with keeping global warming to `well below` 2°C and towards 1.5 °C.

This would also raise substantial revenues, worth about 3.6 pc of the global GDP, which could be used to cut more burdensome taxes such as on those labour, help with debt sustainability, or fund productive investments. Indeed, for developing countries as a whole, revenue gains from full price reform exceed the estimated extra spending needed to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, the report said. It noted that reforming fossil fuel subsidies is in countries` own interest, even when excluding

climate benefits. For the average country, the IMF report says, reforming fuel subsidies to the extent that they reduce CO2 by about 25 pc below baseline levels in 2030 would raise net welfare, before even counting global climate benefits. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

9 # POLICY

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Not any preferable news to be included in this month

10 # ENVIRONMENT

Indian govt sets emission limit for hydrogen to qualify as ‘green’

The Indian government has set an emission limit of two kilogram carbon-dioxide for every kilogram of hydrogen produced to be classified as “green” from renewable sources, the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy said. It said in a statement its notification would bring widely-awaited clarity for green hydrogen production in India. India wants to become a global hub for the production of green hydrogen and is aiming for annual production of 5 million metric tons of the fuel by 2030, which would cut about 50 million metric tons of carbon emissions and save more than \$12 billion on fossil fuel imports. (*Business Recorder, August 20th, 2023, Page 8*)

Poor air quality forces Jakarta civil servants to work from home

Thousands of public employees in Indonesia’s capital, or half of its civil servants, were told to work from home in a two-month trial aimed at improving the city’s air quality, a government notice said. Jakarta and its surrounding cities form a megalopolis of about 30 million people, and its airborne concentration of the tiny particles known as PM 2.5 recently surpassed other heavily polluted cities such as Riyadh, Doha and Lahore. Activists blame the high levels of toxic smog on clusters of factories and coal-fired power plants near the capital, but the government has dismissed such claims, arguing that Jakarta’s recent worsening air pollution was mainly due to weather and traffic. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 10*)

Ecuadoreans vote to stop oil drilling in Amazon

Ecuadoreans have voted to stop an oil drilling project in an Amazon reserve, referendum hailed. After years of demands for a referendum, the country’s highest court authorised the vote in May to decide the fate of “block 43,” which contributes 12pc of the 466,000 barrels of oil per day produced by Ecuador. The block is situated in a reserve which stretches over one million hectares and is home to three of the world’s last uncontacted Indigenous populations and a bounty of plant and animal species. Drilling began in 2016 after years of fraught debate and failed efforts by then president Rafael Correa to persuade the international community to pay cash-strapped Ecuador \$3.6 billion not to drill there.

The government of outgoing President Guillermo Lasso has estimated a loss of \$16 billion over the next 20 years if drilling is halted. The reserve is home to the Waorani and Kichwa tribes, as well as the Tagaeri, Taromenane and Dugakaeri, who choose to live isolated from the modern world. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 11*)

New fund backs implementation of biodiversity objectives

A new Global Biodiversity Framework Fund has been created by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to facilitate financing for developing countries — which are often the most bio-diverse — to enhance their ability to protect, restore and ensure sustainable use of natural resources. The new fund that will also ramp up investment in nature restoration and renewal was agreed upon and ratified by representatives of 185 countries, including Pakistan, at the seventh assembly of GEP just concluded in Vancouver. The fund, uniquely dedicated to supporting the framework and its action towards halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2030 and putting nature on a recovery path by 2050, provides an opportunity to receive funding from all sources. Two countries have announced initial contributions to start its capitalisation: Canada pledged 200 million Canadian dollars and the United Kingdom 10m pounds. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 5*)

10.1 # Health

Global Covid cases up 80pc as new subvariant rises

The number of new Covid-19 cases reported worldwide rose by 80 per cent in the last month, the World Health Organisation said, days after designating a new “variant of interest”. The WHO declared in May that Covid is no longer a global health emergency, but has warned that the virus will continue to circulate and mutate, causing occasional spikes in infections, hospitalisations and deaths. In its weekly update, the UN agency said that nations reported nearly 1.5 million new cases from July 10 to August 6, an 80pc increase compared to the previous 28 days. However, the number of deaths fell by 57pc to 2,500. The WHO warned that the reported number of cases and deaths do not reflect the true numbers, in part because countries carry out far less testing and monitoring than during earlier stages of the pandemic. Many of the new cases came in the Western Pacific region, which saw infections jump by 137pc, the WHO said. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 11*)

