

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

October, 2023

Roots for Equity

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Roots for Equity

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Preface

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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SAU	Sindh Agriculture University
RDF	Research and Development Foundation
SIDA	Sindh Irrigation and Development Authority
HWA	Hari Welfare Association
BISP	Benazir Income Support Programme
SWAWA	Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act
MAF	Million Acre Feet
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
SEZs	Special Economic Zones
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
SIFC	Special Investment Facilitation Council
WB	World Bank
PARC	Pakistan Agricultural Research Council
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
TCP	Trading Corporation of Pakistan
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
ADB	Asian Development Bank
PCGA	Pakistan Cotton Ginnery Association
KBP	Kissan Board Pakistan
CRS	Crop Reporting Services
APTMA	All Pakistan Textile Mills Association
PKI	Pakistan Kissan Ittehad
SCA	Sindh Chamber of Agriculture
FCA	Federal Committee on Agriculture
TEDs	Turtle Excluder Devices
GMOs	Genetically Modified Organisms
PDP	Pasban Democratic Party
GDP	Gross Domestic Product

IRSA	Indus River System Authority
UVAS	University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences
PBU	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SCCI	Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry
FBR	Federal Board of Revenue
USSEC	US Soybean Export Council
SWAT	Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation
KWSC	Karachi Water and Sewerage Corporation
NEPRA	National Electric Power Regulatory Authority
IMF	International Monetary Fund
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
SAI	Sindh Abadgar Ittehad
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
WTO	World Trade Organization
GACC	General Administration of Customs of China
CBAM	Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
FEA	Foreign Economic Assistance
EAD	Economic Affairs Division
PAF	Pakistan Air Force
CATIC	China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation
NPCs	Naya Pakistan Certificates
IEA	International Energy Agency
IDA	International Development Association
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
PDSI	Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives
PSM	privatise Pakistan Steel Mills
PSDP	Public Sector Development Programme
WHO	World Health Organisation

IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
MERF	Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation
CPI	Consumer Price Index
WPI	Wholesale Price Index
SPI	Sensitive Price Index
WBG	World Bank Group
NDMF	National Disaster Risk Management Fund
AGEGA	Government Employees Grand Alliance
PKMT	Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek
SPSC	Sindh Public Service Commission
CEPA	Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement
MEP	Minimum Export Price
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
UNEP	UN Environment Programme
WFP	World Food Programme
IOD	Indian Ocean Dipole
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IMD	India Meteorological Department
SJP	Students for Justice in Palestine

1 Hectare = 2.471 Acres

1 Acre = 4,840 Square Yards

1 Ton = 25 Mann = 1000 Kg

1 Mann = 40 Kg

Point to Ponder

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Agriculture is a complex system in which natural resources, whether they be land, seed or water, play a critical role in socio-economic and political scenarios. For a water scarce country like Pakistan, the dilemma is now increasing. This critical issue was highlighted with an emphasis on promoting drip irrigation system at the “Food-Water Nexus: Connecting Dots,” hosted by the Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) in collaboration with other institutes; this matter has been raised at other fora as well. Pakistan stands at 14 out of 17 extremely high-water risk countries, remaining on the list of ten-most water-stressed countries and if the depletion of water resources continues, it will face severe water scarcity by 2025. The demand for water is 274 MAF, whereas, the supply is about 191 MAF. Around 94 percent of the groundwater is used in the agriculture sector while 80 percent of the water is consumed by mainly four crops, rice, cotton, sugarcane, and wheat. These crops contribute only 5% to the GDP. Currently, there is 15 percent water shortage during the ongoing Rabi season that began on October 1.

A politician, Mr. Altaf Shakoor of, Pakistan Democratic Party, has asked the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) to focus on the issue of saline water irrigation in Thar and other desert areas where salt water lakes are present and can turn our deserts into grain baskets. According to him, many countries in the world successfully use saline water to grow crops with salt-tolerant seed varieties; Pakistan’s wheat research institute had also produced salt-tolerant wheat seed but has not been pursued further.

The caretaker government in Sindh has directed the provincial Forest and Wildlife Departments to start GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping of Kirthar National Park land, cancel illegal allotments and retrieve illegally occupied forest land. According to the Secretary of Forest and Wildlife Department, Najam Shah, the province had 3.4 million acres of forest land. Out of 232,205.7 acres of encroached forest land, 191,175.2 acres have been retrieved, with 41,030.5 acres were still encroached. In addition, 34,713.05 acres of forest land were illegally allotted, of which 21,274.56 acres have been cancelled.

Based on a land record digitization project, the Sindh government has initiated the digitization of land records of the entire province. Sindh Government has set a target of online facilitation and mobile application for the improvement of revenue records and getting information online. According to the Minister of Revenue, Industries & Commerce Mohammad Younus Dagha, about 580 officials from provincial finance and revenue departments have been transferred during the current caretaker government to ensure transparency within the system.

According to reports, Pakistan’s fundamental concern is only management, not resources. There is immense scope for value addition in the fields of human resource,

agriculture and mining. These three sectors, if properly utilized and managed at least for 10 years, will have the potential to steer the country out of the economic quagmire.

Land ownership remains a critical aspect of agrarian society; six people were killed and five wounded in a fierce gun battle between armed men of two rival groups of Kalhoro and Junejo clans in Shikarpur district. Since the start of the dispute over a piece of agricultural land, more than 40 persons have lost their lives in clashes between the two groups.

Neoliberalism at Play!

On the behest of the World Bank, the caretaker government is considering amendments to taxation regime for retail, agriculture and real estate sectors. Imposition of wealth tax on moveable assets is also being proposed, which would allow generation of additional revenue up to four per cent of GDP (approximately PKR4 trillion) in the short term.

