

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

May, 2023

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

ACE	Anti-Corruption Establishment
ACJCE	Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AIM	Agriculture Innovation Mission
APT	The average per tonne
AWP	Awami Workers Party
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
CCP	Competition Commission of Pakistan
CDWP	Central Development Working Party
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
DRAP	Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan
DUHS	Dow University of Health Sciences
ECC	Economic Coordination Committee
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
FIIP	Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure Project
G2G	Government-to-Government
GCCI	Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HCI	Human Capital Index
HCR	Human Capital Review
HEC	Higher Education Commission
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IFRAP	Integrated Flood Resilience and Adaptation Project

IMF	International Monetary Fund
JFPR	Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific
KPC	Karachi Press Club
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
KU	Karachi University
LDCs	Least developed countries
LHC	Lahore High Court
LII	Living Indus Initiative
MDBs	Multilateral Development Banks
MOFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoM	Month-on-Month
MoNFS&R	Ministry of National Food Security and Research
NFML	National Fertilizer Marketing Limited
NICH	National Institute of Child Health
OGDCL	Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd
PASS	Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety
PASSCO	Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Corporation Limited
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PFMA	Pakistan Flour Mills Association
PIBs	Pakistan Investment Bonds
PMRCL	Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company Ltd
PSMA	Pakistan Sugar Mills Association
PSW	Pakistan Single Window
REAP	Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan
SAI	Sindh Abadgar Ittehad
SCA	Sindh Chamber of Agriculture

SEZs	Special economic zone
TCP	Trading Corporation of Pakistan
TSG	Technical Supplementary Grant
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UET	University of Engineering and Technology
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
WMO	World Meteorological Organisation
WWA	World Weather Attribution
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
XDR	Cases of drug-resistant

NEWS EXCEPTS

National News

AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Anti-Corruption Establishment summoned former minister Ijazul Haq on charge of developing housing schemes on agricultural land, allegedly developed seven housing societies in Haroonabad.
- The office of the Punjab ombudsman claims to have recovered state land worth over Rs63 million through its intervention in 10 districts of the province.
- Sindh forest department has finally released the Sindh Sustainable Forest Management Policy, 2023, after purging it of all provisions for promotion of ‘agricultural activity’ on forestland in riverine area to ensure the riverine forests are exclusively used for forestation instead of crops’ cultivation.
- Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) has demanded immediate restoration of natural waterways and warned if the government does not take the issue seriously the province may have to bear billions of rupees losses in the event of heavy rains and flooding as it did in last year’s disaster.
- The SCA alleged that 18,000 cusecs of water was being stolen between Taunsa and Guddu barrages on a daily basis within in the limits of Punjab.
- The meeting rejected cotton’s support prices of Rs8,500 per 40kg fixed by federal government and said that it should be fixed at Rs12,000 per 40kg in view of increasing input costs.

AGRICULTURE INPUTS

- Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN has started rice seeds distribution in Balochistan to protect flood-affected people from poverty & food insecurity.
- Along with rice seeds, 60,000 farming households would receive safer and more durable small tools and protective footwear in flood-hit districts of Balochistan.
- The Chinese hybrid varieties whose fruit is over six inches long had been sown on 7,500 acres in different districts of Sindh and Punjab and will be cultivated on at least 30,000 acres in the next season.
- ECC of the Cabinet has approved a technical supplementary grant amounting to Rs5.57bn on account of federal government’s share of subsidy on imported urea fertilizer besides Rs1bn additional amount for ongoing development schemes of parliamentarians under SDGs Achievement Programme.
- The Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA) has rejected the ex-mill and retail price of sugar fixed by the federal government.

- Punjab government has decided to provide irrigation water to cotton fields as a priority for achieving the over 8.2 million bales production target this season.
- The production of 27.5 million metric tons record bumper wheat crop in the country to government's efforts at timely decisions, provision of quality seed, uninterrupted supply of fertilizers and Kissan package.
- Sindh has decided to impose complete ban on the cultivation of rice in 13 districts on the left bank of Indus River and advised growers to opt for other Kharif crops in place of paddy.
- Mango crop in Pakistan faces the challenge of climate change this year and a reduction of 20 percent is being estimated in its production. It is feared that the production is expected to decrease by 20 percent to 1.44 million metric tons.

TRADE

- Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed by 39.62 percent to \$ 23.713 billion during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$ 39.272 billion during the same period of last year.
- Pakistan's export value of these tariff lines stands at \$5.1bn or 16 per cent of total exports, while Turkish global imports in these products amount to \$7.6bn.
- Pakistan's exports to nine regional countries dipped 28.28 per cent in the first nine months of FY23 mainly driven by a drop in shipments to China.
- (FPCCI) blamed the sudden withdrawal of gas and power subsidies on IMF diktat for the 26.8 percent decline in the country's exports.
- The country's textile group exports declined by around 14.22 per cent during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year 2022-23 and remained at \$13.709 billion as compared to \$15.981 billion during the same period of last year.
- Petroleum group's imports the value was \$891.5 million against \$2.22 billion in April 2022. Over the previous month, its imports declined by 26 percent.
- The vessels carrying 100,000 tons of discounted Russian oil will arrive at Pakistan ports in the first week of June which is part of the energy security plan of the government.
- The government spent over \$1 billion to import 2.68 million tonnes of wheat during July-April FY23 compared to \$795 million for procuring 2.20m tonnes in the corresponding period last year.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- PepsiCo Pakistan, successfully completed an inclusive Water Replenishment Project for community access to clean water in partnership with World Wildlife Fund - Pakistan in Hattar, District Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

- The government has signed new loan agreements worth \$3.904 billion with development partners during the first half of the current fiscal year.
- The country received \$15.4 billion in financing during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year 2022-23. Pakistan has received \$8.1 billion in financing during 10 months from July 2022 to April 2023.
- Pakistan signed a debt relief agreement with the Republic of Korea for the deferment of repayment of about \$20 million loan under the G-20 Debt Service Suspension Agreement offered to poor nations to sustain economic challenges in the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic.
- Pakistan is to pay four percent annual profit to Saudi Arabia on deposits of \$ 2bn with the SBP for a period of one year, well informed sources.
- An agreement for a \$500m investment from Gulf countries is being finalised.
- UN says the Living Indus Initiative the biggest climate initiative in Pakistan’s history which is more than just a one-off response to the climate carnage of 2022 floods, will cost around \$17 billion.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Pakistan could default without an IMF bailout as its financing options beyond June are uncertain Pakistan entered into a \$6.5 billion programme with the IMF in 2019.
- “There is no truth to reports that the IMF is asking Pakistan to raise \$8 billion in fresh financing,” under a review that would unlock \$1.1 billion in financing for the cash-strapped Pakistan as part of a \$6.5bn IMF package.
- Still reeling from the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic and devastating floods of last year, Pakistan needs to declare emergencies and take bold actions to tackle its health and education challenges.
- According to the report, malnutrition is one of Pakistan’s biggest development challenges, with long-term implications for human capital development and economic growth.
- The World Bank has promised to continue supporting BISP. The programme is meant to support the poorest section of society.
- The government approved about Rs34.4 billion worth of supplementary grants mostly to secure World Bank loans and set maximum retail price of four newly registered categories of cardiac stents.
- The ECC of the Cabinet has approved Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs 7.840bn as the rupee cover against \$ 42.3m amount of the World Bank.
- Small dams have decreased salinity levels in groundwater and made it sweet, reduced impact of flash floods, significantly recharged aquifers and provided

ample drinking water for humans as well as for subsistence agriculture and livestock in Kohistan belt, according to a World Bank climate change expert.

- World Bank has approved \$213 million in financing to Pakistan to help improve livelihoods and essential services and enhance risk protection to communities affected by the 2022 floods, particularly those in Balochistan.
- Integrated Flood Resilience and Adaptation Project will provide housing reconstruction grants to approximately 35,100 homeowners to rebuild their homes following resilience standards and livelihood grants to smallholder farmers to support livestock and promote climate-smart agriculture and other productive activities.
- The World Bank is set to provide funds amounting to Rs16bn for development schemes planned to be launched in various cities and towns under the Punjab Cities Programme
- Sindh Energy Minister said that the provincial government had started solar projects on a large scale to free people from expensive electricity. He said that as many as 35 big hospitals and many villages had been solarised with the assistance of the World Bank.

POLICY

- The Central Development Working Party cleared 15 projects costing Rs249.2 billion, mostly in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu & Kashmir.
- CDWP's approved 13 projects with an estimated cost of about Rs22.6bn and cleared two other projects of about Rs226.56bn for formal approval by Ecnec.

ENVIRONMENT

- Forests play a crucial role in the environment, providing employment opportunities, food, wood, fuel, and animal fodder for approximately 1.6bn individuals worldwide.
- Countries should aim to have at least 25 percent of their land covered by forests to promote sustainable employment and ensure protection of the environment.
- These forests are located in the Kacha region — the area between the protective levees constructed along the Indus River. They rely on water from the Indus River and are home to several tree species.
- The irrigated forests in Sindh are manually planted and cover an area of 82,195 hectares these forests are irrigated through the Sindh irrigation network and are home to various tree species.
- Estimated to have 97pc of all mangrove forests in Pakistan, have decreased in size from 600,000 acres to 200,000 acres but have been increasing over the past 15 years.

- Agricultural experts and researchers have expressed their concern about the extinction of bees in many countries of the world including Sindh and emphasize fear that due to the use of pesticides in crops.
- The shortage of funds has been hampering patients' care in public sector hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. We desperately require Rs3bn approved budget, a total of Rs5bn, approved for the hospital.

SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

- HCI value of 0.41 is lower than the South Asia average of 0.48, and human capital outcomes are more comparable to those in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has an average HCI value of 0.40, says the World Bank.
- A cash-strapped government intends to borrow a record Rs 9.4 trillion from the domestic banking sector during three months of 2023 to meet its rising financial requirements.
- The size of all outstanding loans of the microfinance industry crossed the Rs500 billion mark for the first time in the January-March quarter of 2023.
- The district administrations of Sialkot, Kot Addu and Okara seized 90,000, 5,000 and 36,000 wheat bags, respectively in different raids. The Sialkot administration seized 90,000 bags of wheat worth Rs440m.
- In the last quarter of 2022, 8.6m in rural districts of three provinces of Pakistan faced a serious food crisis as one of the worst monsoon floods in years hit the country. Of these people, 5.2 million were in nine districts of Sindh, 1.8m in seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 1.6m in 12 districts of Balochistan.
- Inflation in Pakistan surged to a record 36.4 per cent in April from a year earlier. The finance ministry Said that inflation would remain in the range of 36-38pc mainly due to the rupee's depreciation and rising administered prices.
- CPI-based inflation increased to 36.4 per cent on a year-on-year basis in April 2023 as compared to an increase of 35.4per cent in the previous month and 13.4per cent in April 2022.
- Price of flour continues to rise in Balochistan as gov failed to provide commodity to masses to overcome problem of shortage of wheat in province.
- Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan has allowed pharmaceutical companies to increase 14 percent price for life-saving drugs and 20 percent in other drugs.
- The condition of rural workers and peasants, who make up more than 70 per cent of labour force in Sindh's rural areas and toil long hours in agricultural farms and brick kilns. Millions of young people in rural Sindh were forced to work for a little more than Rs6,000 per month in shops.
- The weekly inflation stayed above 48pc for the previous two weeks due to high prices of transport, vegetables, wheat flour, meat, pulses and sugar. The slight decrease was caused by a cut in petroleum product prices three days before the data collection.

CLIMATE CRISIS

- Activists belonging to different civil society said groups the pre-conditions imposed by the IMF for the release of a \$1.1 billion loan tranche are pushing the country towards a climate catastrophe.
- Ministry of Economic Affairs announced that there is now almost complete clarity regarding the nature of the foreign assistance pledges of \$10.9 billion made during the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- Utror is a scenic valley having a population of nearly 20,000. The area is known for delicious vegetables. Valley houses dozens of pristine glacial lakes.
- At least eight people died & over a dozen received injuries after torrential rains followed by hailstorms hit different parts of Balochistan during past 24 hours.
- Heavy rain coupled with hailstorm damaged standing wheat crop, vegetables and fruit orchards in most areas of Bajaur tribal district. Locals said that dozens of cattle were also killed by the hailstorm.
- At least eight people died & over a dozen received injuries after torrential rains followed by hailstorms hit different parts of Balochistan during past 24 hours.
- Rain and hailstorms lashed various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa damaging crops and inundating roads.
- Heavy rain coupled with hailstorm damaged standing wheat crop, vegetables and fruit orchards in most areas of Bajaur tribal district. Dozens of cattle were also killed by the hailstorm.

NATURAL DISASTER

- A moderate-intensity earthquake hit Khuzdar town and several other areas of the district, prompting residents to leave their homes. The Met office said that the intensity of the earthquake's magnitude as 4.2 on the Richter scale.
- Eleven people, including four women and a child, were killed in an avalanche near Shunter Pass in Astore district of Gilgit-Baltistan. 14 people who were injured are being treated at a local government hospital.

RESISTANCE

- Flour millers in Punjab decide to observe a symbolic strike on a daily basis in protest against what they say 'flawed' policies of the food department
- Family members, including women and children, of the missing persons staged a demonstration at the Kabal Chowk here, blasting the authorities for neither presenting their dear ones in courts nor setting them free despite orders of the higher judiciary.

International News

TRADE

- The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has said the value of the ocean economy ranges between \$3 trillion and \$6tr per year. About 11m tonnes of plastic flow into the oceans each year. Globally, 34 per cent of fish stocks have fallen to levels that are biologically unsustainable.
- Vietnam aims to cut its rice exports to 4 million tonnes a year by 2030, the government said in a document detailing its rice export strategy, down from 7.1 million tonnes last year. Vietnam is the world's third-largest rice exporter, after India and Thailand.

INTERNATIONAL AID LOAN

- Some 258 million people needed emergency food aid last year because of conflict, economic shocks and climate disasters, a UN report, a sharp rise from 193 million the previous year.
- The United Nations demanded a tripling of pledges aimed at filling global digitalisation gap, asking countries and the private sector to hike the funding to \$100 billion by 2026.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Asian Development Bank approved a \$350 million loan for bankrupt Sri Lanka, buttressing an IMF bailout as country battles its worst economic crisis

SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- The United Nations food agency's world price index rose in April for the first time in a year but is still some 20 per cent up on a record high hit in March 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- The Emirati oil chief leading this year's UN climate talks the world must get "serious" about new emission-capturing technology, rather than focussing only on replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy.
- Singapore reported its highest temperature in 40 years, as a blistering heatwave burns through large parts of South and Southeast Asia.

CLIMATE CRISIS

- It is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, next five years will see global temperatures exceed the more ambitious target set out in the Paris accords on limiting climate change.
- The WMO said there was a 66pc chance that annual global surface temperatures will exceed 1.5C above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the years 2023-2027.
- The United Nations' weather agency announced it was making the cryosphere a new top priority, saying the melting of sea ice, glaciers and permafrost posed a global threat.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- Over two million people have died in 11,778 reported climate-related disasters between 1970 and 2021. These extreme events have also resulted in economic losses of \$4.3 trillion. Over 90 per cent of reported deaths worldwide occurred in developing countries.
- Around 200,000 people have been displaced due to flash flooding in central Somalia, Some 200,000 people are now displaced due to the Shabelle River flash floods in Beledweyne town and the number may increase anytime.
- More than 36,000 people have now been forced from their homes by deadly floods in northeast Italy, rising waters swallowed more houses & fresh landslides isolated hamlets Violent downpours earlier on week killed 14 people
- Shing more than 30,000 people out of their homes while oil and gas producers shut in at least 319,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, or 3.7 per cent of national production.

NATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION RESOURCES

1.1 # Land

ACE summons Ijazul Haq for real estate business on agriculture land

Ombudsman gets state land worth Rs63m retrieved

New forest policy purged of provisions for 'agricultural use' of forestland

'President's nod needed for army's land accord'

1.2 # Water

Growers' body calls for revival of waterways

SCA claims 18,000 cusecs being stolen in Punjab daily

2 # AGRICULTURE INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

Climate-resilient farming: funding grows to \$13bn

2.2 # Fertilizers

Warehouse raid Fake fertiliser seized

Moot advises farmers to use eco-friendly bio-pesticides

2.3 # Seed

FAO distributes rice seeds among flood-hit

Chinese chilli seeds give higher yields

2.4 # Subsidies

ECC approves Rs5.57bn TSG for urea subsidy

3 # AGRICULTURE INPUTS

3.1 # Cash Crop

Millers reject govt-fixed sugar price

Punjab plans cotton revival to cut imports

Cotton production target must be achieved, says Punjab CM

3.2 # Food Crop

PM marvels at bumper wheat harvest

Farmers must be enabled to reap benefits of bumper wheat crop: PM

Farmers allege forceful seizure of wheat by govt

Farmers urged to take preventive steps during wheat cultivation

CM decides to ban rice cultivation in 13 districts

Exporters oppose ban on rice cultivation in various Sindh districts

Passco to auction off 44,784MTs of damaged wheat

3.3 # Fruit and Vegetable

Mango varieties in Sindh: Chinese investors show keen interest

Mango crop may decline 20pc; export begins from tomorrow

4 # NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Situationer: Over 740 fishermen in Pakistani, Indian jails await return

Nearly 200 Indian fishermen released

Sindh PA concerned at use of illegal nets, fishing practices

5 # TRADE

Khunjerab Pass to be open 'all year round'

July-April FY23: Trade deficit declines 39.62pc to \$23.71bn YoY

Preferential trade with Turkiye activated

PSW extends scope of operations to all dry ports except Quetta

5.1 # Exports

Exports to nine regional states drop 28pc

Exports plunge by 27pc in April

Gilgit-Baltistan seeks relaxation in exports to China

FPCCI blames IMF for damaging Pakistan's exports with subsidy withdrawal

July-April: Textile group exports dip 14pc to \$13.7bn YoY

Textile exports plunge 29.1pc in April

MoUs to facilitate cherry exports to China signed

Textile exports drop to \$13.7bn

5.2 # Imports

Millers for cheaper wheat imports

Special Technology Zones: FBR imposes conditions on importers

0.1m tons of Russian oil to arrive in first week of June

Prices of pulses, flour refuse to come down despite bulk imports

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

WWF, PepsiCo complete 'Water Replenishment Project' in Hattar

6.1 # Food Companies

'Deceptive marketing practices' LHC allows CCP to proceed against 3 food companies

ACE seizes stocks of Khusro's sugar mills

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

Jul-Dec: Govt inks \$3.9bn new loan agreements

Country receives \$15.4bn in financing during Jul-Apr

7.1 # Countries

Germany promises €120m to fight climate change

\$20m debt deferment pact signed with South Korea

\$2bn Saudi deposits: Pakistan to pay 4pc annual profit

UAE to help build houses for flood affectees

Gulf countries expected to invest \$500m soon

GCCI urges Japanese to invest in Gwadar

7.2 # United Nations

Living Indus Initiative to cost around \$17bn: UN

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Economy: ADB chief vows continuous support

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Pakistan could default without IMF bailout, Moody's warns