Red Cross set to end funding at 25 hospitals across Afghanistan

The International Committee of the Red Cross is likely to end the financial running of 25 Afghan hospitals by the end of August due to funding constraints, a spokesperson said, amid growing concerns over a plunge in aid to Afghanistan. “Although we continue to engage with government ministries, donors, and organisations to find alternative sustainable support mechanisms for the hospital sector, the phase-out of the Hospital Programme is expected to happen tentatively at the end of August,”

DiogoAlcantara, ICRC’s spokesperson for Afghanistan, said.“ The ICRC does not have the mandate nor the resources to maintain a fully functioning public health-care sector in the longer term,” Alcantara said. In April, ICRC said its governing board approved 430 million Swiss francs (\$475.30m) in cost reductions over 2023 and early 2024 and a rolling back of operations in some locations as budgets for humanitarian aid were expected to decrease. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 10*)

10.2 # Pollution

Jakarta hit by major pollution spikes

Indonesian capital Jakarta has been the world’s most polluted city on four days this week, according to air quality monitor IQAir, as authorities fail to grapple with a spike in toxic smog. Air pollution is estimated to contribute to 7mil premature deaths every year globally and is considered by the UN to be the single biggest environmental health risk. President Joko Widodo told reporters he plans to tackle pollution levels by reducing `Jakarta`s burden` as the country prepares to move its capital to Nusantara on Borneo island next year. He also said a planned metro train network across Jakarta `must be finished` to reduce pollution. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 10*)

US to invest \$1.2bn on facilities to pull carbon from air

The US government said it will spend up to \$1.2 billion for two pioneering facilities to vacuum carbon out of the air, a historic gamble on a still developing technology to combat global warming that is criticized by some experts. The two projects — in Texas and Louisiana — each aim to eliminate one million tons of carbon dioxide per year, equivalent in total to the annual emissions of 445,000 gas-powered cars. It is “the world’s largest investment in engineered carbon removal in history,” the Energy Department said in a statement.

Direct Air Capture techniques — also known as Carbon Dioxide Removal — focus on that CO2 emitted into the air, which is helping to fuel climate change and extreme weather. But the sector is still marginal — there are just 27 existing carbon capture sites commissioned worldwide, according to the IEA, though at least 130 projects are under development. And some experts worry that use of the technology will be a pretext for continuing to emit greenhouse gases, rather than switching more quickly to clean energies. (*Business Recorder, August 13th, 2023, Page 6*)

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Post-pandemic, world facing gloomy stew of debt, trade wars and poor productivity

Record levels of government debt, geopolitical tensions that threaten to split the global trading system, and the likely persistence of weak productivity gains may saddle the world with a slow-growth future that stunts development in some countries even

before it starts. That sobering view of a post-pandemic global economy emerged from research organised by the Kansas City Federal Reserve and debated. After rocketing higher during the Global Financial Crisis 15 years ago, the ratio of public debt to world economic output has grown to 60pc from 40pc thanks to pandemic spending and is likely now at a level where serious debt reduction is not politically feasible. (*Dawn, August 29th, 2023, Page 10*)

11.1 # Food

Dozens of states to pledge to combat use of food as weapon of war

More than 75 countries will “commit to take action to end the use of food as a weapon of war and the starvation of civilians as a tactic of warfare” by backing a US-drafted communique at the United Nations, senior US officials said. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will release the communique when he chairs a UN Security Council meeting on famine and food insecurity caused by conflict. A senior US official said more countries were expected to sign. Blinken will also announce some \$362m in new US funding to “tackle the drivers of food insecurity and enhance resilience” in nearly a dozen African countries and Haiti, said a second senior US official. While the US, the Europe Union and others have accused Russia of using food as a weapon of war by worsening a global food crisis when it invaded Ukraine in Feb 2022, the draft communique does not specifically call out any countries. Russia last month quit a deal that had allowed the safe Black Sea export of Ukraine grain for the past year. The pact was brokered by the United Nation and Turkey to help ease a global food crisis following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. After Moscow quit it began targeting Ukrainian ports and grain infrastructure on the Black Sea and Danube River and global grain prices spiked. Moscow has said that if its demands to improve its own exports of grain and fertilizer were met it would consider resurrecting the Black Sea agreement. (*Business Recorder, August 4th, 2023, Page 12*)