According to a senior economist Tobias Haque, real estate and agriculture should yield a revenue of 2 percent and 1 percent, respectively, of the GDP which would be equivalent to about PKR 2.1 trillion and PKR 1 trillion, respectively, according to official GDP size. This should be done immediately to “reduce or refine the current 12.5-acre tax exemption threshold to bring more agriculture land into the tax net,” and ensure appropriate categorization of land on the basis of size, location, irrigation status and area-based productivity aspects into tax rates. Pakistan’s total revenue collection averaged 12.8 percent of GDP in the past decade, is substantially lower than the South Asian average of 19.2 percent.

The Focus on Agrochemical Agriculture and Genetically Modified Seeds

Under the caretaker government, the Ministry of Planning and Development has put agriculture development projects at top priority; it has allocated billions of rupees under the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) 2023-24, as they are deemed to have a ‘huge potential’. In this context, the agriculture sector is a top priority for the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), as well.

The Planning Commission has decided to focus their energies on cage culture cluster development project; commercialization of potato tissue culture technology; establishment of consumer-sourcing seed authenticity system and strengthening of laboratories of Federal Seed Certification and Research and Development, among others. Besides, the Prime Minister’s Initiatives for Green Revolution project worth PKR 5000 million is also a landmark project initiated to address key constraints to productivity of agriculture.

It is felt that Pakistan’s food product exports face a hurdle based on international standards; in this context projects are being initiated to address issues faced in sector for fruits and vegetables. The aim is to reduce on-field and post-harvest losses of

selected fruits and vegetables, and strengthen their value chains based on using value-adding technologies through public-private partnerships.

The Ministry of Industries and Production presented strategies to fulfil urea requirements for the 2023-24 Rabi season; the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has sanctioned the immediate import of 200,000 tons of urea fertilizer. The committee also mandated a continuous gas supply for the fertilizer industry.

In addition, the Variety Evaluation Committee of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has recommended 10 new high yielding genotypes of oilseed crops and two of sugarcane for commercial cultivation in the country. At present, there is a large gap of 66 percent between supply and demand of certified seeds in the country. In addition, there is a huge burden on foreign currency, as Pakistan imported edible oil, mostly palm oil, worth US\$4.5 billion in 2022.

As has been done in the previous years, Punjab government has decided to promote oil seed cultivation in the province by offering subsidy to farmers in a bid to cut the country's edible oil imports bill, and improve their income by encouraging cultivation of non-conventional crops; the provincial agriculture department will offer PKR 5,000 per acre subsidy for a total 100,000 acres to be brought under imported canola hybrid variety cultivation in the Rabi season, sowing for which will begin within days. A farmer may claim the subsidy for a maximum of five acres.

A meeting at the Ministry of National Food Security and Research has focused on the seed sector. Consultations were on streamlining the seed sector by using advanced genomic technologies as well as of IT systems for transparency. The presence of International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) is evidence that international actors, lodged in the United States (US) are also intervening in the seed policy setting arena. The country head of IFPRI, Pakistan, presented salient features of a report titled, 'National Seed Sector: Prospects and Challenges.' The report points out that the national breeders' intellectual property rights are being pirated. The meeting also discussed the issues related to biotech seeds and resolved to settle this in compliance with national and international rules.

According to James McNee, First Secretary, Canadian Embassy in Pakistan, Canada has been exporting grains, canola, and other agricultural products to Pakistan. But for him a handicap is the need for modifying legislation on GMOs to transform its existing agricultural production. He pointed out that grain institutes in Canada and Punjab province have joined hands to further study the GMOs that are being raised in Canada for their suitability to the soil of this region.

Genetically modified seeds, in the context of poultry feed is also being pushed. Increased retail chicken prices are being attributed to the ban on the import of soybean a key ingredient of poultry feed. Last year, there had been a ban imposed on GM

soyabean mainly produced by United States, Brazil and Argentina, a key content of the poultry seed. According to Mr. Tariq Cheema, formerly federal minister for national food security and research, Shehbaz Sharif government, “the poultry industry is acting like a `mafia` to force the authorities to allow the use of a “known carcinogenic ingredient. They`re playing with the lives of people. GM soybean causes cancer.”

Apart from promoting hybrid and GM seeds, neoliberal policies based on market digitalization are also being promoted for agricultural marketing. The Market Committees Management Information System was officially launched in Lahore. Caretaker Agriculture Minister SM Tanvir launched the system; the digitalization of this system would improve tax collection processes & maintain accurate records of market activities while reducing instances of black marketing. The digitalization process is already in process through the use of Kisan Card; farmers that register themselves are able to ‘benefit’ from various government schemes like subsidies, loans, insurance among other.

In addition, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) is launching a new project to promote modern trends and mechanization in agriculture in various member countries including Pakistan. In addition, the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation (SWAT) project of the World Bank is already ongoing; the project is meant to increase agricultural productivity by introducing modern techniques.

A focus on the fisheries industry is also quite clear. According to an expert on fisheries sector of KP, GB and AJ&K, Omar Hayat Khan, the abundance of suitable water in quality and quantity in the shape of springs, streams, rivers and lakes provides opportunity for production of trout fish in millions of metric tons per annum, as well yield job creation. However, it needs translation into a formal ‘billion-dollar industry.’

Similarly, an expected US delegation to review the installation of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in shrimp-catching nets has led to various stakeholders (fisheries departments, and others) to address this issue that has been present for many years. Pakistan’s shrimp exports to the US has been banned since 2017 because fishermen were not using the TED in their nets, endangering turtles. It is speculated that Pakistan has missed out \$150 million in annual exports to the US.