IMF denies asking Pakistan to raise \$8bn in fresh financing

8.3 # World Bank

World Bank launches more robust, transparent business climate rankings

WB suggests bold actions to tackle health, education challenges

World Bank for more investment in human development

WB promises support for BISP

WB expert advises installation of acoustic devices in Indus to save dolphins

ECC okays Rs34bn grants to secure \$50m WB tranche

\$42.3m of WB disbursement: ECC approves Rs7.84bn TSG as rupee cover

Small dams revived agriculture in drought-hit Kohistan: WB expert

World Bank okays \$213m for flood protection

World Bank to provide Rs16bn for uplift schemes in next fiscal

Minister says villages being solarised with WB assistance

9. # POLICY

CDWP clears Rs195bn flood project aimed at protecting millions

10 # ENVIRONMENT

Sindh's shrinking forests

Timber mafia continues to illegally chop down precious trees in Hazro

10.1 # Atmosphere

Ammonia leak in ice factory leaves many hospitalised in Hassanabdal

‘Groundwater contamination by coal-fired power plants quite high in Thar’

Experts concerned at ‘extinction’ of bees in Sindh

10.2 # Health & Safety

Funds shortage affecting patient care in KP’s public sector hospitals

Cases of drug-resistant typhoid register spike in Karachi

Alarmed by Naegleria deaths, Karachi experts urge govt to supply chlorinated water

New study finds around 53pc people suffering from diabetes

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Human Capital Index: Pakistan’s value lower than South Asia’s average: World Bank

May-July: govt intends to borrow record Rs9.4trn

Govt debt stocks soar to record Rs57trn by Mar-end: SBP

Microloans cross half-a-trillion benchmark for first time

Average income drops to \$1,568

11.1 # Food Scarcity

Up to 130,000 wheat bags seized from hoarders in three districts

Over 8m Pakistanis face hunger after floods: UN

FAO introduces system for assessing acute food insecurity

Call for smart steps to tackle growing food insecurity

March held over ‘famine-like’ situation in Thatta, Makli

Call to reduce post-harvest losses to tackle food insecurity

Pakistan designated ‘very high concern’ area in food insecurity

11.2 # Inflation

Pricey food items push inflation to record level in April

Food pushes inflation to record 36.4pc in April

Wheat flour prices continue to rise in Balochistan

Sindh PA: issues of rising food inflation, lawlessness raised

Inflation to keep haunting Pakistanis: UN survey

DRAP allows drug makers to hike prices

Bulk exports push sugar prices up

Monthly update: Inflation to remain on upward trajectory: MoF

11.3 # Poverty

Farmers, brick kiln workers in rural areas remain below poverty line: HWA

11.4 # Weekly Inflation

Short-term inflation jumps to record 48.35pc

Short-term inflation stays above 48pc for second week in a row

Weekly inflation eases to 45.7pc

Short-term inflation stays above 45pc

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Bilawal again pins climate change blame on rich nations

Climate change: Pakistan seventh most vulnerable country: minister

Activists say IMF causing climate catastrophe

Geneva climate moot: There's 'full clarity' about \$10.9bn foreign aid pledges: minister

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Experts predict dry, warmer monsoon in most parts of country this year

13.1 # Flood

Sindh's flood mitigation project: NDRMF to provide Rs 3bn

Swat villagers bear brunt of devastating flood

13.2 # Heat Wave

Heatwave to roast southern regions this week, says Met dept

13.3 # Rainfall

Eight lives lost as rain batters Balochistan

Crops damaged, roads flooded as rain, hailstorms hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Hailstorm damages crops in Bajaur, Shangla

Downpour lashes many districts in Sindh

Heavy hailstorm, rain lash districts of south Punjab

13.4 # Storm

Eight lives lost as rain batters Balochistan

Crops damaged, roads flooded as rain, hailstorms hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Hailstorm damages crops in Bajaur, Shangla

Downpour lashes many districts in Sindh

Heavy hailstorm, rain lash districts of south Punjab

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Quake jolts Khuzdar

Avalanche claims 11 lives in GB

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters enter grid stations, restore power supply to Peshawar villages

Flood-hit villagers protest govt's failure to plug breaches

Haripur city residents protest water shortage

Rallies, seminars held across province to mark Labour Day

Labour Day: Female agricultural workers: seminar held

Killing of man in 'encounter' sparks protest in New Town

Flour millers give strike call

KU non-teaching staff go on three-day pen down strike

Kurram tragedy victims buried amid protests

Turbat University shut after students' protest

Gizri residents protest against water shortage, power outages

Administrative work at KU suffers as non-teaching employees go on strike

Millers to observe strike daily against 'flawed' wheat policy

Families of missing persons take to streets in Swat

Swat people protest attack on school van

Shutdown observed in several districts of Sindh

National News

1 # AGRICULTURE PRODUCTION RESOURCES

1.1 # Land

ACE summons Ijazul Haq for real estate business on agriculture land

Anti-Corruption Establishment summoned former minister Ijazul Haq on charge of developing housing schemes on agricultural land, allegedly developed seven housing societies in Haroonabad. It alleged that Mr Haq used his front men to defraud the people and made millions of rupees. It said the TMA (town municipal administration) officers concerned had also been summoned this week to record their statements in this regard. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 2*)

Ombudsman gets state land worth Rs63m retrieved

The office of the Punjab ombudsman claims to have recovered state land worth over Rs63 million through its intervention in 10 districts of the province. A spokesperson for the ombudsman said that the administrations of Kasur, Toba Tek Singh, Mianwali, Khanewal, Bahawalpur, Sargodha, Hafizabad, Jhang, Mandi Bahauddin, and Faisalabad districts have reclaimed over 35 kanals of state lands within their respective jurisdictions following the intervention of the office of the ombudsman. This land holds a combined market value of over Rs63m. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2023, Page 8*)

New forest policy purged of provisions for ‘agricultural use’ of forestland

Sindh forest department has finally released the Sindh Sustainable Forest Management Policy (Amended), 2023, after purging it of all provisions for the promotion of ‘agricultural activity’ on forestland in riverine area to ensure the riverine forests are exclusively used for forestation instead of crops’ cultivation. One of the key targets of the policy 2023-35 was to bring forest cover back on 100pc plantable area with the involvement mainly of private sector investment and protection through effective contractual agreements under public private partnership mode.

Initially, the policy 2019 was notified in February 2020 but it was stayed by Sindh High Court’s Sukkur bench, which termed it violative of Forest Act 1927 and restrained the department from implementing it. As per court’ directives, “forestlands are to be utilized for the development and preservation of forestry produce that does not include ‘cultivation of crops on the reserved forestlands”.

The policy 2019 had talked about 100pc plantable under a new reform process under ‘long term objectives’ component. The policy sets the target “to bring forest cover back on 100pc plantable area under a new reform process that aligns interests of department personnel and that of the department involving local communities in forest raising and protection through effective contractual agreements”. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2023, Page 15*)

'President's nod needed for army's land accord'

The Lahore High Court was told that a joint venture agreement signed between the governor of Punjab through member colonies of Board of Revenue and the Pakistan Army through director general strategic projects of the General Headquarters for the corporate agriculture farming was not sustainable in the law.

“The JV should have been signed by the president [Arif Alvi] on behalf of the army,” Advocate Fahad Malik said in his concluding arguments on behalf of a public interest petition challenging the handing over 45,267 acres on lease to the army for corporate farming. The counsel, however, reiterated that the army was not authorised or empowered to undertake any commercial or other activities beyond its composition. He said that the army had no jurisdiction to directly or indirectly engage in business ventures of any nature outside its composition nor to claim any state land for corporate agriculture farming. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 5*)

1.2 # Water

Growers' body calls for revival of waterways

Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) has demanded immediate restoration of natural waterways and warned if the government does not take the issue seriously the province may have to bear billions of rupees losses in the event of heavy rains and flooding as it did in last year's disaster. It demanded subsidy on electricity for agriculture sector in view of increasing tariff and called for fixation of Rs8 per unit for the farm sector.

The meeting decried artificial shortage of fertiliser and accused Sindh agriculture department of involvement in black-marketing and hoarding of the farm input. That action should be taken against hoarders to put an end to the shortage of fertiliser. The meeting regretted 50pc water shortage in Sindh despite the fact that river flows had been adequate lately. Still, over 50pc water shortage was being reported and tail-end's watercourses & channels were not getting their required supplies. It said and demanded an immediate end to smuggling of wheat, fertiliser and sugar to a neighbouring country in broad daylight without fear of law. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2023, Page 15*)

SCA claims 18,000 cusecs being stolen in Punjab daily

SCA has expressed its concern over delay in the rehabilitation of drainage system in Sindh including Left Bank Outfall Drain (LBOD) although monsoon is just round the corner. The SCA alleged that 18,000 cusecs of water was being stolen between Taunsa and Guddu barrages on a daily basis within the limits of Punjab. The meeting rejected cotton's support prices of Rs8,500 per 40kg fixed by federal government and said that it should be fixed at Rs12,000 per 40kg in view of increasing input costs. The meeting also regretted that Sindh's share of water was being stolen in Punjab between Taunsa and Guddu barrages. Farmers representatives at the meeting protested over non-supply of adequate water to Sindh and also demanded that 70,000 cusecs of water availability should be ensured at Guddu Barrage. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2023, Page 15*)

2 # AGRICULTURE INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

Climate-resilient farming: funding grows to \$13bn

Funding for a global initiative aimed at creating more environmentally friendly and climate-resilient farming has grown to \$13 billion, co-leaders the United States and the UAE said that money means the Agriculture Innovation Mission (AIM) for Climate, launched in 2021, now exceeds its \$10 billion target for the COP28 climate talks, to be hosted by the UAE in November and December. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2023, Page 11*)

2.2 # Fertilizers

Warehouse raid Fake fertiliser seized

An agriculture department team claimed to have seized fake liquid fertiliser worth Rs0.7 million in a raid on a warehouse of a company. As per officials, the raid was conducted on the warehouse after receipt of laboratory report of the samples which declared the fertiliser fake and harmful for crops. The department had sent fertiliser samples to the laboratory for chemical examination some months ago. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2023, Page 8*)

Moot advises farmers to use eco-friendly bio-pesticides

Speakers at a seminar have urged farmers to ensure use of bio-pesticides as they are not only affordable, but also eco-friendly and safe for crops. To mark the Farmers' Day, under the aegis of the Research and Development Project, Endowment Fund Secretariat, University of Agriculture Faisalabad at Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Agricultural College Dokri, Larkana district. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2023, Page 15*)

2.3 # Seed

FAO distributes rice seeds among flood-hit

The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN has started rice seeds distribution in Balochistan to protect flood-affected people from poverty and food insecurity. Through the Balochistan Urgent Response for Food Security Project, the FAO, in close coordination with the Balochistan government, Asian Development Bank and Japan Fund for Prosperous and Resilient Asia and the Pacific, is responding to livelihood and food security needs of flood-affected people of Nasirabad, Jaffarabad, Usta Muhammad and Sohbatpur districts.

Along with rice seeds, 60,000 farming households would receive safer and more durable small tools and protective footwear in flood-hit districts of Balochistan. Apart from this, FAO would support women's livelihood in agriculture sector by providing protective footwear to 7,500 women labourers to enable safe rice transplanting activities. "The quality seeds will cover approximately 180,000 acres of land and expected to enhance crop yield by 10 to 20 percent. By enabling farmers to restart their livelihood, we aim to uplift communities, combat food insecurity and alleviate poverty," (*Dawn, May 27th, 2023, Page 3*)

Chinese chilli seeds give higher yields

A local agriculture research company claims to have harvested three-fold more yield from Chinese hybrid chilli varieties in successful cultivation projects in Sindh and Punjab. “We have successfully reaped 75 maunds per acre yield of chillies crop from three different Chinese varieties in the local environment against 25-30 maunds produced by indigenous seeds”. The Chinese hybrid varieties whose fruit is over six inches long had been sown on 7,500 acres in different districts of Sindh and Punjab and will be cultivated on at least 30,000 acres in the next season, Dr Rashid informed during a visit to a model chillies farm. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 9*)

2.4 # Subsidies

ECC approves Rs5.57bn TSG for urea subsidy

ECC of Cabinet has approved a technical supplementary grant amounting to Rs5.57 billion on account of federal government’s share of subsidy on imported urea fertilizer besides Rs1 billion additional amount for ongoing development schemes of parliamentarians under SDGs Achievement Programme (SAP). The meeting of the ECC presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar was informed that as per the cabinet’s decision the subsidy on imported urea will be shared at 50:50 basis – 50 percent to be borne by provinces and 50 percent by the federal government. The meeting was told that the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has imported 100,000 metric tonnes of urea from China, in pursuance of Cabinet’s decision & urea was distributed to provincial governments by National Fertilizer Marketing Limited. The ECC was further informed that an amount of Rs6bn is available with the Finance Division for payment of subsidy on import of urea fertiliser. It is proposed that TSG of Rs5.57bn may be released to Ministry of Commerce being administrative division of the TCP for the current financial year, as there would be a time lag between approval of TSG & release of funds to TCP. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2023, Page 1*)

3 # AGRICULTURE INPUTS

3.1 # Cash Crop

Millers reject govt-fixed sugar price

PSMA has rejected the ex-mill and retail price of sugar fixed by the federal government. The sugar mill owners have challenged the government’s decision regarding the prices of commodity in the Appellate Committee. As per the sources, the mill owners were of the view that they cannot sell sugar – which according to their claim cost them at Rs115 to Rs120 per kg – for less than Rs100. They warned of moving courts if Appellate Committee rejects their appeal. In response to the unprecedented 30 percent surge in retail sugar prices within a matter of weeks, set the retail price of sweetener at Rs98.82/kg. The price of sugar includes Sales Tax at Rs14.58 per kg, a profit margin of Rs5.30, and a distributor’s margin of 25 paise per kg. The transport cost is calculated at Rs2 / kg, and the retailer’s profit is Re1/kg. (*Business Recorder, May 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

Punjab plans cotton revival to cut imports

Buoyant by the good wheat harvest, the government has decided to focus on the white lint to revive the most important cash crop of the Kharif season and subsequently the textile industry for reducing its import bill. The Punjab government has decided to provide irrigation water to cotton fields as a priority for achieving the over 8.2 million bales production target this season.

Mr Khurshid said that the irrigation department is providing south Punjab more water than its share on a priority basis so that cotton may be sown in the maximum area. The Punjab irrigation department is facing a total shortage of over 27 per cent in the system this year but the south Punjab canals are being supplied 53,000 cusecs of water against its share of 45,000 cusecs. Mr Sahoo said that cotton is being cultivated on an area of 4.554 million acres in south Punjab which is 91pc of the total target for the province. The provincial government has devised the Cotton Action Plan 2023-24 to what it claims will earn \$3bn in foreign exchange. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2023, Page 9*)

Cotton production target must be achieved, says Punjab CM

Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi presided over a high-level meeting at CM Office in which progress with regard to cotton sowing was reviewed. CM directed to attain cotton sowing and production targets under every circumstance. It was decided during the meeting that farmers yielding more cotton production will be awarded cash prizes and the relevant staff will also be encouraged in achieving the requisite cotton sowing target. (*Business Recorder, May 22nd, 2023, Page 19*)

3.2 # Food Crop

PM marvels at bumper wheat harvest

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif attributed the production of 27.5 million metric tons record bumper wheat crop in the country to government's efforts at timely decisions, provision of quality seed, uninterrupted supply of fertilizers and Kissan package. Expressing his satisfaction over the country's produce which surpassed production during the previous 10 years, the prime minister thanked Allah, the Almighty for the blessing. The prime minister chaired a meeting to review countrywide wheat procurement drive at the official level, PM Office Media Wing said. PM says 100m benefitting from free wheat flour scheme. (*Business Recorder, May 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

Farmers must be enabled to reap benefits of bumper wheat crop: PM

Emphasising the need for practical steps to ensure extending full benefits of bumper wheat crop to the farmers, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif expressed satisfaction over the bumper wheat produce in the province. The PM said this while talking to the caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, who called on him. Overall law and order situation in Punjab and other matters of mutual interest also came under discussion during the meeting. (*Business Recorder, May 4th, 2023, Page 3*)

Farmers allege forceful seizure of wheat by govt

Farmers allege that the food department and district administration are forcefully seizing wheat from them, preventing them from keeping the commodity for domestic use or as seed for the next season. The food department, however, says it recovered thousands of bags of wheat that were hidden in rice factories in the Gujranwala district during its campaign against the hoarding of grain.

Khalid Khokhar, Pakistan Kissan Ittehad president, said in a press release that in major grain markets, the price of wheat has reached the level of Rs5,000 per 40kg in the first week of May. He finds this situation concerning, especially considering that the district administration is conducting raids at farmers' houses to obtain harvested wheat from them. Farmers are not even allowed to keep wheat for domestic use, farm labour or seed purposes. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2023, Page 2*)

Farmers urged to take preventive steps during wheat cultivation

Rescue 1122 Rawalpindi has advised farmers to take all possible necessary preventive steps to avoid fire incidents during wheat harvesting. According to a Rescue-1122 spokesman, the farmers had been urged to adopt all possible preventive measures while harvesting and threshing their wheat crop. (*Business Recorder, May 8th, 2023, Page 3*)

CM decides to ban rice cultivation in 13 districts

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has decided to impose complete ban on the cultivation of rice in 13 districts on the left bank of Indus River and advised growers to opt for other Kharif crops in place of paddy. The chief minister directed Senior Member of the Sindh Board of Revenue to issue a notification under the West Pakistan Rice Ordinance, 1959, imposing a complete ban on rice cultivation for the year 2023 in the areas irrigated by perennial canals of Ghotki Feeder, Rohri Canal, Nara Canal and Khairpur West & East feeders. Meanwhile, Mr Shah directed the irrigation department to release water in time so that growers on the left bank of the river could grow other crops. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2023, Page 15*)

Exporters oppose ban on rice cultivation in various Sindh districts

Rice exporters have strongly opposed a ban on rice cultivation in the various districts of Sindh province. Chela Ram Kewlani Chairman, Haseeb Ali Khan Senior Vice Chairman, Habibur Rehman, Vice Chairman and Managing Committee Members of Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) in an urgent meeting strongly opposed the decision of Sindh Government regarding ban on rice cultivation in various districts of Sindh Province.

He said that rice was the second largest export commodity and earner of over \$2.5 billion valuable foreign exchange annually for the country. Further, rice was a surplus crop for export purposes, as it was not the mass staple diet, "We are already facing crop shortage this year and due to this ban, it is very difficult to achieve our export target of over \$2 billion," he mentioned. (*Business Recorder, May 11th, 2023, Page 1*)

Passco to auction off 44,784MTs of damaged wheat

Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Services Corporation Limited (Passco), an arm of Ministry of National Food Security and Research, is to auction over 44,784 MT of damaged wheat at a total amount of Rs 3.285bn and seek differential of Rs 37.476m in budget of FY 2023-24. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2023, Page 12*)

3.3 # Fruit and Vegetable

Mango varieties in Sindh: Chinese investors show keen interest

Chinese investors expressed their interest in the mango varieties of Sindh Province and visited Sindh Agriculture University and discussed with scientists and progressive farmers, about business opportunities in the mango-producing areas of Sindh, while participants agreed to promote the Mango Value Addition Program to gain access to lucrative international markets. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2023, Page 2*)

Mango crop may decline 20pc; export begins from tomorrow

Mango crop in Pakistan faces the challenge of climate change this year and a reduction of 20 percent is being estimated in its production. The production capacity of mangoes in Pakistan is around 1.8 million metric tons, however, due to the effects of climate change, it is feared that the production is expected to decrease by 20 percent to 1.44 million metric tons.