High heat can serve up food insecurity within days, says study

Amid record-high temperatures globally, a study reveals that a few days of searing heat can be enough to prevent billions of people already living hand-to-mouth on daily wages from putting food on the table. A week of extreme temperatures in India, for example, means an additional eight million people will likely experience serious food insecurity, according to findings published in the journal *Nature Human Behaviour*. Spread across 150 countries examined — especially in tropical and sub-tropical zones — that same heatwave translates into millions of men, women and children at risk of hunger, even if overall food precarity is increased by less than one per cent, they found. The World Bank estimates that nearly 30pc of the global population suffered moderate or severe food insecurity in 2022. (*Dawn, August 22nd, 2023, Page 10*)

11.2 # Poverty

Inflation, Covid pushed nearly 70m Asians into extreme poverty: ADB

Soaring food and fuel prices and the coronavirus pandemic pushed nearly 70 million more people in developing Asia into extreme poverty last year, the Asian Development Bank said in a report. The Manila-based lender defines extreme poverty as living on less than \$2.15 a day based on inflation-adjusted 2017 prices. “Asia and the Pacific is steadily recovering from the Covid-19 pandemic, but the increased cost-of-living crisis is undermining progress toward eliminating poverty,” ADB chief economist Albert Park said in a statement. The bank said an estimated 155.2 million people, or 3.9 percent of the region’s population, were living in extreme poverty in 2022 — 67.8 million more than would have been without the pandemic and higher living costs. Poor people have been hurt the most by higher inflation as they are less able to pay higher prices for necessities, leaving many unable to save money, pay for healthcare or invest in education, the report said.

The ADB estimated that the pandemic pushed 75-80 million more people into extreme poverty in 2020, compared to its pre-pandemic projections. In July, the bank said that it expects inflation to ease to 3.6 percent this year — from 4.4 percent in 2022 — as food and fuel prices softened. While developing Asian economies should continue to make progress against poverty, an estimated 1.26 billion people, or about 30 percent of the region’s projected population by 2030, will still be considered “economically vulnerable”. The term refers to a person living on \$3.65 to \$6.85 a day based on 2017 prices. (*Business Recorder, August 25th, 2023, Page 1*)

Millions of flood-hit kids still in need of urgent support, says Unicef

The Unicef warned that millions of children continue to need humanitarian assistance and access to essential services one year after the catastrophic floods that devastated Pakistan. A press release issued by Unicef reminded that though a national state of emergency was declared, recovery and rehabilitation efforts remain underfunded. The current season’s monsoon rains are worsening already challenging conditions for flood-affected communities, tragically claiming the lives of 87 children across the country, the UN agency said. Unicef estimated there were still eight million people, around half of whom are children, who continue to live without access to safe water in flood-affected areas. Over 1.5m children require life-saving nutrition interventions in the flood-affected districts, while Unicef’s current appeal of \$173.5m to provide life-saving support remained only 57 per cent funded. Unicef calls on the government of Pakistan and partners to increase and sustain investment in basic social services for children and families. We must build back climate-resilient systems that bridge equity gaps and reduce vulnerability to climate shocks. We cannot forget the children of Pakistan. The flood waters have gone, but their troubles remain, in this climate volatile region. (*Dawn, August 26th, 2023, Page 5*)

11.3 # Inflation

World rice price index jumps to near 12-year high in July: FAO

The United Nations food agency's rice price index rose 2.8% in July from a month ago to their highest level in nearly 12 years as prices in key exporting countries jumped on strong demand and India's move to curb the exports. The Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) All Rice Price Index, which tracks prices in key exporting countries, averaged 129.7 points in July against 126.2 points for the previous month, the agency said. The July score was almost 20% higher than the last year's 108.4 points and the highest since September 2011, it said. The agency's overall world food price index also rose in July, rebounding from two-year lows. (*Business Recorder, August 5th, 2023, Page 1*)