While pushing for trade liberalization at home, similar trends are also seen for the export sector; the Pakistan’s Ambassador in China, Moinul Haque inaugurated the Pakistan National Pavilion at the Sichuan Agriculture Expo in Chengdu, where numerous Pakistani companies were promoting country’s agricultural products.

Using the Hungry for Genetic Biofortification, Genetic Modification Technology

UNICEF has reported, more than 1.5 million children require lifesaving nutrition interventions. In Pakistan, the 2022 floods inflicted vast damage to the infrastructure,

including 30,000 schools, 2,000 health facilities, and 4,300 water systems making access to safe drinking water and sanitation low. Further, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) about 2.14 million children are suffering acute malnutrition in various parts of Pakistan. Malnutrition has been attributed to number of issues including inadequate food quality and quantity, heightened food insecurity, insufficient sanitation coverage, elevated rates of diarrhea, acute respiratory infections (ARIs) and fever, as well as suboptimal health-seeking behavior. In response, projects co-funded by the European Union (EU), as well as International Rescue Committee (IRC), Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation (MERF) and others is providing therapeutic food and other services in various areas of the country.

Hunger and malnutrition as well as climate change has been used to promote not only biofortified therapeutic foods in the country but also for crop biofortification. It is being said that climate change-related unexpected temperature variability and extreme weather events lower agricultural yields and in reduction of nutritional value of staple crops in Pakistan; the panacea is switching to biofortified crops to deal with growing malnutrition in the country. Farmers, are being ‘convinced’ to switch to biofortified crops such as zinc wheat, which are more nutritious having adequate amounts of Zinc, Iron and other micronutrients. In this policy option, there is no mention of the added burden to Pakistan’s ‘starved foreign reserves.’

It is interesting that there is news about a survey on milk quality and safety conducted by the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) informs that 54 percent of fresh milk samples were unsuitable for human consumption, and 92 percent did not comply with quality and safety standards. Institutions that support neoliberalism, hold a position where fresh milk should be corporate-controlled; issues of safety and hygiene are being propagated as a shield for transferring the dairy market from small and landless farmers to global dairy corporations. The basic neoliberal law that is being used to push this framework is lodged in the WTO agreements of Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) mechanisms and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT), and of course indirectly Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs) agreement.

It is worth noting that Nestlé Pakistan recorded revenue of PKR 151,153 million for the third quarter of 2023, an increase of 24.9 percent as compared to the same period last year. According to Nestle, this growth is based on the wide spectrum of their products as well as ‘demand generating activities’ of the corporation as well as emphasis on localization of raw and packaging material has led to an improvement in operating profit. It’s worth reminding our readers that Nestle products include dairy products, juices and water: a majority based on local agriculture production. How many of these billions of rupees in profits actually benefit the real producers and how much is taken out of the country?

State's Agriculture Growth Projections, and Contestants

There are predictions that the country will attain its agricultural growth target of 3.5 percent for 2023-24; the agriculture sector contributes 22.9 percent to GDP and 37.4 percent in employment generation, ensures food security and provides raw material to the industrial sector. Official projections for increase in cotton production was 126.6 percent over last year; rice to show an increase of 12.7 percent and 18 percent in area and production, respectively, over last year. For livestock, the share in agriculture sector is likely to increase by 64 percent.

Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has raised concerns with respect to 'cartelization' of Sindh rice millers, who are not paying a 'just price to paddy growers for their produce' who based on moisture presence in paddy crops are already being paid less than offered rates. According to the SCA senior vice president Nabi Bux Sathio, last year Pakistan had exported 3.8 million tons of rice and earned \$2.28 billion in foreign exchange; exporters fetched \$600 per ton of coarse variety rice at the highest possible rate at the end of the export season. Out of these 3.8 million tons, 2.5 million tons were a coarse variety of rice to which Sindh contributed about 85 percent share. Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) has also pointed to 'cartelization' of Sindh rice millers and has appealed to the caretaker prime minister to intervene; the rice millers had offered PKR 4,500 per 40kg to farmers before harvesting but later ". . . due to the cartelization of millers and a nexus between them and rice exporters, the rate of paddy plummeted to PKR 3,200 to PKR 3,000 per 40kg".

SAI has rejected the idea of corporate farming, called for fixing sugarcane rate at PKR 600 per 40kg. The government was planning corporate farming and had initiated project in the Cholistan area of Punjab where vast lands were given to another country while machinery was to be provided by China.

The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) has fixed the wheat production target at 32.12 million tons for rabi season 2023-24, an increase of 12.20 per cent over last year's 28.2m tons. The production target would be achieved from 8.9 million hectares.

However, agriculture experts have called for increasing per acre yield productivity, given the ambitious wheat production target of over 33 million tons expected for the 2023-24 season. The emphasis seems to be on vertical growth by enhancing per acre yield.

The Foundation: Peasants of Pakistan

October is the month for the International Day of Rural Women, as well as the World Food Day. Therefore, this month is marked by many peasant rights activities and actions. According to the Hari Welfare Association (HWA), it is deeply concerned by the failure of federal and provincial governments to safeguard the rights of rural women

in Pakistan. The Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act (SWAWA) though passed in 2019, which categorically recognizes women agriculture workers, remains unimplemented in Sindh.

In rural Sindh, more than 70% of women are employed in agriculture, but often lack access to education through different structural barriers such as patriarchy and feudal tribal systems. Low literacy rate contribute to the heightened abuse and women rights violations, and suffer from poverty, malnutrition and hunger.

