

# ***HAAL AHWAL***

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

**April, 2023**

Roots for Equity



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**April, 2023**

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**Roots for Equity**



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## Preface:

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

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

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

Asian Development Bank; aid agencies such as the USAID and others as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Though the layout of the news items has been changed quite a bit, we are retaining our take on the news items covered under Points to Ponder, which is given in the very beginning of the publication. The next section is based on excerpts 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.

1,000	1 Thousand	1 Thousand	ایک ہزار
10,000	10 Thousand	10 Thousand	دس ہزار
100,000	100 Thousand	1 Lac	ایک لاکھ
1,000,000	1 Million	10 Lac	دس لاکھ
10,000,000	10 Million	1 Crore	ایک کروڑ
100,000,000	100 Million	10 Crore	دس کروڑ
1,000,000,000	1 Billion	1 Arab	ایک ارب
10,000,000,000	10 Billion	10 Arab	دس ارب
100,000,000,000	100 Billion	1 Kharab	ایک کھرب

## **Glossary**

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ANSES	National Agency for Food, Environment and Workplace Security
BISP	Benazir Income Support Program
BRACE	Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures
CERF	Central Emergency Response Fund
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CPI	Consumer Price Index
CWDP	Central Development Working Party
Drac	Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
ECNEC	Executive Committee of National Economic Council
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ESTP	Eastern Sewerage Treatment Plant
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FCA	Federal Committee on Agriculture
FCEPL	FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited
FED	Federal Excise Duty
FPCCI	Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry
FRDLA	Fiscal Responsibility & Debt Limitation Act
FSVO	Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (Switzerland)
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIEWS	Global Information and Early Warning System
HCI	Human Capital Index



HEC	Higher Education Commission
HIDR	Health Inequality Data Repository
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HWA	Hari Welfare Association
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
IDA	International Development Association
IED	Independent Evaluation Department
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPO	Import Policy Order
IRP	Islamic Relief Pakistan
Irsa	Indus River System Authority
ISS	International Space Station
IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
KKH	Karakoram Highway
LBOD	Left Bank Outfall Drain
NBP	National Bank of Pakistan
NFML	National Fertilizer Marketing Limited
PBC	Pakistan Business Council
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PCGA	Pakistan Cotton Ginnery Association
PCRWR	Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources
PFMA	Pakistan Flour Mills Association
Pilap	Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan
PSDP	Public Sector Development Programme
REAP	Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan
Ruda	Ravi Urban Development Authority

SAU	Sindh Agriculture University
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SDPI	Sustainable Development Policy Institute
SECP	Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan
Sepa	Sindh Environmental Protect Agency
SFA	Sindh Food Authority
SFD	Saudi Fund for Development
Sida	Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority
SPDC	Seed Production and Development Centre
SPI	Sensitive Price Index
SWAT	Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation
TCP	Trading Corporation of Pakistan
UBL	United Bank Limited
UN	United Nations
UN-CCRD	United Nations - Convention for the Conservation River Delta
USC	Utility Stores Corporation
Wapda	Water and Power Development Authority
Wasa	Water and Sanitation Agency
WB	World Bank
WEO	World Economic Outlook
WHO	World Health Organisation
WOAH	World Organisation of Animal Health
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WPI	Wholesale Price Index
WTO	World Trade Organisation

# NEWS EXCERPTS

## NATIONAL NEWS

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- As many as 4,000 acres of barren land has been rehabilitated for cultivation as the agriculture department in Khyber tribal district in collaboration with NGO IRP restored two key water channels from the Bara River in Upper Bara area.
- Human Rights Watch (HRW) has criticised the government for forcibly evicting thousands of farmers near Lahore for a massive infrastructure project called the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project
- Government has acted on behalf of private developers to acquire the necessary property, 85 percent of which is agricultural land occupied by nearly one million farmers, labourers, and business owners.
- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the government had raised support price of wheat on the basis of reports of the surveys carried out in flood-hit areas so as to benefit calamity-hit farmers.
- Rs500 billion had been set aside for the reconstruction of houses damaged in the twin disaster of heavy rains and flood across the province.
- The high court stopped the handover of 45,267 acres of land on a lease to the Pakistan Army for the purposes of corporate farming.
- Sindh has long been plagued by a high frequency of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and other natural disasters, said the statement issued by Hari Welfare Association (HWA) on International Peasants Rights Day.
- The lack of land reforms in Sindh has also been exacerbated by the lack of effective law enforcement, the lack of infrastructure and resources, the anti-peasant but pro-landlord policy climate, and the lack of assistance for sharecroppers, small-scale landlords, and peasants.
- In every budget Sindh allocates millions of rupees to support feudal lords but a peasant and sharecroppers remain without any subsidies and services announced by the government each year.
- The unending sea intrusion has deprived the area of its agricultural diversity and prosperity in the Indus Delta. Indus Delta, which witnessed rich farming activities in the past, has become a painful saga of brackish seawater intrusion.
- Contrary to popular perception, Pakistan is not running out of water, not just yet as available freshwater has generally remained constant over past decades.
- Pakistan's current water productivity is the eighth lowest in the world at \$ 1.38 per cubic meter of water withdrawn from the Indus River Basin and the Indus aquifer.

- The main source of low productivity stems from inefficiencies within the delivery system of water from the Indus Basin Irrigation System to the farm gate and from the on-farm application of that water to the crop root.
- The World Bank has proposed some changes in the implementation plan for the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation project to adapt mitigation activities to help the provincial government manage climate risks with a focus on the water and agricultural nexus.
- The \$98 million project that also be additionally funded with \$194 million non-concessional credit from International Development Association (IDA), having the total commitment of \$292 million, will increase agricultural water productivity in Selected Farmers' Organisation (SFO).
- Pakistan is set to face about 37 per cent water shortage during the ongoing Kharif cropping season, the water regulator has confirmed.
- Meeting concluded that Punjab and Sindh would face a 27pc water shortage in the early Kharif and 10pc in the late Kharif season.
- The Senate was told that India could not unilaterally modify the Indus Waters Treaty. On India's move to seek revision of the Indus Waters Treaty.
- The shrinking delta of Mighty River Indus of Pakistan has emerged on the United Nations radar after it accepted to create a global convention on all deltas of the world to ensure its protection against rising climate change impacts casting serious impact on its nature and habitat.
- The Sindh government has planned to execute four projects aimed at storing rainwater and averting damage by floods in Thatta district.

## **AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

- An inter-ministerial meeting on Kissan Package-2022 was informed that use of DAP and urea fertilizer has declined due to higher prices and supply issues.
- NBP launched a new low markup rate agricultural loan programme to support the farming industry.
- Balochistan will start the distribution of free rice seeds and other equipment among farmers in four districts.
- SAU Vice Chancellor inaugurated an experimental farming for the production and expansion of cotton varieties under the aegis of the Seed Production and Development Centre (SPDC).
- Farmers in lower Sindh have achieved a 26% average increase in plant population and 11 to 16% average yield increase through mechanisation.

## **AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT**

- The country has produced 34 per cent less cotton this year as compared with the crop yield last season.

- The textile industry will have to import around 10 million bales to satiate its annual hunger for 15m bales. However, mill consumption in the year 2022-23 has also been reported at 8.8m bales, the lowest in over 20 years, mainly because of severe import financing issues.
- The government has failed to set a target for cotton sowing before the start of the season, with competing crops gradually nudging the silver fiber out.
- This year, the support price of cotton has been fixed at Rs8500 per 40kg, which will make cotton cultivation profitable.
- Secretary Agriculture, Punjab said that there is a need to make research and development more effective and productive for the discovery of climate smart new varieties so that the harmful effects of climate change and insect attack can be reduced.
- The Punjab agriculture authorities estimate that 5 to 6pc of wheat crop worth Rs23bn has been damaged due to recent heavy rains and hailstorms in many districts of the province.
- The per-acre production of wheat is very encouraging this year despite unfavourable weather conditions.
- Wheat was available in abundance at Rs 3,900 per maund in the productive areas. Hence, there was no shortage of wheat in Punjab.
- An outbreak of yellow rust disease has been reported in several areas of Bajaur tribal district, affecting the wheat crop.
- Pakistan is estimated to produce 26.81 million tonnes of wheat during the ongoing Rabi season against the target of 28.4 million tonnes. While production will be below the target, the area under wheat cultivation also reduced from 9.3 million hectares to 9.1 million hectares.
- The ongoing torrential rains and last week's hailstorms damaged watermelon crop, causing heavy losses to the local farmers, forcing them to immediately sell their crops at throwaway prices.

## **NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS**

- ECC of cabinet approved amendments to the Import Policy Order 2022 to comply with new international guidelines on live animal trade.

## **TRADE**

- Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed by 35.51 percent to \$22.9 billion during the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$35.509 billion during the same period of last year.
- The imports decreased by 25.34 per cent during the period under review by going down from \$58.859 billion last year to \$43.946 billion during the current year. On a year-on-year basis, exports witnessed a decline of 14.76 per cent

and were recorded at \$2.367 billion in March 2023 against the exports of \$2.777 billion in March 2022.

- The trade deficit narrowed by 59.75 per cent on a YoY basis to \$1.461 billion in March 2023 compared to \$3.630 billion in March 2022.
- For the first time in the history of Pakistan-Iran economic relations, the volume of bilateral trade exceeded \$2 billion.
- The Ministry of Commerce told a Senate panel that the European Union has not given any preferential access to Indian basmati rice.
- The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) is paying Rs 143 million mark-up daily on loans raised from banks for import of wheat, sugar and fertilizer due to nonpayment by Utility Stores Corporation (USC), National Fertilizer Marketing Limited (NFML) and Passco.
- Pakistan has placed its first order for discounted Russian crude oil under a deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow

## **CORPORATE SECTOR**

- In line with FrieslandCampina's global purpose of nourishing by nature, FCEPL partnered with EngroEximp FZE to expand its global footprint and enter new markets.

## **INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN**

- Finance Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed that China had rolled over a \$2 billion loan, quashing the speculation that the matter was still pending.
- Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) signed an agreement to extend a \$240 million loan to Pakistan for the construction of the \$1.2 billion Mohmand Multipurpose Dam project and help transition towards green energy.

## **INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)**

### **Asian Development Bank**

- ADB committed \$20.5 billion from its resources in 2022 to help Asia and the Pacific continue their recovery from the pandemic despite fresh economic headwinds and crises.
- ADB committed \$6.7bn in financing for climate mitigation and adaptation in 2022, making progress toward its ambition of providing \$100bn in cumulative climate financing during 2019-30.
- ADB provided \$3.7bn under its \$14bn food security programme, delivering essential food relief and strengthening food production systems.
- The floods in Pakistan impacted 33 million people, inflicted damages and economic losses exceeding \$30b, and resulted in recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at \$16.3b.

- The bank stated in October, the ADB provided Pakistan with \$1.5 billion, along with \$500 million in co-financing, through Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures Program.
- The ADB provided timely responses to emerging and ongoing crises in the Asia and Pacific region. This included a combined \$2.2 billion, directed through the bank's Countercyclical Support Facility, for the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- ADB's support during year included \$2.1 billion through the bank's Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) programs.
- In Pakistan, ADB signed a \$300m loan to further develop capital markets, promote private investment, and help mobilise domestic resources.
- To date, the ADB has committed 740 public sector loans, grants, and technical assistance totaling \$ 39.7 billion to Pakistan.
- Cumulative loan and grant disbursements to Pakistan amount to \$30.76billion.
- The ADB's ongoing sovereign portfolio in Pakistan includes 53 loans and three grants worth \$ 9.59 billion. In 2022, ADB's loan and grant disbursements to Pakistan amounted to \$ 2.49 billion.

### **International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

- Hinting at entrenched high inflation, IMF lowered its forecast for Pakistan's economic growth rate for the current fiscal year to just 0.5 per cent, with inflation going beyond 27pc and unemployment rate increasing to 7pc.
- IMF has projected a decrease in the government gross debt for Pakistan, ie, from 75.8 percent of GDP in 2022 to 73.6 percent in 2023 and projected further decline to 68.9 percent in 2024.
- Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced financial support from the United Arab Emirates and China totalling \$1.3 billion, giving the ailing economy a shot in the arm as it seeks to meet conditions to unlock IMF funding.

### **World Bank**

- The World Bank has estimated a decline in GDP per capita income for Pakistan, i.e., from \$1,613.8 in 2021-22 to \$1,399.1 in 2022-23.
- The unemployment rate is estimated to increase to 10.2 percent in 2022-23 compared to 10.1 percent in 2021-22.

### **POLICY**

- CWDP cleared 3 development projects of Rs76.5b in KP, Punjab and Sindh.
- The government has officially clipped the size of the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) by a quarter to just Rs600 billion compared to the Rs800bn allocation, citing fiscal constraints.

- Pakistan has made significant progress in improving intellectual property (IP) legislation, but a lot still needs to be done in the area of enforcement.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

- WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala has said non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for a significant portion of the mortality rate in Pakistan, amounting to 57 per cent.
- The federal government is considering withdrawing funding to the Rs88 billion nationwide health programme initiated three years ago to combat Covid-19 and other natural calamities owing to poor implementation progress by the provinces and other regional administrations.
- The Ministry of Climate Change informed a parliamentary body that around three million tons plastic waste was generated in Pakistan in 2022, and was expected to reach 12 million tonnes by 2040, if no urgent action was taken.

## **SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION**

- Pakistan's public debt increased by over 28 per cent or Rs1.3 trillion between June 2021 and September 2022 to Rs51.13tr
- The total public debt which was Rs39.87tr by end-June 2021, increased to Rs49.19tr by end-June 2022, showing an increase of Rs9.3tr.
- The domestic debt of the central government has increased by Rs3 trillion during the first 8 months of the current financial year, reported the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).
- UN warned that the number of children suffering from malnutrition in flood-affected areas had greatly increased compared to the pre-flood situation.
- Pakistan's food trade balance was a deficit of \$3.6 billion in the FY2022.
- Any potential mitigation methods used by Engro do not have an understanding of the toxicity of the water caused by the ongoing Thar coal project. Comparing with historical baseline data, it appears that it is Engro's operations that are responsible for poisoning the water of Thari communities.
- Consumer inflation raced to 35.4% in March, the highest annual rise in prices on record, driven mainly by costs of food, electricity, beverage, and transport.
- CPI-based inflation increased to 35.4% on a y-o-y basis in March 2023 as compared to increase of 31.5% in previous month and 12.7% in March 2022.
- Sindh Information Minister said that over one million deserving people had been given Rs2.14 billion for the purchase of flour across the province.
- Government announced that the budget for the BISP was increased from Rs 235b to Rs 400b reflecting an increase of 70.12%.
- World Bank sees poverty in Pakistan will inevitably increase with pressures from weak labour markets and high inflation.



# NEWS EXCERPTS

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Closing the gender gap in the agriculture and food system, where women still earn less than men, would add \$1 trillion to the global economy
- The share of men who hold the rights to property or are guaranteed rights of agricultural land is two times higher than that of women,” in more than 40 percent of countries that provide data on women’s land ownership.
- ANSES began a testing regime in 2019 to identify around 200 complex chemical compounds originating from pesticides or explosives which are not normally sought in its routine checks.
- Syngenta, which was bought by ChemChina for \$43 billion in 2017, lobbied against a ban on its product, pointing to other studies that disputed any carcinogenic effect.

### AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- Crop seeds sent into space last year to develop resilient crops that can help provide sufficient food as the planet heats up, returned to Earth. Seeds sent into space to explore the effects of cosmic radiation on speeding up natural, genetic adaptation of much needed crops.

### TRADE

- WTO said that 2023 global trade growth would be slightly better than feared
- India and Russia are discussing a free trade agreement.
- Overall Indian imports from Russia increased almost fourfold to \$46.33b in the year to March 31.

### INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

- IMF said its executive board had approved a four-year \$15.6b loan programme for Ukraine, part of a broader \$115bn international support package to help the country meet urgent funding needs.
- The World Bank’s ongoing reform could result in a \$50 billion lending boost over the next decade
- World Bank Group President David Malpass said that the lender has revised its 2023 global growth outlook slightly upward to 2% from a January forecast of 1.7% but the slowdown from stronger 2022 growth will increase debt distress for developing countries.

- Global public debt soared to almost 100% of GDP in 2020 before posting its steepest drop in 70 years by 2022, although it remained about 8 percentage points above the pre-pandemic level. Rather than normalizing, the ratio was expected to start rising again this year, hitting 99.6% of GDP in 2028, the last year of the IMF’s forecast horizon.
- Debt sustainability analyses carried out by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should reflect the growing share of domestic debt in many developing countries’ overall debt levels.
- The World Bank forecast a substantial decline in global commodity prices during the current year but Pakistanis would have to brace for 21pc average annual inflation in the next fiscal year.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

- Report revealed that in these countries eliminating wealth-related inequality in under-five mortality could help save the lives of 1.8 million children.
- Unicef says with vaccination coverage levels decreasing in 112 countries, children born just before or during the pandemic are now moving past the age when they would normally be vaccinated.

## **SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS**

- IMF expects global economic growth to dip below three per cent in 2023 and to remain at around 3pc for the next five years.
- IMF predicted global economy will grow by 2.8 per cent this year and 3pc in 2024, a decline of 0.1 percentage point from its previous forecasts in January.
- United Nations food agency’s world price index fell in March for a 12th consecutive month, and is now down 20.5%.
- Food prices in Pakistan have been increasing for 11 consecutive months, eroding the purchasing power of households by as much as 38 percent.
- FAO says in a study that meat, eggs and milk offer crucial sources of much-needed nutrients which cannot easily be obtained from plant-based foods.
- The death toll in a case involving a Kenyan cult that practised starvation climbed to 73.
- The number of Afghans in poverty nearly doubled to 34 million as the nation was racked by collapse of the US-backed government and Taliban takeover.

## **CLIMATE CHANGE**

- World’s glaciers melted at dramatic speed last year and saving them is effectively a lost cause, noting that record levels of GHG have caused.
- “Antarctic sea ice fell to its lowest extent on record and the melting of some European glaciers was, literally, off the charts,” the WMO.