Mango crop is directly affected by changing weather patterns, he added. He urged that research institutes and provincial agriculture departments should provide resources and awareness to mango farmers to avert the negative impact of the climate change. The target of export of mangoes for this season has been set at 125,000 metric tons & if this is achieved, Pakistan will earn foreign exchange worth \$100m. Export of mangoes will commence from 20th May 2023. (*Business Recorder, May 19th, 2023, Page 7*)

4 # NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Situationer: Over 740 fishermen in Pakistani, Indian jails await return

MORE than 740 fishermen incarcerated in Indian and Pakistani prisons for trespassing water borders have completed their sentences, but their release and eventual repatriation have not materialised due to the apathy of governments on both sides of the border. In Indian jails of Delhi, Gujarat and Tihar, over 113 Pakistanis who had been detained for trespassing water borders in 2015-2022 are waiting to return home after completing their sentences. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2023, Page 1*)

Nearly 200 Indian fishermen released

As many as 198 Indian fishermen released from the District Prison Malir left for Lahore by the Allama Iqbal Express that departed from the Cantonment Railway Station. The original number of fishermen who were to be released was 200 but two fishermen had died earlier. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2023, Page 13*)

Sindh PA concerned at use of illegal nets, fishing practices

Opposition during the Sindh Assembly session voiced concerns over the use of banned fishing nets in the country's sea waters, saying that the thin meshes pose a threat to the marine life. Syed Abdul Rasheed, MMA's legislator told the house that there is an unchecked use of "prohibited" nets to hunt shrimps. He said that the unlawful fishing practices are carried out through bribes to the concerned authorities.

Sindh Livestock and Fisheries Minister said that there are five different departments like coast guards, maritime security agency, etc., to keep a check on boats to bar them from carrying such illegal nets for a deep-sea hunt. However, he acknowledged that there are such other escape routes, which experienced fishermen are aware about to voyage with unlawful nets into deep sea. (*Business Recorder, May 18th, 2023, Page 7*)

5 # TRADE

Khunjerab Pass to be open 'all year round'

China has agreed to keep the Khunjerab Pass functional throughout the year for trade and travel activities, a PPP leader from Gilgit-Baltistan has claimed. Amjad Hussain, who is the party's regional president, told Dawn that Chinese authorities had also agreed to relax restrictions on the import of several items from Pakistan. Mr Hussain, who met Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, said the land route between Pakistan and China would remain open throughout the year. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 12*)

July-April FY23: Trade deficit declines 39.62pc to \$23.71bn YoY

Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed by 39.62 percent to \$ 23.713 billion during the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to \$ 39.272 billion during the same period of last year PBS said. The country's exports during July-April (2022-23) were recorded at \$ 23.174 billion against exports of \$ 26.247 billion in July-April of 2021-22, a decline of 11.71 percent, according to PBS.

The imports decreased by 28.44 percent during the period under review by going down from \$ 65.519 billion last year to \$ 46.887 billion during the current year. Jul-Mar trade deficit shrinks 35. On a year-on-year basis, exports witnessed a decline of 26.68 percent and were recorded at \$ 2.124 billion in April 2023 against the exports of \$ 2.897 billion in April 2022. The imports also decreased to \$ 2.953 billion in April 2023 from \$ 6.661 billion in April 2022, showing negative growth of 55.67 percent. The trade deficit narrowed by 77.98 percent on a YoY basis to \$ 829 million in April 2023 compared to \$3.764 billion in April 2022. On a month-on-month basis, the exports during April 2023 decreased by 10.46 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.372b in March 2023.

The imports into the country decreased by 22.62 percent in April 2023 when compared to the imports of \$3.816 billion in March 2023. The trade deficit narrowed by 42.59 percent on a month-on-month basis and stood at \$ 829 million in April 2023 compared to \$ 1.444 billion in March 2022. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Preferential trade with Turkiye activated

Almost after seven years, Pakistan and Turkiye have implemented a preferential trade agreement to boost bilateral trade volume across various sectors. Both sides notified duty reductions on mutually agreed tariff lines with effect from May 1st.

Islamabad and Istanbul signed the “Trade in Goods Agreement” in August 2016. Under the agreement, Pakistan has gained preferential access to the Turkish market under 261 tariff lines covering traditional as well as non-traditional sectors such as leather, rice, dates, mangoes, cutlery, sports goods, seafood, processed agricultural products, rubber tubes and tyres, plastics, and engineering goods. Pakistan’s export value of these tariff lines stands at \$5.1 billion or 16% of the total exports, while Turkish global imports in these products amount to \$7.6bn.

Duty was reduced to zero percent on 123 tariff lines, including five agricultural and 118 industrial products. The current export value of these products is \$714m, while Turkish global imports of these products stand at \$3.920bn. Customs duty on average is 2-3pc. However, the additional customs duty is 20pc for industrial products, which will be reduced. This is one area having the potential to increase exports of non-traditional products. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2023, Page 9*)

PSW extends scope of operations to all dry ports except Quetta

Pakistan Single Window (PSW) has extended the scope of its operations to all dry ports (except Quetta) with effect from May 3, 2023, a move that will further facilitate the country’s cross-border trade operations. With the new development, goods and commodities clearance of commercial consignments classified under Chapters 1 to 50 of the Pakistan Customs Tariff has been completely switched to PSW, allowing clearance of imported consignments via submission of a Single Declaration (SD). (*Business Recorder, May 16th, 2023, Page 7*)

5.1 # Exports

Exports to nine regional states drop 28pc

Pakistan’s exports to nine regional countries dipped 28.28 per cent in the first nine months of FY23 mainly driven by a drop in shipments to China, data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan showed. The decline is not confined to exports but imports especially from China also saw a deep decline during the current fiscal year.

The country’s exports to Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives dipped to \$2.744 billion — just 13.83pc of Pakistan’s total exports of \$21.05bn in July-March FY23. China tops the list of Pakistan’s regional exports leaving other populous countries India and Bangladesh behind. But Pakistan’s exports to China posted negative growth in the first 9MFY23 on a y-o-y basis. The bulk of the regional exports share, which accounts for 55pc, is with China while the remaining is for eight countries.

Pakistan's exports to China declined 28.31pc to \$1.524 in July-March FY23 from \$2.126bn in 9MFY22. The decrease in export proceeds was noted for the first time in the post-Covid period. However, the imports from China also declined by 48.36pc to \$7.745bn on a year-on-year basis during the months under review. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan posted a positive growth of 8.42pc to \$400.77m in July-March from \$369.63m in July-March 2022. Till a few years ago, Afghanistan was the second major export destination for Pakistan after the United States. The export figures did not include proceeds materialised through the land routes. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 9*)

Exports plunge by 27pc in April

For the eighth month in a row, Pakistan's merchandise exports shrank by 26.68 per cent year-on-year to \$2.12 billion in April, data released by PBS. In the first 10 months (July to April) of 2022-23, exports were down 11.71pc at \$23.17bn compared to \$26.24bn 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. At the same time, imports plunged by 55.67pc to \$2.95bn in April compared to \$6.66bn in the corresponding month last year. Imports fell 28.44pc to \$46.88bn during July-April from \$65.51bn over the corresponding period last year. Between July and April FY23, the trade deficit decelerated by 39.62pc to \$23.71bn from \$39.27bn over the corresponding months of last year. In April, the trade deficit fell 77.98pc to \$0.829bn on a year-on-year basis. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 9*)

Gilgit-Baltistan seeks relaxation in exports to China

A delegation from Gilgit-Baltistan has visited the Tashkurgan town in Xinjiang, an autonomous territory in northwest China, to discuss matters of mutual interest and sought relaxation on exports to the neighbouring country through Khunjerab Pass. The parliamentary delegation, headed by GB Assembly Speaker Syed Amjad Ali Zaidi and on a five-day visit to Xinjiang, also asked Chinese authorities to include five items from GB in the free trade agreement.

In a meeting between Chinese authorities and the GB delegation, the two sides agreed to start weekly flight operations between the Tashkurgan and Kashgar areas of Xinjiang and Gilgit-Baltistan of Pakistan to boost bilateral trade and tourism. They also agreed to establish a joint small business bank to facilitate small traders and businesses. The two sides agreed to establish a trade zone in GB to promote border trade. The Tashkurgan authorities said that they would lift travel restrictions within Xinjiang region for the border pass holders of GB. The Chinese side assured that GB would be equally benefited in the upcoming CPEC projects. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2023, Page 3*)

FPCCI blames IMF for damaging Pakistan's exports with subsidy withdrawal

FPCCI blamed the sudden withdrawal of gas and power subsidies on IMF diktat for the 26.8 percent decline in the country's exports. FPCCI President Irfan Iqbal Sheikh expressed his shock that, as per latest trade statistics of Pakistan, exports have declined

by 26.68 percent in April 2023 on YoY basis. “This was the direct, inevitable and forewarned result of the sudden, harshest withdrawal of gas and power subsidies for the five zero-rated, export-oriented industries on the dictation of the IMF. To add insult to injury, the IMF EFF (Extended Fund Facility) programme has not yet been resumed.

The concessional tariffs were effective only for the five zero-rated sectors; namely, textile, jute, leather, surgical and sports goods. All of these sectors have posted tremendous decline in exports, with a massive 29 percent drop in April 2023 posted by the textiles sector in particular. Highlighting the fact that Pakistan’s exports during July-April FY23 were recorded at \$23.174 billion against the exports of \$26.247 billion in July-April FY22, Sheikh called the decline in April 2023, drastic.

April 2023 exports were recorded at \$2.124 billion against \$2.897 billion in April 2022, a 26.68 percent decline. Sheikh recalled that, as the president of FPCCI, he issued 6 policy statements in no-uncertain-terms on the issue in the past 2 months, but, the government and its economic team did not see the storm that was building up. (*The News, May 7th, 2023, Page 18*)

July-April: Textile group exports dip 14pc to \$13.7bn YoY

The country’s textile group exports declined by around 14.22 per cent during the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2022-23 and remained at \$13.709 billion as compared to \$15.981 billion during the same period of last year. The data of exports and imports released by PBS revealed that the country’s textile group exports witnessed a decline of 29.11 per cent in April 2023 on a year-on-year basis and remained at \$1.232 billion when compared to \$1.739 billion during the same month of last year.

On a MoM basis, textile group registered 1.99 per cent negative growth compared to \$1.257 billion in March 2023. Cotton yarn exports registered 36.71 per cent negative growth in July-April and remained \$636.831 million compared to \$1.006 billion during the same period of the last year. On a year-on-year basis, cotton yarn exports registered 34.72% negative growth, while on a MoM basis, it registered 6.35% negative growth.

Rice exports declined by 11.17% during the first ten months of 2022-23 and remained \$1.822 billion compared to \$2.052 billion during the same period of the last fiscal year. The country’s exports during July–April 2022-2023 totalled \$23.181 bn (provisional) against \$26.247 bn during the corresponding period of last year showing a decrease of 11.68 percent. The exports in April 2023 were \$2.137bn (provisional) as compared to \$2.372bn in March 2023 showing a decrease of 9.91 per cent and by 26.23 per cent as compared to \$2.897 billion in April, 2022. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2023, Page 1*)

Textile exports plunge 29.1pc in April

Textile exports, Pakistan’s primary source of foreign exchange, experienced significant decline of 29.1 percent to \$1.23 billion in April 2023, when compared to \$1.74 billion exported in the same month last year. The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS)

announced that this marks the seventh consecutive month in which both the monetary value and quantity of textile sales dwindled. Likewise, cumulative exports of the textile sector during July-April FY23 also contracted by 14.2 percent, amounting to \$13.7 billion as opposed to \$15.98 billion recorded in the corresponding period last year. This rapid decline could have significant economic implications, as it serves as the foremost earner of foreign exchange and a major provider of employment opportunities.

Import

Petroleum group's imports in April 2023, were down 60 percent compared to the corresponding month of last year. The value was \$891.5 million against \$2.22 billion in April 2022. Over the previous month, its imports declined by 26 percent. Crude oil imports declined 48 percent to \$277 million, petroleum products 75.2 percent to \$312.6 million, and LNG 32.86 percent to 258.6 million. LPG imports however increased by less than half a percent to \$43.2 million against imports in April 2022. Over March 22, import of petroleum products in April 2023 fell 35.4%, crude 26.6%, LNG 14.2 percent, and LPG imports dropped by 1.66%. (*The News, May 21st, 2023, Page 17*)

MoUs to facilitate cherry exports to China signed

Eleven members of a business delegation from China returned home, while three others will fly from Islamabad, after a successful visit to G-B where they signed several MoUs with officials, businessmen and representatives of chambers of commerce to facilitate cherry trade. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2023, Page 3*)

Textile exports drop to \$13.7bn

In a significant economic setback, Pakistan's textile and clothing industry experienced a substantial decline of 14.22% y-o-y to \$13.7 billion during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year. This downturn can primarily be attributed to a notable reduction in production, which was largely driven by the surging cost of production, data released by PBS. The export figures for April paint a bleak picture, as they witnessed a sharp and alarming decline of 29.11pc, plunging from \$1.73bn in the corresponding month of the previous year to a mere \$1.23bn. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2023, Page 9*)

5.2 # Imports

Millers for cheaper wheat imports

Slamming bureaucracy for its utter failure in ensuring fair prices to consumers by nabbing the exploiters, the flour millers have asked the government to allow the import of wheat as it is available at cheaper rates due to the arrival of fresh crops. Pakistan Flour Mills Association, Punjab Chapter, Chairman Asim Raza Ahmed slammed the traders and bureaucracy, whom he called the exploiters for raising the price of wheat within a few hours after the news of bumper wheat crop broke out. He said that wheat was currently cheap on the international markets due to the arrival of fresh crops whereas it was getting expensive in Pakistan. "There is no smuggling to Afghanistan, it

is the wrong and unfair notion and the bureaucracy is deceiving the whole nation,” adding that the official reports were categorising the movement of wheat from one city to another city in Punjab as smuggling. (*Dawn, May 7th, 2023, Page 9*)

Special Technology Zones: FBR imposes conditions on importers

The goods imported for the Special Technology Zones (STZs) must be retained for a period of at least ten years and cannot be sold without prior approval of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), the FBR laid down conditions on the importers of the STZs under the SRO 536(I)/2023 notified to issue draft amendments in the Customs Rules, 2001. (*Business Recorder, May 11th, 2023, Page 1*)

0.1m tons of Russian oil to arrive in first week of June

The vessels carrying 100,000 tons of discounted Russian oil will arrive at Pakistan ports in the first week of June which is part of the energy security plan of the government. State Minister for Energy, Musadik Malik announced this during an off-camera meeting with mediapersons on new refinery policy, which aims at incentivising the greenfield investment in shallow, deep conversion, and ultra-deep conversion new refineries up to 20 years. “Russian cargo carrying 100,000 tons Urals will reach at Oman port on May 26-27 where oil in small vessels will be transported to Pakistan in seven to 10 days.

He further disclosed that a new refinery policy would help to accelerate the required energy growth which is pivotal for economic growth. “One percent economic (GDP) growth required 1.5 to two percent growth in the energy sector and five percent GDP growth requires seven to 10 percent energy growth which cannot be possible without investment in refineries and exploration and production of oil and gas sector. The new refinery policy has 20 years’ incentives for 300,000 tons capacity refinery and 10 years below 300,000 tons refinery but it will be mandatory the financial closure would be within five years. The import duty on the equipment used in the refinery on 300,000 and above would be 7.5 percent on MS and diesel for 20 years and the same incentives will be applicable for 10 years on below capacity of 300,000 new refineries. Both types of refineries would be incentivised as per special economic zone (SEZs) laws.

He said by 2030, the consumption of petrol and diesel would increase from 20 million to 33 million. Presently, the production of local refineries was 10 to 11 million and rest imported. The premium on diesel was up to \$18 globally due to high demand, he added. Multiple foreign countries and private companies have shown interest in the new refinery policy and a positive response received at a road show conducted in the US on greenfield investment. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2023, Page 12*)

Prices of pulses, flour refuse to come down despite bulk imports

The prices of wheat and pulses have failed to subside even after massive imports in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year as consumers were still paying hefty prices for the commodities. The government spent over \$1 billion to import 2.68 million tonnes of wheat during July-April FY23 compared to \$795 million for procuring 2.20m tonnes

in the corresponding period last year. The average per tonne (APT) price of grain stood at \$393 this fiscal year compared to \$360 in the corresponding period last year. Similarly, a whopping \$818m was spent to import 1.14m tonnes of pulses compared to \$520m on the 783,634 tonnes in the same period last year. The APT price this year was \$715 against \$664 last year.

The latest Sensitive Price Index showed that the average national price of a 20kg wheat bag increased to Rs2,628.17 in the week ending on May 25 as compared to Rs1,250.50 in the corresponding period last year. Similarly, the average prices of gram pulse, mash and moong have increased from Rs180.67 to Rs248.60 per kg, from Rs287.37 to Rs448.11 per kg and from Rs172.20 to Rs281 per kg, respectively. Besides, the bulk of black gram went up in March on the back of soaring demand as it was a vital ingredient to make gram flour (besan). Similarly, the quantity of wheat imported has also risen gradually in the last few years. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2023, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

WWF, PepsiCo complete 'Water Replenishment Project' in Hattar

PepsiCo Pakistan, successfully completed an inclusive Water Replenishment Project for community access to clean water in partnership with World Wildlife Fund (WWF) - Pakistan in Hattar, District Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Under this multi-stakeholder project, the company has constructed four groundwater recharge wells with the University of Haripur and University of Engineering and Technology (UET) Taxila. (*Business Recorder, May 18th, 2023, Page 2*)

6.1 # Food Companies

'Deceptive marketing practices' LHC allows CCP to proceed against 3 food companies

Lahore High Court (LHC) has granted authorization to the Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) to proceed against three leading food companies involved in deceptive marketing practices. This decision comes as a result of the court's recognition of the CCP as the primary authority responsible for addressing competition-related matters, affirming its status as the original forum for such issues. The cases originated from enquiries initiated based on formal complaints lodged by three companies including M/s. Ismail Industries, M/s. Hilal Foods, and M/s. English Biscuit Manufacturers against M/s. SM Food Makers Limited and M/s. Volka Foods. The complainants accused the latter parties of engaging in deceptive marketing practices. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2023, Page 3*)

ACE seizes stocks of Khusro's sugar mills

The Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) officials have seized sugar stocks worth Rs 100 million from RYK Sugar Mills, owned by former ministers Khusro Bakhtyar and Hashim Jawan Bakht, The action was taken after Ahmed Khan Bhatti, former principal secretary of the former CM, under investigation at ACE police station in Gujranwala. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2023, Page 2*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

Jul-Dec: Govt inks \$3.9bn new loan agreements

The government has signed new loan agreements worth \$3.904 billion with development partners during the first half (July-December) of the current fiscal year, i.e., 46 percent of the commitments of the corresponding period of last year, says the Economic Affairs Division (EAD). The official data revealed that out of the total new agreements, \$3.695bn worth of financing agreements were signed with multilateral development partners, \$200m with foreign commercial banks, and \$9m with bilateral partners. Among the multilateral development partners, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) emerged as the largest partner in terms of new commitments of FEA of \$1.793bn (46 percent of total commitments) followed by the IDA (\$1.107bn).