A report by HWA, “the State of Peasants’ Rights in Sindh in 2022” was launched at the HWA office, Nawab Shah. The report reviews the legislative, policy, and administrative frameworks in place and highlights the challenges faced by peasants and rural workers. And highlights the need for enforcement of laws such as the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950, the Sindh Tenancy Amendment Act 2013, the Sindh Bonded Labor (Abolition) System Act 2015, and the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013.

The World Food Day was commemorated as the ‘World Hunger Day’ by an alliance of small and landless farmers, Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) in collaboration with the Asian Peasant Coalition, in Ghotki, Sindh. Recent reports by UNICEF and World Banks have stated that 333 million children (one in every six children) worldwide live in extreme poverty including 62 million children in South Asia. The World Food Program estimates that 345 million people worldwide suffer from severe hunger; these figures show the aptness of PKMT, and APC call which points out the true state of affairs.

Drummers Beat - Trade

The Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has provided data according to which Pakistan’s trade deficit narrowed by 42.25 percent in the first quarter (July-September) of the current fiscal year 2023-24; exports decreased by 3.78 percent to \$6.899 billion in this period whereas, imports declined by 25.36 per cent to \$12.188 billion during the first quarter of fiscal year 2023-24.

In the first quarter of the financial year of 2023-2024, exports of agriculture and food products from Pakistan increased by 37.4 percent as compared to the same period during 2022-2023. Major increases were in export of Sesame seed, meat, fruits and vegetables, fish and fish products.

Based on data from Pakistan Customs, the Afghan transit cargo flow of containers have shown a 39 percent increase in the past year. According to the commerce secretary, Afghan exports are approximately worth \$1 billion, but imports had risen to \$6 billion in FY23. With fears of illegal entry of goods in Pakistan through this transit trade, a ten percent processing fee has been levied on items imported under the Afghan Transit Trade Agreement.

Ambassador of Turkiye would like to see a bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye to reach USD 20-25 billion, and the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) have suggested exploring new avenues to export to Turkiye, which would also include industrial collaborations and transfer of technology. The Iranian Ambassador to Pakistan has suggested that the long Pakistan-Iran border could be turned into an economic border, while both countries could trade in Chinese Yuan. Pakistan could export live animals, meat, wheat and rice while Pakistan could import from Iran fuel, building materials and food products. According to the Iranian Ambassador, CPEC was an important project for both countries, and Iran could provide energy to Pakistan for CPEC projects at economical terms.

The European Parliament has extended the current generalized system of preferences (GSP) for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on exports to the European market. However, according to analysts, the long-term future for exporting goods to the EU will be based on the type of electricity used for manufacturing. These measures are being taken under Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a new set of trade rules for imposing taxes on imports from non-EU members. Starting now, businesses in EU have to provide information on ‘carbon emission-intensive’ aspects of imported products, and this could make Pakistani export products more expensive in the European markets.

Energyico, formerly known as Byco Petroleum Pakistan Limited (BPPL), has imported the country’s first private-sector shipment of Russian crude oil. Russia is offering discounted rates after its exports were banned in Europe.

Increase in gas tariff for the ongoing fiscal year have been approved by Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet, along with import of 200,000 metric tons of urea for the Rabi season. Further, import of one million ton of milling wheat through Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has also been approved.

Of Loans and Loans . . .

According to the State Bank of Pakistan, the federal government’s total debt (domestic and external) stocks reached PKR 64 trillion by August 2023, mainly due to exchange rate volatility

The economy continues to be based on foreign loans. According to the “World Bank Annual Report 2023: A New Era in Development,” in fiscal year 2023, Pakistan was International Development Association’s (IDA) top borrower, securing \$2.3 billion in funding. The Economic Affairs Division (EAD) has reported that Pakistan’s foreign assistance inflows rose by about 58 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

The World Bank has projected positive growth return for Pakistan in fiscal year 2023-24, but at a rate of only 1.7 per cent, while the economy remains dependent on capital

inflows to finance substantial fiscal and current account deficits. On the other hand, the IMF's latest growth forecast is well above the recent forecasts from the World Bank and ADB.

While the flow of loans comes in freely, the conditionalities are also there. The caretaker Privatization Minister Fawad Hassan has affirmed the government's decision to divest major loss-making state-owned enterprises, so as to get rid of the drain on resources. He has held meetings with World Bank officials for divestment of PIA and other state-owned entities for optimizing the performance of ex-Wapda Discos, a process in which the World Bank has agreed to provide help. In addition, the caretaker government has decided to privatize Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) on Government to Government (G2G) basis, as Privatization Commission has failed to finalize restructuring plan in eight years. The World Bank has critiqued this form of privatization, based on fears of litigation in divestments to foreign states under government-to-government contracts, and advised public offerings through stock exchanges followed by privatization under transparent oversight of the parliament. Quite interesting that the French Ambassador to Pakistan has expressed interest in gaining insights into Pakistan's privatization strategy on which he was then briefed by the Privatization Minister, Mr. Fawad Hassan. It's worth pointing out, that all this is happening under a caretaker government.

Climate Crisis, Economic Crisis – Who Wins, Who Loses?

According to a preliminary research, global carbon dioxide emissions are expected to rise around one per cent to reach a new all-time high in 2023. Scientists say carbon pollution will need to be cut almost in half this decade to meet the world's targets of limiting global warming and avoiding catastrophic climate impacts.

The ongoing climate crisis, which of course is based on the carbon emissions of industrialized rich countries, finds expression in the misery of the people in countries like Pakistan. According to the "World Bank Annual Report 2023: A New Era in Development," South Asia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters, and in the past 20 years, climate disasters have impacted 750 million people, which means more than 50 percent of the population. South Asia, which is one of the poorest regions in the world is suffering from intensifying heatwaves, cyclones, droughts and floods. The changing climate could sharply diminish living conditions for up to 800 million people.