# NATIONAL NEWS

## 1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Dept, NGO join hands in Khyber for agricultural rehabilitation

### 1.1 # Farmers

HRW criticises high-handedness of Ruda for evicting farmers

Murad says wheat support price raised to benefit flood-hit farmers

Punjab has not formally recognised role of women farm workers: FAO

### 1.2 # Land

LHC stops transfer of land to army for corporate farming

HWA advocates land reforms to address food insecurity

Sindh's unending sea intrusion

Housing schemes gluttony sees no end as 100 more Mandi Bahauddin villagers deprived of land

### 1.3 # Water

Pakistan not running out of water: report

World Bank proposes changes to Sindh water, agriculture project

Wastewater, effluents continue to be discharged into freshwater body

Irsa confirms 37pc water shortage for Kharif

India can't amend water treaty on its own, Senate told

Wapda wants safety protocols beefed up after GB dam mishap

Irrigation infrastructure destroyed by recent floods restored: minister

Shrinking Indus Delta attracts UN's attention

Sindh to face greater water shortage than other provinces in Kharif season, says Irsa

Wapda restores Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project on Eid

Revival of natural waterways ahead of monsoon urged

Thatta district to have three small dams

## **2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

Kissan Package: Use of DAP, urea ebbs due to higher prices, supply issues

NBP launches new agri loan programme

Balochistan farmers to get free rice seeds after Eid

SAU inaugurates work on production of cotton seed varieties

Mechanisation helps Sindh farmers increase yield by 16pc: report

Li for accelerating agri, tech cooperation with Pakistan

## **3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT**

Zarai bank, SDPI sign MoU to improve agriculture output

Canal breach damages crops over 200 acres

### **3.1 # Cash Crop**

Increased FED on cigarettes to hurt interests of farmers

Pakistan sees lowest output of cotton in four decades

Farmers reject proposal to impose tax on tobacco leaf

Competing crops push cotton out as govt misses sowing target

Secretary agriculture finalises cotton revival plan

### **3.2 # Food Crop**

Heavy rains, hailstorms destroyed wheat worth Rs23bn

Good wheat crop expected this year

Yellow rust disease hits wheat crop in Bajaur

Wheat production estimated to fall short by 2m tonnes

### **3.3 # Fruits**

Rain-ridden farmers selling watermelon at throwaway prices

## **4 # NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS**

Revised import policy for livestock approved

## **5 # TRADE**

Jul-Mar trade deficit shrinks 35.51pc to \$22.9bn YoY

Taftan trade gateway to reopen after nine years

Officials promise removal of hurdles to Pak-Afghan trade

Pakistan-Iran trade volume exceeds \$2bn mark

### **5.1 # Export**

Pakistan's exports fall 15pc for seventh month in a row

Pakistan bigger exporter of basmati to Europe than India, panel told

Exports of textiles dip 22.61pc in March

Non-textile exports fall to \$11.2bn in 2022-23

Basmati rice exports surge 45pc in March

REAP urges govt to help it achieve \$5bn rice exports

Rice exports: quarterly roundup

Rs80bn gas subsidy to five export sectors ends

### **5.2 # Import**

20pc duty imposed on import of tea whiteners

TCP paying Rs143m mark-up daily on loans for commodity imports

9MFY23 cotton imports

Pakistan places order for first oil cargo from Russia

Govt urged to ban import of non-essential items

## **6 # CORPORATE SECTOR**

FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan posts strong financial results for Q1

Dairy-Based Products Segment

Frozen Desserts Segment

FCEPL Partnership with Engro Eximp FZE

Future Outlook

## **7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN**

Ishaq Dar confirms rollover of \$2 billion Chinese loan

KSA commits financial support to help secure IMF deal: govt

Saudis okay \$240m for Mohmand Dam project

## **8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)**

### **8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

Public sector projects perform inefficiently, says ADB

ADB extends \$20.5bn to support recovery

Recovery needs estimated at \$16.3bn: Floods hit 33m people, caused \$30bn economic losses

Pakistan's economy: ADB lists factors that continue to pose challenges

ADB decides against financing Karachi's Malir Expressway

### **8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

IMF slashes Pakistan's growth outlook to 0.5pc

Govt terms previous deal with IMF 'poisonous'

Fiscal Monitor: IMF projects fall in govt gross debt to 73.6pc of GDP

IMF says public debt is growing faster than pre-Covid projections

Pakistan inches closer to IMF deal with \$1.3bn boost

### **8.3 # World Bank**

Pakistan makes inadequate investments in human capital: WB

DHP-1: WB projects \$1.3bn financing gap

'WB could lend \$50bn more over decade with reform'

World Bank estimates fall in GDP per capita income to \$1,399

World Bank calls for simpler tax regime

Debt assessments should reflect growing share of domestic debt: World Bank

Decades-old issue of canal design to be addressed with WB loan, but no time soon

Operationalisation: World Bank to extend additional financing for CASA-1000

## **9 # POLICY**

### **9.1 # Development Policy**

CDWP clears three projects worth Rs76.5bn

Uplift plan cut by a quarter to Rs600bn

Public Sector Development Programme: Rs129bn released for development projects

### **9.2 # Neo-Liberal Policy**

US wants Pakistan to ‘do more’ for intellectual property enforcement

## **10 # ENVIRONMENT**

### **10.1 # Health**

WHO seeks policymakers’ role in prevention of NCDs in Pakistan

‘Over 600,000 people contracted TB in last two years in Pakistan’

Health experts raise concerns over growing TB cases in country

Haemophilia management needs emergency treatment, rehabilitation services: WHO

Unusual rise in preventable diseases among children in flood-hit areas

Malaria spikes in Pakistan after ‘climate-driven’ disasters

Authorities on alert after new monkeypox case reported

‘Kidney diseases rising at alarming rate in Pakistan’

Govt looks to stop fund for health project

### **10.2 # Pollution**

3m tonnes of plastic waste generated in Pakistan last year: ministry

## **11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION**

Public debt jumps 28pc to Rs51.13tr

0.4pc growth rate foreseen: World Bank warns of a ‘macro-economic crisis’

Central govt’s domestic debt jumps to Rs34tr

Trade and industry warn of unsustainable financial burden

### **11.1 # Food**

Concerns raised over ‘poisoning’ of potable water in Thar  
SFA to begin registration of pre-packed food brands on May 15  
Growers’ body objects to seizure of wheat stock

### **11.2 # Food Scarcity**

Millers warn govt of flour crisis if free movement of wheat not allowed  
Malnutrition in flood-hit areas has increased, says UN  
Great food insecurity ahead for country, says PBC report

### **11.3 # Poverty**

One million people get Rs2bn for buying flour, says Sharjeel  
BISP budget increased 70.12pc to Rs400bn  
Economic, political uncertainty worsens poverty outlook in Pakistan: report

### **11.4 # Inflation**

Inflation sets another record, hits 35.4pc in March  
March inflation soars to 35.4pc, highest since 1965  
Average inflation projected at 27.5pc: Growth likely to decelerate to 0.6pc: ADB  
Meat prices rise amid high exports  
‘Reckless’ sugar exports push up local prices  
Inflation projected to hit 38pc as food, energy prices rocket

#### **11.4.1 # Weekly Inflation**

Short-term inflation remains above 45pc  
Weekly inflation stays above 44 per cent  
Short-term inflation spikes to 44.6pc on costly food  
Short-term inflation skyrockets to 47.23pc  
Weekly inflation stays elevated



## **12 # CLIMATE CHANGE**

Pakistan urges SCO to prioritise climate action

## **13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS**

Two killed, highway blocked after heavy rains, landslides

Thousands stranded on KKH as heavy rains lash region

Swat hotels, shops flooded after downpour

Pakistan among 20 states at risk of ‘excessive rainfall’

Three killed in rain-related mishaps in Balochistan

Lightning kills boy, two animals as rain, dust storm hit lower Sindh

Farmers cautioned in face of heavy rains across country

## **14 # NATURAL DISASTER**

### **14.1 # Earthquake**

Three dead, five hurt as quake jolts Chaman

Earthquake hits Chaman, parts of Balochistan

### **14.2 # Landslide**

Torkham landslide buries trucks, kills 3

Torkham landslide death toll reaches five as two more bodies retrieved

## **15 # RESISTANCE**

Sanitation workers observe strike against non-payment of salary on Easter Eve

Protests held against murder of IBA professor

Rally staged against supply of unhygienic water to Dodial

# NATIONAL NEWS

## 1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

### *Dept, NGO join hands in Khyber for agricultural rehabilitation*

As many as 4,000 acres of barren land has been rehabilitated for cultivation as the agriculture department in Khyber tribal district in collaboration with NGO Islamic Relief Pakistan (IRP) restored two key water channels from the Bara River in Upper Bara area. Sources in Speen Drand, Sandana, Dray Wand, Sheikh Mali Baba and Kandaw Jumaat areas of Upper Bara told that irrigation channels originating from the Bara River in different areas of Upper Bara and other parts of Tirah valley were damaged during their decade-long displacement from their homes due to law and order situation and subsequent military operations. (*Dawn, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### 1.1 # Farmers

#### *HRW criticises high-handedness of Ruda for evicting farmers*

Human Rights Watch (HRW) has criticised the government for forcibly evicting thousands of farmers near Lahore for a massive infrastructure project called the Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project and urged the authorities to enforce environmental protections and reform colonial-era laws that grant the government broad powers to acquire land for private as well as public use.

The Ravi Riverfront Urban Development Project was begun in August 2020 by then-prime minister, Imran Khan, who claimed it would address Lahore’s many problems—pollution, sewage, water, housing, and employment—while reviving its “lost glory.” The Rs5 trillion government project, covering more than 100,000 acres along the Ravi River in Punjab province, is among the largest infrastructure projects in Pakistan.

To advance the project, the government has acted on behalf of private developers to acquire the necessary property, 85 percent of which is agricultural land occupied by nearly one million farmers, labourers, and business owners. The international rights body says affected farmers who have challenged the legality of the land seizures have faced intimidation and criminal charges brought by the Ravi Urban Development Authority (Ruda), provincial authorities, and project developers, even as these legal challenges remain pending in court.

Environmental groups have raised concerns that the project’s proposed changes to the flow of the Ravi River could significantly increase the risks of flooding. Pakistan’s Sindh province experienced catastrophic floods in mid-2022. Since 2020 the authorities have criminally charged more than 100 farmers with resisting or refusing to hand over the land they occupied. Accounts by farmers along with corroborating photos and video show evidence of intimidation, harassment, and use of force to evict farmers.

In January 2022, the Lahore High Court ruled that the Ravi River project was unconstitutional. The court said that it violated domestic laws concerning the forcible acquisition of land, the process for compensating those displaced, and the project's environmental impact assessment. The following month, the Supreme Court partially overruled the Lahore High Court decision and allowed the government to continue development only on the land it had already acquired and for which it had paid compensation. Farmers and activists have alleged that despite the Supreme Court ruling, the authority has continued to seize land. In November 2022, they petitioned the High Court to have the Supreme Court's decision enforced. In October 2022, the authority filed criminal cases against at least nine farmers, claiming that they resisted handing over lands and houses that the government had legally acquired. The farmers have challenged this, saying that they had not consented to the acquisition and had received no compensation from the government. (*Dawn, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

### ***Murad says wheat support price raised to benefit flood-hit farmers***

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that the government had raised support price of wheat on the basis of reports of the surveys carried out in flood-hit areas so as to benefit calamity-hit farmers. In addition, Rs500 billion had been set aside for the reconstruction of houses damaged in the twin disaster of heavy rains and flood across the province. About approval of IMF loan, he said that all issues had been settled with the IMF which had run into a snag due to PTI government's policies. The credit went to this government for taking part in result-oriented negotiations with IMF and ensuring the talks reached logical conclusion. (*Dawn, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Punjab has not formally recognised role of women farm workers: FAO***

Findings of a study on women's work burden and their effects on child labour says the Punjab government has not yet formally recognised the role of women agriculture workers who still do not benefit from legal protection regardless of their contribution to the agricultural labour force. The study, 'Gender roles related to work burden and child labour in agriculture in Punjab', carried out by the Punjab Economic Research Institute with the support of United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), suggested that agricultural policy, extension advisory services, training activities and education strategies should recognise the central role of women in small-scale agriculture and it should be more inclusive.

In the surveyed communities, 69.1 per cent of women reported their primary occupation to be household work (which also includes agricultural work for home consumption such as tending for small ruminants) and 24.3pc reported agricultural labour as their second occupation. On the other hand, 28.7pc of surveyed men indicated they were farmers while 36pc mentioned agricultural labour as their main occupation. During planting & harvesting seasons, women commonly work from 8 to 10 hours/day in field on top of the 4 to 5 hours per day they need to perform their households related tasks.

It recommended that agriculture policies should be reviewed with a gender lens to engage more women in agriculture extension services, input supply, and access to finance, among others. There is a need to build rural women's capacities for increased participation across the crop value chain. The public and private sectors should offer tailor-made financial products for rural women. School curricula should include more content on good agricultural practices for small-scale farming. More women should be employed by agro dealer shops to encourage women farmers to visit the shop for crop related transactions.

The study suggested that enabling women to organise themselves will help in building social cohesion in rural communities and empowering women to invest in small businesses. The public and private sectors should support the establishment and strengthening of organised farmer groups, such as cooperatives and associations to streamline the women's participation. There is need to address some of the key gender based constraints and their impact on child labour in these rural communities, policies and strategies. This would require strengthening parenting and community education initiatives to address harmful practices and social norms that perpetuate child labour, while collaborating with national and local governments to prevent exploitation and abuse. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 Page 5*)

## **1.2 # Land**

### ***LHC stops transfer of land to army for corporate farming***

The high court stopped the handover of 45,267 acres of land on a lease to the Pakistan Army for the purposes of corporate farming. The Punjab caretaker government recently agreed to hand over the land in question to the army in three districts — Bhakkar, Khushab and Sahiwal — on a 20-year lease (with the possibility to extend it for another 10 years). The Public Interest Law Association of Pakistan (Pilap) moved the LHC against the agreement and subsequent notification issued by the caretaker government. They argued that notification was illegal as caretaker government of a province had no power under the Constitution to take such a decision. (*Dawn, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***HWA advocates land reforms to address food insecurity***

Sindh has long been plagued by a high frequency of hunger, malnutrition, poverty, and other natural disasters, said the statement issued by Hari Welfare Association (HWA) on International Peasants Rights Day. It said that in 2022 the situation concerning food security significantly deteriorated as a result of high costs for food and fuel, a drought, torrential monsoon rains, animal diseases, and fewer job prospects. HWA President said that International Peasants Rights Day is a day to recognize and raise awareness about the rights and challenges faced by small-scale farmers, agricultural workers, and rural communities around the world.

Like other peasants in the world, peasants in Sindh are facing severe issues including food insecurity due to many problems but primarily the absence of land reforms in Sindh and the hegemony of a few feudal lord families on lands and the entire governance structure. Due to its absence, there are just a few people who own land, agriculture is less productive and wider rural and peasant groups receive minimal economic benefits. When properly carried out, land reforms can help with the problem of food insecurity in many ways. According to the President, land reforms that seek to give land to landless peasants or redistribute land to encourage equitable land distribution can expand access to land for small farmers, landless peasants (sharecroppers), and marginalized groups. Since it gives peasants the resources to cultivate crops and rear livestock for food production, access to land is a crucial component of food production.

The lack of land reforms in Sindh has also been exacerbated by the lack of effective law enforcement, the lack of infrastructure and resources, the anti-peasant but pro-landlord policy climate, and the lack of assistance for sharecroppers, small-scale landlords, and peasants. The statement also said that the Sindh Tenancy Act of 1955 is a significant piece of legislation that has never been implemented. The Act regulates the relations between landlords and tenants and provides for the fixation and revision of fair rents, security of tenures, and rights of tenants to purchase land.

The Act also includes provisions for the distribution of state-owned land to landless tenants and peasants. Sindh Land Revenue Act of 1967 governs land administration and revenue collection in the province but that has always been manipulated by the powerful class to benefit feudal lords in Sindh. The Act includes provisions related to land record management, land ownership, and transfer of land, and aims to streamline the land administration system to ensure transparency and fairness in land transactions.

The statement further added that in every budget Sindh allocates millions of rupees to support feudal lords but a peasant and sharecroppers remain without any subsidies and services announced by the government each year. The president demanded that Sindh should introduce land reforms to end the miseries of rural workers, sharecroppers (peasants), and other landless peasants which ensure food security for millions of peasants and rural workers in Sindh. (*Business Recorder, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 4*)

### ***Sindh's unending sea intrusion***

For Ahmed Khan Jat, the unending sea intrusion has deprived the area of its agricultural diversity and prosperity in the Indus Delta. The Indus Delta, which witnessed rich farming activities in the past, has become a painful saga of brackish seawater intrusion. From the experts' point of view, it is primarily due to inadequate Indus River flows to check intrusion in the delta. The river is the principal source of keeping the delta's ecology alive with consistent freshwater flows, which is no longer the case.

“Around 28 Dehs (revenue villages) have been devoured by the sea, but four are still fed by the irrigation canal although with inadequate flows for agriculture,” said Mr Jat, alluding to the Kotri barrage’s non-perennial Pinyari’s irrigation supplies amidst the chronic mismanagement of the irrigation system. Many villages had to relocate and much agricultural land has been lost owing to the increase of brackish water. National Institute of Oceanography, in collaboration with the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), Suparco and Pakistan Navy, lately started the project of monitoring seawater intrusion along the Pakistan coast (Balochistan/Sindh) at the cost of Rs731m in February 2021 after release of funds. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 16*)

### ***Housing schemes gluttony sees no end as 100 more Mandi Bahauddin villagers deprived of land***

It seems the gluttony of the private housing schemes mafia and the power that be supporting it has no end in Pakistan as another scam has surfaced in which about 100 villagers in Mandi Bahauddin have been deprived of almost 1,000 kanals of land in their own village without their knowledge. The housing society involved in the scam is connected with a property tycoon of the country, presented as an example of success by many who ignore the foul play in the business of land done with the connivance of corrupt state departments. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

## **1.3 # Water**

### ***Pakistan not running out of water: report***

Contrary to popular perception, Pakistan is not running out of water, not just yet as the available freshwater has generally remained constant over the past decades. This was revealed by the State of Pakistan’s Agriculture 2023 report recently launched by the Pakistan Business Council and the Pakistan Agricultural Coalition. However, the report points out, Pakistan is creating little value from its water even compared to a cohort of countries with comparable levels of water availability, low GDP per capita, a high proportion of water used in agriculture, and the importance of agriculture in GDP. “Pakistan is among the few countries where more than 90% of the freshwater used by the country is devoted to agriculture,” stated the report.