During 1st half (July-December) of 2022-23, out of the total commitments of \$3.905 billion, an amount of \$2.200 billion (or 56 percent of the total commitments) was earmarked as budgetary support, arranged through the ADB, the AIIB, and Bank of China, for easing out financial constraints on the foreign reserves side. An amount of \$161m was allocated for commodity financing and 40 percent of the total commitments to project financing. (*Business Recorder, May 10th, 2023, Page 12*)

Country receives \$15.4bn in financing during Jul-Apr

Country received \$15.4b in financing during first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2022-23, says Ministry of Economic Affairs. The ministry stated that in some sections of the press, it has been reported that Pakistan has received \$8.1b in financing during 10 months from July 2022 to April 2023. This additionally includes the rollover of friendly countries' deposits amounting to US\$ 6.0bn (i.e., \$3.0bn each from China and Saudi Arabia), and the re-financing of a Chinese loan of US\$ 1.3bn which has been recorded as foreign currency denominated domestic debt. Govt of Pakistan has financing arrangements in place to meet its re-payment loan obligations during the CFY (2022-23) and is expecting improvement in its foreign exchange reserve levels.

The government has budgeted foreign assistance of \$22.817 billion for the current fiscal year including \$7.5 billion for foreign commercial banks, shows the EAD data. The latest data released by the division shows that the government has borrowed \$8.123 billion from multiple financing sources including \$900 million from foreign commercial banks during the first 10 months (July-April) of 2022-23 compared to \$13.033 billion borrowed during the same period of last fiscal year, showing a decline of around 37.7 per cent.

The country received \$1.166bn from the IMF during the first 10 months (July-April) of 2022-23. Contrary to past practices, the EAD has also listed the loans taken from the IMF. If the IMF loan is excluded, then the country received \$6.957 during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year compared to \$13.033bn during the same period of LFY, indicating the slowdown in inflows. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2023, Page 1*)

7.1 # Countries

Germany promises €120m to fight climate change

Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman held a bilateral meeting with a delegation from Germany's Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), led by Federal Minister Svenja Schulze, at the sidelines of Petersberg Climate Dialogue happening in Berlin, Germany. The focus of the meeting was on three main areas: better protection against flooding, enhancing Pakistan's renewable energy infrastructure, and expanding social safety support programmes to assist vulnerable communities facing climate shocks. Federal Minister Schulze pledged Germany would provide Pakistan with €120 million in assistance to support these initiatives. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2023, Page 3*)

\$20m debt deferment pact signed with South Korea

Pakistan signed a debt relief agreement with the Republic of Korea (RoK) for the deferment of repayment of about \$20 million loan under the G-20 Debt Service Suspension Agreement (DSSI) offered to poor nations to sustain economic challenges in the aftermath of Covid-19 pandemic. The agreement was signed by Secretary of Economic Affairs Dr Kazim Niaz and Ambassador of Korea to Pakistan Suh Sangpyo. The total amount of Pakistan's external debt that has been suspended & rescheduled under DSSI framework, covering period from May 2020 to December 2021, is about \$3.688bn. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2023, Page 9*)

\$2bn Saudi deposits: Pakistan to pay 4pc annual profit

Pakistan is to pay 4pc annual profit to Saudi Arabia on deposits of \$2bn with SBP for a period of one year. KSA had agreed to deposit \$2bn to meet one of the preconditions of IMF in which Pakistan had been asked to arrange external funding reportedly up to \$6bn. UAE has also confirmed to the IMF that it would deposit \$1b with SBP. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2023, Page 1*)

UAE to help build houses for flood affectees

UAE will help the Sindh government in construction of houses for flood affectees in the province. It was agreed in meeting that housing project will be finalised soon. Bilateral and trade relations between Pakistan and UAE will be enhanced further. The UAE ambassador informed the Sindh chief minister that investors of his country are keen to invest in Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2023, Page 5*)

Gulf countries expected to invest \$500m soon

Maritime Affairs Minister Faisal Sabzwari has said an agreement for a \$500 million investment from Gulf countries is being finalised. In this regard, an intergovernmental agreement policy would be submitted to the law ministry, which if approved, would pave the way for direct foreign investment as per the conditions set by IMF. He said Pakistan and UAE are working under the government-to-government (G2G) agreement, focusing on three projects, including bulk terminals.

According to the KATI's press release, Mr Sabzwari said that plans are under way to establish 1,250 acres of industrial parks in Port Qasim, offering facilities to foreign investors. Proposed G2G agreement aims to pave way for IMF-aligned FDI; Port Qasim to host industrial parks. He noted that there have been no tariff charge increases at the port, but digitalisation has yet to be implemented, while restrictions on leases have been imposed. That terminal charges have now been raised from 60 cents to 80 cents, resulting in a marginal increase of only 1.5pc in the cost of production for industrialists. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2023, Page 9*)

GCCI urges Japanese to invest in Gwadar

The Gwadar Chamber of Commerce and Industry (GCCI) has urged Japanese businesses to invest in various sectors in the coastal district as there were ample opportunities, especially in fisheries. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2023, Page 5*)

7.2 # United Nations

Living Indus Initiative to cost around \$17bn: UN

The United Nations says the Living Indus Initiative (LII), the biggest climate initiative in Pakistan's history which is more than just a one-off response to the climate carnage of 2022 floods, will cost around \$17b. Backed by the leadership of the UN Resident Coordinator in Pakistan and the buy-in from across the UN country team, the LII represents a road map for Pakistan's future and a blueprint for building more resilient communities and long-lasting livelihoods, reveals a new UN document. Led by the government with support from the UN, donors, private sector and civil society, the LII focuses on restoring the ecological health of the Indus River Basin while consolidating projects that will build communities' resilience and forge sustainable livelihoods. The document says the cost of inaction is far more and the list of interventions provides opportunities at every level of investment suitable to a range of budgetary constraints. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2023, Page 3*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Economy: ADB chief vows continuous support

Acknowledging quick stabilization measures taken by Pakistan to put national economy back on track, ADB President assured bank's continued support for incumbent government's critical and structural reforms at a time when country recently witnessed devastating floods caused by climate change. The ADB was supporting those policy measures that would definitely improve the economic condition of country and help improve fiscal space for enhancing social protection transfers. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Pakistan could default without IMF bailout, Moody's warns

Pakistan could default without an IMF bailout as its financing options beyond June are uncertain, ratings agency Moody's was quoted as saying in a report published by Bloomberg. "We consider that Pakistan will meet its external payments for the remainder of this fiscal year ending in June," said Grace Lim, a sovereign analyst with Ratings Company in Singapore. "However, Pakistan's financing options beyond June are highly uncertain. Without an IMF programme, Pakistan could default given its very weak reserves." Pakistan entered into a \$6.5 billion programme with the IMF in 2019. But the programme's ninth review for the release of \$1.2 billion is pending since October last year as the government has been unable to meet some of the pre-requisites set by the lender. The IMF tranche is critical for Pakistan as it will also unlock financing from friendly countries, helping Pakistan avert default. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2023, Page 1*)

IMF denies asking Pakistan to raise \$8bn in fresh financing

Pakistan's external financing requirements have not been changed in talks with IMF over bailout funds, IMF resident representative in Pakistan said that the Fund was seeking fresh financing. "There is no truth to reports that the IMF is asking Pakistan to raise \$8 billion in fresh financing," Esther Prez Ruiz said. Prez Ruiz said that external funding requirements had not changed throughout the discussions, under a review that would unlock \$1.1 billion in financing for the cash-strapped Pakistan as part of a \$6.5bn IMF package. A staff-level agreement on the review has been delayed since November, with nearly 100 days passed since the last staff-level mission to Pakistan — the longest such delay since at least 2008. Fund reiterated that obtaining commitments on external financing from friendly countries would be essential before the IMF approves the release of bailout funds. The United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and China came to Pakistan's assistance in March and April with pledges that would cover some of the funding deficit. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2023, Page 3*)

8.3 # World Bank

World Bank launches more robust, transparent business climate rankings

The WB unveiled a new methodology and improved safeguards for assessing business climate in up to 180 countries after embarrassing revelations of data irregularities & favouritism toward China forced it to cancel its flagship rankings two years ago. The bank scrapped its "Doing Business" rankings in September 2021, citing internal audits and an independent probe that found senior World Bank leaders had pressured staff to alter data to favour China. It cited data irregularities that also boosted the rankings of other countries, including KSA, UAE and Azerbaijan. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 9*)

WB suggests bold actions to tackle health, education challenges

Still reeling from the shocks of the Covid-19 pandemic and devastating floods of last year, Pakistan needs to declare emergencies and take bold actions to tackle its health

and education challenges, said a World Bank report. According to report, malnutrition is one of Pakistan's biggest development challenges, with long-term implications for human capital development and economic growth. It remains the top cause of death and disabilities in the country. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and the 2022 floods, the report points out, an estimated 75 per cent of Pakistani children were in 'learning poverty', unable to read and understand a simple age-appropriate story by age 10.

The Pakistan's Human Capital Index (HCI) value of 0.41 is low in both absolute and relative terms. It is lower than the South Asia average of 0.48, with Bangladesh at 0.46 and Nepal at 0.49. Pakistan's human capital outcomes are more comparable to those in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has an average HCI value of 0.40. "Despite favourable demographic tailwinds, Pakistan is currently unable to reap its rightful dividends due to inadequate investments in education, health, social protection, and the labour force. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 13*)

World Bank for more investment in human development

The World Bank's report, Pakistan Human Capital Review Building Capabilities throughout Life, underlines the need for Pakistan to significantly increase investments in human capital to address the severe gaps it faces in education and health outcomes, particularly. Through an analysis of new and existing data, the report documents and quantifies Pakistan's human capital crisis. Its Human Capital Index (HCI) of 0.41 means that a baby born in Pakistan today will only be 41 percent as productive as they could be if they enjoyed complete education and full health. The country's HCI is lower than the South Asian average of 0.48, Bangladesh's 0.46 and Nepal's 0.49. Indeed, Pakistan's human capital outcomes are more comparable to Sub-Saharan Africa's, which has an average HCI of 0.40. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 7*)

WB promises support for BISP

The World Bank has promised to continue supporting the Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP). The programme is meant to support the poorest section of society. A World Bank team, led by its Vice President for Human Development Mumta Murthi, visited the BISP headquarters to learn about various aspects of the programme. The delegation was briefed by top officials of the social safety net. Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Ms Shazia Marri, informed delegation that BISP was a great initiative which is currently extending financial assistance to over 9million families having low income. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2023, Page 3*)

WB expert advises installation of acoustic devices in Indus to save dolphins

World Bank's water resources management specialist Francois Onimus has suggested installation of Pingers (acoustic devices) in the Indus river to protect rare blind dolphins and other species, their habitats and flora and fauna. Pingers are deterrent devices that emit pulses of sounds underwater and generate a response in dolphins to prevent their incidental by-catch. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2023, Page 15*)

ECC okays Rs34bn grants to secure \$50m WB tranche

A few weeks before the next fiscal year's budget, the government approved about Rs34.4 billion worth of supplementary grants mostly to secure World Bank loans and set maximum retail price (MRPs) of four newly registered categories of cardiac stents. The decisions were taken at a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, presided over by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, which also allowed expansion in the exploration licence area and extension in the well testing period to Oil and Gas Development Company Ltd (OGDCL) and United Energy Pakistan Ltd (UEPL), respectively.

The meeting approved a Rs13.2bn supplementary grant, equivalent to \$50 million to be obtained from the World Bank as the first tranche of a \$85m credit line, to Pakistan Mortgage Refinance Company Ltd (PMRCL) set up in June 2018 as a joint venture of nine local banks and International Finance Corporation (IFC) — a commercial arm of the WB. The PMRCL is aimed to provide medium to long-term funding to primary mortgage lenders by raising from the capital debt market at cheaper rates. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2023, Page 9*)

\$42.3m of WB disbursement: ECC approves Rs7.84bn TSG as rupee cover

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has approved Technical Supplementary Grant (TSG) of Rs 7.840bn as the rupee cover against \$ 42.3m amount of the World Bank. The Finance Division briefed ECC that Financial Inclusion and Infrastructure Project (FIIP) was approved by the Executive Committee of National Economic Council on October 6, 2017 in line with the government's National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFOS-2017).

The FIP with a total portfolio of \$ 137 million was initiated as a 5-year PSDP project of the Finance Division, funded by the WB, set to close on December 31, 2022. However, due to initial delays and Covid-19 pandemic, project suffered time overrun. Consequently, upon request of the State Bank of Pakistan, executing agency of project, Finance Division through EAD approached the WB for a 30-month no cost extension.

The World Bank Management agreed to a two-phase project timeline extension, i.e, phase-1, January -June 2023 (6 months) and phase-2 July 2023-June 2025 (24 months). For the extension, one of the key actions to be completed by Finance Division was to arrange rupees cover of \$ 33.1 million against the already existing FE withdrawal till June 2201 and for \$ 9.2 million which were yet to be withdrawn during the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, May 16th, 2023, Page 12*)

Small dams revived agriculture in drought-hit Kohistan: WB expert

Small dams have decreased salinity levels in groundwater and made it sweet, reduced impact of flash floods, significantly recharged aquifers and provided ample drinking water for humans as well as for subsistence agriculture and livestock in Kohistan belt, according to a World Bank climate change expert. The expert Ali Tauqeer Sheikh, who

was part of World Bank support mission led by Task Team leader for Sindh Resilience Project and Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project Ahsan Tehsin and members, said during the team's visit of the small dams sites at mole-I and mole- II in Kohistan, Jamshoro district, that small dams had a positive impact not only on the lives and livelihood of local community. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2023, Page 15*)

World Bank okays \$213m for flood protection

Board of Executive Directors of the World Bank has approved \$213 million in financing to Pakistan to help improve livelihoods and essential services and enhance risk protection to communities affected by the 2022 floods, particularly those in Balochistan. The announcement came after the conclusion of two-day meeting of the International Partners Support Group (IPSG) at Prime Minister Secretariat that so far projects worth \$975m had been finalised for implementation including \$575m financing from the Asian Development Bank and \$400m by the World Bank. "We will be working closely with the Government of Balochistan to support the affected communities by providing livelihood support and rehabilitating irrigation and flood protection infrastructures," World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. Integrated Flood Resilience and Adaptation Project will provide housing reconstruction grants to approximately 35,100 homeowners to rebuild their homes following resilience standards and livelihood grants to smallholder farmers to support livestock and promote climate-smart agriculture and other productive activities. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

World Bank to provide Rs16bn for uplift schemes in next fiscal

The World Bank is set to provide funds amounting to Rs16bn for development schemes planned to be launched in various cities and towns under the Punjab Cities Programme (PCM) during the upcoming fiscal year starting from July 1. On the other hand, work on several development projects being executed currently under PCM in collaboration with WB has entered the final stage, according to Punjab Caretaker Minister for Local Government & Community Development Department. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 2*)

Minister says villages being solarised with WB assistance

Sindh Energy Minister Imtiaz Ahmed Sheikh said that the provincial government had started solar projects on a large scale to free people from expensive electricity. Addressing the inauguration ceremony of the first solar park at the Karachi Press Club (KPC), he said that as many as 35 big hospitals and many villages had been solarised with the assistance of the World Bank. The minister said that providing solar system to KPC was a gift of the provincial government. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 14*)

9. # POLICY

CDWP clears Rs195bn flood project aimed at protecting millions

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) cleared 15 projects costing Rs249.2 billion, mostly in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The schemes included two larger projects of national outreach, which were referred to the

Ecneec for formal approval. The CDWP's meeting approved 13 projects with an estimated cost of about Rs22.6bn and cleared two other projects of about Rs226.56bn for formal approval by the Ecneec. Under current financial rules, CDWP is empowered to approve projects costing no more than Rs10bn, while the projects of higher estimated costs are approved by Ecneec on the recommendations of the CDWP after clearance on technical grounds. Meeting recommended that Ecneec approve umbrella Flood Protection Sector Project-III, costing Rs194.6bn. (*Dawn, May 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

10 # ENVIRONMENT

Sindh's shrinking forests

Forests play a crucial role in the environment, providing employment opportunities, food, wood, fuel, and animal fodder for approximately 1.6bn individuals worldwide. They also help mitigate climate change by absorbing carbon dioxide and generating oxygen, making them the largest carbon store on the planet. Deforestation releases carbon dioxide, contributing to global warming. Countries should aim to have at least 25 per cent of their land covered by forests to promote sustainable employment and ensure the protection of the environment. Unfortunately, deforestation is happening at an alarming rate, with around 13 million hectares of land being deforested annually.

Globally, only 30pc of the land is covered by forests. In Pakistan, only 5.4pc of the land is covered by forests, with an estimated carbon storage of around 243m tonnes. Countries should aim to have at least a quarter of their land covered by trees, but Pakistan has only 5.4pc of forested land. A scientific study conducted in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in 1994 recorded the forest area and tree species in Sindh, but no further research has been conducted. Only 2.5pc of Sindh's total area is estimated to be forested. Forests can absorb carbon dioxide emissions and produce oxygen, making them known as the world's lungs.

The Red Plus programme was launched by the United Nations Convention on Climate Change in 2013 to protect and promote forests in developing countries through sustainable management and enhancement of carbon stocks. Countries that increase their forest carbon stocks can receive compensation, with \$4.5bn allocated for this purpose. Currently, Pakistan is a member of the Red Plus programme, which aims to reduce the environmental impacts of climate change worldwide. Pakistan received a \$3.8m grant from the World Bank in 2015 to support forest maintenance, community involvement in forest management, and modern technology to track environmental and climate changes. However, the effectiveness of this grant in addressing deforestation in Pakistan is unclear, as around 12,000 hectares of land are deforested every year.

Riverine forests

These forests are located in the Kacha region — the area between the protective levees constructed along the Indus River. They rely on water from the Indus River and are

home to several tree species. Riverine forests play a crucial role in preserving the natural environment by preventing erosion along the riverbed and banks. The current riverine forest area is approximately 241,198 hectares (596,000 acres). However, these forests are rapidly declining due to deforestation caused by the lumber mafia and the conversion of forest land for agricultural purposes.

Irrigated (Nahri) forests

The irrigated forests in Sindh are manually planted and cover an area of 82,195 hectares (203,108 acres). These forests are irrigated through the Sindh irrigation network and are home to various tree species. However, many of these forests, including the Pai, Makhi, Khipro, and Miyani forests, are facing significant challenges due to water scarcity and illegal logging by lumber mafia, leading to a loss of trees and conversion to croplands. The precarious state of these forests reflects the overall state of forests in Sindh.