According to the 'State of Global Water Resources 2022 Report' published by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), over 50 percent of the global catchment areas experienced deviations from normal river discharge conditions in 2022. From 2000 to 2018, the total glacier mass balance decreased by more than four percent.

Climate change has wrecked the hydrological cycle which is a result; extreme weather events, such as droughts and extreme rainfall events are taking a heavy toll on lives and livelihoods. At the same time, high temperatures lead to melting snow, ice and glaciers that result in intense floods as we have seen in Pakistan numerous times.

According to a report by FAO, a staggering \$3.8 trillion loss in crop and livestock production has been reported over the past 30 years due to disasters. This equals an average annual loss of \$123 billion, or five per cent of global agricultural GDP. Average losses over 30 years have increased across all the main agricultural product groups, with an average of 69 million tons of cereals, 40 million tons of fruits and vegetables and 16m tons of meat, dairy products and eggs lost annually due to extreme events; a \$3.8 trillion loss in crop and livestock production has been reported over these three decades.

Numerous projects have been floated by neoliberal institutions, however there seems to be reliance on the private sector. The IMF has asked the private sector to 'drastically' increase its climate-related investments in the poor countries. Will these projects than like it has happened over many decades, result in flow of funds from poor countries to rich, through intellectual property rights on shared technologies and knowledge sharing?

According to an Oxfam International report, world's poorest countries face budget cuts topping \$220 billion over the coming five years due to a debt crisis that has pushed dozens to the brink of default.

The conditions imposed by IMF have been having a diabolical impact on the working class and peasantry in the country. Inflation in the first quarter (July to September) surged to 29.04 percent in FY24 from 25.11 percent over the corresponding period of last year. State Bank of Pakistan has projected 20-22 percent average inflation for FY24 from 29.2 percent in FY23. Wheat flour prices saw a staggering rise of 81.29 percent while rice prices experienced a rise of 64.71 percent. The ongoing economic crises have multiple impacts on the people. A truly tragic incidence was the killing of a person by three others, when he failed to return a loan of PKR 50,000.

Stand Up and Fight for Your Rights

As part of resisting the ongoing false solutions provided by industrialized countries for climate change, a Global People's Caravan was organized from many countries including Pakistan. In Shikarpur, Sindh, PKMT held a People's Caravan highlighting the plight of the peasantry, especially women in face of the ongoing climate as well economic crisis.

It was reported that "the caravans will build up to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the UN Climate Change Conference happening in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from Nov 30 to Dec 12. Similar caravans or actions in

various countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions are planned throughout October-November 2023. . . . They are holding to account imperialism – the global empire of the wealthiest countries’ finance oligarchs and their monopoly corporations.”

Other sectors of society, such as students of Sindh University held a rally against student fee increase, ban on student unions, and other issues. It was noted that in just a period of seven months, the university implemented fee hikes by 45 percent. Urban and rural communities in Karachi and Peshawar have been carrying out sit-ins against the long hours of power outage and other injustices related to energy supply.

In Tangwani town, Kandhkot-Kashmore, a large number of paddy growers, along with their children, took out a rally against rice millers and traders for refusing to offer more than 50 per cent of the agreed upon price of their crop without any valid reason. Similarly, rice farmers of Garhi Khairo, Jacobabad staged a protest sit-in against paddy price being offered to them by traders. According to them, the government of Sindh had fixed paddy price at PKR 4,500 per 40kg but the traders were only paying PKR 2200-2300 per 40kg.

Farmers associations in Balochistan also protested against WAPDA, due to long hours of unannounced power shortage which had resulted in destroying livelihood of farms, as destruction of agriculture produce has left them unable to repay loans taken from commercial banks. Other farmer movements have also protested demanding international financial institutions should write-off loans of countries like Pakistan, that also suffer from climate crisis. Similarly, the salaried class has also been protesting against the World Bank proposal of inflicting further taxes on this class.

A shutter down strike was carried out in Gwadar over shortage of drinking water. Please note, Balochistan home and tribal affairs department has banned the blocking of main avenues and highways in Red Zone across the province under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. In Khairpur, the Khairpur police registered an FIR against 16 reporters along with around 100 people, who were holding a protest in Hingorja against a lesser rate than the officially fixed price of cotton.

In Sukkur, irrigation department employees have been agitating with slogans ‘Eliminate corruption and save irrigation,’ so as to ‘cleanse the department of the menace that had hollowed out one of the oldest institutions of the province.’

In the geo-political arena, there have been many developments in this month which will change the course of human history in the context of understanding genuine democracy and human rights. October 7, 2023 will be remembered for years to come. After many decades of atrocities by Zionist Israel, the Palestinian Resistance hit back; this feat looms large over all nations, whether they have stood up against the US-backed Zionist entity of Israel, or those who have supported this fascist formation.