To put this in perspective, on average, the countries of the world have the following distribution of the freshwater they use: 70% in agriculture, 20% in industry, and 10% in municipal uses (drinking water, public uses in towns, etc). But Pakistan’s distribution is 93% in agriculture, 6% in industry, and 1% in municipal services. Pakistan’s real water-related challenges when it comes to the agriculture sector are severe water wastage, the state and management of the irrigation system, unrestrained withdrawals of groundwater, deteriorating water quality, and the coming impact of climate change on Pakistan’s water resources.

The report suggested that to reduce the amount of water withdrawn for agriculture, improvements to the productivity of water must be addressed as water productivity is the amount of GDP created per drop of water. “Pakistan’s current water productivity is the eighth lowest in the world at \$ 1.38 per cubic meter of water withdrawn from the Indus River Basin and the Indus aquifer,” mentioned the report. According to the World Bank, Pakistan’s total water withdrawals are the fifth highest globally. “The main source of low productivity stems from inefficiencies within the delivery system of water from the Indus Basin Irrigation System to the farm gate and from the on-farm application of that water to the crop root”. Only a fraction of the water that is diverted from the Indus River System reaches the crop as conveyance losses within the canal system account for an average of 25% losses to the watercourse outlet to the farm gate. (*Business Recorder, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***World Bank proposes changes to Sindh water, agriculture project***

The World Bank has proposed some changes in the implementation plan for the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation project to adapt mitigation activities to help the provincial government manage climate risks with a focus on the water and agricultural nexus. In a just-released climate change technical note on the project, the World Bank says the project approved in December last year intends to improve agricultural water productivity to obtain more value from water supplies affected by climate change.

By improving the institutional framework for Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), the project will improve the capacity of Sindh to better cope with floods and droughts. It will also help in the allocation of increasingly scarce water resources among competing uses such as agriculture, urban, and the environment. The promotion of climate-smart agriculture will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and contribute to mitigation goals.

The \$98 million project that also be additionally funded with \$194 million non-concessional credit from International Development Association (IDA), having the total commitment of \$292 million, will increase agricultural water productivity in Selected Farmers’ Organisation (SFO) command areas, improve integrated water resources management, and contribute to restoring crop production by small- and medium-sized farmers hit by the 2022 floods. (*Dawn, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Wastewater, effluents continue to be discharged into freshwater body***

Downstream population living in Tando Mohammad Khan and Sujawal districts would have to wait for a few years more to get clean drinking water from Kotri barrage’s non-perennial Old Phulelli/Pinyari canal — a freshwater body. And till then, the canal would keep getting effluent of all sorts, thanks to delay in the execution of multibillion federal government-funded sewerage treatment plant, a scheme of Wasa.

The Eastern Sewerage Treatment Plant (ESTP), approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne), was aimed at resolving the issue of clean drinking water to the area's population. An amount of Rs660.802m was spent out of the total cost of Rs915.30m. Initially, it was to be executed on 50-50 basis by the federal and Sindh governments. Subsequently, federal government undertook to bear the entire cost after sharing Rs254.498m (out of Rs660.802m). Over the years, according to a Wasa official, the cost was revised to Rs2,804.873m. "I fear it will be around Rs3,500m now due to currency's depreciation," said official. (*Dawn, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Irsa confirms 37pc water shortage for Kharif***

Pakistan is set to face about 37 per cent water shortage during the ongoing Kharif cropping season, the water regulator has confirmed. This could be potentially damaging for key cash crops like cotton, whose output has already slumped to multi-decade lows. As a result, a meeting of the advisory committee of the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) decided with a consensus to continue with a three-tier formula for distributing water shares among the provinces, as currently in practice. The meeting concluded that Punjab and Sindh would face a 27pc water shortage in the early Kharif and 10pc in the late Kharif season. (*Dawn, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***India can't amend water treaty on its own, Senate told***

The Senate was told that India could not unilaterally modify the Indus Waters Treaty. On India's move to seek revision of the Indus Waters Treaty, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that the issue was linked with the future of the country. He said Pakistan had still not given an effective, solid and bold response over January 25 notice. Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman stressed that the treaty could not be changed until both parties — Pakistan and India — agreed. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

### ***Wapda wants safety protocols beefed up after GB dam mishap***

A day after three workers were killed and several injured in an explosion during rock blasting at the Diamer-Bhasha Dam construction site, the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has directed all project contractors and consultants to revisit safety guidelines and put in place effective safety mechanism to avoid a repeat of such incidents. The police said after the incident that labourers were preparing explosives for blasting when it accidentally exploded due to a short circuit at the site. (*Dawn, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Irrigation infrastructure destroyed by recent floods restored: minister***

Sindh Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro has said that the irrigation infrastructure, including parts of the Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD), destroyed during the 2022 floods in the province had been restored. He emphasised the need for more planning to avert destruction in the monsoon. (*Dawn, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)



### ***Shrinking Indus Delta attracts UN's attention***

The shrinking delta of Mighty River Indus of Pakistan has emerged on the United Nations radar after it accepted to create a global convention on all deltas of the world to ensure its protection against rising climate change impacts casting serious impact on its nature and habitat. The development occurred after a strong international civil society nexus of experts, academicians, policy makers and stakeholders unanimously raised their voice for an international UN Convention for the Conservation River Delta (UN-CCRD) on the sequel of its UN Human Rights Declaration, UN Geneva Pact and many others to ensure that all the major deltas of the world were dying due to adverse impacts of climate change and environmental degradation namely sea intrusion, sea level rise, droughts, depleting water flows, shrinking creeks and others.

The African Centre for Climate Actions and Rural Development Initiative (ACCARD) in collaboration with the Nigeria's Bayelsa State Government, the Institute for Environmental Diplomacy and Security at the University of Vermont, the Consortium for Capacity Building at the University of Colorado, Transboundary Water In-Cooperation Network (TWIN), Water Environment Forum-Pakistan, Center for the Advancement of Public Action (CAPA) Bennington College; Vietnam National University, Hanoi, Vietnam and Center for Environment and Sustainable Livelihood Projects (CESLP), among others hosted a side event at the UN Water conference titled "Integrative Highland to Ocean (H2O) Action for Disappearing Deltas: Towards a UN Convention on Conserving River Deltas. (*Business Recorder, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 16*)

### ***Sindh to face greater water shortage than other provinces in Kharif season, says Irsa***

Sindh will have to brace for another spell of water shortage early Kharif season as Irsa raised caution about the looming water scarcity at a recent meeting held on April 6. According to Irsa's anticipated flows, Sindh will have to bear with more shortage than other provinces. KP and Balochistan are exempted from Irsa governance for various reasons including infrastructural. (*Dawn, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Wapda restores Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project on Eid***

Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) claims to have restored a 150-foot-long stretch of the tunnel collapse, removing blockage in the tailrace tunnel of the 969MW Neelum-Jhelum hydropower project on Eid. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Revival of natural waterways ahead of monsoon urged***

Qaumi Awami Tehreek president Ayaz Latif Palijo has called for reviving natural waterways across the province ahead of upcoming monsoon season so as to avert a repeat of the twin disaster of rains and flood people had to face to last year. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Thatta district to have three small dams***

The Sindh government has planned to execute four projects aimed at storing rainwater and averting damage by floods in Thatta district, besides ensuring adequate drinking water supply to the local population. Three dams would be built and capacity of Haleji and Hudero lakes would be increased to store rainwater and check damage during floods in the district. The Sindh government is working on the plan to execute the dam and water supply projects for which Rs2 billion loan is being sought from the Asian Development Bank, according to the sources. Funds were also being negotiated with the World Bank for the flood control project. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

## **2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

### ***Kissan Package: Use of DAP, urea ebbs due to higher prices, supply issues***

An inter-ministerial meeting on Kissan Package-2022 was informed that use of DAP and urea fertilizer has declined due to higher prices and supply issues. During discussion on enhancement of agri-loans to Rs 1.819 billion from Rs 1.419 billion, the representative of State Bank of Pakistan informed the meeting that updated city-wise data will be shared by SBP. Under PM's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan scheme, the target of Rs 30 billion has been assigned to 15 banks for SME and agriculture sector, of which Rs 15 billion will be disbursed to agriculture sector. The PMYBALS portal was launched on March 24, 2024 and Rs 1.420 billion have been disbursed to 1,153 farmers. (*Business Recorder, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***NBP launches new agri loan programme***

NBP launched a new low markup rate agricultural loan programme to support the farming industry. With this initiative, farmers can increase their crop yield by availing agriculture loans with swift processing. In addition, NBP is offering special discounts on the markup rate for women to encourage female participation in the farming industry. The loan can be used to finance a range of agricultural needs, including warehouse, solar tube-well, fisheries, new tractors, agriculture baler, seeds, soil, and pesticides etc. (*Business Recorder, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Balochistan farmers to get free rice seeds after Eid***

Balochistan will start the distribution of free rice seeds and other equipment among farmers in four districts after Eidul Fitr. Agriculture department Secretary Umaid Ali Khokhar said that with the help of a \$5m grant from the Asian Development Bank, the government will provide free rice seeds and other agricultural machinery to the farmers in Sohbatpur, Jafarabad, Nasirabad and Jhal Magsi. He said the agriculture department was using all available resources for the development of the agriculture sector and to facilitate the farmers. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

### ***SAU inaugurates work on production of cotton seed varieties***

Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Vice Chancellor Dr Fateh Mari inaugurated an experimental farming for the production and expansion of cotton varieties under the aegis of the Seed Production and Development Centre (SPDC). The SAU also signed an agreement with the United Bank Limited (UBL) for the development of improved and climate-resilient seeds of wheat and cotton varieties. The VC said cotton was most affected due to recent floods, which caused losses of billions of rupees to farmers' economy. Thus farmers faced a shortage of certified cotton seeds to deal with the situation and the SAU in collaboration with the UBL conducted research on the certified seeds of cotton and wheat.

He said that so far private companies had been meeting 80 per cent need of cotton seed. Mostly unregistered, those companies bought cotton seed from ginning factories and sell them without process, thus, causing irreparable losses to cotton producers. Experts have described lack of provision of certified cotton seed and sale of substandard seed by private companies in the province as a leading cause of loss of productivity. They have emphasised the need for a cooperation between institutions for better production and expansion of quality cotton seeds. (*Dawn, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Mechanisation helps Sindh farmers increase yield by 16pc: report***

Farmers in lower Sindh have achieved a 26% average increase in plant population and 11 to 16% average yield increase through mechanisation. This was disclosed by the state of the agriculture industry report launched by the Pakistan Business Council recently. According to details, a special project in collaboration with the Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) is going on since December 2018 to develop and implement a multi-year programme for increasing Pakistan's rice exports. The aim of the project "Khushhaal Kissan" is to improve farm productivity and cut post-harvest losses (15-20%) and significantly increase rice exports over the next few years.

Since Pakistani farmers cannot afford all machines as mechanisation requires service providers, therefore, leading rice exporters Garibsons, MesKay, Conwill, MM Commodities, RBI and Jaffer Brothers have already invested in mechanisation companies namely Khushhaal Kissan and MFT. Similarly, leading machine manufacturers like Kubota from Japan, Yanmar, Klaas, and Fuerdai from China, TYM from South Korea, and World from China have given agencies in Pakistan. The reason is that Pakistan's farmers operating in traditional scenario use seeds saved from last years while in the mechanical scenarios, they are to use proper seeds, which gives them up to a 50% yield increase.

Moreover, farmers have around 55,000 plants per acre in traditional nursery-raising through manual transplantation while the plant population increases to 100,000 per acre by dint of nursery-raising in trays and mechanical transplantation. Thus, in harvesting,

farmers get a 50% reduction in harvesting losses by using mechanical means against traditional harvesting while instead of traditional sun-drying of paddy and paddy storage, they get a mechanized system. Besides, Pakistan's farmers face increasing climate risks such as flood or drought excessive/untimely rain, heatwave, windstorm, hail, and frost as well as biological risks that include pest/insect attacks, and viral/bacterial attacks locusts.

The increases in variability of monsoon and winter rains are expected to cause increased variability and uncertainty in river flows. It is to be noted that from 1980 to 2007 heatwave days per year increased by 31 days while rainfall in the arid plains/coastal areas decreased by 10 to 15%. Farmers have been reporting changes in weather patterns for years and they have meager defences against key pests/insects (cotton) as many viruses are not well-identified. (*Business Recorder, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Li for accelerating agri, tech cooperation with Pakistan***

China and Pakistan should speed up bilateral cooperation in agriculture, mineral and technology. Two countries should build CPEC as a demonstration project under China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative. (*Business Recorder, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

## **3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT**

### ***Zarai bank, SDPI sign MoU to improve agriculture output***

Food security is a major concern of Pakistan that is linked with other national security issues and needs to be resolved urgently, Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI has said. "Though Pakistan has improved productivity of certain crops, diversification of food basket continues to be a challenge and inadequacies in access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities". He was speaking at a signing of MoU between the Zarai Taraqiati Bank (ZTBL) and Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) to collaborate for the promotion and adoption of latest technologies, practices, and techniques for improving agricultural productivity and livelihood of rural communities. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Canal breach damages crops over 200 acres***

A 75-foot breach occurring in Shareen Minor Canal near Talaywala Headworks in Khanpur tehsil, some 60kms, damaging maze, onion and sugarcane crops over some 200 acres. Locals blamed lack of monitoring and maintenance of the weakened canal bank by the irrigation staff for the breach which they plugged on their own, finding no help from the department. They says the breach was caused due to weakening of the canal banks because of wild growth of plant and grass, excessive silt in it and unchecked entry of livestock into the canal. They say the breach was initially 30-foot wide but later expanded to 75 feet despite low water flow. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### **3.1 # Cash Crop**

#### ***Increased FED on cigarettes to hurt interests of farmers***

Tobacco farmers of KPK's economically marginalised areas have warned that recent exorbitant increase in federal excise duty (FED) on cigarettes will reduce economic prospects for tobacco farmers. Tobacco farmers from Mardan and Swabi district of KP growers while expressing their concerns about the difficulties faced by the legal cigarette industry, pointed out the effects of the factors promoting illegal cigarettes in the country. Tobacco farmers said that tobacco is an important cash crop and any threat to this crop is a threat to the survival of tobacco farmers which could cause serious socio-economic consequences. (*Business Recorder, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

#### ***Pakistan sees lowest output of cotton in four decades***

The country has produced 34 per cent less cotton this year as compared with the crop yield last season, reveals data with Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA). The final figures for the crop year 2022-23 show that Pakistan produced 4,912,069 bales, the lowest in around four decades, of cotton against 7,441,833 in the 2021-22 season, a year-on-year decline of 2,528,764 bales or 34pc loss. It means the textile industry will have to import around 10 million bales to satiate its annual hunger for 15m bales. However, mill consumption in the year 2022-23 has also been reported at 8.8m bales, the lowest in over 20 years, mainly because of severe import financing issues. Textile mills have so far signed import agreements for 5.5m bales, whereas they have purchased 4,605,449 bales from the local market. Last year, the mills had bought 7,332,000 bales from the domestic market. Ginners say they are still holding 301,720 bales in their stocks against last year's inventory of 93,833 bales. (*Dawn, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### ***Farmers reject proposal to impose tax on tobacco leaf***

While appreciating the decision of the government to increase FED on cigarettes, President Mehnatkash Labour Federation alleged that the cigarette industry was trying to get tax imposed on farmers instead of the industry. (*Dawn, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 4*)

#### ***Competing crops push cotton out as govt misses sowing target***

The government has failed to set a target for cotton sowing before the start of the season, with competing crops gradually nudging the silver fiber out. As a result, policymakers are virtually groping in the dark about the potential area under cultivation. This is the first time that cotton sowing and production targets could not be fixed before the start of the Kharif season and are delayed at least until May 1, 2023. One of the key reasons for the delay has been the less receptive and slow thinking process being followed by policymakers. It resulted in a belated meeting on fixing targets of Kharif crops two weeks into the Kharif season. (*The News, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 17*)

### ***Secretary agriculture finalises cotton revival plan***

Cotton crop is of key importance for the country's economy. Government is taking vigorous steps to revive cotton. This year, the support price of cotton has been fixed at Rs8500 per 40kg, which will make cotton cultivation profitable. These views were expressed by Secretary Agriculture, Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahu while presiding over a meeting held in Lahore to formulate a plan for the approval of cotton rehabilitation. On this occasion, Secretary Agriculture, Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahu said that there is a need to make research and development more effective and productive for the discovery of climate smart new varieties so that the harmful effects of climate change and insect attack can be reduced. (*Business Recorder, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

### **3.2 # Food Crop**

#### ***Heavy rains, hailstorms destroyed wheat worth Rs23bn***

The Punjab agriculture authorities estimate that 5 to 6pc of wheat crop worth Rs23bn has been damaged due to recent heavy rains and hailstorms in many districts of the province. The wet spells and windstorms battered a number of districts during the last two weeks, leading to the lodging (falling of plants to the ground) of around 50pc of the standing crops. Farmers, however, estimate the lodging ratio up to 70pc. As per data of the agriculture department, of 16.014 million acres of the area under wheat 0.8m acres was partially damaged and 30,000 acres was fully damaged due to inclement weather up till March 30, 2023. More hailstorms occurred in some districts of south Punjab on April 2. (*Dawn, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

#### ***Good wheat crop expected this year***

The per-acre production of wheat is very encouraging this year despite unfavourable weather conditions. Wheat was available in abundance at Rs 3,900 per maund in the productive areas. Hence, there was no shortage of wheat in the province, said Zaman Wattoo, secretary Food Punjab. He said the production of wheat was 5 to 10 maund higher than the previous year. He said the government was taking steps for the economic welfare of all segments of society. Flour for free is being provided to 10 crore people in Punjab. (*The News, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

#### ***Yellow rust disease hits wheat crop in Bajaur***

An outbreak of yellow rust disease has been reported in several areas of Bajaur tribal district, affecting the wheat crop, officials of local agriculture department and farmers said. The growers said the disease was reported in Khar, Barang and Utmankhel tehsils a week ago. An official of the agriculture department claimed due to their effective response the disease had been controlled in many areas of the district. He said fungicide spray was the best solution to eradicate the disease. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Wheat production estimated to fall short by 2m tonnes***

Pakistan is estimated to produce 26.81 million tonnes of wheat during the ongoing Rabi season against the target of 28.4 million tonnes. While production will be below the target, the area under wheat cultivation also reduced from 9.3 million hectares to 9.1 million hectares. However, the reason for below-the-target wheat production was not explained during a meeting of the high-powered Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA). The committee meeting decided to set the production target of nine million tonnes for rice over 3.1 million hectares of land; 78.6 million tonnes of sugar over an area 1.2 million hectares; and 7.6 million tonnes of maize over an area of 1.2 million hectares of land. The FCA observed that the potato production this year is expected to be 7.9 million tonnes from an area of 300,000 hectares of land, registering an increase of 1.9pc over previous year. (*Dawn, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### **3.3 # Fruits**

#### ***Rain-ridden farmers selling watermelon at throwaway prices***

The ongoing torrential rains and last week's hailstorms damaged watermelon crop, causing heavy losses to the local farmers, forcing them to immediately sell their crops at throwaway prices. The local fruit markets are not accepting the watermelon as the last two days' rain further affected the crop. Watermelon farmers of Pakpattan, Sahiwal and Okara took the brunt of more heavy rain and thunderstorm. Furthermore, the low temperature in April and cloudy weather conditions are not suitable for watermelon as they stunt its growth. Such weather conditions are also not suitable for sale and purchase of watermelon, the fruit of hot summers along with melon. After the recent rains, the watermelon farmers decided to take their produce to the Islamabad market for better rates instead of waiting for another spell of rain or hailstorm and complete destruction of their crop. (*Dawn, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

### **4 # NON-AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS**

#### ***Revised import policy for livestock approved***

ECC of cabinet approved amendments to the Import Policy Order 2022 to comply with new international guidelines on live animal trade. The import of live animals and animal products is regulated under the Import Policy Order (IPO), 2022, in line with guidelines issued by the World Organisation of Animal Health (WOAH), an intergovernmental body coordinating, supporting and promoting animal disease control. The ECC approved the proposed changes to the relevant IPO clauses under which the import of live cattle, meat and bone meal, and feed ingredients of animal origin are banned from countries classified by the WOAH as controlled bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk and undetermined BSE risk. (*Dawn, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## 5 # TRADE

### ***Jul-Mar trade deficit shrinks 35.51pc to \$22.9bn YoY***

Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed by 35.51 percent to \$22.9 billion during the first nine months (July-March) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$35.509 billion during the same period of last year, PBS said. Country's exports during July-March (2022-23) were recorded at \$21.046 billion against the exports of \$23.350 billion in July-March of 2021-22, showing a decline of 9.87 per cent, data released by PBS. The imports decreased by 25.34 per cent during the period under review by going down from \$58.859 billion last year to \$43.946 billion during the current year.