Mangrove forests

The mangrove forests in Sindh span from Korangi Creek to Sir/Seer Creek and are located in the tidal floodplain of the Indus Delta. These forests, estimated to have 97pc of all mangrove forests in Pakistan, have decreased in size from 600,000 acres to 200,000 acres but have been increasing over the past 15 years. They are the largest in the world in dry climate forests and the sixth largest overall. Mangrove creeks and islands provide a habitat for marine life and exotic birds, act as a natural barrier against natural disasters, and reduce coastal erosion. Only four species of mangroves remain in the Indus Delta, with *Avicenna Marina* being the most common. Additionally, one hectare of mangrove forest produces 100kg of fish, 25kg of shrimp, 15kg of crab, 200kg of molluscs, and 40kg of sea cucumber each year. It is evident that the disappearing forests in Sindh pose a significant threat to the region's ability to mitigate the impacts of climate change. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page*)

Timber mafia continues to illegally chop down precious trees in Hazro

The powerful timber mafia continues to wreak havoc as they have cut down precious trees planted decades ago in Hazro town of Attock. Timber mafia chopped a large number of eucalyptus trees systematically alongside Hazro-Gondal road, allegedly with the support of field officials from the forest department. It must be noted that this area is the home town of former special assistant to the prime minister on climate change Malik Amin Aslam Khan. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2023, Page 4*)

10.1 # Atmosphere

Ammonia leak in ice factory leaves many hospitalised in Hassanabdal

A gas leak at an under-construction ice factory along G.T. Road in a residential area of Hassanabdal affected scores of people and left a number of people, mostly children, hospitalised. Leakage of ammonia gas created panic in area and forced a number of people to leave their homes to avoid the impact. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 4*)

‘Groundwater contamination by coal-fired power plants quite high in Thar’

Residents of Thar have expressed their concern over groundwater contamination being caused by coal-fired power plants in Thar is high. According to the statement of Peoples’ Tribunal on Thar local water table is going down due to dewatering of coal-mines while, on other hand, groundwater is being poisoned due to seepage from the wastewater disposal reservoirs in Gorano and Dukar Chou and reinjection of untreated water at Meghay-Jo-Tar. Even ADB has acknowledged in a recent letter to Thar’s local communities that groundwater contamination being caused by coal-fired power plants in Thar is “high”. (*Business Recorder, May 20th, 2023, Page 9*)

Experts concerned at ‘extinction’ of bees in Sindh

Agricultural experts and researchers have expressed their concern about the extinction of bees in many countries of the world including Sindh and emphasize fear that due to the use of pesticides in crops, honey bees are becoming rare; the research institutes should promote and motivate farmers to use biological methods to protect crops from harmful insects. (*Business Recorder, May 22nd, 2023, Page 7*)

10.2 # Health & Safety

Funds shortage affecting patient care in KP’s public sector hospitals

The shortage of funds has been hampering patients’ care in public sector hospitals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. “Shortage of funds has been adversely affecting our day-to-day services. We desperately require Rs3bn approved budget, which has not been released,” Mohammad Asim, the spokesperson for the province’s biggest health facility Lady Reading Hospital. He added that a total of Rs5bn, approved for the hospital. “The hospital also faces shortage of funds to pay salaries to its employees but the main issue is that we need funds to ensure provision of medicines, surgical disposable items and other medical supplies to provide services to patients.”

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has more than 1,900 health facilities employing over 60,000 staffers including doctors, paramedics and nurses. The State Life Insurance Corporation suspended Sehat Card Plus programme due to non-payment of its dues by government. The insurance firm, which runs the free health insurance programme for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, restored the services after a day when then health adviser to chief minister Prof Abid Jameel intervened and paid Rs2bn to it. Sources said that federal government had not paid dues of Rs238bn to the province that resulted in the disruption of healthcare services as well as payment of salaries to the employees of hospitals. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 9*)

Cases of drug-resistant typhoid register spike in Karachi

Cases of drug-resistant (XDR) typhoid, particularly among children, are on the rise in the metropolis and health experts warn of a further spike in the days to come. Currently, a number of cases of XDR typhoid are being reported at different healthcare facilities in the city on a monthly basis. In 2019-20, an outbreak of XDR typhoid was reported in

Sindh that affected hundreds and thousands of patients in Hyderabad, Karachi and other districts. More than 200,000 cases of typhoid were reported in Sindh in 2022.

The experts said as weather gets warmer in the coming weeks these cases might see a further spike. “At the National Institute of Child Health (NICH), we have been seeing a rising trend in typhoid cases over the past two months. Most patients reporting with prolonged fever, diarrhoea, vomiting and abdominal pain, are being diagnosed with extensively-drug resistant (XDR) typhoid”. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2023, Page 13*)

Alarmed by Naegleria deaths, Karachi experts urge govt to supply chlorinated water

A day after the Sindh health department confirmed three deaths from Naegleria fowleri in a short span of one week in the metropolis, health experts associated with the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) called upon the government to ensure supply of properly chlorinated water to citizens. The experts are alarmed over the fact that none of the three victims of Naegleria fowleri, better known as brain-eating amoeba, had a history of swimming and it appeared that the infection occurred due to the use of contaminated, or non-chlorinated, tap water. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 13*)

New study finds around 53pc people suffering from diabetes

Around 53 per cent people were found to be diabetic when over 21,729 people were screened for the lifestyle disease during last one year, said the report of a nationwide project. “Among them, 11,500 were found to be suffering from type-2 diabetes in Pakistan,” said the report compiled by the Discovering Diabetes (DD). “As many as 21,729 people were tracked through the DD helpline during last one year, who were screened and of them, 11,500 were found to be suffering from type-2 diabetes in the country. Of them, 8,255 patients have so far been connected with the healthcare professionals at the 200 DD Clinics”. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 14*)

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Human Capital Index: Pakistan’s value lower than South Asia’s average: World Bank

Pakistan’s Human Capital Index (HCI) value of 0.41 is lower than the South Asia average of 0.48, and human capital outcomes are more comparable to those in Sub-Saharan Africa, which has an average HCI value of 0.40, says the World Bank. The World Bank’s report, “Pakistan Human Capital Review (HCR), Building Capabilities Throughout Life”, stated that while the country had reached middle-income status and made significant progress in reducing poverty over the past two decades, low human capital outcomes limit Pakistan’s further progress, capping its growth and development prospects. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

May-July: govt intends to borrow record Rs9.4trn

A cash-strapped government intends to borrow a record Rs 9.4 trillion from the domestic banking sector during three months (May-July) of 2023 to meet its rising financial requirements. Analysts said that in absence of foreign funding the government

is completely relying on the domestic debt market and its borrowing is gradually increasing to finance the fiscal deficit. Major chunk of the borrowing will be consumed to repay the previous loans obtained from the domestic financial institution. Government securities worth Rs 8 trillion are being matured in the next three months and the federal government will pay this amount through fresh borrowing. The federal government will raise Rs 7.5 trillion from the banking sector through sale of Pakistan Market Treasury Bills of 3-month, 6-month & 12-month in May-July of 2023. (*Business Recorder, May 13th, 2023, Page 1*)

Govt debt stocks soar to record Rs57trn by Mar-end: SBP

The federal government's total debt (domestic and external) surged to Rs 57 trillion by the end of March 2023, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. According to the SBP, the central government's total domestic and external debt stocks rose by 19.42 percent during the first nine months of this fiscal year (FY23). Cumulatively, the central government's total domestic and external debt stocks rose to record level of Rs 57.122 trillion at the end of March 23 compared to Rs 47.832 trillion in June 2022, depicting an increase of Rs 9.29 trillion. (*Business Recorder, May 16th, 2023, Page 12*)

Microloans cross half-a-trillion benchmark for first time

The size of all outstanding loans of the microfinance industry crossed the Rs500 billion mark for the first time in the January-March quarter of 2023, latest statistics released by the Pakistan Microfinance Network (PMN) show. The combined figure for the outstanding principal for all outstanding client loans, without interest receivables, increased 3.7 per cent from the preceding quarter to Rs509.6bn at the end of March. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2023, Page 9*)

Average income drops to \$1,568

Pakistan's economy experienced a notable decline in its GDP size in dollar terms, growth rate and per capita income during the outgoing 2022-23, marking the slowest expansion in the country's overall output over the past four years. The decline in Pakistan's economy during 2022-23 reveals significant mismanagement by the coalition government. The overall economy only grew by 0.29% in FY23, marking a sharp drop from the previous year's rapid 6.1pc growth. The economy size in dollar terms declined to \$341.554 billion in the outgoing FY23 from \$375.449bn in FY22. These figures, approved by National Accounts Committee (NAC). The decrease in the economy's size can be attributed to the highest-ever depreciation of the rupee in any year. The per capita income in dollar terms fell to \$1,568 in FY23 from \$1,766 in the previous year and \$1,677 in FY21. This suggests the deterioration of the standard of living and well-being of almost all segments of society with a sharp decline in personal incomes. The provisional growth rate of GDP for the fiscal year 2022-23, estimated at 0.29pc. The data indicates varying growth rates across different sectors, with agriculture projected to experience a positive growth of 1.55pc. However, industrial sector is expected to face a decline of 2.94pc and 0.86pc in the services sector. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2023, Page 9*)

11.1 # Food Scarcity

Up to 130,000 wheat bags seized from hoarders in three districts

The district administrations of Sialkot, Kot Addu and Okara seized 90,000, 5,000 and 36,000 wheat bags, respectively in different raids. Sialkot administration seized 90,000 bags of wheat worth Rs440m. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 8*)

Over 8m Pakistanis face hunger after floods: UN

In the last quarter of 2022, 8.6m in rural districts of three provinces of Pakistan faced a serious food crisis as one of the worst monsoon floods in years hit the country, said a UN-backed report released this week. Of these people, 5.2 million were in nine districts of Sindh, 1.8m in seven districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and 1.6m in 12 districts of Balochistan. The latest global report on food crises, warned that roughly 258m people in 58 countries faced acute hunger at crisis levels. And people in seven countries — Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, Afghanistan, Nigeria, Haiti, & Burkina Faso faced potential starvation.

Subsequently, flooding and landslides brought widespread destruction, disrupting the lives and livelihoods of about 33m people in five of six provinces. Around 4.4m acres of agricultural land were damaged, prompting the downward revision of 2022 production forecasts for rice, maize, sorghum, and millet. Around 0.8m livestock were estimated to have perished. The total damage and loss in the agriculture sector was estimated at almost \$13bn, consisting mainly of crops (82pc) followed by livestock (17pc). The October–December planting of the ‘Rabi’ wheat crop was hampered in localised areas that were still under flood water. The loss or damage of agricultural inputs, including seed stocks, fertilisers, machinery and irrigation infrastructure, may result in a contraction in the area planted with a negative impact on 2023 production. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 5*)

FAO introduces system for assessing acute food insecurity

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has introduced a tool that made it easier for decision makers to assess the acute food insecurity of agricultural households and analyse its drivers when such shocks occur. The Data in Emergencies (DIEM) Information System, developed and funded by the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance of USAID, with contributions from the European Union and the Special Fund for Emergency and Rehabilitation Activities (SFERA) of FAO, is currently active in more than 25 food-crisis countries and the DIEM-Monitoring system surveys about 150,000 households per year, representing more than 650 million people. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2023 Page 3*)

Call for smart steps to tackle growing food insecurity

Highlighting concerns over triple burden of malnutrition in Pakistan, speakers at an international conference called for climate-smart interventions to tackle growing food insecurity and related challenges. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2023, Page 14*)

March held over ‘famine-like’ situation in Thatta, Makli

Activists of various political parties, nationalist groups and civil society organisations intensified their protest against water crisis in Thatta and Makli on 50th day of their drive. They held a 4km march on foot and held a sit-in on the Thatta-Makli section of highway. The march was led by ‘Save Thatta Forum’. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2023, Page 15*)

Call to reduce post-harvest losses to tackle food insecurity

Expressing concern over the increasing food insecurity in the country posing a major threat to public health, experts at a seminar held at the Dow University of Health Sciences underscored the need for controlling high post-harvest losses. Organised by the university’s School of Public Health, the event was part of the project titled “Post-harvest Losses - Key Contributor to Food Insecurity & Possible Interventions” funded by the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2023, Page 14*)

Pakistan designated ‘very high concern’ area in food insecurity

Acute food insecurity in Pakistan is likely to further exacerbate in coming months if the economic and political crisis further worsens, compounding the effects of the 2022 floods, warns a new United Nations report published. The report titled, Hunger Hotspots: FAO-WFP early warnings on acute food insecurity, jointly published by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) covers the June to November 2023 period. It notes that amid the current global economic slowdown, mounting public debt has exacerbated ongoing financial crisis in Pakistan. It points out that authorities will have to repay \$77.5bn external debt between April 2023 and June 2026, a substantial amount considering the country’s GDP of \$350bn in 2021. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2023, Page 1*)

11.2 # Inflation

Pricey food items push inflation to record level in April

Inflation in Pakistan surged to a record 36.4 per cent in April from a year earlier, driven mainly by skyrocketing food prices and rising energy costs. The finance ministry in its recent report projected that inflation would remain in the range of 36-38pc mainly due to the rupee’s depreciation and rising administered prices, which contributed to the increase in overall prices.

The lower-income segment of the society is already feeling the brunt of high inflation, which has become unrelenting on the back of political instability, financial mismanagement and delay in an agreement with the International Monetary Fund. According to a finance ministry report, slow recovery from the flood-led damages had caused the supply of essential crops to remain short of domestic requirements, consequently intensifying inflation. On the other hand, the central bank was enacting contractionary monetary policy, “but inflationary expectations are not settling down”.

Monthly inflation — measured by a basket of products and services called the Consumer Price Index (CPI) — stayed above 20pc for the 11th month from June to April. It then hit 31.6pc in February, crossed 35pc in March and now further escalated to 36.4pc. The reading was 13.4pc in April last year. However, when compared to the previous month, inflation edged up 2.4pc in April, data showed. Higher prices of food, cooking oil and transportation pushed up the index. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Food pushes inflation to record 36.4pc in April

The Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation increased to 36.4 per cent on a year-on-year basis in April 2023 as compared to an increase of 35.4per cent in the previous month and 13.4per cent in April 2022, says the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). On a month-on-month basis, it increased to 2.4per cent in April 2023 as compared to an increase of 3.7per cent in the previous month and an increase of 1.6per cent in April 2022. Average CPI inflation for July-April 2022-23 stood at 28.2per cent compared to 11% during the same period of last year. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Wheat flour prices continue to rise in Balochistan

The price of flour continues to rise in Balochistan as the government failed to provide the commodity to the masses to overcome the problem of shortage of wheat in the province. The flour crisis has further worsened in Quetta, Loralai and other areas of Balochistan as the supply has been interrupted from the last few weeks. The Balochistan government appears to be helpless regarding the flour crisis as per kilogram flour was being sold at over 160 Rupees in the local market. According to sources, a 20kg bag of flour in Quetta has reached Rs3,100 and people are also worried due to the increase in flour prices. (*Business Recorder, May 6th, 2023, page 9*)

Sindh PA: issues of rising food inflation, lawlessness raised

Opposition parties in Sindh Assembly voiced concerns over the deteriorating law and order in the metropolis and growing food inflation, but the treasury brushed aside these apprehensions. MMA's Syed Abdul Rasheed in a call attention notice drew a bleak picture of the law and order in Karachi. (*Business Recorder, May 13th, 2023, Page 3*)

Inflation to keep haunting Pakistanis: UN survey

The mid-year UN survey on the world economic situation forecast that the inflation rate in Pakistan is expected to remain in double digits in the coming months owing to weakening local currency and supply-side constraints. Domestic food inflation remains elevated due to country-specific factors, challenging food security across the South Asian region, particularly in Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan.

South Asia's economy is projected to grow by 4.7 per cent in 2023 and 5.8pc in 2024, a slight downward revision of 0.1 percentage points for both years from the forecasts in January. Regional consumer price inflation is projected to average 11pc in 2023 and 9.4pc in 2024, slightly lower than the 12.9pc recorded in 2022. Central banks in the region continued their interest rate hikes in early 2023 to tackle inflation and stabilise

exchange rates. The world economy is now projected to grow by 2.3pc in 2023 and 2.5pc in 2024, a slight uptick in the global growth forecast for 2023. In the United States, resilient household spending has prompted an upward revision of the growth forecast to 1.1pc in 2023. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2023, Page 9*)

DRAP allows drug makers to hike prices

DRAP has allowed pharmaceutical companies to increase 14% price for life-saving drugs and 20% in other drugs. Authority has fixed new maximum retail prices (MRPs) of drugs and biologicals. This approval is subjected to the specified conditions which include a one-time dispensation, enabling manufacturers and importers to increase their existing MRPs of essential drugs and biologicals, excluding lower prices equal to a 70% increase in CPI with a cap of 14% and MRPs of all other drugs and biologicals and lower priced drugs up to increase in CPI with a cap of 20% on basis of average CPI for current year. (*Business Recorder, May 20th, 2023, Page 3*)

Bulk exports push sugar prices up

Pakistan exported a significant quantity of sugar during the February-April period of this fiscal year which pushed up domestic retail prices of the sweetener. In comparison to the same period last year, where there were no foreign sales, the country successfully exported a substantial quantity of 212,896 tonnes of sugar in FY23, according to PBS. Net sugar consumption stood at over 5 million tonnes. A Re1 increase per kg means over Rs5bn net transfer of resources from consumers. At the same time, sugar imports plunged by 98.29pc to 5,336 tonnes during the first 10 months of this fiscal year against 311,914 tonnes in the same period last year. (*Dawn, May 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

Monthly update: Inflation to remain on upward trajectory: MoF

Inflation to remain on a higher trajectory despite monetary tightening primarily due to rupee depreciation as well as on account of many challenges emanating from the uncertain external and domestic economic environment. This was noted by Finance Ministry in its monthly “Economic Update and Outlook May 2023”. According to the economic update, inflationary pressure in May 2023 is likely to continue as was observed in April 2023 with a range of 34-36 percent. The potential reasons for the rising price level are flood damages, disruptions in supply chains, devaluation brought by the macro-economic imbalances and political uncertainty.

Pakistan’s economy experienced 0.29 percent provisional GDP growth in the fiscal year 2023 on account of many challenges emanating from the uncertain external and domestic economic environment. These challenges triggered CPI inflation to remain on a higher trajectory despite monetary tightening primarily due to the rupee depreciation. Moreover, external payments also remained burdened due to lesser foreign exchange inflows. (*Business Recorder, May 31st, 2023, Page 1*)

11.3 # Poverty

Farmers, brick kiln workers in rural areas remain below poverty line: HWA

The condition of rural workers and peasants, who make up more than 70 per cent of labour force in Sindh's rural areas and toil long hours in agricultural farms and brick kilns, have gotten only worse, according to the Hari Welfare Association (HWA). The Sindh government has never given priority to these people who lack access to social security, good employment, and minimum wage, said HWA president Akram Khaskheli in a statement issued here other day.