Climate change contributing to global inflation, says fund boss

The head of Norway's mammoth sovereign wealth fund said it would be "quite difficult" to bring down global inflation due to persistent upward pressure brought on by climate change and global market trends. But a positive development in the world is artificial intelligence, which will enable us to concentrate on the "most fun" tasks, Nicolai Tangen, the chief executive of Norges Bank Investment Management which manages the fund, said as he addressed current economic trends while presenting the fund's half-yearly report. Central banks around the world have struggled to rein in inflation despite numerous interest rate hikes since the end of the Covid pandemic. In addition to that trend, "the new thing here is the climate effects, that is to say, the link between the climate and inflation," he said, pointing to rising food costs. "More expensive olive oil, potatoes, beef, all these things and that fuels inflation," he said. "What's new is that (the climate) is also affecting productivity." Tangen cited a summer "in Europe this year so hot that you can't work in the middle of the day", as well as increasingly extreme weather events that dissuade tourists. "And then there's nothing going on in the stores... We shut down parts of society during certain periods due to the climate". (*Dawn, August 17th, 2023, Page 10*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

'Concerned' world community to provide special financial aid to Pakistan

The concerned world community assembling at the United Nations Climate Change Conference-2023 (COP28) to be held in Dubai this year to provide special financial assistance to Pakistan keeping in view its serious vulnerability due to extreme weather conditions. The UAE diplomat said that he had been following up on a daily basis to ensure that the Pakistani government actively took part in the upcoming COP-28 to effectively highlight the country's climate risk vulnerability before the concerned world community. (*Business Recorder, August 11th, 2023, Page 7*)

12.1 # Climate Crisis

Oceans set new record for surface temperature

The world's oceans set a new temperature record this week, raising concerns about knock-on effects on the planet's climate, marine life and coastal communities. The temperature of the oceans' surface rose to 20.96 degrees Celsius on Friday, according to European Union climate observatory data. The previous record was 20.95C in March 2016, a spokeswoman for the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service said. The samples tested excluded Polar Regions. Oceans have absorbed 90 per cent of the excess heat produced by human activity since the dawn of the industrial age, according to scientists.

This excess heat continues to accumulate as greenhouse gases — mainly from burning oil, gas and coal — continue to accumulate in the Earth's atmosphere. Globally, the average ocean temperature has been besting seasonal heat records on a regular basis since April. Warmer oceans are also less capable of absorbing carbon dioxide (CO₂), reinforcing the vicious cycle of global warming. By 2100, they could be 10 times more intense than they were at the beginning of the 20th century if pollutant emissions are not reduced. (*Dawn, August 5th, 2023, Page 11*)

Heat threatens millions of children across South Asia: Unicef

South Asia has the highest percentage of children exposed to extreme high temperatures, compared to all other regions, according to a Unicef analysis. Unicef estimates that 76 per cent of children under-18 in South Asia — 460 million — are exposed to extreme high temperatures where 83 or more days in a year exceed 35 degree celsius. This means that 3 in 4 children in South Asia are already exposed to extreme high temperature compared to only 1 in 3 children (32pc) globally. The analysis is of 2020 data, the latest available. In addition, the data also show that 28 pc of children across South Asia are exposed to 4.5 or more heatwaves per year, compared to 24pc globally.

In parts of Pakistan's southern Sindh province, including Jacobabad, the world's hottest city in 2022, temperatures were in their 40s in June, exposing 1.8 million people to severe short- and long-term health risks. The scorching heat came less than one year after the devastating floods which left most parts of southern Sindh underwater in August 2022. More than 800,000 children in flood-affected areas were at risk of severe heat stress in June 2023. July was the hottest month ever recorded globally, raising further concerns about a future where children, including those living in South Asia, are expected to face more frequent and severe heatwaves, largely due to climate change. According to Unicef's 2021 Children's Climate Risk Index (CCRI), children in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Maldives, and Pakistan are at 'extremely high risk' of the impacts of climate change. (*Dawn, August 8th, 2023, Page 3*)

IMF warns climate shocks may increase conflict deaths

Climate change threatens to exacerbate conflict in fragile nations across the globe and lead to increased deaths, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said in a report. While climate shocks alone may not trigger new unrest, the Washington-based IMF said, they “significantly worsen conflict, compounding fragility” such as hunger, poverty and displacement.

By 2060, conflict deaths could increase by 8.5 percent as a share of the population in so-called fragile and conflict-affected states (FCS), and by up to 14 percent in those nations facing an extreme increase in temperatures. In all, 39 countries that are home to nearly one billion people and 43 percent of the world’s poor are classified as FCS by the World Bank. More than half of these nations, which are disproportionately burdened by climate change, are in Africa.