On a year-on-year basis, exports witnessed a decline of 14.76 per cent and were recorded at \$2.367 billion in March 2023 against the exports of \$2.777 billion in March 2022. The imports also decreased to \$3.828 billion in March 2023 from \$6.407 billion in March 2022, showing negative growth of 40.25 per cent. Trade deficit narrowed by 59.75 per cent on a YoY basis to \$1.461 billion in March 2023 compared to \$3.630b in March 2022. (*Business Recorder, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Taftan trade gateway to reopen after nine years***

The government has decided to reopen Taftan Bazarcha Business Gateway on a trial basis from Saturday (today), almost nine years after it was closed in 2014 over security reasons. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

### ***Officials promise removal of hurdles to Pak-Afghan trade***

Authorities have assured Pakistani and Afghan traders of measures to remove hurdles to trade between the two countries. Newly-appointed chief collector (customs) in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Fayyaz Anwar chaired a meeting at the Torkham border to discuss issues related to Pak-Afghan trade. The participants, including Pakistani and Afghan traders and relevant officials, held a "thorough discussion on the performance of relevant public sector institutions along with the problems of Pak-Afghan businessmen," according to a news release. The traders highlighted their issues and proposed ways to resolve them. Traders complain of slow goods clearance at border points. (*Dawn, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***Pakistan-Iran trade volume exceeds \$2bn mark***

For the first time in the history of Pakistan-Iran economic relations, the volume of bilateral trade exceeded \$2 billion. This was revealed during a farewell meeting for the outgoing Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini with Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq at the Ministry of Economic Affairs. (*Business Recorder, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)



## 5.1 # Export

### ***Pakistan's exports fall 15pc for seventh month in a row***

Pakistan's exports of merchandise shrank for the seventh month in a row dipping by 14.76 per cent year-on-year to \$2.36 billion in March, reflecting fear of massive layoffs in the export sector of the country. In the first nine months (July to March) of 2022-23, exports were down 9.87pc at \$21.04bn compared to \$23.35bn in the corresponding period last year. The export proceeds are declining mainly because of internal and external factors raising fears about the closure of industrial units, especially textile, and clothing. Imports dipped 40.25pc to \$3.82bn in March compared to \$6.40bn over the corresponding month of last year. In the first nine months, imports fell 25.34pc to \$43.94bn this year from \$58.85bn over the corresponding period last year. Between July and March FY23, trade deficit decelerated 35.5pc to \$22.9bn from \$35.50bn over the corresponding months of last year. (*Dawn, April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Pakistan bigger exporter of basmati to Europe than India, panel told***

The Ministry of Commerce told a Senate panel that the European Union has not given any preferential access to Indian basmati rice. Replying to lawmakers' questions during a meeting of the Senate Committee for Commerce, the ministry's secretary said that at present, Pakistan was exporting more basmati rice to European markets than India. Basmati rice is a shared production of India and Pakistan. In the recent past, it became a source of a contentious trade battle between the two nations after India applied for an exclusive trademark that would grant it sole ownership of the basmati title in the European Union. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Exports of textiles dip 22.61pc in March***

Textiles and clothing exports fell 12.42 per cent year-on-year to \$12.47 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The exports recorded a steep decline of 22.61pc to \$1.26bn in March from \$1.62bn in the corresponding month of last year. However, on a month-on-month basis, textile exports rose 6.6pc. The overall exports also fell for the seventh straight month by 9.85pc to \$21.05bn in July-March against \$23.35bn in the corresponding months of last year. (*Dawn, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Non-textile exports fall to \$11.2bn in 2022-23***

Pakistan's non-textile exports fell by 9.87 per cent to \$11.23 billion in outgoing FY23 compared to \$12.46bn in the preceding year, according to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The PBS reported that export proceeds from the non-textile sector showed a stagnant trend since the beginning of FY23 due to demand contraction in the buyers' market. Exports showed no growth since September 2022 on a year-on-year basis. (*Dawn, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Page 9*)

### ***Basmati rice exports surge 45pc in March***

Basmati exports staged a strong rebound surging by 45 per cent to 64,274 tonnes in March from 44,137 tonnes in February despite 25pc damage to the last crop due to floods and heavy rains. In dollar terms, rice exports jumped by 39pc to \$69,475 in March from \$49,875 in February. Non-basmati export, however, registered a decline of 35.5pc to 328,344 tonnes in March against 509,271 tonnes in February. The fall in exports in dollar terms was around 21.3pc. Total rice exports during March stood at 382,618 tonnes valuing \$243,632, while Pakistan exported a total 2,907,322 tonnes of rice to earn \$1,598,261 during the period July-March 2022-23. Of them basmati variety was 428,404 tonnes worth \$456,361 and non-basmati 2,478,918 tonnes valuing \$1,141,900. Rice trade expert Hamid Malik says with the current export trend Pakistan will be able to cross the \$2bn export target. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 Page 9*)

### ***REAP urges govt to help it achieve \$5bn rice exports***

Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) has asked the federal government to devise a long-term strategy with consultation of all stakeholders to achieve \$5 billion rice export target. Chairman REAP Chela Ram Kewlani said that the rice sector has potential to export \$5 billion rice annually, but there is a need to devise a long-term policy to gradually increase the rice exports. While talking to media, he informed that despite multiple challenges rice exporters are earning over \$2 billion annually precious foreign exchange for the country and still there are many opportunities to increase the rice exports. However, quality seeds, subsidies, agricultural input and aggressive marketing are required to enhance rice exports. As per PBS, Pakistan's rice exports grew 23 percent to reach \$2.511 billion in FY21 compared with \$2.041 billion in FY20. Pakistan exported 4.877 million tonnes of rice in FY22 against 3.684 million tonnes in FY21, recording a growth of 32.35%. (*Business Recorder, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***Rice exports: quarterly roundup***

Pakistan's basmati rice exports surged strongly in March 2023, if reports from PBS are to be believed. Dollar earnings against monthly basmati exports were up 17.2 percent against same period last year, and 39.3 percent against Feb 2023, suggesting some reprieve for country's exports amid an across-the-board decline or stagnation elsewhere. But will it be enough? Don't let the headline numbers fool you. Basmati rice exports make up a little over one-fourth of total earnings from rice exports each year, bulk of which are contributed by export of other rice varieties such as IRRI, and hybrid rice. In absolute terms, basmati rice exports average under \$0.7 billion per annum, against annual rice export revenue of \$2.25 billion over the last several years.

Meanwhile, coarse rice exports were down in Mar 2023, declining 9 percent compared to same month last year, and 21.4 percent against Feb 2023. Even though prices are on the rise, the country recorded its worst March for coarse rice exports, barring the Covid

years. No doubt, the price impact has been strong during the ongoing fiscal. For the 9MFY23 period ending Mar 2023, average unit price for the 2.8 million metric tons of total rice exported stood at \$570 per ton, which is the highest in well over a decade. Average unit price for all rice exports during 9MFY22 stood at just \$500 per ton last year, The rise in unit price is broad based, with basmati unit prices rising by 21 percent over same period last year and coarse rice average export unit price rising by 12 percent.

But the rising tide of higher prices will most certainly won't lift the full year export revenue higher than last year. In volume terms, Pakistan's coarse rice exports are at their weakest in a decade, standing under 2.5MMT against 3.1MMT against during the 9MFY23 last year. Overall export earnings may very well shy away from \$2b mark, far cry from \$2.5b breached during FY22. (*Business Recorder, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

### ***Rs80bn gas subsidy to five export sectors ends***

The federal government has ended the Rs 80-billion subsidy on gas to five export sectors for FY 2022-23. (*Business Recorder, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

## **5.2 # Import**

### ***20pc duty imposed on import of tea whiteners***

The Customs classification committee of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has imposed 20 percent Customs duty on the import of "tea whiteners" by leading companies. (*Business Recorder, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***TCP paying Rs143m mark-up daily on loans for commodity imports***

The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) is paying Rs 143 million mark-up daily on loans raised from banks for import of wheat, sugar and fertilizer due to nonpayment by Utility Stores Corporation (USC), National Fertilizer Marketing Limited (NFML) and Passco. "We are paying Rs 48.5 million mark-up on a daily basis on outstanding receivables of Rs 73.7 billion against USC, Rs 63.84 million against outstanding receivables Rs 97 billion of NFML and Rs 30 million on receivables of Rs 46 billion against Passco," said TCP Chairman Rafeo Bashir Shah in his presentation to a National Assembly panel. (*Business Recorder, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***9MFY23 cotton imports***

Pakistan looks all set to record its lowest cotton import volume in three years, based on the 9MFY23 foreign trade report card released by PBS earlier this week. This comes as the country recorded its lowest cotton production in 40 years during the most recent crop season, when freak weather and river-flooding destroyed nearly half of the country's acreage last monsoon.

If PBS numbers are anything to go by, cotton availability in the domestic market during the ongoing fiscal 2022-23 is lower by one-third, whereas cotton yarn and cotton cloth production has declined by 18 and 10 percent, respectively during the same period. Regular readers of this space would recall that Pakistani spinning segment's annual cotton consumption is placed anywhere between 11 – 13 million bales (of 170kg), whereas the milling segment would consume approximately 9 million bales (of 170kg) during the ongoing fiscal.

By that measure, Pakistan's cotton import demand was supposed to climb up to 6 million bales (of 170kg) during 2022-23. Instead, cotton imports are expected to clock in at just a little over 4.2 million bales, going by average monthly import figure during 9MFY23. Although the shortfall is widely attributed to the dollar liquidity crisis, there might be just a tad bit more to the story.

According to USDA's monthly world cotton market report, global cotton trade is slated to drop to its lowest quantum in six years, signaling a significant slowdown in the world fiber demand. This slowdown seems to have initially been set off by decade high cotton prices, which climbed up to \$3.25 per kg during H1-CY22. Since then, cotton prices in the international market have witnessed a consistent slowdown, averaging down to \$2.1 per kg in Mar-23 from a peak of \$3.61 per kg less than a year ago in May 2022.

World cotton prices may have very well tapered in the near term; however, are still far off from their pre-Covid territory. International market prices had averaged below \$1.70 per kg in the months and years leading up to the 2020 pandemic. Little surprise then that as per USDA, larger importing nations such as Bangladesh and China have witnessed a sharper contraction in import during 2022-23 marketing year, with annualized imports declining by 10 and 7.5 percent, respectively on a y-o-y basis.

Pakistan may have witnessed its lowest cotton output in four decades; however, shortfall alone is not sufficient explanation. The price effect may not only be keeping local spinning industry on the sidelines, but as evidence from other importing nations suggest, may also signal a decline in overall world fabric trade. Don't let pleas of vested interests fool you into thinking that textile export volume would have breached fresh levels if only local cotton output hadn't been wrecked by natural disasters. (*Business Recorder, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 2*)

### ***Pakistan places order for first oil cargo from Russia***

Pakistan has placed its first order for discounted Russian crude oil under a deal struck between Islamabad and Moscow, State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik said, with one cargo to dock at the port of Karachi in May. Pakistan's purchase gives Russia a new outlet, adding to Moscow's growing sales to India and China, as it redirects oil from western markets because of the Ukraine conflict. (*Dawn, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Page 1*)

## **6 # CORPORATE SECTOR**

### ***FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan posts strong financial results for Q1***

FrieslandCampina Engro Pakistan Limited (FCEPL) announced its financial results for Q1, 2023. The Company reported a revenue of Rs 22,651 million in the first quarter, showcasing 62 percent topline growth versus last year, driven by mix improvement, widening our distribution footprint, and volume growth in both, the Dairy-Based Products and the Frozen Desserts segments. Despite inflation and rupee devaluation, the Company improved its gross margin and operating margin by 70 bps and 30 bps respectively, by driving cost efficiencies across the value chain. However, the profit after tax (Rs 990 million vs Rs 664 million same period last year), as a percentage of sales, declined by 40 bps due to increase in finance cost and taxation.

### **Dairy-Based Products Segment**

With a growth of 66% versus Q1 2022, the segment reported a revenue of Rs. 21.2 billion. The flagship brand, Olper's, led the growth in the segment along with strengthening its market leadership position through consistent brand building and trade activities. Olper's Cheese continued to grow in terms of volumes and distribution each month. Building upon the momentum of last year, Olper's Flavored Milk was launched in a new flavor of Mango. Other brands like Olper's Full Cream Milk Powder (FCMP), Olper's Cream, and Tarang also gained healthy market shares.

### **FCEPL Partnership with Engro Eximp FZE**

In line with FrieslandCampina's global purpose of nourishing by nature, FCEPL partnered with EngroEximp FZE to expand its global footprint and enter new markets. The agreement will increase Pakistan's dairy exports, bringing in much needed foreign exchange to the country while enriching farmers' livelihoods.

### **Future Outlook**

Rising inflation, foreign exchange constraints, currency devaluation, higher finance cost and import constraints continue to put pressures on Company's profitability. However, with an agile business model in place. (*Business Recorder, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 7*)

## **7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN**

### ***Ishaq Dar confirms rollover of \$2 billion Chinese loan***

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar confirmed that China had rolled over a \$2 billion loan, quashing the speculation that the matter was still pending. The remarks come as Pakistan scrambles to secure a \$1.1bn bailout tranche from IMF to address its acute balance-of-payments crisis and avert default. Speaking in the Senate, Mr Dar explained that Pakistan has two kinds of businesses with China; one relating to SAFE (state

administration of foreign exchange) deposit is between Central Bank of China and State Bank of Pakistan, which is sovereign in nature, while the other is with commercial banks of China. (*Dawn, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***KSA commits financial support to help secure IMF deal: govt***

Minister of State for Finance, Dr Aisha Ghaus Pasha said Saudi Arabia has made the commitment to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Pakistan got this indication from the Fund in this regard. The UAE's support will play an important role in reaching staff-level agreement with the IMF on the 9th review and subsequent release of the next tranche. (*Business Recorder, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Saudis okay \$240m for Mohmand Dam project***

Saudi Fund for Development (SFD) signed an agreement to extend a \$240 million loan to Pakistan for the construction of the \$1.2 billion Mohmand Multipurpose Dam project and help transition towards green energy. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)**

### **8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)**

#### ***Public sector projects perform inefficiently, says ADB***

The success rate of Asian Development Bank's (ADB) public sector operations declined during 2016–2022, Independent Evaluation Department (IED), ADB's assessing body revealed. According to the '2023 Annual Evaluation Review' prepared by IED, and released, the success rate of ADB's public sector projects shrank primarily among infrastructure projects in the relatively new areas of the transport and energy sectors, however, private sector projects remained stable. The sovereign success rate in 2020-2022, averaged 68 per cent, continued the steady decline from 77pc in 2016-2018. Annual variation in the number of completed and validated sovereign projects in 2016-2022, overall sovereign project performance declined by 3.2pc annually. Deteriorating infrastructure performance drove decline of overall sovereign performance, leading to a drop of 3.9pc annually during 2016–2022. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

#### ***ADB extends \$20.5bn to support recovery***

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) committed \$20.5 billion from its resources in 2022 to help Asia and the Pacific continue their recovery from the pandemic despite fresh economic headwinds and crises. The \$20.5bn comprised loans and guarantees, grants, equity investments, and technical assistance provided to governments and the private sector. ADB mobilised an additional \$11.4bn in co-financing, according to the financial and operational results published in the bank's Annual Report 2022.

ADB committed \$6.7bn in financing for climate mitigation and adaptation in 2022, making progress toward its ambition of providing \$100bn in cumulative climate financing during 2019-30. To address region's worsening food crisis, ADB provided \$3.7bn under its \$14bn food security programme, delivering essential food relief and strengthening food production systems. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

***Recovery needs estimated at \$16.3bn: Floods hit 33m people, caused \$30bn economic losses: ADB***

The floods in Pakistan impacted 33 million people, inflicted damages and economic losses exceeding \$30 billion, and resulted in recovery and reconstruction needs estimated at \$16.3 billion, says the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The bank in its "Annual Report 2022 Building Resilience in Challenging Times", stated that the ADB worked swiftly to provide immediate support for Pakistan's flood victims, disbursing a \$3 million grant under the Asia Pacific Disaster Response Fund in September and ensuring supply of emergency food supplies, tents, and other relief items.