NEWS EXCEPTS

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National News

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Agricultural and water experts, and progressive farmers have emphasised the need for conserving water in the lower areas of Sindh and promoting urban and vertical agriculture. The drip irrigation system should be used for agriculture on 50pc Sindh's uncultivated agricultural land.
- SAU VC Dr Fateh Marri said there had been no significant development in agricultural production for the past 30 years so there was a need to promote technologies related to urban agriculture and more efficient use of water.
- Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister retired Justice Maqbool Baqar has directed the provincial forest and wildlife departments to start GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping of Khirthar National Park land, cancel illegal allotments and retrieve illegally occupied forest land.
- Sindh government is starting an ambitious project of digitization of land records of entire province, as Minister of Revenue, Industries & Commerce Mohammad Younus Dagha said around 580 officials from provincial finance and revenue departments have been transferred during this caretaker setup to ensure transparency within the system.
- On this International Day of Rural Women, Hari Welfare Association (HWA) is deeply concerned by the failure of federal and provincial governments to safeguard the rights of rural women in Pakistan.
- Rural women are often denied schooling due to the absence of educational facilities, female teachers, or societal norms controlled by feudal and tribal systems. In rural Sindh, more than 70% of women are employed in agriculture, yet they & their families continue to endure poverty, malnutrition, and hunger.
- The significant influence of landlords and individuals associated with agriculture in provincial and national parliaments. This influence was evident in the absence of any specific legislative measures addressing the rights of peasants and rural workers in 2022.
- Country is estimated to face 15per cent water shortage during the ongoing Rabi season that began on October 1.
- Experts warned that if the depletion of water resources continues, Pakistan shall face severe water scarcity by 2025. Despite unprecedented precipitation, water shortage in the country has increased to 30 percent.
- It stands at 14 out of 17 extremely high-water risk countries. Presently, the country remains on the list of ten-most water-stressed countries.
- Saline water irrigation in Thar and other desert areas where salt water lakes are present can turn our deserts into grain basket and the Special Investment

Facilitation Council should divert its sharp focus to this area, said PDP. Many countries in the world successfully use saline water to grow crops with salt-tolerant seed varieties.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The caretaker government is considering amendments to taxation regime for retail, agriculture and real estate sectors.
- The World Bank (WB) urged Pakistan to close all tax exemptions and bring incomes from agriculture, properties and retail businesses under the effective tax net to generate an additional revenue of up to four per cent of GDP (about Rs4 trillion) in the short term.
- Pakistan's total revenue collection averaged 12.8pc of GDP in past decade, substantially lower than South Asian average of 19.2pc.
- Rejecting the idea of corporate farming, representatives of the Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) have called for fixing sugar cane rate at Rs600 per 40kg and commencing cane crushing immediately.
- They said the paddy price had dropped from Rs4,500 to Rs2,800 due to cartelisation by rice millers who were looting paddy growers.
- The Variety Evaluation Committee of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has recommended 10 new high yielding genotypes of oilseed crops and two of sugarcane for commercial cultivation in the country.
- The Punjab government has decided to promote oil seeds cultivation in the province by offering subsidy to farmers in a bid to cut the country's edible oil import bill, and improve their incomes by encouraging cultivation of non-conventional crops. Pakistan had imported edible oil, mostly palm oil, worth US\$4.5 billion in 2022.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

- The Market Committees Management Information System was officially launched in Lahore. Caretaker Agriculture Minister SM Tanvir opened the system. He said Punjab's agricultural markets generate Rs2.9 billion annually.
- Digitisation of this system would improve tax collection processes & maintain accurate records of market activities while reducing instances of black marketing.
- In the wake of back to back natural calamities and weather-related disasters, they were trying to convince local farmers to switch to biofortified crops such as zinc wheat, which are more nutritious having adequate amounts of Zinc, Iron and other micronutrients.
- The country is likely to achieve the agriculture growth target of 3.5 percent set for 2023-24 by meeting the target of major crops including cotton and rice production which would contribute positively to the budgeted GDP growth

target of 3.5 percent. Agriculture sector, contributes 22.9 percent to GDP and 37.4 percent in employment generation, ensures food security and provides raw material to the industrial sector.

- Cotton production for 2023-24 was estimated at 11.5 million bales from an area of 2.4m hectares, showing an increase of 126.6 percent in production.
- Rice production for 2023-24 is estimated at 8.64m tons from an area of 3.35m hectares showing an increase of 12.7% & 18% in area & production respectively sugarcane production is estimated at 78.5m tons from an area of 1.7m hectares showing a decrease of 10.74% & 10.9% in area & production respectively
- Pakistan produced 10.3 million tons of maize showing a decrease of 6.07 percent in production and 2.40 percent in area.
- The share of livestock in the agriculture sector is likely to increase by 64%.
- Pakistan's Ambassador in China, Moin ul Haque inaugurated the Pakistan National Pavilion at the Sichuan Agriculture Expo in Chengdu. More than a dozen Pakistani companies displayed their agricultural products at the Pavilion. Expo will inject impetus into the ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and China in the agriculture sector.
- Cotton production by the end of September surpassed the total output of the crop recorded in the last season, As per the PCGA figures cotton arrivals at ginning factories across the country reached 5.025m bales by Sept 30, which is 71.15% more when compared with 2.936m bales for same period last year.
- Business Club Commodities` Haseeb Ahmed says textile mills have so far purchased 4.179m bales against 2.319m bales last year, an increase of 80.2pc, whereas exporters have picked over 0.248m bales against just 4,900 bales LY.
- Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq says the pest attack and weather conditions have hit the cotton quality, particularly in Punjab, where so far 2.069m bales have arrived in ginning factories, registering an increase of 34pc over the same period last year.
- Lint production in Sindh has been reported as 2.956m bales, which is 113pc more than the same period last year.
- Wide gap in output data The Punjab Crop Reporting Services (CRS) claims as of Sept 30 the province produced 3.366mbales, registering a 64pc increase over 2.047m bales produced in the same period last year.
- The Punjab government believes that some ginners are involved in `under-reporting` of cotton arrivals to avoid taxes, earlier the Punjab Agriculture Department (Extension) had claimed cultivation of cotton in the province at 4.8m acres, while the CRS report put the acreage as 3.5m acres but the report was not made public.
- Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry Dr Gohar Ejaz says Punjab will witness bumper cotton crop this year. He said eight million cotton

bales are expected in this crop, and approximately three billion dollars will be saved in terms of foreign exchange.