Economic losses resulting from climate shocks are more “severe and persistent” in fragile nations than in other countries. Each year, three times more people are affected by natural disasters in fragile states than in other countries. Disasters in fragile states displace more than twice the share of the population in other countries. IMF said that by 2040, these nations could face 61 days a year of temperatures above 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) on average — four times more than other countries. Extreme heat, along with the more frequent extreme weather events that come with it, will endanger human health and hurt productivity and jobs in key sectors such as agriculture and construction. (*Business Recorder, August 31st, 2023, Page 11*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Flood

Over 48,000 evacuated in Myanmar floods

Floods and landslides caused by monsoon rain have killed five and forced around 48,000 people to flee their homes. Myanmar experiences heavy monsoon rains every year, but scientists believe extreme weather events are being exacerbated by climate change. Escaping the deluge was a struggle. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 11*)

13.2 # Rainfall

Beijing on alert as heavy rain batters northern China

Heavy rains battered northern China, killing at least two people in Beijing while washing away cars and forcing the capital to issue its highest alerts for flooding and landslides. Storm Doksuri, a former super typhoon, has swept northwards over China, when it hit southern Fujian province after scything through the Philippines. The Beijing government issued the highest flood warning. China has been experiencing extreme weather and posting record temperatures this summer, events that scientists

say are being exacerbated by climate change. An average of 170.9 millimetres of rain inundated Beijing in 40 hours. That is almost equivalent to the average rainfall for the entire month of July. (*Dawn, August 1st, 2023, Page 12*)

20 killed as rainstorms lash Beijing, other areas

At least 20 people were killed and 19 were missing after heavy rains lashed Beijing and surrounding provinces, in downpours that have submerged roads and deluged neighbourhoods with mud. More than 100,000 people deemed at risk across Beijing have been evacuated. Authorities have allocated 110m yuan (\$15.4m) for disaster relief work in the capital & surrounding provinces. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 11*)

Beijing records its heaviest rainfall in 140 years

Rains that pummelled Beijing in recent days were the heaviest since records began 140 years ago. The maximum (amount) of rainfall recorded during this storm, which was 744.8 millimetres. (*Dawn, August 3rd, 2023, Page 10*)

China rains death toll rises to 78

The death toll from record-breaking rains across northern China rose to at least 78, as authorities warned of more flooding and another storm approached the country. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 10*)

Over 50 killed as rain triggers landslides in India's Himalayas

Torrential rain in India's Himalayas triggered landslides over the weekend that have killed over 50 people, with the death toll expected to rise as more than 20 remain trapped or missing. Unusually heavy rain and melting glaciers have brought deadly flash floods to the mountains of India and neighbouring Pakistan and Nepal over the past year or two, with government officials increasingly blaming climate change. (*Dawn, August 15th, 2023, Page 12*)

13.3 # Storm

Tropical storm triggers floods, evacuations in South Korea

South Korea authorities evacuated more than 14,000 people and closed schools in flood-hit areas as tropical storm Khanun swept over the peninsula, having pounded southern Japan. Downgraded from a typhoon to a tropical storm, Khanun made landfall on the southeast coast, and was heading towards the South Korean capital Seoul. The storm brought up to 60 mm (2.4 inches) of rain per hour in some east coast towns, and maximum wind speeds of 126 kilometres per hour in the port city of Busan. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 10*)

Storm Hilary to bring 'life-threatening flooding' to US

States across the typically arid US southwest braced for torrential rain and potentially life-threatening flooding, as Hurricane Hilary barreled up Mexico's coast, where

authorities reported at least one fatality. At its peak, Hilary reached Category 4 on the five-step Saffir-Simpson scale, but it was expected to weaken to a tropical storm before reaching southern California. (*Dawn, August 21st, 2023, Page 11*)

Over 1,000 flights cancelled as hurricane makes landfall in Florida

Airlines in the United States cancelled more than 1,000 flights as Hurricane Idalia slammed into the Big Bend region of Florida, but the storm's power ebbed as it headed toward Georgia. (*Dawn, August 31st, 2023, Page 10*)

13.4 # Heatwave

Iran declares holidays due to heatwave

Iran declared a two-day holiday for government workers and banks nationwide as searing temperatures sweep across the country. The decision came after the meteorological office forecast temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in many cities, and nearly 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in the southwest. (*Dawn, August 2nd, 2023, Page 11*)