He said that a rural worker did not even earn an equivalent of the Rs25,000 minimum wage that the government implemented for unskilled labourers in 2019. Millions of young people in rural Sindh were forced to work for a little more than Rs6,000 per month in shops, restaurants, and workshops due to unemployment, and lack of opportunities for education, skills development, and employment and they included women, girls and minor boys who picked cotton and chilies for a piteous pay, he said, adding they were the prime targets of exploiters. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 15*)

11.4 # Weekly Inflation

Short-term inflation jumps to record 48.35pc

Short-term inflation, based on Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose to a new high of 48.35 per cent for the week ending May 4. However, on a week-on-week basis, the reading increased was 1.05pc, with food items getting costlier, particularly chicken, eggs, flour, wheat products, pulses, fruits, potatoes and meat. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 1*)

Short-term inflation stays above 48pc for second week in a row

Short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), remained elevated at 48.02 per cent for the week ended on May 11. The year-on-year rise remained above 48pc for the second consecutive week. The SPI rose by an all-time high of 48.35pc for the period ending on May 4. Wheat flour, sugar, meat, pulses and vegetables are getting costlier. However, on a week-on-week basis, it posted a rise of 0.27pc. The SPI has steadily been on the rise since the start of Ramazan due to continued rupee devaluation, costly petrol prices, increase in sales tax and higher electricity charges. Of the 51 items in the SPI basket, prices of 23 goods soared, seven dropped and 21 remained unchanged compared to the previous week. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2023, Page 9*)

Weekly inflation eases to 45.7pc

The short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), eased slightly but remained elevated at 45.72 per cent for the week ending on May 18. The weekly inflation stayed above 48pc for the previous two weeks due to high prices of transport, vegetables, wheat flour, meat, pulses and sugar. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2023, Page 9*)

Short-term inflation stays above 45pc

The short-term inflation, based on the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), eased slightly further year-on-year but remained significantly high at 45.49 per cent for the week ending on May 25. Despite a decrease in petroleum prices, the short-term inflation remained above 45pc for the past two weeks. It reached an all-time high at 48.35pc for the week ending on May 4 and slightly dropped to 48.02pc in the subsequent week. However, on a week-on-week basis, it posted a drop of 0.42pc. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Bilawal again pins climate change blame on rich nations

Calling climate change “a crisis created by rich countries,” Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari has sought immediate measures amid fast-changing weather cycles, which he said, had “forced poor nations to suffer catastrophic and unimagined losses”. In a statement, the foreign minister rang alarm bells over rainfall in April at a time when hundreds of thousands were still reeling from the damage caused by last year’s flood. He referred to the situation in Balochistan and KP where rains have created a flood-like situation in rivers and canals of different areas. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 3*)

Climate change: Pakistan seventh most vulnerable country: minister

Pakistan is the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change which poses a serious challenge to the well-being of the people or to even national security. This was stated by the Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal, while addressing as chief guest at the inaugural session “Reducing the Risk of Water Disasters” The minister said that the traditional seeds and cropping pattern would become irrelevant in future which means that there can be serious implications for food security. Thus, challenge for the country is not only to develop and make infrastructure resilient and adaptable. He said that challenge is also to have smart agriculture or new agriculture revolution that would provide the country with new seeds that are weather resistant and can withstand climate change because traditional seeds and cropping patterns would become irrelevant. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2023, Page 7*)

Activists say IMF causing climate catastrophe

Activists belonging to different civil society said groups the pre-conditions imposed by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the release of a \$1.1 billion loan tranche are pushing the country towards a climate catastrophe. Speaking at a webinar organised by the Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy (ACJCE), Alternative Collective Law researcher Hashim Rashid said the falling currency, hyperinflation, rising taxes and spiralling energy prices and production costs, especially in the renewables sector, are tied directly to harmful prior actions under the IMF programme. “Flat refusal to allow fuel subsidies for lower-middle class and poor population shows that the IMF is not interested in mitigating the impact of economic and environmental disasters that Pakistanis have faced in the last year or so”. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2023, Page 9*)

Geneva climate moot: There's 'full clarity' about \$10.9bn foreign aid pledges

The Ministry of Economic Affairs announced that there is now almost complete clarity regarding the nature of the foreign assistance pledges of \$10.9 billion made during the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan. Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman chaired the second meeting of the International Partners Support Group (IPSG), where the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) provided a comprehensive update on the implementation status of foreign assistance pledges made during the International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan, held in Geneva on January 9, 2023.

An official statement issued by the Economic Affairs Ministry noted that the follow-up on the total pledges of \$10.9 billion and its apportionment in specific projects was included in the presentation. The presentation not only highlighted the considerable achievements since the previous IPSG meeting but also outlined the necessary actions for the future. It was announced that there is now almost complete clarity regarding the nature of the pledges made. Furthermore, specific projects totaling \$575m have been identified under the ADB's \$1 billion pipeline funds, with a focus on enhancing flood resilience. Additionally, a negotiated amount of \$400m with the World Bank has been allocated to the National Post-Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project, while a separate agreement of \$50.26m with IsDB has been established for the Sindh Integrated Health and Women Empowerment Project. (*Business Recorder, May, 26th, 2023, Page 14*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Experts predict dry, warmer monsoon in most parts of country this year

Most parts of South Asia are likely to experience normal to below normal rainfall and an increase in both maximum and minimum temperatures during the southwest monsoon season (June-September) this year, according to a statement of South Asian Climate Outlook Forum (SASCOF-25). The statement was finalised during a recently held meeting of the forum. The regional climate outlook had been collaboratively developed by all nine national meteorological and hydrological services of South Asia with the support from international experts at the 25th session of the South Asian Climate Outlook Forum conducted online.

The experts have forecast above normal minimum temperatures over most parts of South Asia except parts of the foothills of Himalayas and above normal maximum temperatures in most parts of the region except central and parts of southern region of South Asia. "This means that most parts of South Asia including Pakistan are likely to have relatively warmer and dry monsoon this year except some pockets, such as parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and northeast Punjab, where normal weather pattern during the season is likely to prevail. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2023, Page 13*)

13.1 # Flood

Sindh's flood mitigation project: NDRMF to provide Rs 3bn

The National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) will fund Rs3.011 billion to the Provincial Irrigation Department Sindh's project titled, 'Building Resilience of Damaged Flood Mitigation Structures' along River Indus in Sindh Resilience and Adaptive Population in Disaster (RAPID). Sindh was the worst-affected province during floods in 2022. A total of 10 million people were affected in 30 districts. The worst-affected areas remained inundated for months due to the absence of natural drainage pathways leaving behind a vast magnitude of damaged public infrastructure, agricultural land and houses of people, requiring extensive medium to long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts. The proposed interventions are in line with NDMP. Project is designed for rehabilitation and reconstruction of four schemes that received major damages and losses during monsoon floods in 2022 in districts, Shaheed Benazirabad, NausheroFeroze, Sujawal, and Matiari. (*Business Recorder, May 20th, 2023, Page 5*)

Swat villagers bear brunt of devastating flood

The residents of Utror union council in upper Swat have been facing numerous problems for the past one month after destruction of about one-kilometre road, connecting the area with Kalam and rest of the country, by flash flood. Utror is a scenic valley having a population of nearly 20,000. The area is known for delicious vegetables. The valley houses dozens of pristine glacial lakes, roaring waterfalls, thick forests and serene pastures. It also provides passes to Upper Dir and Chitral. A large number of tourists visit the area during the summer season. Due to harsh weather and heavy snowfall, 80 per cent of its residents migrate to down parts of the country in November and then return in May. However, this year they face problems in returning to their homes because the recent flash floods in April washed away about a one-kilometre road, leaving the valley cut off from rest of the country. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2023, Page 9*)

13.2 # Heatwave

Heatwave to roast southern regions this week, says Met dept

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has forecast that regions in the country's southern half would face a sudden rise in day temperatures this week while temperatures are likely to rise gradually in other parts of the country. According to the weather advisory of Pakistan Meteorological Department, the presence of high pressure in the upper atmosphere would the day temperatures are likely to increase gradually in most parts of the country particularly in southern half of the country from May 10 to 13. Day temperatures are likely to be three to five degrees Celsius above normal in Sindh, south Punjab and parts of Balochistan. The mercury will be two to three degrees Celsius above normal in upper and central Punjab, Islamabad, upper KP, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Kashmir. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2023, Page 1*)

13.3 # Rainfall

Eight lives lost as rain batters Balochistan

At least eight people died and over a dozen received injuries after torrential rains followed by hailstorms hit different parts of Balochistan during the past 24 hours. Lasbela, Khuzdar, Musakhel and Naseerabad, Qila Saifullah and Harnai were the most affected areas due to heavy rainfall, prompting the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) and local administration to launch a rescue operation in the region to provide relief to people, they added. Initial reports suggested that the torrential rains also caused heavy losses of property and livestock. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

Crops damaged, roads flooded as rain, hailstorms hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Rain and hailstorms lashed various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa damaging crops and inundating roads. However, no damage to public life was reported. Snow fell in parts of Hazara division turning the weather cold. The Pakistan Meteorological Department forecast more rains. The provincial capital reported downpour for several hours with thoroughfares. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 8*)

Hailstorm damages crops in Bajaur, Shangla

Heavy rain coupled with hailstorm damaged standing wheat crop, vegetables and fruit orchards in most areas of Bajaur tribal district. Locals said that dozens of cattle were also killed by the hailstorm. They termed the worst calamity in the history of district. Some vehicles were also damaged by hailstorm. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2023, Page 9*)

Downpour lashes many districts in Sindh

A day after having pounded the areas of Kandhkot-Kashmore, Ghokti, Sukkur, Khairpur, Shikarpur and Jacobabad districts, heavy rain accompanied by strong winds battered several parts of Dadu district. Strong wind blew away signboards and uprooted power pylons in different parts of the city, causing power supply to go off. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2023, Page 15*)

Heavy hailstorm, rain lash districts of south Punjab

A heavy windstorm accompanied by hailstorm and rain lashed districts of south Punjab, injuring two persons and damaging crops at a massive level. Two people suffered injuries and were shifted to the district headquarters (DHQ) hospital after the roof of their house fell on them due to heavy rain near the Fatima Rice Mill, District Officer (Emergency) Rao Sharafat told. Agriculture Deputy Director Latifullah said cotton crop recently sown over hundreds of acres had been damaged in Haroonabad and Fort Abbas because of the rain and hailstorm while 40pc of cotton crop cultivated across the district had been partially affected. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2023, Page 8*)

13.4 # Storm

Eight lives lost as rain batters Balochistan

At least eight people died and over a dozen received injuries after torrential rains followed by hailstorms hit different parts of Balochistan during the past 24 hours. Initial reports suggested that the torrential rains also caused heavy losses of property and livestock. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

Crops damaged, roads flooded as rain, hailstorms hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Rain and hailstorms lashed various parts of KP damaging crops and inundating roads. However, no damage to public life was reported. Snow fell in parts of Hazara division turning the weather cold. The Pakistan Meteorological Department forecast more rains. Workers of Rescue 1122 said that floodwaters entered houses, shops and mosques in Timergara, Paito Dara and Khungi areas causing damages of millions of rupees. Hailstorms at Talash Jabo and Yarkhan Banda killed several cattle heads and brought the temperature down to the freezing point. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 8*)

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A heavy windstorm accompanied by hailstorm and rain lashed districts of south Punjab, injuring two persons and damaging crops at a massive level. Two people suffered injuries and were shifted to the district headquarters (DHQ) hospital after the roof of their house fell on them due to heavy rain near the Fatima Rice Mill, District Officer (Emergency) Rao Sharafat told Dawn. Agriculture Deputy Director Latifullah said cotton crop recently sown over hundreds of acres had been damaged in Haroonabad and Fort Abbas because of the rain and hailstorm while 40pc of the cotton crop cultivated across the district had been partially affected. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2023, Page 8*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Quake jolts Khuzdar

A moderate-intensity earthquake hit Khuzdar town and several other areas of the district, prompting residents to leave their homes. Officials said the quake struck Khuzdar district, including Naal, Wadh, Zehri and other surrounding areas at around 5pm. People rushed to the open area to seek shelter after tremor jolted the divisional

headquarters of the Kalat division. The Met office said that the intensity of the earthquake's magnitude as 4.2 on the Richter scale, with its epicentre located in Khuzdar district. Officials reported no human or property loss from the affected area. However, some mud houses on the outskirts of Khuzdar city reportedly developed cracks. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2023, Page 5*)

Avalanche claims 11 lives in GB

Eleven people, including four women and a child, were killed in an avalanche near Shunter Pass in Astore district of Gilgit-Baltistan. According to the Astore deputy commissioner, 14 people who were injured are being treated at a local government hospital. According to the local administration and rescue officials, about 40 nomads, who were moving towards Astore from Azad Kashmir, had set up camp in the area, along with their cattle. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2023, Page 1*)

15 # Resistance

Protesters enter grid stations, restore power supply to Peshawar villages

A large number of people of various villages staged protest against power outages and restored supply of electricity by force to their areas from Rehman Baba grid station on Ring Road and Industrial grid station on Kohat Road. Protesters entered Rehman Baba grid station and restored power supply, which was suspended. Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) has started observing 18 to 20 hours loadshedding in various villages located on the outskirts of provincial capital. "We entered the grid station and still sitting inside it along with scores of people". (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 9*)

Flood-hit villagers protest govt's failure to plug breaches

A large number of flood-hit villagers and residents of Khairpur Nathan Shah staged a march in town in protest against continued failure of district administration and Sindh government in plugging breaches in river and canal dykes and embankment of MNV drain, which had inundated the town and 700 villages during heavy rain and flood last year. The protesters marched on main roads and streets and held demonstrations before K.N. Shah Press Club and on Indus Highway. The protesters' leaders accused Dadu district administration and Sindh government of failing to take preventative measures to protect urban population and rural areas. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2023, Page 15*)

Haripur city residents protest water shortage

The residents of two urban localities of Noor Colony staged a demonstration against the tehsil municipal administration and public health department for their failure to fix a faulty tubewell, which caused water shortage in areas. The protesters said about 10 days ago the water pumping machine of one of the two tubewells went out of order, and the authorities concerned removed the faulty motor, which could not be reinstalled till date. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 8*)

Rallies, seminars held across province to mark Labour Day

Political parties, civil society and government organisations as well as trade unions organised several events including rallies, seminars and talks across Sindh to mark Labour Day. The programme were held in Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Badin, Sanghar, Sakkur, Shikarpur, Jacobabad, Larkana and Dadu and almost every small city and towns of the province. In Karachi, the Awami Workers Party (AWP), Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Karachi Bachao Tehreek, Women Democratic Front and Progressive Students Federation commemorated Labour Day by a demonstration and peoples' assembly at the Pakistan Trade Union Federation office in Khamosh Colony, Nazimabad. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 15*)

Labour Day: Female agricultural workers: seminar held

In commemoration of the international Labour Day, Sindh Community Foundation in collaboration with 'Feed The Minds' held an awareness seminar marking the labour rights of women agriculture workers held in village Maiho Machi of Matiri district attended by women cotton workers and local growers. He said that climate change is an emerging threat to the agriculture and livelihoods of the women agriculture workers mainly cotton workers, so due to last year climate incidents and future incidents have put these workers vulnerable. He said that the decent work is the need of time; climate safety and social protection are needed immediately to protect the labor rights of agriculture workers in country. He demanded that women agriculture workers should be included in labor welfare schemes and textile sector should also come forward to ensure the labor laws implement in value chain of cotton. As Pakistan is fourth largest cotton producing country in the world need more specific protection of workers. (*Business Recorder, April 2nd, 2023, Page 4*)

Killing of man in 'encounter' sparks protest in New Town

The killing of a man in an alleged encounter in New Town triggered a protest by his relatives, who blocked the main Stadium Road for vehicular traffic, claiming that he was innocent but police dubbed him a robber. Police and rescue services said that 25-year-old Kamal Kishan, a resident of Shanti Nagar, was shot dead in an encounter near the Liaquat National Hospital (LNH). Civil Society activists and members of the Hindu community also joined the protest as the deceased was Hindu. They alleged that police officer Farman Shah was involved in the incident. East-SSP Zubair Nazeer Shaikh said that he along with SSP Mastoi held successful talks with the protesting relatives and convinced them to end their protest. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 13*)

Flour millers give strike call

Flour millers have announced a strike for an indefinite period from today due to the non-supply of wheat from the government of Sindh. Addressing a press conference at Karachi Press Club The Chairman of Pakistan Flour Mills Association, Chaudhary Amir Abdullah said that the Sindh government' policies have left the flour mill exhausted, of which mills are unable to continue the operation. Aamir said that currently wheat

movement for Karachi mills is almost halted due to check posts in the several locations of the Sindh. He alleged that wheat grain trucks for Karachi are being released after bribe of Rs 250,000/ to Rs 300,000/. He informed that Karachi based flour mills have deposited some Rs4bn with the government of Sindh for the wheat grains, despite that flour mills are not getting wheat. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

KU non-teaching staff go on three-day pen down strike

Frustrated over non-payment of leave encashment at KU this year, its non-teaching staff held a general body meeting where they announced a three-day pen down strike from tomorrow. The meeting, held in KU's Arts Auditorium, was followed by a series of demonstrations, sit-ins and rallies on the campus. Interestingly, sources said, the well-attended meeting had no elected representation of the non-teaching staffers, which numbered more than 2,500 at the university. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2023, Page 13*)

Kurram tragedy victims buried amid protests

Protests erupted in Parachinar after the burial of seven people, including teachers, who were killed by unidentified gunmen at a school. The town remained closed to mourn the deaths. Another teacher, who was killed before the mass shooting of teachers, was buried in Teri Mangal area of the district. The protesters were also joined by teachers and hospital employees to condemn the incidents. All markets, bazaars, schools and courts also remained closed in the district. Female teachers in the Alizai area organised a protest to condemn the incident, demanding better security for teachers. They held up placards and banners, including ones that read "Protect the Teachers" and "It's better to raise your voice than to carry the dead." (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 3*)

Turbat University shut after students' protest

The University of Turbat has been closed for an indefinite period following continuous protests against withholding of results of some students. A notification issued by the registrar of the university stated that "owing to unavoidable circumstances", halls and hostels of the university will remain closed from May 5 till further orders. Meanwhile, the university administration said in a statement that a group of students had been creating hurdles in smooth working of the university and disturbing the educational atmosphere. They started protests in the university and locked the gates to stop entry of the teachers and students on small issues. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 5*)

Gizri residents protest against water shortage, power outages

Residents staged a demonstration on the main road at Khayaban-i-Hafiz near Saudi consulate general in protest against water shortage and power breakdowns, causing traffic problem on the main artery. South SSP Syed Asad Raza said that a few hundred residents of Gizri held the protest against power outages and shortage of water in their neighbourhood. They burnt old tyres on the road, resulting in suspension of vehicular traffic. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 13*)

Administrative work at KU suffers as non-teaching employees go on strike

Administrative work at KU remained disrupted as majority of the non-teaching staff members opted to join the pen-down strike announced a day earlier in favour of their leave encashment demand. The disgruntled staffers, however, didn't hinder academic activities or students' transport service. The strike followed a series of demonstrations, sit-ins and rallies over leave encashment on the campus. Sources said that the KU administration this year hadn't released leave encashment to any employees, including teachers, on the ground that the university was facing a financial crisis, particularly after the HEC deducted a huge sum from its allocated funds. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 14*)