The floods that raged from June to October 2022 killed more than 1,730 people. The bank followed that emergency support by committing a further \$449 million for direct and comprehensive flood support. Comprising a loan, technical assistance, and repurposed financing, the package covers reconstruction of 485 km of vital roads and around 30 bridges. It is also helping restore and upgrade irrigation and drainage structures and strengthen flood risk management.

The bank stated in October, the ADB provided Pakistan with \$1.5 billion, along with \$500 million in co-financing, through Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures Program. This support is helping the government counter rising food prices & strengthen food security, shore up employment, and enhance social protection for poor and vulnerable people, many of whom were directly affected by the floods.

The ADB provided timely responses to emerging and ongoing crises in the Asia and Pacific region. This included a combined \$2.2 billion, directed through the bank's Countercyclical Support Facility, for the Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.

In Pakistan, extreme floods damaged over one-third of the Kharif (summer) seasonal cropping area, curtailing food supply and driving up prices. Responding to this region-wide crisis, the ADB announced a \$14 billion program over 2022–2025 to provide immediate food relief and improve long-term food security in Asia and the Pacific, with significant financing repurposed from existing projects of lesser urgency.

Afghanistan and Pakistan were severely impacted by rising food and energy prices, exacerbated by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, triggering domestic inflation and curtailing consumption. Highlighting the region's vulnerability to climate change,

Pakistan was also hit by devastating floods that killed more than 1,730 people, directly affected 33 million people, caused billions of dollars in damage, and worsened an already fragile economic situation.

As well as delivering a substantial emergency response for Pakistan during 2022, the ADB supported post-pandemic green growth and increased resilience to both short- and long-term challenges in its developing member countries (DMCs) of Central and West Asia. The bank committed financial resources totaling \$6 billion for the region in 2022, comprising \$4.8 billion in sovereign financing and \$1.2 billion in non-sovereign investments.

The ADB's support during the year included \$2.1 billion through the bank's Building Resilience with Active Countercyclical Expenditures (BRACE) programs. This helped Pakistan navigate the economic impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine and extreme flooding, and provided a buffer to shore up government budgets in the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. To improve health outcomes for Pakistani women, the ADB committed a \$100 million loan for upgrading secondary hospitals in KP, a province that suffers from a high infant mortality rate and maternal mortality ratio.

In Pakistan, ADB signed a \$300m loan to further develop capital markets, promote private investment, and help mobilise domestic resources. The loan supports policy actions to strengthen market stability and attract investor capital, including structural reforms within the SECP. By making Pakistan's capital markets more robust and strengthening government debt management, the program helps underpin the financing of sustainable growth. (*Business Recorder, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Pakistan's economy: ADB lists factors that continue to pose challenges***

The devastating floods in 2022, impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, security issues, structural risks, and adverse external shocks continue to pose major economic challenges to Pakistan, said the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The bank in its report, "Factsheet on Pakistan," stated that uncertainties and institutional factors continue to weigh on project implementation. These included land acquisition procedures, procurement delays caused by restrictions, and price fluctuations affecting the importation of construction materials.

The report noted that reforms are required to promote high value-added exports, expand social spending, reinforce the energy sector's financial and technical sustainability, and implement structural changes that will strengthen institutions and create jobs. The ADB's country partnership strategy, 2021–2025, for Pakistan focuses on three priorities — improving economic management, building resilience, and boosting competitiveness and private sector development. To date, the ADB has committed 740 public sector loans, grants, and technical assistance totaling \$ 39.7 billion to Pakistan.



Cumulative loan and grant disbursements to Pakistan amount to \$ 30.76 billion. These were financed by regular and concessional ordinary capital resources, the Asian Development Fund, and other special funds. The ADB's ongoing sovereign portfolio in Pakistan includes 53 loans and three grants worth \$ 9.59 billion. In 2022, the ADB's loan and grant disbursements to Pakistan amounted to \$ 2.49 billion. This included \$ 1.8 billion in programme lending, \$ 680 million from project lending, and \$ 4.6 million from grants. The ADB provided \$ 1.5 billion to help Pakistan boost social protection, promote food security, and support employment for people. Total outstanding balances and undisbursed commitments of ADB's nonsovereign transactions in Pakistan as of 31st December 2022 was \$ 242.48 million representing 1.9 percent of the ADB's total private sector portfolio. (*Business Recorder, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***ADB decides against financing Karachi's Malir Expressway***

The Asian Development Bank has said that the Malir Expressway project has been taken off the priority lists for funding through ADB resources. The ILRA had lodged a complaint with the ADP about the adverse environmental impact of the expressway on behalf of the affected people. (*Dawn, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 13*)

## **8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)**

### ***IMF slashes Pakistan's growth outlook to 0.5pc***

Hinting at entrenched high inflation, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) lowered its forecast for Pakistan's economic growth rate for the current fiscal year to just 0.5 per cent, with inflation going beyond 27pc and the unemployment rate increasing to 7pc. This showed an unambiguous deterioration of economic fundamentals over the last six months since October when the Fund forecast the country's gross domestic product to grow by 3.5pc against 6pc for 2022 ago and inflation at 20pc against 12.1pc last year amid a slowdown in the global economy and devastating effects of floods. Meanwhile, global headline inflation is set to fall from 8.7pc in 2022 to 7pc in 2023 on the back of lower commodity prices, but core inflation — excluding the volatile energy and food components — is likely to decline more slowly.

The revision in Pakistan's growth prospects is in line with similar 0.4pc and 0.6pc projected last week by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, respectively. They also projected inflation at 29.5pc and 27.5pc, respectively, for the current year. Projects 27.1pc inflation, 2.3pc current account deficit, 7pc unemployment rate for this fiscal year. In its flagship World Economic Outlook (WEO), the IMF has also estimated the unemployment rate in Pakistan to rise to 7pc against 6.2pc last year. For fiscal 2024, however, the IMF expected the economic growth to improve to 3.5pc, inflation to stay elevated at 22pc and the unemployment rate to slightly decline to 6.8pc.

At the cost of loss of growth, elevated inflation and higher unemployment, the current account deficit, according to the WEO, would decline to 2.3pc of GDP during this fiscal year from 4.6pc a year ago and slightly go up to 2.4pc next year. The IMF's current account deficit forecast is 20 basis points lower than its earlier estimate of 2.5pc, which had been one of the key bones of contention between the Pakistan authorities and the IMF mission in reaching a staff-level agreement.

In the latest outlook, the IMF has also slightly lowered its baseline forecast for global economic output from 3.4pc in 2022 to 2.8pc this year against its earlier projections of 2.9pc, before rising slowly and settling at 3pc five years out — the lowest medium-term forecast in decades. This forecast for the coming years is well below what was expected before the onset of the adverse shocks since early 2022 and described it as a “rocky landing”.

It said the tentative signs in early 2023 that the world economy could achieve a soft landing — with inflation coming down and growth steady — had receded amid stubbornly high inflation and recent financial sector turmoil. Although inflation has declined as central banks have raised interest rates and food and energy prices have come down, underlying price pressures are proving sticky, with labour markets tight in several economies. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Govt terms previous deal with IMF 'poisonous'***

Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government could not provide reasonable relief to the people due to the “poisonous pact” with International Monetary Fund (IMF) signed by previous Imran Khan government. However, when asked a specific question pertaining to his portfolio Dastgir parroted the government line: “We did not sign any agreement with the IMF. (*Business Recorder, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Fiscal Monitor: IMF projects fall in govt gross debt to 73.6pc of GDP***

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a decrease in the government gross debt for Pakistan, ie, from 75.8 percent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2022 to 73.6 percent in 2023 and projected further decline to 68.9 percent in 2024. According to the IMF report “Fiscal Monitor, on the path to policy normalization” the net debt for Pakistan is projected to decrease to 68.7 per cent of the GDP in 2023 against 69.5per cent in 2022. The net debt is projected to further decline to 65per cent in 2024. The government revenue is projected at 12.2 per cent of GDP for 2023 and 12.5 per cent for 2024 against 12.1per cent during the same period of 2022 and 12.4per cent in 2021. IMF drastically cuts Pakistan's FY23 growth forecast to 0.5pc.

The Fund has projected government primary balance at -0.5 per cent for 2023 against -3.0 per cent in 2022. Further, the government overall balance is projected at -6.8 per

cent for 2023 and -8.3 per cent for 2024 against -7.8 per cent in 2022. The report has projected government expenditure to decrease to 19.1 per cent of GDP in 2023 compared to 19.9 per cent in 2022, but projected to increase to 20.8 per cent in 2024. According to the report the country's debt to average maturity in 2023 is estimated at 26.8 per cent of GDP. There would be total financing need of about 26.8 per cent of GDP in 2023. (*Business Recorder, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Pakistan inches closer to IMF deal with \$1.3bn boost***

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar announced financial support from the United Arab Emirates and China totalling \$1.3 billion, giving the ailing economy a shot in the arm as it seeks to meet conditions to unlock IMF funding. He said the UAE had promised \$1bn to prop up Pakistan's forex reserves — which at their current level of \$4.04bn can barely pay for four weeks of controlled imports. The confirmation from the emirates removes a key hurdle to securing the much-awaited bailout tranche from the International Monetary Fund. Besides, China was set to release \$300 million to Pakistan — the last tranche of a \$1.3bn rollover loan. UAE authorities have confirmed to IMF for their bilateral support of US \$ One billion to Pakistan. (*Dawn, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

## **8.3 # World Bank**

### ***Pakistan makes inadequate investments in human capital: WB***

Low human capital investments will limit the realisation of Pakistan's ambition to become an upper-middle-income country by 2047, says a new World Bank report. Pakistan's Human Capital Index (HCI) value of 0.41 is low in both absolute and relative terms; lower than the South Asia average of 0.48, with Bangladesh at 0.46 and Nepal at 0.49. "If Pakistan continues on its current trajectory in human capital development, its GDP per capita would grow overall by a mere 18 per cent through 2047, the 100th anniversary of its founding.

Human capital makes up 61pc of Pakistan's wealth, yet its levels of human capital are among the world's lowest. It suggested that if Pakistan can boost human capital investments and its HCI value to the level of its peers, per capita could grow by 32pc. But if Pakistan improves both its human capital and its use of human capital, bringing adults into employment outside farming, GDP per capita could rise by 144pc, eight times more than under business as usual. (*Dawn, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***DHP-1: WB projects \$1.3bn financing gap***

Terming implementation progress on Dasu-1 hydropower project moderately satisfactory, the World Bank (WB) has estimated total financing gap of \$ 1.3 billion due to increased forex requirements. The Bank Mission, visiting Pakistan from February 20 March 11, 2023 has submitted a detailed update of project costs and available financing. The mission argues that despite delay in implementation, the total cost is expected to be

increased only 3% for the hydropower component. However, due to increased requirements of forex, the total financing gap in dollars for DHP- 1 is about \$ 1.3 billion. Given the construction schedule and associated expenditures and keeping in mind the overall financing strategy for Dasu, the World Bank will start preparatory work for potential additional financing to partially address this gap, tentatively before the end of 2024. (*Business Recorder, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***World Bank estimates fall in GDP per capita income to \$1,399***

The World Bank has estimated a decline in GDP per capita income for Pakistan, i.e., from \$1,613.8 in 2021-22 to \$1,399.1 in 2022-23. The bank in its report 'Macro Poverty Outlook for Pakistan: April 2023' noted that GDP per capita growth is estimated at - 1.5% in 2022-23 compared to 4.2 % in 2021-22. The unemployment rate is estimated to increase to 10.2 percent in 2022-23 compared to 10.1 percent in 2021-22. Poverty will inevitably increase with pressures from weak labour markets and high inflation. In the absence of higher social spending, the lower middle-income poverty rate is expected to increase to 37.2 percent in FY23. Given poor households' dependency on agriculture, and small-scale manufacturing and construction activity, they remain vulnerable to economic and climate shocks. Gross investment is estimated to decline to 10.6 percent in 2022-23 against 13.3 percent in 2021-22. Gross Investment - Public is estimated to be 2.8 percent in 2022-23 compared to 3.4 percent in 2021-22. Private Consumption growth is estimated at 1.3 percent in 2022-23 compared to 10 percent in 2021-22. The Bank has estimated revenue to decline to 10.9 percent of GDP in 2022-23 compared to 12.1 percent in 2021-22. (*Business Recorder, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***World Bank calls for simpler tax regime***

Pakistan's tax system needs an overhaul to simplify provisions, close loopholes and ensure equitable distribution of tax burden, the World Bank has said in its latest report. The report, 'Enabling a Modern and Efficient Tax System', said despite strategies and proclaimed intentions over the last two decades, the outcomes remain to be attained. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Decades-old issue of canal design to be addressed with WB loan, but no time soon***

Commencement of physical work for the rehabilitation of Akram Wah, the only off-taking lined channel of Kotri barrage, at a cost \$75.92m may take more time to address its decades-long design problem that blocks full discharge into the channel. These remedial measures would be undertaken under World Bank-funded Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation (SWAT) project. With the establishment of Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (Sida), the lined channel was placed under its administrative authority besides a non-perennial new Phulelli canal. Rest of Kotri barrage's two canals are under irrigation department's domain. (*Dawn, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

## ***Operationalisation: World Bank to extend additional financing for CASA-1000***

The World Bank is to extend additional financing for CASA-1000 to meet extra payment obligations for additional activities to make CASA-1000 operational, such as studies and implementation of reverse power flow from Pakistan to Central Asia and others. (*Business Recorder, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

## **9 # POLICY**

### **9.1 # Development Policy**

#### ***CDWP clears three projects worth Rs76.5bn***

The Central Development Working Party (CWDP) cleared three development projects of Rs76.5 billion in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh. The meeting of the CDWP presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal through a video link from Saudi Arabia, approved two projects of about Rs7.1bn and cleared another project of Rs69.4bn for formal approval by Ecneec. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

#### ***Uplift plan cut by a quarter to Rs600bn***

The government has officially clipped the size of the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) by a quarter to just Rs600 billion compared to the Rs800bn allocation, citing fiscal constraints. In the previous fiscal year (2021-22), the development programme was contained at about Rs550bn against a budget allocation of about Rs900bn — almost a 40pc cut — as no funds were released for spending throughout the last quarter (April-June) amid political transition. Ministry of Planning and Development confirmed that it had authorised the disbursement of Rs129bn for PSDP projects for the fourth quarter (April-June) despite financial constraints and disruptions caused by super floods last year. For second consecutive year, projects face drastic cuts even in funds allocated by parliament. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### ***Public Sector Development Programme: Rs129bn released for development projects***

Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives has released Rs 129 billion for development projects under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the fourth quarter of (2022-23). The Water Resource Division and Higher Education Commission (HEC) have been given top priority. It is worth noting that in the last quarter of (2021-22), there was a zero release for PSDP, which resulted in the government shrinking the PSDP from Rs 700b to Rs 550b. According to the latest data provided by the Planning Ministry, an amount of Rs 129b has been released for development projects under PSDP for the fourth quarter (2022-2023), including Rs 27b for Azad Jammu & Kashmir AJK, Gilgit-Baltistan GB and Ex-FATA. (*Business Recorder, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

## **9.2 # Neo-Liberal Policy**

### ***US wants Pakistan to ‘do more’ for intellectual property enforcement***

Pakistan has made significant progress in improving intellectual property (IP) legislation, but a lot still needs to be done in the area of enforcement. This was stated in a new report by the United States Trade Representative which kept Pakistan on the ‘watch list’ for 2023 while acknowledging that the country “maintained a positive dialogue with the US on intellectual property matters and promoting IP protection and enforcement”. (*Dawn, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

## **10 # ENVIRONMENT**

### **10.1 # Health**

#### ***WHO seeks policymakers’ role in prevention of NCDs in Pakistan***

WHO Representative in Pakistan Dr Palitha Gunarathna Mahipala has said non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for a significant portion of the mortality rate in Pakistan, amounting to 57 per cent, and urged policymakers and legislators to play their role in the prevention of these diseases by promoting a healthy lifestyle, and hoped for the prevention of diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, hypertension and other preventable diseases. (*The News, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 16*)

#### ***‘Over 600,000 people contracted TB in last two years in Pakistan’***

As many as 611,000 people have fallen ill due to TB in Pakistan over the past two years whereas 48,000 HIV-negative and 2,100 HIV-positive people died due to TB in the country but only 55pc of the cases were notified. (*Dawn, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 4*)

#### ***Health experts raise concerns over growing TB cases in country***

Experts at a seminar expressed concern over the growing number of TB cases in the country, stating that a major barrier in tackling challenge was a lack of public awareness about the disease and the places to seek care from. (*Dawn, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 14*)

#### ***Haemophilia management needs emergency treatment, rehabilitation services: WHO***

Haemophilia management requires prophylactic, routine and emergency treatment in addition to rehabilitation services and facilities. Despite these challenges, there is reason for hope in the form of promising advances in medical research leading to new treatment medicines and even cures for haemophilia patients. WHO Global Adviser on Blood Regulation, Availability and Safety Prof Hasan Abbas Zaheer said. while some of the medicines, given to patients, were registered with Drug a number of them were not available as new medicines were frequently introduced due to continuous advancements and research in the medical sector. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 4*)

### ***Unusual rise in preventable diseases among children in flood-hit areas***

Several preventable diseases like measles, pertussis, resistant malaria, gastroenteritis, emphysema and malnutrition have registered an unusual rise among children who reported at the Chandka Medical College children hospital from flood-hit areas in the wake of last year's devastating deluge. Prof Dr Shanti Lal, chairman of the department of pediatrics at the hospital, confirmed that majority of the cases were pouring in from flood-hit areas of Qambar-Shahdadkot, Larkana and other districts including Jhal Magsi, Gaibidero, Ratoderro, Naudero, Warah and remote areas.