13.5 # Wildfire

Hawaii wildfires leave at least 36 dead

Fast-moving wildfires have claimed at least 36 lives in the US tourist paradise of Hawaii, where rescuers raced to evacuate more people from the worst-hit island of Maui. Brushfires on Maui's west coast — fuelled by high winds from a hurricane passing to the south — broke out and rapidly engulfed the seaside town of Lahaina. The quick-moving flames forced many to flee into the ocean to escape. President Joe Biden declared the fires a “major disaster” and unblocked federal aid for relief efforts, as residents said they needed more help and feared it would take years for the town to recover. Thousands of people have been evacuated from Maui, with plans for more flights out of the main airport in Kahului. (*Dawn, August 11th, 2023, Page 12*)

Artificial Intelligence to help spot wildfires

California firefighters are using artificial intelligence to help spot wildfires, feeding video from more than 1,000 cameras strategically placed across the state that alerts first responders when to mobilise. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 11*)

Firefighters battle Hawaii blazes as death toll hits 55

Firefighters battled stubborn wildfires which killed at least 55 people on the Hawaiian island of Maui and left a historic beachfront town a charred ruin. The Maui County Government said firefighters were trying to extinguish flare-ups and contain wildfires in Lahaina and two other areas of the island. Thousands of people have been evacuated from Maui, with 1,400 waiting at the main airport in Kahului overnight, hoping to get out. (*Dawn, August 12th, 2023, Page 12*)

80 dead as Hawaii starts probe into handling of wildfire

The death toll from the Hawaii wildfires rose to 80 as search teams combed through the smoldering ruins of Lahaina, and Hawaiian officials sought to determine how the inferno spread so rapidly through the historic resort town with little warning. The fires became the deadliest natural disaster in the state's history, surpassing that of a tsunami that killed 61 people on the Big Island of Hawaii in 1960, a year after Hawaii joined the US. Cadaver dogs could still find more dead from the fire that torched 1,000 buildings and left thousands homeless, likely requiring many years and billions of dollars to rebuild. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 12*)

Thousands flee wildfires in Canada's far north

Thousands ordered to flee wildfires advancing on one of the largest cities in Canada's far north crammed into a local airport to board emergency evacuation flights, as convoys snaked south to safety on the only open highway. The order to evacuate Yellowknife in the Northwest Territories marked the latest chapter of a terrible summer for wildfires in Canada, with tens of thousands of people forced to leave their homes and vast swathes of land scorched. (*Dawn, August 18th, 2023, Page 10*)

Tens of thousands flee western Canada wildfires

Residents of western Canada scrambled to evacuate as raging wildfires encroached on two metropolitan areas — separate blazes that have sent tens of thousands fleeing over the course of just days. The devastating fires in British Columbia and the Northwest Territories are just the latest in a summer of dramatic wildfires across the country that have left millions of acres scorched. (*Dawn, August 20th, 2023, Page 10*)

Wildfires force over 26,000 to evacuate Spanish holiday island

An estimated 26,000 people may have been forced to flee a wildfire raging out of control on the Spanish holiday island of Tenerife as high temperatures and strong winds plagued efforts to tackle the massive blaze. The huge blaze is the biggest fire ever experienced in the Canary Islands. (*The News, August 20th, 2023, Page 11*)

Wildfire in Greece sparks more evacuations, road closures

A 'really difficult' wildfire in northeastern Greece, fanned by high winds causing more evacuations while authorities issued extreme fire risk warnings. Firefighters battled 53 wildfires in the previous 24 hours. (*Business Recorder, August 21st, 2023, Page 12*)

Fire forces 25,000 to leave Athens quarter

Thousands of people in an outer district of Greece's capital Athens were under evacuation orders as firefighters battled a steadily growing wave of wildfires around the country that has left 20 dead. Over 60 fires had erupted in the last 24 hours, and six countries were sending help via the European Union's civil protection mechanism, the fire department said, amid a dangerous mix of gale-force winds and temperatures

of up to 41 degrees Celsius. Amid a heatwave, a fire that started on July 18 and was fanned by strong winds ravaged almost 17,770 hectares (more than 43,000 acres) in 10 days in the south of Rhodes, a popular tourist island in the south-eastern Aegean Sea. (*Dawn, August 23rd, 2023, Page 10*)