Millers to observe strike daily against 'flawed' wheat policy

Flour millers in Punjab decide to observe a symbolic strike on a daily basis in protest against what they say 'flawed' policies of the food department. A press release issued by the Punjab chapter of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association here said the symbolic strike would be observed from May 10 to 17 during which all the mills would keep their grinding and supply operations closed between 2pm and 6pm daily. He said traditionally the flour milling industry, food department and other agencies had been purchasing wheat side by side during the harvesting season. Though the wheat crop is bumper this year. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2023, Page 2*)

Families of missing persons take to streets in Swat

Family members, including women and children, of the missing persons staged a demonstration, blasting the authorities for neither presenting their dear ones in courts nor setting them free despite orders of the higher judiciary. Addressing the protesters, Aftab Ali Shah, provincial coordinator of the trust, said hundreds of people, who had been picked from different parts of Swat since 2009, were languishing in prisons of Mardan, Kohat, Peshawar and Haripur without any recourse to law. Mr Shah said about 500 of the missing persons were still languishing in prisons despite they had won their cases in courts. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2023, Page 8*)

Swat people protest attack on school van

People from different walks of life took to the streets in Charbagh tehsil to condemn a shooting incident outside a girls school involving a policeman, which left a girl dead and seven others, including a teacher, injured. The demonstration was held in the Charbagh Bazaar organised by Matorzee Qami Jirga Charbagh. Civil society activists, youth and elders participated in the protest. The protesters demanded an inquiry against the policeman, who opened fire at a school van outside the Sangota Girls High School. The protesters chanted slogans against the police. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2023, Page 8*)

Shutdown observed in several districts of Sindh

A shutdown strike was observed in Hyderabad, Matiari, Larkana, Thatta, Shaheed Benazirabad and several other districts against "flawed" digital census, alleged enforced disappearances and outsiders' influx into Sindh. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2023, Page 15*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES (APR)

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

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3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

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4 # NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

5 # TRADE

Value of ocean economy ranges \$3-6tr per year, says UN

Vietnam to cut annual rice exports

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID LOAN

258 million needed urgent food aid in 2022: UN

UN wants \$100bn to boost digitalisation in poor countries

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

IMF, others should give \$100bn climate FX guarantee

ADB grants \$350m to cash-strapped Sri Lanka

9 # POLICY

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

10 # ENVIRONMENT

Coming years 'critical' to slashing plastic pollution, says UN

WHO warns against using artificial sweeteners

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITION

Autopsies in Kenya cult deaths confirm starvation

Kenya starvation cult death toll exceeds 200

World food prices rise for first time in a year: FAO

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate maths ‘doesn’t add up’ without carbon capture: COP28 chief

Temperature in Singapore soars to 40-year high

12.1 # Climate Crisis

Next five years to be warmest period ever, warns UN

UN agency sees melting ice as a global threat

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Over 2m perished in climate-related disasters since 1970

13.1 # Cyclone

Thousands flee as Cyclone Mocha approaches Myanmar, Bangladesh

Climate change makes cyclones more intense, destructive: scientists

13.2 # Flood

Flooding in Somalia displaces 200,000 people

Somalia floods claim 22 lives, displace 219,000

Eight killed, thousands evacuated as floods batter Italy

Flooding kills 13 in Italy as thousands wait to return home

Italy floods displace over 36,000 people

13.3 # Heat Wave

Chinese cities broil in heat, brace for more record temperatures

13.4 # Wildfire

25,000 flee wildfires in Canada

Wildfires force evacuations, hit power production in Canada

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

50 aftershocks shake Japan after Friday quake

More than 1,000 evacuated as volcano erupts in Guatemala

Two victims of volcano eruption found in Roman ruins of Pompeii

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters clash with police at May Day marches in France

Violence flares up after Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike dies

Riots in Kenya as opposition protests ‘cost of living’

Germany averts 50-hour train strike

Climate activists turn Rome’s Trevi Fountain black

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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5 # TRADE

Value of ocean economy ranges \$3-6tr per year, says UN

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has said the value of the ocean economy ranges between \$3 trillion and \$6tr per year, sustaining at least 150 million direct jobs across a wide range of sectors, including but not limited to fishing, aquaculture, shipping, tourism, offshore wind energy, oil and gas, mining and marine biotechnology. UNCTAD, in its latest Trade and Environment Review 2023 released this week, said marine resources are under threat from climate change, pollution and overfishing. About 11m tonnes of plastic flow into the oceans each year. Globally, 34% of fish stocks have fallen to levels that are biologically unsustainable.

At stake are the livelihoods of about three billion people — living mostly in coastal areas of developing countries. The export value of ocean-based goods — including fisheries, seafood, ships and port equipment — and services — such as shipping and coastal tourism — was estimated at \$1.3tr in 2020. The European Union is by far the world's leading exporter with \$459bn worth of exports, followed by China (\$160bn). Among developing countries, the next biggest exporters are India (\$34bn), Turkiye (\$19bn) and Thailand (\$17bn).

Two ocean-based goods sectors seafood processing & marine high-technology manufactures even grew during peak of pandemic, as more people reached for ready-to-eat foods with a longer shelf-life and electronic monitoring devices. As a result, the export of ocean-based goods (\$681bn) overtook those of services (\$628bn) in 2020. The drop in revenue from services hit many coastal communities in developing countries, which often rely on sectors like tourism. Diversifying ocean exports and activities is key to building economic resilience to future crises. The report highlighted two emerging sustainable sectors — seaweed and plastics substitutes — that offer huge opportunities for developing countries to attract investment.

Seaweed can grow without fresh water or fertiliser and captures huge amounts of CO₂. The global market has more than tripled in two decades, growing from \$4.5bn in 2000 to \$16.5bn in 2020. It can be farmed for food, cosmetics and biofuels, and can be used as an alternative to plastic. The global exports of plastics reached about 369m tonnes in 2021. Most of it will end up flooding our oceans.

But nature abounds in sustainable materials that could be used to make eco-friendly versions of the plastic products we consume daily. Besides algae, the list includes bamboo, banana plants and agricultural wastes. The world traded about \$388bn in plastics substitutes in 2020. While this is already a sizeable market, it is just one third the amount traded in plastics made from fossil fuels.

So there is huge potential for growth. Two thirds of global exports of plastic substitutes are in the form of raw materials that many developing countries have in abundance. The report points out that an estimated \$35bn of government subsidies go to fishing activities around the world. The impact of this money on fish stocks and ocean sustainability depends on how it is used.

While some funds, for example, support sustainable fisheries management and artisanal fishers, a significant share — about \$20bn a year — could contribute to overfishing by enhancing the capacity of the fishing industry. Such support includes providing fuel subsidies, paying operational costs or providing financial support to buy larger ships. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2023, Page 5*)

Vietnam to cut annual rice exports

Vietnam aims to cut its rice exports to 4 million tonnes a year by 2030, the government said in a document detailing its rice export strategy, down from 7.1 million tonnes last year. Vietnam is the world's third-largest rice exporter, after India and Thailand. The move is aimed at “boosting the exports of high-quality rice, ensuring domestic food security, protecting the environment and adapting to climate change,” according to the government document, dated May 26 and reviewed by Reuters.

Rice export revenue will fall to \$2.62bn a year by 2030, down from \$3.45bn in 2022, the document. “Although Vietnam's rice farming area is shrinking due to climate change and some farmers are switching to growing other crops and raising shrimp, the strategy appears to be too aggressive,” a rice trader based in Ho Chi Minh City. The trader said some rice farmers in the Mekong Delta are turning parts of their fields to fruit farms, growing mangoes, grapefruit, jackfruit and durian, but the vast majority remain dependant on rice. The trend toward cultivating shrimp has been taking place in the area for years as rising seawater triggered by climate change brings significantly increased salination in the Mekong Delta region. Vietnam will diversify its rice export markets to reduce its reliance on any country, the government document said. The Philippines has long been Vietnam's biggest rice buyer, accounting for 45% of its shipments last year.

The government said Vietnam will focus on the production of high-quality, fragrant and glutinous rice, while reducing the production of low-quality grains to 15% of total output by 2025 and to 10% by 2030. “I doubt strategy will materialise, as rice production depends on supply and demand, not on a government decision,” Rice exports from Vietnam in first four months of this year rose 40.7% from a year earlier to 2.9m tonnes, according to government customs data. (*Business Recorder, May 28th, 2023, Page 8*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID LOAN

258 million needed urgent food aid in 2022: UN

Some 258 million people needed emergency food aid last year because of conflict, economic shocks and climate disasters, a UN report, a sharp rise from 193 million the previous year. “More than a quarter of a billion people are now facing acute levels of hunger, and some are on the brink of starvation. That’s unconscionable,” UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. It was “a stinging indictment of humanity’s failure to make progress... to end hunger, and achieve food security and improved nutrition for all,” In 2022, 258 million people faced high levels of acute food insecurity in 58 countries or territories, up from 193 million in 53 countries the previous year.

More than 40% of those lived in the conflict-torn countries of Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Yemen, it said. This overall figure of people in dire need of food aid has now increased for the fourth consecutive year in a row. In this last category, 376,000 people were on the brink of starvation last year, it said. More than half of them lived in Somalia, a nation experiencing a devastating drought linked to climate change. An international group of climate scientists, the World Weather Attribution, said last month that human-caused climate change had made agricultural drought in the Horn of Africa “about 100 times more likely”.

In the 58 countries included in the report, over 35 million children under five years old were malnourished and dangerously thin, it said. But “humanitarian funding to fight hunger and malnutrition pales in comparison to what is needed. The food crises last year were caused by “conflict and insecurity, economic shocks and weather extremes”. In 2022, these key drivers were associated with lingering socioeconomic impacts of Covid-19, knock-on effects of war in Ukraine and repeated droughts & other weather extremes.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February last year had an effect because of the major contributions Ukraine and Russia make “to the production and trade of fuel, fertilisers and essential food commodities like wheat, maize and sunflower oil”, In July last year, the UN and Turkey brokered a landmark deal to ease Ukraine grain exports after they were blocked by the Russian invasion. (*Business Recorder, May 4th, 2023, page 1*)

UN wants \$100bn to boost digitalisation in poor countries

The United Nations demanded a tripling of pledges aimed at filling global digitalisation gap, asking countries and the private sector to hike the funding to \$100 billion by 2026. Around 2.7bn people around the world were offline in 2022, according to data from the International Telecommunications Union, the UN's telecoms agency. "The digital connectivity divide separating the least developed countries from the rest of the world is widening," ITU warned, launching an appeal for far more resources towards ensuring meaningful connectivity and digitalisation in world's least developed countries (LDCs).

"Tech is at the top of the global agenda, but the benefits of digital technology are still out of reach for too many people," ITU chief Doreen Bogdan-Martin said in a statement. "If we are serious about digitalising the world in a way that is meaningful and sustainable, we must take action to accelerate digital transformation for everyone." The world's 46 least developed countries are home to nearly one-third of the global offline population, the ITU said, lamenting that the internet is considered to be affordable in just two of those nations. To rectify the situation, the ITU launched the Partner2Connect Digital Coalition in September 2021.

It is aimed at using public-private partnerships to help boost digitalisation in the world's hardest-to-connect communities, including LDCs, and developing countries that are landlocked or small island states. That coalition began mobilising direct funding in February last year, and has so far raked in pledges of \$30bn, including \$12bn to bring LDCs online as quickly as possible. In its statement, the ITU said it was launching "a worldwide appeal calling to increase the value of pledges for digitalising the world from the current \$30bn to \$100bn by 2026". (*Business Recorder, May 18th, 2023, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

IMF, others should give \$100bn climate FX guarantee

A top-level meeting in Paris next month will lay out a \$100 billion plan to drive more money into climate and development finance in poorer countries by providing currency guarantees to investors, according to a document seen by Reuters. The plan, which has not previously been reported, was sent to the world's governments ahead of the "Summit for a New Global Financing Pact" in Paris in June as part of the Bridgetown Initiative spearheaded by Barbados leader Mia Mottley.

The idea, in a consultation document dated April 2023, would rely on the firepower of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other multilateral development banks (MDBs), and forms part of growing efforts to reform the international financial system. It would see the IMF and other MDBs "cut the excessive macro-risk premia on developing countries with \$100 billion per year of foreign exchange guarantees", for financing in more volatile domestic currencies rather than the dollar or euro.

The guarantees would be for “just green transition investments”, which one source involved in the plans said could include “green” bonds focused on environmentally friendly projects as well as others such as ocean-focused “blue” bonds. A report released at the COP27 climate talks suggested developing countries would need \$1 trillion a year in public and private money annually by 2030 to tackle global warming, yet to-date capital flows are just a fraction of what is needed. A report by the World Bank and other big multilateral lenders said they gave \$51 billion in 2021 alongside \$13 billion from private finance.

The Paris summit, hosted by French President Emmanuel Macron on June 22-23, will be attended by a number of world leaders and representatives from flagship global institutions such as the IMF and United Nations. Outlines of the proposals have been sent to key groups preparing discussions over last couple of weeks. As well as currency idea, document also gives more detail on main objectives of Version 2.0 of Bridgetown Initiative, which has become a heavyweight voice over last 18 months in global climate & sustainability discussions. (*Business Recorder, May 27th, 2023, Page 1*)

ADB grants \$350m to cash-strapped Sri Lanka

The Asian Development Bank approved a \$350 million loan for bankrupt Sri Lanka, buttressing an IMF bailout as the country battles its worst economic crisis. The loan will help stabilise the economy of the South Asian nation, the ADB said, after Sri Lanka ran out of foreign currency and defaulted on its \$46bn debt over a year ago. The latest cash injection comes just over two months after the International Monetary Fund released \$330m as the first instalment of a \$2.9bn, four-year bailout linked to Colombo undertaking painful reforms. “Transparency and open communication will be crucial in building agreement around the reforms,” ADB, referring to Colombo’s plans to privatise state enterprises. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2023, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

Not any news is preferable to be included in this month

10 # ENVIRONMENT

Coming years ‘critical’ to slashing plastic pollution, says UN

The world must halve single-use plastics and slash throwaway consumption to stem the tide of environmental pollution. Concern is growing about the impacts of plastics, with microplastic fragments found from the deepest oceans trenches to top of Mount Everest. In humans, they have been detected in blood, breast milk and placentas. The report by UNEP comes two weeks before negotiators from nearly 200 countries meet in Paris for a new round of negotiations aimed at reaching a legal agreement next year to end plastic pollution. It lays out a three-pronged plan based on reuse, recycling and diversifying the materials used — to help slash plastic pollution 80% by 2040 overall and cut single-use plastic production by half. The report cited research estimating plastic could emit 19pc of global greenhouse gas emissions by 2040.

Without significant changes, UNEP expects annual plastic waste to reach 408 mmt by 2040, including 380 mmt of new fossil-fuel-based plastics. That would mean some 227 mmt of plastics would end up in the environment. The report estimates that with a range of “systems change” solutions, that pollution figure could be reduced to 41 mmt. But the report says there is no time to waste. “The next three to five years present a critical window for action to set the world on the path towards implementing the systems change scenario by 2040,” it warned. Reuse — as opposed to recycling — was identified as the most effective measure, and would cut plastic pollution up to 30pc by 2040 with the introduction of things like refillable water bottles, packaging take-back schemes and “reverse vending machines”. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2023, Page 10*)

WHO warns against using artificial sweeteners

Artificial sweeteners, used to replace sugar in a vast range of products, do not help in losing weight and can have serious health effects, according to the World Health Organization. The United Nations’ health agency released new guidelines advising against using so-called non-sugar sweeteners or NSS. A systematic review of available evidence “suggests that use of NSS does not confer any long-term benefit in reducing body fat in adults or children”. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2023, Page 12*)

11 # SOCIO-ECONOMICAL CONDITION

Autopsies in Kenya cult deaths confirm starvation

The first autopsies on corpses found in mass graves linked to a Kenyan pastor suspected of inciting followers to fast to death confirm starvation as the cause of death, although some victims were asphyxiated. Experts carrying out the first post-mortems on more than 100 bodies unearthed in a coastal forest examined nine children aged one to 10 as well as one woman. “Most of them had features of starvation,” chief government pathologist Johansen Oduor said. “We have had a look at all their bodies and all their organs were intact. None was missing so far.” But “From what we are hearing, there was some indication that they were being smothered that can be one of the causes of asphyxiation. It was in two children”. In a case that erupted last month, horrifying a deeply religious nation, cult leader Paul Mackenzie Nthenge is accused of urging followers to find God through starvation. The provisional death toll stands at 109, which includes a small number of people who were found alive but died on their way to hospital. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 10*)

Kenya starvation cult death toll exceeds 200

The death toll in an investigation linked to a Kenyan cult that practised starvation has climbed to 201, as search teams unearthed 22 more bodies from a coastal forest. Police believe most of the bodies found in a forest near Indian Ocean town of Malindi belong to followers of Paul Nthenge Mackenzie, driver turned-preacher who is accused of inciting them to starve to death “to meet Jesus”. (*The News, May 14th, 2023, Page 11*)

World food prices rise for first time in a year: FAO

The United Nations food agency's world price index rose in April for the first time in a year but is still some 20 per cent up on a record high hit in March 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 127.2 points last month against 126.5 for March, the agency said.

The Rome-based agency said the April rise reflected higher prices for sugar, meat and rice, which offset declines in the cereals, dairy and vegetable oil price indices. "As economies recover from significant slowdowns, demand will increase, exerting upward pressure on food prices," said FAO Chief Economist Maximo Torero. The sugar price index surged 17.6pc from March, hitting its highest level since October 2011. FAO said the rise was linked to concerns of tighter supplies following downward revisions to production forecasts for India and China, along with lower-than-earlier-expected outputs in Thailand and the European Union.

While the meat index rose 1.3pc month-on-month, dairy prices dipped 1.7pc, vegetable oil prices fell 1.3pc and the cereal price index shed 1.7pc, with a decline in world prices of all major grains outweighing an increase in rice prices. "The increase in rice prices is extremely worrisome and it is essential that the Black Sea initiative is renewed to avoid any other spikes in wheat and maize," said Torero, referring to a deal to allow the export of Ukrainian grain via the Black Sea. The FAO forecast world wheat production in 2023 of 785m tonnes, slightly below 2022 levels but nonetheless second largest outturn on record. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 9*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate maths 'doesn't add up' without carbon capture: COP28 chief

The Emirati oil chief leading this year's UN climate talks the world must get "serious" about new emission-capturing technology, rather than focussing only on replacing fossil fuels with renewable energy. Sultan Al Jaber said renewables such as solar and wind "cannot be the only answer", especially in the steel, cement and aluminium industries, where emissions are particularly hard to reduce. While major oil producers Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are touting carbon capture and storage as a remedy for global warming, some experts caution that the nascent technology is unproven and expensive, and should not replace efforts to phase out hydrocarbons. "Renewable energies are not and cannot be the only answer," argued Al Jaber. Earlier this year, the UN's climate expert panel (IPCC) said the world risks crossing the key 1.5-degree Celsius global warming threshold in about a decade, urging a drastic reduction in planet-heating emissions. One of fastest transformations will need to be in energy, with solar and wind power already expanding dramatically. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2023, Page 10*)

Temperature in Singapore soars to 40-year high

Singapore reported its highest temperature in 40 years, as a blistering heatwave burns through large parts of South and Southeast Asia. Saturday's temperature of 37 degrees Celsius was the highest this year, and matches the record for a daily peak recorded in April 1983, "The current warm and dry conditions are expected to continue tomorrow," the agency said. "Short-duration showers are expected next week which may help to moderate the warm temperatures. May is normally one of the warmest months of the year. Some schools in city-state have relaxed rules on uniforms over the rising mercury in recent days. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2023, Page 8*)

Next five years to be warmest period ever, warns UN

It is near-certain that 2023-2027 will be the warmest five-year period ever recorded, the United Nations warned as greenhouse gases and El Nino combine to send temperatures soaring. There is a two-thirds chance that at least one of the next five years will see global temperatures exceed the more ambitious target set out in the Paris accords on limiting climate change, the UN's WMO said. The hottest eight years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2022, with 2016 the warmest but temperatures are forecast to increase further as climate change accelerates. "There is a 98-per cent likelihood that at least one of the next five years, and the five-year period as a whole, will be the warmest on record," the WMO said.