The hospital had three units and roughly over 130 cases of the above mentioned diseases were being admitted every month from among 650 to 750 patients reporting daily at the OPD, he said. A number of mothers who accompanied their ailing children complained that their children had contracted the diseases specially measles despite being vaccinated. Dr Lal said that many women were not even unaware about the vaccination or they did not have the vaccination cards with them to confirm if their children had been inoculated or not. He pointed to a five-year-old boy lying on a bed nearby who could barely open his sour eyes and said it was the outcome of measles complication. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Malaria spikes in Pakistan after 'climate-driven' disasters***

Extreme weather events in Malawi and Pakistan have driven "very sharp" rises in malaria infections and deaths, a global health chief said ahead of World Malaria Day on April 25. Cases in Pakistan last year, after devastating floods left a third of the country under water, rose four-fold to 1.6 million, WHO. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

### ***Authorities on alert after new monkeypox case reported***

A new case of monkeypox has been reported after a patient from Saudi Arabia tested positive for the virus, prompting the authorities to beef up measures at airports and set up isolation wards in hospitals. (*Dawn, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Govt looks to stop fund for health project***

The federal government is considering withdrawing funding to the Rs88 billion nationwide health programme initiated three years ago to combat Covid-19 and other natural calamities owing to poor implementation progress by the provinces and other regional administrations. 'Covid-19 Responsive and other natural calamities control programme' was approved in 2020 for implementation across the four provinces on a 50:50 cost-sharing basis and as federally financed projects in Azad Kashmir and Gb.

However, out of the federal share of about Rs46bn, the centre released about Rs38bn (almost 83pc) but the provinces could utilise no more than Rs10.5bn, accounting for only 27.6pc of funds released or about 23pc of the total federal share. The flagship

umbrella project was originally approved by the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council in 2020 to provide support to the provinces to respond, reduce and mitigate the impact of the pandemic at an estimated total cost of Rs70bn. The project was then expanded to also include the upgradation of public sector health facilities across the country to Rs88bn to cope with other emergencies, epidemics and natural calamities and support health sector interventions. (*Dawn, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **10.2 # Pollution**

### ***3m tonnes of plastic waste generated in Pakistan last year: ministry***

The Ministry of Climate Change informed a parliamentary body that around three million tons plastic waste was generated in Pakistan in 2022, and was expected to reach 12 million tonnes by 2040, if no urgent action was taken. The officials also said that the ministry was working with international partners to find environmental friendly solutions for recycling of plastics wastes. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 4*)

## **11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION**

### ***Public debt jumps 28pc to Rs51.13tr***

Pakistan's public debt increased by over 28 per cent or Rs11.3 trillion between June 2021 and September 2022 to Rs51.13tr mainly because of policy prescriptions like devaluations and interest rate hikes, rather than additional debt inflows for economic growth. The total public debt which was Rs39.87tr by end-June 2021, increased to Rs49.19tr by end-June 2022, showing an increase of Rs9.3tr. This further rose to Rs51.13tr by end-September 2022. The Fiscal Responsibility & Debt Limitation Act (FRDLA) threshold was thus violated by a big margin. Resultantly, the public debt to GDP ratio increased from 71.5pc of GDP in June 2021 to 73.5pc by end of June 2022. The per capita debt, therefore, increased from Rs175,625 per person in June 2021 to Rs225,247 in September 2022 – an additional indebtedness of almost Rs50,000 per person in just 15 months, up by 28pc.

This has been revealed in Debt Policy Statement submitted to the parliament under statutory requirements of the FRDLA. During FY22, Pakistan's debt-to-GDP ratio witnessed an increase of 2 percentage points and stood at 73.5pc at end-Jun 22 compared with 71.5pc a year earlier. This was mainly due to adverse exchange rate movement on account of the depreciation of the rupee against foreign currencies which stood around 5pc of GDP. This ratio remained below the pre-pandemic level of 74.7pc for Pakistan, contrary to global debt-to-GDP levels remaining above the pre-pandemic level, the report said. However, it was higher than the threshold of 58pc to be achieved by FY22 as stipulated in FRDLA.

The share of external debt in total public debt increased from 34pc in 2020-21 to 37pc in 2021-22 and was contained below the benchmark (maximum limit) of 40pc. The



increase was attributable mainly to exchange rate depreciation rather than excessive external borrowings. The volume of new government guarantees issued during a financial year is limited under FRDLA at 2pc of GDP and the total stock of guarantees is limited to 10pc of GDP. This limit is applicable on guarantees issued both in local and foreign currencies. (*Dawn, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***0.4pc growth rate foreseen: World Bank warns of a ‘macro-economic crisis’***

The World Bank (WB) has warned that a macroeconomic crisis could materialize in Pakistan, given the country’s low foreign exchange reserves and debt service obligations, in case the International Monetary Fund (IMF)’ Extended Fund Facility (EFF) is not completed and additional financing flows are not secured. The bank in its report, “Pakistan Development Update Recent Economic Developments, Outlook, and Risk”, has revised downward GDP growth projection while saying that growth is expected to slow sharply to 0.4 percent in the fiscal year 2023, reflecting the tightening of fiscal policy, flood impacts, high inflation, high energy prices, and import controls. Consumer price inflation is estimated to surge to an average of 29.5 in the fiscal year 2023. (*Business Recorder, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Central govt’s domestic debt jumps to Rs34tr***

The domestic debt of the central government has increased by Rs3 trillion during the first 8 months of the current financial year, reported the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The central bank data showed the stock of government debt rose to Rs34.071 trillion in February compared to Rs31.037tr in June 2022, an increase of 9.7 per cent. The central government’s domestic borrowings increased by 23pc to Rs34.07tr in February from Rs27.7tr in the same month last year. The SBP data showed the central government’s public debt (including external debt) increased by 13.7pc to Rs54.353tr during the first 8 months of 2022-23. The external debt in rupee terms rose 21pc to Rs20.281tr by the end of February. The stock external debt at end of June 2022 was Rs16.74tr. However, the external debt was calculated at the exchange rate of Rs261.6 per dollar. The current dollar rate is over Rs287, which is a record. (*Dawn, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Trade and industry warn of unsustainable financial burden***

The export-oriented businesses of Pakistan are unlikely to sustain the burden of additional billions of rupees amid the withdrawal of subsidised electricity, restricted imports, all-time high-interest rates, and the rupee’s devaluation against the US dollar. President Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI), Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said the private sector in Pakistan is under enormous distress and its investments have dried up consistently. He said businessmen’s confidence in the government policies and its handling of the IMF programme has come to a standstill, adding that the businessmen have never witnessed such inconveniences in doing business in the history of Pakistan. (*Dawn, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **11.1 # Food Scarcity**

### ***Millers warn govt of flour crisis if free movement of wheat not allowed***

Flour millers gave a 48-hour ultimatum to the Sindh government to allow free movement of wheat to Karachi from the interior of Sindh to avert any serious flour crisis in the metropolis. “We will announce our future course of action in case grain is not allowed to enter Karachi,” said Chaudhry Aamir Abdullah, the chairman of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA), Sindh Zone. He said that the production activities in 50 out of 92 mills in Karachi had already suspended due to non-availability of the commodity. The arrival of wheat had been suspended for the last one week from the interior of Sindh due to a ban imposed by the Sindh government on its movement. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 14*)

### ***Malnutrition in flood-hit areas has increased, says UN***

The United Nations warned that the number of children suffering from malnutrition in the flood-affected areas had greatly increased compared to the pre-flood situation, which was already reaching emergency levels. A rapid survey conducted in 15 flood-affected districts suggests that nearly one-third of children aged 6-23 months suffer from moderate acute malnutrition and 14 per cent from severe acute malnutrition with girls being more affected than boys. UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan, Julien Harneis announced dedicating \$5.5 million of the \$6.5 million allocation received from CERF towards emergency nutrition and food security interventions. This additional \$5.5 million will help Unicef, WFP, WHO and NGOs to provide emergency nutrition interventions as part of the government-led flood response in the most vulnerable communities of Balochistan and Sindh. (*Dawn, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### ***Great food insecurity ahead for country, says PBC report***

Pakistan’s food trade balance was a deficit of \$3.6 billion in the Financial Year 2022. Compulsion to import food commodities along with Pakistan’s perilous shortage of foreign reserves in the wake of global commodity price levels and transport congestion leads to apprehension of great food insecurity in the years to come — tougher for the poor. This has been claimed in a report ‘State of Pakistan’s Agriculture’ launched by the Pakistan Business Council (PBC). It states that the massive rise in global commodity prices since 2022 has brought a wave of inflation to Pakistan turbo-charged with sharp depreciation in the value of the rupee. (*Business Recorder, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 7*)

## **11.2 # Food**

### ***Concerns raised over ‘poisoning’ of potable water in Thar***

Activists belonging to Thar alleged that the coal project in the desert region had poisoned drinking water. Speaking at a press conference at the Karachi Press Club, local

activists shared the findings of a recent report that raised questions about the claims of the Engro Corporation Ltd — which owns stakes in the coal mining and coal-based power plants — that their operations are not harming the drinking water or the integrity of subsoil and water aquifers in Block II of the Thar coal area. They called on the government to take notice of the report on water quality and take action to save the people of Thar. Govt urged to take action on report that linked excessive levels of selenium, arsenic, mercury, chromium and lead with coal mining.

The report is based on the tests conducted by the Mehran University of Engineering and Technology’s Soil and Water Pollution Control Laboratory, which is approved by Sepa. Eight of the nine locations also show excess of fluoride. Arsenic was also found to be in excess of permissible limits at four out of six locations tested. Across the six locations, lead levels were found to be more than seven times higher than the standards of WHO as well as those of Sindh. Mercury levels were found to be 19 to 95 times higher than the WHO and Sindh standards. Selenium levels were found to be six to 20 times higher than the WHO and Sindh standards. Arsenic levels were two times higher than the WHO standards.

Lead, mercury, selenium and arsenic are toxic heavy metals that can have significant adverse effects on human health and the environment when present at high levels. Lead exposure can affect the nervous system, causing developmental delays, cognitive impairment and behavioural disorders in children and pregnant women. It can also cause anaemia, kidney damage and reproductive problems. “Engro has failed in its duty to safeguard the health of the people of Thar while making big profits. Water reports conducted by Engro reveal that its own testing does not check for toxic metals, which is a key metric in testing the safety of water supplies”. “This means that any potential mitigation methods used by Engro do not have an understanding of the toxicity of the water caused by the ongoing Thar coal project. Comparing with historical baseline data, it appears that it is Engro’s operations that are responsible for poisoning the water of Thari communities”. Report also raised questions about Sepa’s willingness and capacity to monitor Thar coal activities adequately and casted doubt on the adequacy of the approved EIA for Thar coal mining and power plants. (*Dawn, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 13*)

### ***SFA to begin registration of pre-packed food brands on May 15***

Director General, Sindh Food Authority (SFA), Agha Fakhar Hussain has said that SFA has decided to start the registration process of food products/brands of all pre-packed food items from May 15 to make authority fully functional. Those, who do not get their products registered under SFA, will face legal action under SFA Act 2016, rules, laws, and regulations. (*Business Recorder, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 7*)

### ***Growers' body objects to seizure of wheat stock***

The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad has objected to confiscation of wheat crop by food department which was stocked up by growers for use as seed and for personal consumption. SAI president Nawab Zubair Talpur said that growers did not hoard grain. They were selling wheat to buyers in open market for better returns compared with food department's rate. He maintained that the food officials who had failed to check smuggling of wheat had now turned to farmers' own wheat and confiscated it. It was highly condemnable and this practice must stop now. (*Dawn, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

## **11.3 # Inflation**

### ***Inflation sets another record, hits 35.4pc in March***

Consumer inflation raced to 35.4% in March, the highest annual rise in prices on record, driven mainly by skyrocketing costs of food, electricity, beverage, and transport. Poor citizens are already feeling the brunt of such high inflation, which has become unrelenting on the back of a messy cocktail of factors like political instability, years of financial mismanagement, the rupee's depreciation, and as the government scrambled to meet IMF conditions to unlock a desperately needed bailout. At least 20 people have been killed since the start of Ramazan in crowd crushes at food distribution centres.

Monthly inflation — measured by a basket of products and services called the Consumer Price Index (CPI) — stayed above 20pc for eight months from June to January. It then hit 31.6pc in February and has now crossed 35pc. The reading was 12.7pc in March last year. However, when compared to the previous month, inflation slightly slowed but was still high at 3.7pc in March, data showed. Higher prices of food, cooking oil and electricity pushed up the index.

Annual food inflation in March was 47.1pc and 50.2pc for urban and rural areas, respectively, data said. Core inflation, which strips out food and energy, stood at 18.6pc in urban areas and 23.1pc in rural areas. Overall inflation in urban and rural areas increased to 33pc and 38.9pc year-on-year, respectively. With the latest increase in CPI, average inflation has reached 27.3pc this fiscal year compared to 10.8pc in the previous year. (*Dawn, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***March inflation soars to 35.4pc, highest since 1965***

The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation increased to 35.4 percent on a year-on-year basis in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 31.5 per cent in the previous month and 12.7 percent in March 2022, says the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The CPI in the first eight months (July-March) of the current fiscal year on average remained at 27.26 per cent compared to 10.7 per cent during the same period of the last fiscal year. On month-on-month basis, it increased to 3.7 per cent in March 2023 as

compared to an increase of 4.3 per cent in the previous month and an increase of 0.8 per cent in March 2022.

The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) inflation on YoY increased to 40.4 per cent in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 33.6 per cent a month earlier and 13 per cent in March 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 5.8 per cent in March 2023 as compared to an increase of 3.7 per cent a month earlier and an increase of 0.6 per cent in March 2022. The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased to 37.5 per cent in February 2023 as compared to an increase of 36.4 per cent a month earlier and an increase of 23.8% in March 2022. (*Business Recorder, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Average inflation projected at 27.5pc: Growth likely to decelerate to 0.6pc: ADB***

Pakistan's GDP growth is expected to decelerate significantly to 0.6 per cent in the fiscal year 2023 (ends 30 June 2023) compared to six percent in the last fiscal year, while average inflation is projected to more than double from 12.2 per cent to 27.5 per cent, in the wake of last year's devastating floods, ballooning inflation, a current account deficit, and an ongoing foreign exchange crisis, said Asian Development Bank (ADB).

The bank in its latest report, "Asian Development Outlook (ADO) April 2023", noted that a return to political stability with the formation of a new government after scheduled general elections would improve business sentiment. The bank stressed that the stalled International Monetary Fund (IMF) program must be resumed to buttress falling reserves and ease the balance of payments crisis, in part by catalyzing financing from other sources. (*Business Recorder, April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Meat prices rise amid high exports***

Amid surging Eid-related demand, retailers have further raised veal meat prices by Rs100 per kg. Veal beef with and without bones prices rose to Rs900-950 and Rs1,100-1,200 per kg from Rs850 and Rs1,000 depending on the area. In the last one and a half months, retailers have increased veal meat rates by up to Rs200 per kg citing rising wholesale prices. Surprisingly, Commissioner Karachi had fixed the rate at Rs750 and Rs900 per kg but there was not a single outlet in the city selling meat at control rates during the holy month. Retailers do not even bother to put on display the official price list. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***'Reckless' sugar exports push up local prices***

Pakistan exported 172,180 tonnes of sugar in February-March against zero foreign sales in the same period last year, which triggered a surge in domestic retail prices. (*Dawn, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## ***Inflation projected to hit 38pc as food, energy prices rocket***

The government expects inflation to remain high in the coming months and it may hit an all-time high of 38 per cent in April, driven by hikes in food and energy prices. “The inflation is expected to remain in the range of 36-38 per cent for April,” the finance ministry said in its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook released. The short-term inflation measured by SPI was 46.8pc last week, just shy of the record 47.2pc witnessed a week ago. Monthly inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI) was 35.4pc in March — the highest on record. The ministry said the rupee’s depreciation and rising administered prices had contributed to the increase in overall prices. “Although global commodity prices are showing a downward trend, they are still on the higher side compared to the pre-pandemic level.” (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### **11.4 # Poverty**

#### ***One million people get Rs2bn for buying flour, says Sharjeel***

Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that over one million deserving people had been given Rs2.14 billion for the purchase of flour across the province. He said that the provincial government had allocated Rs15.6bn for the over 7.8m families for purchase of flour and each family would be given Rs2,000 each. He said that as many as 3,824,145 families had so far been sent messages for availing themselves of the subsidy. He adding that the provincial government will add another Rs5bn to the subsidy amount if the need arose. (*Dawn, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 13*)

#### ***BISP budget increased 70.12pc to Rs400bn***

Government announced that the budget for the BISP was increased from Rs 235b to Rs 400b reflecting an increase of 70.12%. (*Business Recorder, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

#### ***Economic, political uncertainty worsens poverty outlook in Pakistan: report***

World Bank sees poverty in Pakistan will inevitably increase with pressures from weak labour markets and high inflation, warning that further delays in external financing, policy slippages, and political uncertainty pose significant risks to the macro poverty outlook. In the absence of higher social spending, the lower middle-income poverty rate is expected to increase to 37.2 per cent in 2022-23, according to the World Bank report on the macro poverty outlook for Pakistan. Given poor households’ dependency on agriculture, and small-scale manufacturing and construction activity.

Official remittance inflows also fell by 11.1pc, partly due to the exchange rate cap that made informal non-banking channels preferable. Any decline in overall remittances would reduce households’ capacity to cope with economic shocks, adding pressure on poverty, warns the report. The report says Pakistan’s economy is under stress with low foreign reserves and high inflation. Activity has fallen with policy tightening, flood

impacts, import controls, high borrowing and fuel costs, low confidence, and protracted policy and political uncertainty. Despite some projected recovery, growth is expected to remain below potential in the medium term.