- Cotton farmers accused the government of deliberately overestimating the size of the crop in the middle of the harvesting season to drive down prices and benefit textile millers from cheap raw material.
- Haji Ramzan, KBP spokesperson, claimed that cotton production in Punjab would hardly be around 6 million bales.
- Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), another farmers' group, also contradicted the cotton production figures presented by the federal and provincial governments.
- The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has appealed to the caretaker prime minister to intervene in the 'cartelisation' of Sindh's rice millers, who are denying a just price to paddy growers for their produce.
- SCA senior vice president Nabi Bux Sathio pointed out that last year Pakistan had exported 3.8m tonnes of rice and earned \$2.28bn foreign exchange.
- The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) has fixed the wheat production target at 32.12m tonnes for rabi season 2023-24, The (Irsa) committee has anticipated a water shortage of 15pc for Punjab and Sindh during rabi season.
- Cotton production for 2023 is provisionally estimated at 11.5m bales from an area of 2.4m hectares showing an increase of 126.6pc in production over last year. Rice production is provisionally estimated at 8.64m tonnes from 3.35m hectares, an increase of 12.7pc and 18pc in area and production.
- Agriculture experts called for increasing per acre yield productivity, keeping in view, highly ambitious wheat production target of over 33 million tons expected for the 2023-24 season. The primary focus in this connection is to go for vertical growth by enhancing per acre yield.

NON – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- A nationwide survey on milk quality and safety, conducted by UVAS, indicates that 54 per cent of loose milk samples were found unsuitable for human consumption, Pakistan is 4th largest milk producing country, but around 95 percent of the milk consumed is loose milk,
- The abundance of suitable water in quality and quantity in the shape of springs, streams, rivers and lakes provides opportunity for production of trout fish in million of metric tons per annum.
- Pakistan's shrimp exports to the US has been banned since 2017 because fishermen were not using the TED in their nets, endangering turtles.
- The disease responsible for the mysterious death of more than 30 Sindh Ibex over the past two months has finally been identified as the highly contagious Peste des Petits Ruminants the diseased had killed over 40 animals in 2016.
- Retail price of chicken has gone up almost 35% from a year ago, because its production is dropping like a stone. The main reason for the reduced

production, that the government banned the import of soybean on the pretext of its genetically modified (GM) nature.

- Annual imports of GPs have come down from 267,000 birds to just 65,000 this year. This means the number of broilers available for consumption in Pakistan will be down almost 76pc this year to just 269m from about 1.1bn a year ago.
- Tariq Bashir Cheema, told that the poultry industry is acting like a `mafia` to force the authorities to allow the use of a `known carcinogenic ingredient`. `They`re playing with the lives of people. GM soybean causes cancer.

TRADE

- A minor mistake of submitting a phytosanitary certificate for a wrong consignment by the Customs clearing agents leads to a position of heavy penalty to the exporter.
- Pakistan's merchandise exports registered year-on-year a modest growth of 1.15 per cent in September. The commerce ministry reported that more than 1,600 textile units had closed down in the past 16 months.
- Imports also plunged by 25.30pc to \$3.95bn in September from \$5.29bn in the corresponding month last year.
- The trade deficit narrowed 42.25pc to \$5.28bn in July-Sep FY24 from \$9.15bn over the corresponding quarter of last year. The trade deficit fell 47.86pc to \$1.48bn in Sept from \$2.85bn over corresponding month of last year.
- The number of containers under Afghan transit trade transporting goods through Pakistan has increased by nearly 39 per cent, reaching a total of 102,886 containers in the 2022-23 from 74,316 containers in the previous year.
- Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador of Turkiye said that in the long-term, bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye can reach USD 20-25 billion.
- Iranian Ambassador in Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Mughaddam suggested that 950-km long Pakistan and Iran common borders can be turned into the economic border, which will bring economic prosperity and peace in region.
- Iran wants so strong trade ties with the Pakistan that Iran both has a common currency. Secondly, border can be used for trade and thirdly both countries can trade in Chinese Yuan. Now a days Russia and Pakistan are doing trade in Yuan, he said adding that Iran and Pakistan have good relations with Russia so both countries can trade with each other in Yuan.
- Pakistan can export live animals, meat, wheat and rice to Iran while Pakistan can import fuel, building materials and food products. Iran is also producing knowledge-based products, as well as, exporting tractors to Europe.
- Pakistan's exports of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 5.16% during first two months of the current fiscal year 2023-24. The overall exports to China were recorded at \$ 350.297m during July-August 2023-24.