338 missing since deadly Hawaii wildfire

Hawaii officials have released the names of 338 people still missing more than two weeks after the deadliest US wildfire in more than a century swept through the resort town of Lahaina. (*Dawn, August 27th, 2023, Page 10*)

Fresh evacuations as Greek wildfires burn

Firefighters in Greece were battling flames for a ninth consecutive day, as more areas of the country's north were ordered to evacuate their homes. (*Dawn, August 28th, 2023, Page 10*)

Greece blaze described as 'largest wildfire ever recorded in EU'

A forest blaze in Greece is "the largest wildfire ever recorded in the EU" and the bloc is mobilising nearly half its firefighting air wing to tackle it, a European Commission spokesman said. Firefighters have been battling the flames for 11 days in north-eastern Greece which have killed at least 20 people and pose an "ecological disaster". (*Dawn, August 30th, 2023, Page 13*)

13.6 # Landslide

Two dead, 16 missing in north China mudslide

Two people died and 16 others are missing after a mudslide triggered by heavy rains occurred near the northern Chinese city of Xi'an. China has faced deadly floods and historic rainfall in recent weeks, with the death toll from storms in the northern part of the country reaching at least 78. (*The News, August 13th, 2023, Page 12*)

Death toll from mudslide in China's Xian rises to 21

The death toll from a mudslide in China's northwestern city of Xian has risen to 21, with six people still missing as China grapples with unusually high summer rainfall. (*Business Recorder, August 14th, 2023, Page 6*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

23 injured as 5.4-magnitude quake hits China

At least 23 people were injured and dozens of buildings collapsed, state media reported, after a shallow 5.4-magnitude earthquake struck eastern China. The quake was felt as far away as Beijing and Tianjin, as well as in Shanghai, about 800 kilometres from the epicentre. (*Dawn, August 7th, 2023, Page 10*)

36 feared dead after landslide at Myanmar mine

At least 36 people were feared dead at a jade mine in northern Myanmar after being swept into a lake by a huge landslide. The accident happened in the remote town of Hpakant, the centre of Myanmar's secretive jade industry, where scavengers risk their lives picking through unstable earth and rubble excavated by mining companies, searching for small pieces of the semi-precious stone. Myanmar produces about 90 per cent of the world's jade, large quantities of which are sold in China. The industry is worth billions of dollars each year to Myanmar's ruling military and business allies, according to activists. (*Dawn, August 15th, 2023, Page 10*)

15 # RESISTANCE

South Korean activists protest against Fukushima water discharge

Hundreds of South Korean activists gathered in central Seoul to protest against Japan's plan to release treated radioactive water from the tsunami-wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant into the ocean. Japan's Asahi shimbun daily reported earlier this week that the country plans to start releasing the water into the ocean as early as late August, citing unidentified government sources. 'If it is discarded, radioactive substances contained in the contaminated water will eventually destroy the marine ecosystem,' said Choi Kyoungsook of Korea Radiation Watch, an activist group that organised the protest. Hundreds of protesters held up signs saying 'Keep It Inland' and 'Protect the Pacific Ocean!'. Japan's nuclear regulator last month granted approval for plant operator Tokyo Electric Power to start releasing the water, which Japan and the International Atomic Energy Agency said is safe but nearby countries fear may contaminate food. (*Dawn, August 13th, 2023, Page 10*)

Thousands protest over 'enforced disappearances' in Bangladesh

Thousands of Bangladeshi protesters marched demanding information on hundreds of people they say security forces have abducted during Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's nearly 15 years in power. The government denies the allegations of disappearances and extrajudicial killings, saying some of those reported missing drowned in the Mediterranean while trying to reach Europe. National elections are due in Bangladesh by the end of January, but rights groups and foreign governments have long raised concerns over efforts by Hasina's government to silence criticism and stamp out political dissent. (*Dawn, August 31st, 2023, Page 12*)

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.

Roots for Equity

A-1, 1st Floor, Block 2, Gulshan-e-Iqbal, Karachi, Pakistan

Phone: +9221 34813320

Email: roots.equity@gmail.com

Website: <http://rootsforequity.org/>

Blog: <https://rootsforequity.noblogs.org/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RootsEquity>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/rootsforequity/>