Due to higher energy and food prices, and the weaker rupee, inflation is projected to rise to 29.5pc in FY23 but moderate over the forecast horizon as global inflationary pressures dissipate. With dampened imports, the current account deficit is projected to narrow to 2pc of GDP in FY23 but widen to 2.2pc of GDP in FY25 as import controls ease. The fiscal deficit is projected to narrow to 6.7pc of GDP in FY23 and further over medium term as fiscal consolidation takes hold. (*Dawn, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **11. 5 # Weekly Inflation**

### ***Short-term inflation remains above 45pc***

Short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose to 45.36 per cent for the combined income group on a year-on-year basis for the week ending March 22, data compiled by PBS. However, following a persistent increase for three consecutive weeks, the SPI dropped 0.36pc week-on-week with a slight decline in prices of onion, tomatoes and cooking oil. (*Dawn, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Weekly inflation stays above 44 per cent***

Short-term inflation, based on SPI, slightly eased but remained at an elevated level of 44.49 per cent for the combined income group on a year-on-year basis for the week ending April 6, data issued by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). However, on a week-on-week basis, the SPI recorded an increase of 0.92pc with food items getting costlier, particularly fruits, potatoes and cooking oil in wake of the Ramazan-related demand spiral. On a year-on-year basis, weekly inflation has stayed above 40pc since late February. However, after hitting a record high of 46.7pc in the week ending March 22, it has slightly eased in the previous two weeks. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Short-term inflation spikes to 44.6pc on costly food***

Short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose to 44.61 per cent year-on-year for the week ended on April 13, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). On a week-on-week basis, the SPI eased by 0.60pc. On a year-on-year basis, weekly inflation has stayed above 40pc since late February. However, after hitting a record high of 46.7pc in the week ending March 22, it has slightly eased in the previous three weeks. (*Dawn, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Short-term inflation skyrockets to 47.23pc***

Short-term inflation, based on the SPI, spiked to an unprecedented 47.23 per cent year-on-year for the combined income group for the week ending April 19, according to data

released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The year-on-year SPI has been steadily on the rise since August last year and remained mostly above 40pc. It rose to 42.31pc on Aug 18 last year, followed by 45.5pc on Sept 1 that year and 46.65pc during week ending March 22 this year. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Weekly inflation stays elevated***

Short-term inflation, based on the SPI, rose to 46.82% year-on-year for the combined income group for the week ended on April 27, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). However, on a week-on-week basis, the SPI rose by 0.15pc with food items getting costlier, particularly wheat flour and its products, fruits, tomatoes, potatoes, onions, meat and cooking oil. (*Dawn, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **12 # CLIMATE CHANGE**

### ***Pakistan urges SCO to prioritise climate action***

Warning that the sustainability of life on earth and the overall socio-economic development of current and future generations are now under threat, Pakistan urged the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) to prioritise climate action. Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman, representing Pakistan at the 4th Meeting of the Heads of the Ministers and Agencies of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) member states responsible for environmental protection, emphasised the critical role that the SCO could play at the regional level in achieving shared goals related to environmental sustainability and climate resilience. (*Dawn, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

## **13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS**

### ***Two killed, highway blocked after heavy rains, landslides***

Landslides triggered by heavy rains in the hilly region on the border of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa swept mud and rocks into several areas, damaging vehicles and blocking a highway connecting the two provinces. (*Dawn, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Thousands stranded on KKH as heavy rains lash region***

Thousands of passengers travelling to Gilgit-Baltistan from different parts of the country were stranded on the Karakoram Highway (KKH) as floodwater and landslides caused by heavy rains blocked the highway at Uchar Nallah near Dasso in Kohistan district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The bridge on Uchar Nallah, swept away by flood in August last year, has yet to be rebuilt. Following the heavy rain continued, the water level in the nullah increased, causing the suspension of traffic on the KKH. The KKH was also blocked at several points after landslides hit the main artery. The road link between tourist spots Kalam and Bahrain was damaged as heavy rain lashed the picturesque valley of Swat. (*Dawn, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)



### ***Swat hotels, shops flooded after downpour***

Heavy rain caused flooding in the Swat River's tributary Daral Khwar inundating hotels and shops in Bahrain Bazaar. However, no damage to public life was reported. The residents said the flooding damaged several link roads and bridges as well. Heavy rain, snowfall destroy roads, crops in Hazara. (*Dawn, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***Pakistan among 20 states at risk of 'excessive rainfall'***

Pakistan is among the 20 countries which are at risk of excessive rainfall as the El Nino oceanographic phenomenon forecast returns in June following three years of La Nina, according to a report prepared by the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS) of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. While 20 countries are at risk of excessive rainfall, 42 countries are also at risk of the effects of El Nino with the risk of dry conditions.

The countries at risk of excessive rainfall are: Afghanistan, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bhutan, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkiye, Turkmenistan, United States and Uzbekistan. Forecast to return in June 2023, the El Nino oceanographic phenomenon was a key driver of extreme weather events that pose high risks to global food security. Already in 2022, the number of people facing acute food insecurity was projected to reach up to 222 million in 53 countries/territories, according to the latest Hunger Hotspots report. (*Dawn, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

### ***Three killed in rain-related mishaps in Balochistan***

At least three people were killed and several injured as heavy rains battered various parts of Balochistan during the last 36 hours. A new spell of heavy rains, with thunderstorms and lightning, which continued with small intervals. Seven districts including Lasbela, Kech, Panjgur, Washuk, Khuzdar, Mastung and Sohrab were badly affected, said Balochistan PDMA head. (*Dawn, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

### ***Lightning kills boy, two animals as rain, dust storm hit lower Sindh***

A young boy and several animals were killed by lightning in Badin as unusual rainfall coupled with dust storm and thunderstorm lashed most parts of the lower Sindh region. Rainfall started at in the afternoon and continued for around 30 minutes with intensity in Hyderabad. Before rainfall, a strong dust storm swept through Hyderabad and Mirpurkhas divisions. (*Dawn, April 29<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### ***Farmers cautioned in face of heavy rains across country***

Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman advised farmers to take necessary precautions and mitigation measures to minimise losses and damages in the face of an

imminent spell of heavy rainfall in the country. In a statement, the federal minister said that the agricultural and livestock sectors were expected to experience various impacts from the incoming weather system. “High winds, heavy rains and hailstorms are likely to cause damage to the standing and recently harvested crops as well as adversely affect new sowing efforts”. She cautioned that fruit orchards might also be affected, with recently flowering or budding mango orchards at risk of damage from high winds and hailstorms. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

## **14 # NATURAL DISASTER**

### **14.1 # Earthquake**

#### ***Three dead, five hurt as quake jolts Chaman***

Three children were killed and five others, including women, were injured when a low-intensity earthquake jolted the areas along the Pak-Afghan border, destroying a house on the outskirts of Chaman. “An earthquake of 3.6 magnitude struck the border district of Chaman at around 10pm, which jolted the town,” said Naveed Alam, assistant commissioner for Chaman. (*Dawn, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### ***Earthquake hits Chaman, parts of Balochistan***

An earthquake of moderate intensity hit Chaman and other areas of Balochistan. According to officials of the Chaman administration, the tremor struck Chaman district along the border with Afghanistan at around 9:30am, forcing the people to come out of their homes and take refuge in open areas. Other areas hit by the earthquake included Quetta, Qila Abdullah and Ziarat. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

### **14.2 # Landslide**

#### ***Torkham landslide buries trucks, kills 3***

Three transporters lost their lives while five more sustained injuries when over 15 Afghanistan-bound container-mounted trailers were hit by a landslide near the Torkham border. Official sources at Torkham said they feared some more drivers were still trapped in their vehicles, which were buried under huge rocks and tons of mud at the site of the incident. (*Dawn, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### ***Torkham landslide death toll reaches five as two more bodies retrieved***

Rescue workers retrieved two more dead bodies from the rubble of the landslide near Torkham border. With the retrieval of two more bodies, the death toll reached five while rescue workers and relatives of the transporters, whose vehicles were crushed under huge rocks and mud, believed that at least six more persons were still buried under the rubble. All five dead persons were Afghan nationals. (*Dawn, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Page 8*)

## 15 # RESISTANCE

### ***Sanitation workers observe strike against non-payment of salary on Easter Eve***

With Christians celebrating Easter today (Sunday), sanitation workers of the public sector Water and Sanitation Services Peshawar have complained about a delay in salary payment and said the lack of money amid record inflation has dampened their enthusiasm for the religious festival. (*Dawn, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***Protests held against murder of IBA professor***

The civil society and Sindhi Adabi Sangat Sindh staged separate protest demonstrations and sit-ins at Press Club and Naseem Nagar Chowk in Qasimabad against the brutal murder of Ajmal Sawand in Kashmore-Kandhkot district. (*Business Recorder, April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 5*)

### ***Rally staged against supply of unhygienic water to Dodial***

Residents of Dodial town and its suburbs took to the streets against authorities complaining about the supply of unhygienic water. The protesters, who showed up on the Karakoram Highway from different areas, shouted slogans against the public health department over the supply of unhygienic water, which caused health problems. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 14*)

## **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

### **1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES**

World would gain \$1trn by closing agri gender gap: UN

French study warns of pesticide traces in water

### **2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

IAEA investigating effects of cosmic radiation on seeds

### **3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **4 # NON – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **5 # TRADE**

WTO sees ‘subpar’ 2023 global trade growth

WTO panel rules against India in IT tariffs dispute with EU

India, Russia in talks on free trade deal

### **6 # CORPORATE SECTOR**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)**

IMF board okays \$15.6bn package for Ukraine

WB raises 2023 global growth outlook slightly, eyes debt progress

World Bank sees sharp decline in global commodity prices

### **9 # POLICY**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **10 # ENVIRONMENT**

Rich-poor gap in health coverage among women has halved: WHO

## **11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS**

Global growth seen slipping below 3pc

Global growth forecast cut to 2.8pc

### **11.1 # Food**

World food prices fall for 12th month running in March: FAO

World food prices down by a fifth compared to 2022: UN

World Bank recognises grim spectre of food price rise

‘Meat, eggs, milk crucial sources of nutrients’

### **11.2 # Food Scarcity**

Death toll in Kenya starvation cult case climbs to 73

### **11.3 # Poverty**

UN says 34m Afghans in poverty under Taliban rule

## **12 # CLIMATE CHANGE**

Iraq’s ancient treasures sand-blasted by climate change

G7 pledges to quit fossil fuels faster, but no new deadline

World’s glaciers melted at dramatic speed in 2022: UN

## **13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS**

### **13.1 # Flood**

Deadly storms and tornadoes sweep through central US

14 go missing in Burundian mine flood: official

Heavy rain brings flash flooding to Sydney

### **13.2 # Heatwave**

‘Hotter and hotter’: swathes of Asia sweat in heatwave

‘Vulnerable’ South Asia least prepared to deal with urban heat: World Bank

### **13.3 # Wildfire**

Big fire hits Miani forest

## **14 # NATURAL DISASTERS**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

## **15 # RESISTANCE**

Doctors in England start historic four-day strike over pay

Macron hit by pension protests on Dutch state visit

Nurses in England reject pay offer, plan more strikes for improved deal

Macron signs France pension law as unions threaten mass protests

UK nurses prepared to go on strike until Christmas: union leader

25,000 Norwegian industry workers to go on strike

155,000 Canadian public workers go on strike

Strikes cripple Germany's rail network, airports

UK climate protester jailed for three years

Climate protesters launch four-day mass action in London

Afghan women protest 'bid' to recognise Taliban

## INTERNATIONAL NEWS

### 1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

#### *World would gain \$1trn by closing agri gender gap: UN*

Closing the gender gap in the agriculture and food system, where women still earn less than men, would add \$1 trillion to the global economy, a UN report said. The report, updating the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) 2011 study into the matter, found that women continue to occupy a "marginal" place in agri food systems. Women must "cope with work conditions that are often more difficult than those of men, in that they are confined to jobs that are casual, part-time, informal or low-skilled", it said. Women represent more than half of the agricultural workforce in many countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and just under half in Southeast Asia. Around the world, they are lagging behind when it comes to access to land, resources like fertilisers and seeds, financing or technology, while they are often more dependent on agriculture to survive. "The share of men who hold the rights to property or are guaranteed rights of agricultural land is two times higher than that of women," in more than 40 percent of countries that provide data on women's land ownership, the FAO said. (*Business Recorder, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### *French study warns of pesticide traces in water*

France's public health watchdog said that mass testing of drinking water revealed traces from a banned pesticide in half the samples, showing how potentially harmful chemicals persist in the environment. The National Agency for Food, Environment and Workplace Security (ANSES) began a testing regime in 2019 to identify around 200 complex chemical compounds originating from pesticides or explosives which are not normally sought in its routine checks. The agency said "one case in particular stood out": traces left behind from a fungicide known as chlorothalonil, sold widely by Swiss chemicals group Syngenta in Europe from 1970s until it was banned by EU in 2020. Results are likely to raise questions about presence of other undetected chemicals in drinking water and pose potentially major operational and financial challenges for water companies.

French authorities were alerted to the possible presence of chlorothalonil metabolites by studies carried out in Switzerland. In February, ANSES ordered a halt to some uses of one of the most widely used weed killers in France, S-metazachlor, which is also produced by Syngenta, after finding excessive levels in groundwater. Mildew protection Chlorothalonil, sold under the brand name Bravo by Syngenta, was a best-selling product to prevent mildew and mould on crops such as barley and wheat, as well as potatoes, peas and beans. It was banned in the European Union after a review by the European Food Safety Authority concluded it was potentially carcinogenic amid concerns about the contamination of groundwater. ANSES said last year that laboratory

studies on chlorothalonil had linked it to kidney tumours in rats and mice, while other studies have suggested it has played a role in the vast decline in bumblebee populations.

Syngenta, which was bought by ChemChina for \$43 billion in 2017, lobbied against a ban on its product, pointing to other studies that disputed any carcinogenic effect. The multinational sued Switzerland's Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) after it warned that chlorothalonil was a probable carcinogen. ANSES said its testing had involved taking 136,000 samples across France from groundwater sources or treated water, but said they represented only about 20 percent of all water distributed in the country. (*Dawn, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

## **2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS**

### ***IAEA investigating effects of cosmic radiation on seeds***

Crop seeds sent into space last year to develop resilient crops that can help provide sufficient food as the planet heats up, returned to Earth. Seeds sent into space to explore the effects of cosmic radiation on speeding up natural, genetic adaptation of much needed crops. Their return to Earth paves the way for scientists to start analysing the results. It is a new milestone for the joint efforts of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and FAO, IAEA says.

Launched from Nasa's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia and having spent around five months at the International Space Station (ISS), Arabidopsis and Sorghum seeds — chosen because there is already a large bank of scientific data available for comparison — were released from the ISS in the SpaceX CRS-27 cargo craft on 15 April and made a parachute-assisted splashdown off the coast of Florida. They will now begin their journey back to the laboratories of the Joint FAO/IAEA Centre in Seibersdorf, Austria, where they will be screened and analysed for desirable traits.

Arabidopsis, a type of cress that is easy and inexpensive to grow and produces many seeds, will be tested for tolerance to drought, salt and heat. Sorghum, a nutrient-packed cereal grain that can grow on arid lands and is resilient to changes in climate, will be tested for desirable traits for climate change resilience. Both seeds will be grown to the next generation before trait selection, and with the faster growing Arabidopsis, depending on when they arrive in the laboratories in Seibersdorf, initial results could be available in October 2023.

Plants naturally evolve to thrive in their surroundings, but crops have been struggling to keep up with the current pace of climate change. The world is warmer and the global population is increasing, causing farmers around the world to struggle to meet food demand. "The cosmic crops project is a very special one. This is science that could have a real impact on people's lives in the not-too-distant future, by helping us grow stronger crops and feed more people," said IAEA. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)



### **3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **4 # NON – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **5 # TRADE**

#### ***WTO sees ‘subpar’ 2023 global trade growth***

The World Trade Organization said that 2023 global trade growth would be slightly better than feared, but would remain “subpar”, weighed down by the Ukraine war and stubbornly high inflation. Presenting their annual trade forecast, WTO economists said they expected to see the volume of global merchandise trade slow to 1.7 percent this year — a full percentage point lower than in 2022. That forecast was slightly better than feared last October, when the WTO projected 2023 trade growth would be as low as one percent, but a far cry from the 3.4 percent expansion initially projected a year ago. (*Business Recorder, April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

#### ***WTO panel rules against India in IT tariffs dispute with EU***

A World Trade Organisation panel said that India had violated global trading rules in a dispute with the European Union, Japan and Taiwan over import duties on IT products. (*Dawn, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

#### ***India, Russia in talks on free trade deal***

India and Russia are discussing a free trade agreement, ministers said, a move that would further deepen bilateral commercial ties that have flourished since war broke out in Ukraine. Overall Indian imports from Russia increased almost fourfold to \$46.33b in the year to March 31. Moscow was looking to increase machinery imports from India to improve the trade balance. Russia was potentially seeking to import more than 500 products from India for key sectors including cars, aircraft and trains, as western sanctions undermine Moscow’s ability to keep core industries operating. India too aims to narrow its growing trade deficit with Russia, which has been India’s largest supplier of military equipment for decades and is fourth-biggest market for Indian pharmaceuticals. (*Business Recorder, April 18<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### **6 # CORPORATE SECTOR**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

## **8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)**

### ***IMF board okays \$15.6bn package for Ukraine***

The International Monetary Fund said its executive board had approved a four-year \$15.6 billion loan programme for Ukraine, part of a broader \$115bn international support package to help the country meet urgent funding needs. The decision clears the way for an immediate disbursement of about \$2.7bn to Kyiv. The Extended Fund Facility loan is the first major financing programme approved by the IMF for a country involved in a large-scale war. Ukraine's previous \$5bn IMF programme expired last year. (*Dawn, April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***'WB could lend \$50bn more over decade with reform'***

The World Bank's ongoing reform could result in a \$50 billion lending boost over the next decade, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen told ahead of stakeholders' meetings next week where key changes are expected to be announced. Central bankers, finance ministers and participants from more than 180 member countries are expected to gather in the US capital for the International Monetary Fund and World Bank's spring meetings in the coming week. (*Dawn, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***WB raises 2023 global growth outlook slightly, eyes debt progress***

World Bank Group President David Malpass said that the lender has revised its 2023 global growth outlook slightly upward to 2% from a January forecast of 1.7% but the slowdown from stronger 2022 growth will increase debt distress for developing countries. Malpass told a media briefing that the upward revision was due to an improved outlook for China's recovery from COVID-19 lockdowns, with growth now pegged at 5.1% this year compared to 4.3% in the bank's January Global Economic Prospects report. (*Business Recorder, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***IMF says public debt is growing faster than pre-Covid projections***

Public debt is higher and growing faster than projected before the COVID-19 pandemic, driven mainly by the United States and China, the world's two largest economies, the International Monetary Fund's top fiscal expert said. Sixty percent of countries are projected to see their public debt to gross domestic product (GDP) ratios decline through 2028 after COVID-related surges, but a significant number of large economies, including Brazil, China and the United States, are seeing rapid growth in their debt-to-GDP ratios. Vitor Gaspar, director of the IMF's Fiscal Affairs Department, said global public debt soared to almost 100% of GDP in 2020 before posting its steepest drop in 70 years by 2022, although it remained about 8 percentage points above the pre-pandemic level. Rather than normalizing, the ratio was expected to start rising again this year, hitting 99.6% of GDP in 2028, the last year of the IMF's forecast horizon. (*Business Recorder, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***Debt assessments should reflect growing share of domestic debt: World Bank***