The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900 and 1.5C if possible. The global mean temperature in 2022 was 1.15C above 1850-1900 average. The WMO said there was a 66pc chance that annual global surface temperatures will exceed 1.5C above pre-industrial levels for at least one of the years 2023-2027, with a range of 1.1C to 1.8C forecasted for each of those five years. "WMO is sounding the alarm that we will breach 1.5C level on a temporary basis with increasing frequency". (*Dawn, May 18th, 2023, Page 1*)

UN agency sees melting ice as a global threat

The United Nations' weather agency announced it was making the cryosphere a new top priority, saying the melting of sea ice, glaciers and permafrost posed a global threat. Member states at the UN's World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) are concerned about impacts of melting ice on sea levels, natural disasters, ecosystems & economies. Nations far from the polar regions, such as in the Caribbean and Africa, voiced concerns that changes in the cryosphere would affect the whole planet. "What happens in polar regions and high mountain regions doesn't stay in those regions," WMO spokeswoman Clare Nullis told reporters. "More than a billion people rely on water from snow and glaciers melt which is carried by the major rivers of the world. When those glaciers retreat... you need to think what's going to happen to the water security of those people." "Greenhouse gas concentrations are at record levels in fact, higher than at any time over the last 800,000 years". (*Dawn, May 31st, 2023, Page 10*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Over 2m perished in climate-related disasters since 1970

Over two million people have died in 11,778 reported climate-related disasters between 1970 and 2021, according to new data released by WMO. These extreme events have also resulted in economic losses of \$4.3 trillion. The figures are part of the WMO's 'Atlas of Mortality and Economic Losses from Weather, Climate and Water-related Hazards', and based on the data from the Centre for Research on the Epidemiology of Disasters' Emergency Events Database. Over 90 per cent of reported deaths worldwide occurred in developing countries. Over 60pc of economic losses due to weather-, climate- and water-related disasters were reported for developed economies. However, the economic losses were equivalent to less than 0.1pc of the gross domestic product (GDP) in respective economies in more than four-fifths of these disasters.

No disasters were reported with economic losses greater than 3.5pc of the respective GDPs. The United States alone incurred losses of \$1.7tr, accounting for 39pc of economic losses worldwide in the 51 years. Most of the reported economic losses were attributed to storm-related disasters, and more specifically, to tropical cyclones. But the Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States suffered a disproportionately high cost in relation to the size of their economies.

In Asia, 3,612 disasters attributed to weather, climate and water extremes were reported, with 984,263 deaths and \$1.4tr in economic losses. Between 1970 and 2021, the continent accounted for 47pc of all reported deaths worldwide, with tropical cyclones being leading cause of reported deaths. Tropical cyclone Nargis — which hit Myanmar in May 2008 — led to 138,366 deaths. Bangladesh has highest death toll in Asia with 520,758 deaths due to 281 events.

In Europe, 1,784 disasters caused 166,492 deaths and \$562bn in economic losses. Between 1970 and 2021, the continent accounted for 8pc of reported deaths worldwide. In South America, there were 943 disasters attributed to weather, climate and water extremes, with floods accounting for 61 per cent of these. They resulted in 58,484 deaths and \$115.2bn in economic losses.

In North America, Central America and the Caribbean the 2,107 reported disasters caused 77,454 deaths and \$2tr in economic losses. Between 1970 and 2021, the region accounted for 46pc of the reported economic losses worldwide.

In Africa, 1,839 disasters attributed to weather, climate and water extremes were reported between 1970 and 2021. They caused 733,585 deaths and \$43bn billion in economic losses. Droughts accounted for 95pc of the reported deaths. Tropical cyclone Idai in March 2019 was the costliest event with a loss amounting to \$2.1bn.

There were 1,493 such disasters in the South-West Pacific, resulting in 66,951 deaths and \$185.8bn in economic losses. Tropical cyclones were the leading cause of death.

The report said that the improvement in early warnings and coordinated disaster management efforts have slashed the human casualty toll over the past half a century.

In the last two years under consideration — 2020 and 2021 — the number of deaths (22,608 deaths in total) indicated a further decrease in mortality relative to the annual average of the previous decade. However, the economic losses have increased with most of them attributed to storm-related disasters. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2023, Page 5*)

13.1 # Cyclone

Thousands flee as Cyclone Mocha approaches Myanmar, Bangladesh

Thousands fled Myanmar’s west coast and officials in neighbouring Bangladesh raced to evacuate Rohingya refugees as the most powerful cyclone in the region for over a decade churned across the Bay of Bengal. Cyclone Mocha was packing winds of up to 220-km per hour, according to India’s meteorological office, equivalent to a category four hurricane. It is expected to weaken before making landfall between Cox’s Bazar, where nearly one million Rohingya refugees live in camps largely made up of flimsy shelters, and Sittwe on Myanmar’s western Rakhine coast. Sittwe residents piled possessions and pets into cars, trucks and tuk-tuks and headed for higher ground. (*The News, May 14th, 2023, Page 11*)

Climate change makes cyclones more intense, destructive: scientists

Climate change does not make cyclones, such as that battering Bangladesh, more frequent but it does render them more intense and destructive, according to climatologists and weather experts. These immensely powerful natural phenomena have different labels according to the region they hit, but cyclones, hurricanes and typhoons are all violent tropical storms that can generate 10 times as much energy as the Hiroshima atomic bomb. They are divided into different categories according to their maximum sustained wind strength and the scale of damage they can potentially inflict. “A cyclone is a low-pressure system that forms in the tropics in an area hot enough for it to develop,” Emmanuel Cloppet, from French weather office Meteo France.

“It is characterised by rain/storm clouds that start rotating and generate intense rains and winds, and a storm surge created by the wind,” These huge weather phenomena — several hundreds of kilometres across — are made more dangerous by their ability to travel huge distances. Tropical cyclones are categorised according to wind intensity, rising from tropical depression (under 63 kilometres per hour), through tropical storm (63-117 kph) to major hurricane (above that). They are termed cyclones in the Indian Ocean and South Pacific, hurricanes in the North Atlantic and Northeast Pacific and typhoons in the Northwest Pacific. Meteorological agencies monitoring them use different scales to categorise them, depending on the oceanic basin in which they occur. The most well-known scale for measuring their intensity and destructive potential is the five-level Saffir-Simpson wind scale. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2023, Page 10*)

13.2 # Flood

Flooding in Somalia displaces 200,000 people

Around 200,000 people have been displaced due to flash flooding in central Somalia, a regional official told AFP, as the Shabelle River burst its banks and submerged roads. Inhabitants of Beledweyne town in Hiran region were forced out of their homes as heavy rainfall caused water levels to rise sharply, with residents carrying their belongings on top of their heads as they waded through flooded streets in search of refuge. “Some 200,000 people are now displaced due to the Shabelle River flash floods in Beledweyne town and the number may increase anytime. (*The News, May 14th, 2023, Page 11*)

Somalia floods claim 22 lives, displace 219,000

Flash flooding in central Somalia has killed 22 people and affected over 450,000, the UN’s humanitarian agency OCHA said, after the Shabelle River burst its banks, forcing tens of thousands out of their homes. Heavy rainfall earlier in the week sent water gushing into homes in Beledweyne town in Hiran region, submerging roads and buildings as residents grabbed their belongings and waded through flooded streets in search of refuge.

“Initial estimates indicate that the flash and riverine floods across Somalia have affected at least 460,470 people, of whom nearly 219,000 have been displaced from their homes mainly in flood-prone areas, and 22 killed,” the UN’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. The floods “have left a trail of destruction... inundating homes and farmland, washing away livestock, temporarily closing schools and health facilities, and damaging roads,” the agency said in a situation report.

The disaster comes on the heels of a record drought that has left millions of Somalis on the brink of famine, with the troubled nation also battling an insurgency for decades. Residents said earlier that the floods have become a familiar ordeal to many of them, with experts saying that extreme weather events are happening with increased frequency and intensity due to climate change. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2023, Page 10*)

Eight killed, thousands evacuated as floods batter Italy

At least eight people died and thousands were evacuated from their homes as torrential rain battered Italy’s northern Emilia-Romagna region, triggering widespread floods, officials said. Civil Protection Minister Nello Musumeci said some areas had received half their average annual rainfall in just 36 hours, causing rivers to burst their banks, sending water cascading through towns and submerging thousands of acres of farmland. Eight bodies had been retrieved from various locations, the vice president of Emilia-Romagna, Irene Priolo, told reporters, adding that the rains were easing but that river levels were still rising. This weekend’s Formula One race in Imola, which is close to many of the worst-hit areas, was called off after the government said the emergency services had to concentrate on the rescue operation. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2023, Page 10*)

Flooding kills 13 in Italy as thousands wait to return home

The death toll from floods that have devastated northeastern Italy rose to 13, according to media reports, driving thousands from their homes and destroying crops in an area known as the country's orchard. Rescue workers have been searching for anyone trapped by floodwaters in the Emilia Romagna region. Authorities have not confirmed the latest rise from the 11 deaths previously announced. Among the victims were two farmers in their 70s who may have been electrocuted while trying to move a fridge inside a flooded house, Italian media reported. With 10,000 people already displaced, authorities in Ravenna issued an immediate evacuation order for three more villages threatened by floods. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2023, Page 12*)

Italy floods displace over 36,000 people

More than 36,000 people have now been forced from their homes by deadly floods in northeast Italy, regional officials said, as rising waters swallowed more houses and fresh landslides isolated hamlets. Violent downpours earlier this week killed 14 people, transforming streets in cities & towns of the Emilia Romagna region into rivers. (*The News, May 21st, 2023, Page 10*)

13.3 # Heat Wave

Chinese cities broil in heat, brace for more record temperatures

Major Chinese cities have issued heat advisories, with Beijing expected to swelter in 36C, as China braces for record-breaking heat that could threaten electricity supply, crops and a fragile economy. China has suffered from heat waves in several regions since March. Yunnan province in the southwest, which is known for its mild weather, recently suffered temperatures of more than 40C. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2023, Page 10*)

13.4 # Wildfire

25,000 flee wildfires in Canada

Alberta announced a state of emergency as wildfires flared across the Canadian province, forcing 25,000 people to flee their homes in what a top official said was an "unprecedented" crisis. Thousands more have been told to be prepared to leave on a moment's notice, as the number of fires — fanned by strong winds — jumped to 110. One-third of the blazes were listed as out of control. "We've declared a provincial state of emergency to protect the safety, health and welfare of Albertans," the province's Premier Danielle Smith told a news conference after a meeting of her government's emergency management committee. Earlier she said the province — one of the world's largest oil-producing regions — "has been experiencing a hot, dry spring and with so much kindling, all it takes is a few sparks to ignite some truly frightening wildfires." "These conditions have resulted in the unprecedented situation our province is facing today, According to Smith, more than 20 communities have been evacuated and at least 301,000 acres have burned so far. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2023, Page 10*)

Wildfires force evacuations, hit power production in Canada

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was headed to Alberta to meet with soldiers fighting wildfires that worsened over the weekend, forcing evacuations and hitting energy production in Canada's main oil-producing province over the weekend. More than 100 wildfires have raged this month, at one point pushing more than 30,000 people out of their homes while oil and gas producers shut in at least 319,000 barrels of oil equivalent per day, or 3.7 per cent of national production. Officials in Alberta expect hot and dry weather conditions to continue after they caused an upsurge in wildfires and a rise in home evacuation orders. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2023, Page 11*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

More than 1,000 evacuated as volcano erupts in Guatemala

Guatemalan authorities evacuated more than 1,000 people and closed a road as Central America's most active volcano erupted, spewing thick clouds of ash over farms and towns not far from the capital city. Civil protection official Oscar Cossio said 1,054 people had been evacuated from five communities near the foot of the volcano, and moved to a sports hall for shelter. Guatemala's Conred disaster centre said the volcano named Fuego, Spanish for "fire," was sending out "pyroclastic flows" — a high-temperature mix of gas, ash and rock fragments "which descend with great speed down the flanks of the volcanic complex." The ash column ejected by Fuego reached more than some 19,000 feet above sea level. Conred said ash was falling to the west and southwest of the volcano, in a direction away from the capital Guatemala City, which is 35 kilometres to the northeast. Conred official Rodolfo Garcia estimated that 130,000 people live within areas exposed to falling ash, which came down as far as 100 kilometres from the crater. He said 13 emergency shelters had opened in four nearby towns, capable of providing refuge to 7,600 people. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2023, Page 10*)

50 aftershocks shake Japan after Friday quake

Aftershocks shook Japan a day after a powerful earthquake left at least one person dead, with officials assessing damage from the jolt that destroyed several buildings. The 6.5 magnitude quake hit the central Ishikawa region mid-afternoon at a depth of 12 kilometres (seven miles), according to the Japan Meteorological Agency. More than 50 aftershocks, some of them strong, the agency said, as it warned that heavy rain could trigger landslides in the area. At least 29 people had been injured, Japan's disaster management agency. (*Dawn, May 7th, 2023, Page 10*)

Two victims of volcano eruption found in Roman ruins of Pompeii

Two skeletons have been found in the ruins of Pompeii, the ancient Roman city wiped out by an eruption of volcano Mount Vesuvius nearly 2,000 years ago. The skeletons were recovered from a building known as the "House of the Painters at Work", and are probably of two men in their 50s who died in an earthquake that accompanied eruption. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2023, Page 10*)

15 # Resistance

Protesters clash with police at May Day marches in France

Protesters clashed with security forces across France as hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets for Labour Day to vent their anger against President Emmanuel Macron's pension reform. At least 108 police were wounded and 291 people detained across the country. Such a high toll of police wounded was "extremely rare". Unions had been hoping for a vast turnout across France for the May 1 protests to further rattle Macron, who has been greeted by pot-bashing and jeers as he toured the country seeking to defend the reforms and relaunch his second mandate. Macron last month signed a law to raise the retirement age from 62 to 64, despite months of strikes against bill. Radical protesters threw projectiles at police and broke windows of businesses such as banks & estate agents, with security forces responding with tear gas & water cannon.

Some 782,000 people protested across France, including 112,000 in Paris alone, the interior ministry said. The CGT union said it counted 2.3 million protesters across France, including 550,000 in the capital. The turnout was massively higher than May Day last year but smaller than the biggest protests seen against the pension reform this year. Macron and his government have tried to turn the page on the months of popular discontent, hoping to relaunch his second term after the reform was signed into law. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2023, Page 10*)

Violence flares up after Palestinian prisoners on hunger strike dies

The Israeli military traded fire with Gaza fighter in a flare-up of violence following the death in Israeli custody of a Palestinian prisoner on hunger strike. The Israeli army said it hit Gaza with "tank fire" in response to rockets from Palestinian enclave, sparking a renewed volley from Gaza that was witnessed by journalists. The exchange of fire came hours after 45-year-old prisoner Khader Adnan died, nearly three months after being detained in occupied West Bank over his ties to Islamic Jihad group.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh described his death as a "deliberate assassination", charging Israel had killed him "by rejecting his request for his release, neglecting him medically and keeping him in his cell, despite the seriousness of his health condition". News of his death was initially followed by three rockets fired from Gaza, Israeli army said. Israel's retaliatory tank fire was met with a further 22 projectiles launched from Gaza, military reported. The territory's rulers Hamas & Islamic Jihad, said in joint statement rocket fire was an "initial response" to Adnan's death.

Adnan was the first Palestinian to die in decades as a direct result of a hunger strike, according to advocacy group the Palestinian Prisoners' Club. Other Palestinian detainees have died "as a result of attempts to force feed them", said the group's director Qaddura Faris. Palestinians launched a general strike in West Bank cities in response to Adnan's death. Israel's far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said prison officials decided to close cells to "prevent riots". (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 11*)

Riots in Kenya as opposition protests ‘cost of living’

Kenyan riot police fired tear gas on opposition MPs as sporadic violence erupted during fresh anti-government demonstrations over a cost-of-living crisis and last year’s disputed election. Tear gas canisters were launched at members of opposition leader Raila Odinga’s Azimio la Umoja (One Kenya) coalition near President William Ruto’s office in downtown Nairobi, according to footage of the incident.

The March unrest had drawn international calls for restraint after police fired tear gas on demonstrators, including Odinga’s motorcade, and gangs went on the rampage, attacking people and property. The violence had raised fears of a repeat of the 2007/08 post-election ethnic fighting that claimed the lives of more than 1,100 people in Kenya, now considered an anchor of democracy in a turbulent region. Odinga lost to Ruto — his fifth presidential election defeat — and continues to insist that the poll was fraudulent and that victory was “stolen”. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2023, Page 12*)

Germany averts 50-hour train strike

Germany averted a crippling 50-hour train strike as transport union EVG called off the industrial action after reaching a wage deal with rail operator Deutsche Bahn. Delays and disruptions are however still expected in the next days across the rail network, Deutsche Bahn said, as it needed to work through the mass changes that had arisen because of the planned strike.

Over the last few months, workers in different sectors including healthcare, childcare and transport have gone on strike to demand better conditions. The industrial unrest comes as consumers struggle with steep increases in prices, as the cost of energy and food have soared. Inflation has cooled slightly in Germany in recent months but remained very elevated in April at 7.2 percent. The rail system was largely brought to a halt in a major walkout at the end of March led by EVG and fellow union Verdi. Another shorter strike followed in mid-April, with similar disruption to rail traffic. (*The News, May 14th, 2023, Page 12*)

Climate activists turn Rome’s Trevi Fountain black

Climate activists in Italy turned Rome’s famous Trevi Fountain black, saying floods that have killed 14 people in the country’s northeast were ‘a warning’. Activists from the anti-climate change organisation Last Generation climbed into the landmark fountain and poured a vegetable-based carbon liquid into it, before being pulled out and escorted away by police. The Trevi Fountain’s most iconic moment saw Swedish actress Anita Ekberg go for a dip in Federico Fellini’s film *La Dolce Vita*. The protest came as Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni arrived in Emilia Romagna to visit areas devastated by floods described as the worst in a century after six months’ worth of rains fell in 36 hours. Over 36,000 people have been displaced by the disaster, with costs in the hundreds of millions of euros. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2023, Page 10*)

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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