Debt sustainability analyses carried out by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund should reflect the growing share of domestic debt in many developing countries' overall debt levels, World Bank President David Malpass said. Malpass called for urgent measures to jump-start sovereign debt restructuring efforts for the many countries that are in or near debt distress, after years of glacial progress under the Group of 20 Common Framework. Speaking at a World Bank event entitled "Breaking the Impasse in Global Debt Restructuring," Malpass said it was critical to get a better understanding of countries' total debt levels, including both domestic and external debt. (*Business Recorder, April 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***World Bank sees sharp decline in global commodity prices***

The World Bank forecast a substantial decline in global commodity prices during the current year but Pakistanis would have to brace for 21pc average annual inflation in the next fiscal year. In its latest Commodity Markets Outlook, the World Bank expected global commodity prices to decline this year at the fastest clip since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, clouding the growth prospects of almost two-thirds of developing economies that depend on commodity exports. "The drop in prices, however, is expected to bring little relief to the nearly 350 million people across the world who face food insecurity". Although food prices were expected to fall by 8pc in 2023, they would be at the second-highest level since 1975. World Bank noted that as of February this year, annual food price inflation was at 20pc globally. (*Dawn, April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **9 # POLICY**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

## **10 # ENVIRONMENT**

### ***Rich-poor gap in health coverage among women has halved: WHO***

The Health Inequality Data Repository (HIDR), launched by WHO, shows that in just a decade, the rich-poor gap in health service coverage among women, newborns and children in low- and middle-income countries has nearly halved. The report also revealed that in these countries eliminating wealth-related inequality in under-five mortality could help save the lives of 1.8 million children. In high-income countries, hypertension is more common among men than women and obesity rates are similar among men and women. By contrast, in low-income countries, hypertension rates are similar among women and men, but obesity rates are higher among women than men. In a report titled, State of the World's Children Report released, Unicef says with vaccination coverage levels decreasing in 112 countries, children born just before or during the pandemic are now moving past the age when they would normally be vaccinated. (*Dawn, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 Page 3*)

## **11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS**

### ***Global growth seen slipping below 3pc***

The International Monetary Fund expects global economic growth to dip below three per cent in 2023 and to remain at around 3pc for the next five years, Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said, flagging increased downside risks. That is the global lender's lowest medium-term growth forecast since 1990, and well below the average growth of 3.8pc seen in the past two decades. (*Dawn, April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

### ***Global growth forecast cut to 2.8pc***

The International Monetary Fund slightly lowered its outlook for the global economy, while predicting that most countries will avoid a recession this year despite economic and geopolitical concerns. The IMF predicted the global economy will grow by 2.8 per cent this year and 3pc in 2024, a decline of 0.1 percentage point from its previous forecasts in January. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 9*)

## **11.1 # Food**

### ***World food prices fall for 12th month running in March: FAO***

United Nations food agency's world price index fell in March for a 12th consecutive month, and is now down 20.5%. FAO price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 126.9 points last month against 129.7 for February. It was the lowest reading since July 2021. The February reading was originally given as 129.8. (*Dawn, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

### ***World food prices down by a fifth compared to 2022: UN***

World food prices are still high but have fallen by a fifth compared to a year ago when prices soared to a monthly record high. Prices have fallen 20.5% since March last year after a 12<sup>th</sup> straight monthly drop. FAO said food remained expensive notably for developing countries. (*Business Recorder, April 9<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***World Bank recognises grim spectre of food price rise***

Food prices in Pakistan have been increasing for 11 consecutive months, eroding the purchasing power of households by as much as 38 percent, says the World Bank. The bank in its latest, "Food Security Update", stated that the consumer price inflation for food items in Pakistan was 47.2 per cent in March 2023 on a year-on-year basis – the highest in South Asia after Sri Lanka with 47.6 per cent. Data suggests that the CPI is declining in Sri Lanka for the last several months while it is on the rise in Pakistan. In Sri Lanka, CPI was 49 percent in February and came down to 47.6 percent, in Pakistan, it increased from 45.1% to 47.2%. (*Business Recorder, April 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

### ***‘Meat, eggs, milk crucial sources of nutrients’***

FAO says in a study that meat, eggs and milk offer crucial sources of much-needed nutrients which cannot easily be obtained from plant-based foods. This is particularly vital during key life stages such as pregnancy and lactation, childhood, adolescence and older age, said the study, entitled “Contribution of terrestrial animal source food to healthy diets for improved nutrients and health outcomes”, released by the FAO. Globally, more than one in two preschool aged children (372 million) and 1.2 billion women of child-bearing age suffer from the lack of at least one of three micronutrients: iron, Vitamin A or zinc. Three quarters of these children live in South and East Asia, the Pacific and sub-Saharan Africa. (*Dawn, April 26<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### **11.2 # Food Scarcity**

#### ***Death toll in Kenya starvation cult case climbs to 73***

The death toll in a case involving a Kenyan cult that practised starvation climbed to 73, police sources said as investigators unearthed more corpses from mass graves in a forest near the coast. A major search is under way near the coastal town of Malindi where dozens of bodies were exhumed over the weekend, sending shockwaves through the country as President William Ruto vowed to crack down on “unacceptable” religious movements. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### **11.3 # Poverty**

#### ***UN says 34m Afghans in poverty under Taliban rule***

The number of Afghans in poverty nearly doubled to 34 million as the nation was racked by collapse of the US-backed government and Taliban takeover. Vast foreign subsidies were halted and aid programmes dramatically cut back after the US-backed republic fell in 2021 as many countries refused to deal with the Taliban authorities in Kabul. The figure is a staggering increase of 15 million on 2020. There is no contemporary census data for Afghanistan but UN uses a population estimate of 40 million, meaning 85% of the nation is projected to be in poverty. (*Business Recorder, April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 1*)

## **12 # CLIMATE CHANGE**

### ***Iraq’s ancient treasures sand-blasted by climate change***

Iraqi archaeological marvels that have survived millennia and the ravages of war now face a modern threat: being blasted and slowly buried by sandstorms linked to climate change. Ancient Babylonian treasures, painstakingly unearthed, are slowly disappearing again under wind-blown sand in a land parched by rising heat and prolonged droughts. Iraq, one of the countries worst-hit by climate change, endured a dozen major sandstorms last year that turned the sky orange, brought daily life to a halt and left its

people gasping for air. In the next 10 years, it is estimated that sand could have covered 80 to 90 percent of the archaeological sites. (*Dawn, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

### ***G7 pledges to quit fossil fuels faster, but no new deadline***

The G7 pledged to quit fossil fuels faster and urged other countries to follow suit, but failed to agree to any new deadlines on ending polluting power sources like coal. The language reflects the depth of disagreements among the allies on the balance between climate action and energy security, with host Japan leading a pushback against the most ambitious proposals discussed. The Group of Seven industrialised nations, which also includes Germany, Italy, Canada and the EU, pledged to end new plastic pollution by 2040. Britain, Canada and the EU already belong to an international coalition with the same goal, but this is the first time Japan and the United States have made the 2040 commitment. Plastic waste has doubled globally in two decades and only nine percent is successfully recycled. (*Business Recorder, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 12*)

### ***World's glaciers melted at dramatic speed in 2022: UN***

The world's glaciers melted at dramatic speed last year and saving them is effectively a lost cause, a UN agency said, noting that record levels of greenhouse gases have caused "planetary scale changes on land, in the ocean and in the atmosphere". The last eight years have been the warmest ever recorded, while concentrations of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide hit new peaks, WMO said. "Antarctic sea ice fell to its lowest extent on record and the melting of some European glaciers was, literally, off the charts," the WMO. Heatwaves in the 2022 pre-monsoon season in India and Pakistan caused a decline in crop yields. This, combined with the banning of wheat exports and restrictions on rice exports in India, threatened the availability, access, and stability of staple foods within international food markets and posed high risks to countries already affected by shortages of staple foods. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 Page 12*)

## **13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS**

### **13.1 # Flood**

#### ***Deadly storms and tornadoes sweep through central US***

A major storm system bore down on the US east coast, after producing tornadoes and devastating winds across several central states that killed at least 11 people. Multiple tornadoes swept through Arkansas, including in the capital Little Rock, killing at least five people. (*Dawn, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

#### ***14 go missing in Burundian mine flood: official***

Fourteen miners were missing and feared dead in Burundi after flash floods swept into a pit where they were searching for gold. (*The News, April 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

## ***Heavy rain brings flash flooding to Sydney***

Heavy rain brought flash flooding to Australia’s largest city Sydney, prompting rescues and residents to sandbag houses. (*Dawn, April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

### **13.2 # Heatwave**

#### ***‘Hotter and hotter’: swathes of Asia sweat in heatwave***

Sweltering under a blistering sun, people across South and Southeast Asia have been taking cover beneath any shelter they can find as they pray for cooling rains with record temperatures hitting the region. Bangladesh saw its highest temperature for almost 60 years in the past week, while in India at least 13 people died from heatstroke along with two in Thailand. Scientists say global warming is exacerbating adverse weather, with a recent report from the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warning that “every increment of global warming will intensify multiple and concurrent hazards”.

“This year’s record heat in Thailand, China and South Asia is a clear climate trend and will cause public health challenges for years to come,” said scientist Fahad Saeed, regional lead for climate policy institute Climate Analytics. In Bangladesh hundreds gathered in the capital Dhaka this week to pray for rain after temperatures hit 40.6 degrees Celsius — the highest recorded since the 1960s. Neighbouring India saw at least 13 people die from heatstroke at an awards event held outside in the west of the country. (*Dawn, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

#### ***‘Vulnerable’ South Asia least prepared to deal with urban heat: World Bank***

South Asia is one of the regions most at risk due to extreme heat but the majority of its urban areas are ill-equipped to deal with the phenomenon, which is increasing in frequency, severity and complexity due to climate change. This was stated in a new World Bank report which said that the region, home to a quarter of the world’s population, was accustomed to extreme heat, but rapid urbanisation and climate change were pushing the region’s limits of adaptation with lethal consequences.

The impacts of heat in South Asia are already emerging with over 3,600 heat-related deaths in India and Pakistan during the 2015 heat waves. More recently in 2022, at least one billion people in India and Pakistan experienced further record-breaking heat waves with temperatures reaching 51 degrees Celsius in some parts of Pakistan.

The report, ‘Urban Heat in South Asia: Integrating People and Places in Adapting to Rising Temperature’ said high-density living, along with low permeation of green and blue spaces, has created heat management challenges for a large number of communities in South Asia. The report said that between 1950-2017, 60 per cent of the world’s urban population experienced warming twice as large as the global average, and by 2100, 25pc of the world’s largest cities could warm by 7C. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 3*)

### **13.3 # Wildfire**

#### ***Big fire hits Miani forest***

A huge fire in the Miani irrigated forest destroyed eucalyptus acacia trees. The forest is located along the National Highway and managed by the provincial forest department. According to chief conservator of forests, Riaz Waghan, the fire broke out in a 40-acre compartment. (*Dawn, April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 15*)

### **14 # NATURAL DISASTERS**

*Not any preferable news to be included in this month*

### **15 # RESISTANCE**

#### ***Doctors in England start historic four-day strike over pay***

Doctors working in England’s public health service launched what has been billed as the most disruptive strike in its history, in a dispute over pay and working conditions. The four-day walkout, follows months of strikes by other public and private sector staff as inflation sparks the UK’s worst cost-of-living crisis in a generation. The action by so-called junior doctors — physicians who are not senior specialists but who may still years of experience — comes after a three-day stoppage last month and several strikes by nurses. It threatens to be the most serious walkout yet and lead to the cancellation of hundreds of thousands of appointments.

They are demanding a pay rise of 35 per cent, which they say is needed to help make up for more than a decade of salary cuts in real terms. They also argue pandemic backlogs coupled with staff shortages are massively increasing workloads, endangering patients. After slowing for three straight months, the Consumer Prices Index shot up to 10.4pc in February — close to 40-year highs and more than five times the target set by the Bank of England. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

#### ***Macron hit by pension protests on Dutch state visit***

Protesters disrupted a keynote speech by Emmanuel Macron as his domestic troubles cast a shadow over the first state visit to the Netherlands by a French president in 23 years. Demonstrators shouted “Where is French democracy?” and unfurled banners at the start of the address in The Hague by Macron, who has faced violent protests and strikes at home over pensions reforms.

The two-day visit got off to a stormy start for other reasons too, with Macron facing criticism over controversial remarks in which he said Europe must not be a “follower” of either the United States or Beijing over Taiwan. The French president is confronting the biggest challenge of his second term over his flagship pension overhaul, which



includes raising the retirement age from 62 to 64 and demanding people work longer for a full pay-out. (*Dawn, April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

### ***Nurses in England reject pay offer, plan more strikes for improved deal***

Nurses in England rejected the government's new pay deal, setting out plans for further strikes that will put the National Health Service under more strain as they hold out for a higher wage offer than the 5 per cent currently on offer. About 54pc of nurses who took part in a ballot voted to reject the pay deal, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) trade union, which had recommended members accept the deal, said. The turnout was 61pc of eligible members. (*Dawn, April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***Macron signs France pension law as unions threaten mass protests***

French President Emmanuel Macron signed his controversial pension reform into law, prompting accusations from unions and the left that he was showing "contempt" for those behind a three-month protest movement. The alterations became law after the text was published before dawn in France's official journal, with the livid opposition claiming that Macron had moved to smuggle it through in the middle of the night. The publication came just hours after the approval by the Constitutional Council of the essence of the legislation, including the headline change of raising the retirement age from 62 to 64. The standoff with unions and the left has become the biggest challenge of the second mandate of Macron. Trade unions warned they were calling for mass Labour Day protests on May 1, and sometimes violent demonstrations erupted in several cities including Paris. (*The News, April 16<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***UK nurses prepared to go on strike until Christmas: union leader***

Nurses in Britain are prepared to strike until Christmas if they cannot reach a deal with the government on pay, the leader of the country's main nursing union said. Members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) would strike at the end of April and the beginning of May before holding a ballot on continuing the strike to the end of the year, union leader Pat Cullen said. (*Business Recorder, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***25,000 Norwegian industry workers to go on strike***

Almost 25,000 private-sector workers in Norway will go on strike from Monday morning after negotiations with employers broke down, and the industrial action is set to escalate in the following days, two major labour unions said. Another 16,000 workers are due to strike from April 21 unless an agreement is reached, and the industrial action could ultimately involve around 200,000 workers, unions have said.

The Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) is negotiating on behalf of 185,000 members, while the smaller Confederation of Vocational Unions (YS) represents a further 16,000 in the talks. The unions are demanding an increase in real

wages this year after two years of consumer prices rising faster than nominal wages, citing healthy profits in Norwegian industries.

This means that wages would have to rise by 5% or more as Norwegian headline inflation is predicted at 4.9% for the full year, according to a forecast from a commission with members from unions, employers' federations and Statistics Norway. The Confederation of Norwegian Enterprise (NHO), representing employers, had sought restraint, arguing that wages should not be allowed to rise to an extent that would risk inflation spinning out of control. (*Business Recorder, April 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 8*)

### ***155,000 Canadian public workers go on strike***

About 155,000 federal workers in Canada walked off the job after failing to reach a deal for higher wages and work-from-home guarantees, a strike that affects a range of public services from tax returns to passport renewals. The Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC) union said contract negotiations would continue, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stressed the urgency of resolving the dispute. Striking workers picketed and waved union flags in front of Trudeau's office in Ottawa, one of 250 picket lines across the country.

The federal government said in a statement that it presented a "fair, competitive offer to the PSAC," including a nine percent wage increase over three years, and that it would continue negotiations to reach an agreement quickly. The contract negotiations cover two main groups of employees: 120,000 workers under the Treasury Board and more than 35,000 revenue agency workers. (*Dawn, April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***Strikes cripple Germany's rail network, airports***

Rail workers went on strike across Germany, mostly bringing national operator Deutsche Bahn's services to a halt in the morning hours, as protests over pay in Europe's largest economy widened. Germany has witnessed some of its most disruptive strikes in decades since last year, when the war in Ukraine sent energy and food prices soaring, leading to union pressure for wages to rise in line with living costs.

High inflation has also exacerbated labour problems in sectors like aviation that have faced a difficult transition following the Covid-19 pandemic. The rail workers' action was set to coincide with a walkout at four German airports — Duesseldorf, Hamburg, Cologne Bonn and Stuttgart — by members of the Verdi union, after around 700 departures were cancelled by strikes at the first three locations. Inflation in Germany stood at 7.4pc in March, remaining very elevated despite having fallen from a peak of 8.8pc in last October. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 10*)

### ***UK climate protester jailed for three years***

Two climate protesters were jailed for scaling a major road bridge over the River Thames east of London and causing huge traffic delays. Morgan Trowland, 40, and Marcus Decker, 34, used climbing equipment to scale the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge in October. The bridge was closed from 4am on October 17 to 9pm (local time) the next day, causing huge jams as traffic was forced to use nearby tunnels. Judge Shane Collery at Southend Crown Court sentenced Trowland to three years in prison, while Decker was jailed for two years and seven months. (*Dawn, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***Climate protesters launch four-day mass action in London***

Environmental campaign group Extinction Rebellion began four days of action in London, promising less disruption and more inclusion than the mass blockades that became its trademark. The group hopes that 100,000 people will gather outside parliament this weekend and so far has said it has seen 30,000 people register their interest. It hopes that 40,000 to 50,000 people will attend “The Big One” event, which coincides with the London Marathon. (*The News, April 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, Page 11*)

### ***Afghan women protest ‘bid’ to recognise Taliban***

A group of Afghan women protested in Kabul, defying a crackdown on dissent to urge foreign nations not to formally recognise the Taliban government, ahead of a UN summit next week. Protesters opposing creeping curbs on women’s rights have been beaten or detained since the Taliban surged back to power in 2021, and security forces have fired into the air to disperse some rallies. However, small groups of women have continued to stage sporadic gatherings. Around 25 women marched through a residential area in the Afghan capital, ahead of a summit in Doha that UN says will discuss a “durable way forward” for the country. (*Dawn, April 30<sup>th</sup>, 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**

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