- On year-on-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 25.09 percent from \$ 159.021 million in August 2022, against the exports of \$ 198.932 million in August 2023. Overall Pakistan’s exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 8.26% in the first two months, from \$4.951b to \$4.541b.
- In a groundbreaking development for Pakistan’s meat industry, a local meat company named Pakistan’s Organic Meat has achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Pakistani entity to be registered with the General Administration of Customs of China.
- The senator also spoke about foreign trawlers with built-in processing equipment smuggling fish worth \$3 to \$4bn. Afghan exports are approximately worth \$1 billion, but imports have risen to \$6bn in FY23.
- During the first quarter of the financial year of 2023-2024, exports of agro and food products from Pakistan has been increased by 37.4 percent as compared to the same period during 2022-2023.
- Analysts say the long-term future of every business that exports goods to the European Union (EU) depends in large part on the kind of electricity it uses to manufacture its products. Starting this month, all businesses based in the EU countries are required to report on imported products that are “carbon emission-intensive”.
- Textile and clothing exports fell for third month in a row due to growing production costs and liquidity crunch. The export value of textile and clothing exports shrank 9.95 per cent in the first quarter (July-September) FY24 to \$4.12 billion from \$4.58bn in the corresponding period last year.
- Pakistan’s food exports grew more than 18 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2023-24 to \$1.28bn. In Sept, Pakistan’s annual food inflation was over 34pc. The country’s rice exports rose 0.98pc in the first three months of FY24.
- The reason for the increase in basmati rice exports is India’s rice export prohibition and an increased rice output in Pakistan. As a result, the average basmati rice price increased dramatically in the domestic market.
- Pakistan exported fish and fish products worth \$83.06m in the first quarter of FY24, showing a growth of 3.75pc from a year ago.
- Pakistan exported \$112.98m worth of meat in the first quarter, showing a growth of 20.05pc. Export of fruits saw an increase of 12.43pc in the first three months to \$88.66m.
- Vegetable exports dipped 30.35pc to \$51.41m this year. Sugar exports stood at 33,102 metric tonnes in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan’s exports of non-textile products saw a paltry growth of 1.33 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.
- The first quarter of the current fiscal year witnessed a marginal growth of 3% in exports to nine regional countries, mainly driven by an increase in shipments to China.

- Pakistan refiner Cnergyico has imported country's first private-sector shipment of Russian crude oil. Country has started snapping up crude oil that Russia has discounted after its exports were banned from European markets.
- Petroleum group imports witnessed a negative growth of 28.03 percent during the first quarter (July-September) of current fiscal year and stood at \$3.501bn.
- ECC of the Cabinet has approved increase in gas tariff for ongoing fiscal year & allowed import of 200,000 metric tonnes of urea fertiliser for Rabi season.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Nestlé Pakistan recorded revenue of Rs151,153 million for the third quarter of 2023, an increase of 24.9 percent as compared to the same period last year.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

- Pakistan's foreign assistance inflows rose by about 58 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.
- As Unicef reported, more than 1.5m children require lifesaving nutrition interventions.
- Government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth 794 million Japanese Yen (equivalent to around USD 5.3m/ around Rs1.530bn).

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- A delegation of ADB visited the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and discussed agricultural issues, mechanisation, water and food security. ADB is launching a new project to promote modern trends and mechanisation in agriculture in various member countries including Pakistan.
- Pakistan was the top borrower of the International Development Association (IDA) in fiscal year 2023, securing \$2.3 billion in funding.
- The report forecast that South Asia's GDP is expected to grow 5.6 per cent in 2023 and to remain moderate at 5.9pc in 2024, following an initial post-pandemic recovery of 8.2pc in 2021.
- World Bank task team leader Greg Browder told the officials that agricultural productivity was supposed to be increased through the project by introducing modern techniques in the agriculture sector, besides helping the agriculture and irrigation departments in mending the system.
- WB has projected positive growth return for Pakistan in FY23-24, but at a rate of only 1.7%.

POLICY

- During a meeting with World Bank Resident Director Najy Benhassine, the minister also discussed the privatisation agenda with a specific focus on the

divestment of PIA and other state-owned entities for optimising the performance of ex-Wapda Discos.

- The caretaker government has reportedly decided to privatise Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) on Government to Government (G2G) basis, as Privatisation Commission has failed to finalise restructuring plan in eight years.
- The World Bank has agreed to help Pakistan for the privatisation of power distribution companies (Discos), and the bank’s energy specialists pledged to present the most suitable mode of privatisation of Discos to the ministries of energy and privatisation within a week.
- The ministry of planning and development has geared up efforts to implement projects related to the agricultural sector for which billions of rupees were allocated under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2023-24 to tap the huge potentials of the sector.

ENVIRONMENT

- While the overall cover of mangroves in the Indus delta has increased over the years, Karachi continues to lose these precious “protected” forests on account of land allotment by the Board of Revenue and the Karachi Port Trust.
- The mangrove cover in the Indus delta has increased from 160,000 hectares in 2010 to 240,000 hectares this year.
- Lahore, which was on top of the list of 109 cities world over in terms of poor air quality index, IQAir.
- According to the Global Liveability Index for 2023, out of 173 unlivable cities of the world, Karachi is 169th.
- Burning crop residues now incurs a fine of Rs15,000 per acre, and FIRs are being registered against violators.
- Even before start of cold weather conditions, smog has engulfed Lahore as it became most polluted city in world with most hazardous levels of air quality.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- The World Bank advocated Pakistan for a sharp fiscal adjustment of about 4pc of GDP and decisive implementation of broad-based reforms committed to the IMF to get out of the fiscal and macroeconomic quagmire.
- `Predicated on the robust implementation of the IMF Standby Arrangement (SBA), new external financing and continued fiscal restraint, real GDP growth is projected to recover to 1.7pc in FY24 and 2.4pc in FY25` ,
- World Bank’s latest `Pakistan Development Update: Restoring Fiscal Sustainability` released. It estimated the rate of inflation at 26.5pc for the current fiscal year and 17pc for FY25.

- More than 12.5 million people are estimated to have fallen below the international poverty line (\$3.65 per day) from the vulnerable stage or 39.4pc of the population under the poverty line FY23 down from 34.2pc in FY22.
- Pakistan's domestic debt is estimated to have shot up by more than Rs7 trillion since January last year.
- The federal government's total debt (domestic and external) stocks continued upward journey, reaching historic mark of Rs 64 trillion by the end of August 2023, mainly due to exchange rate volatility.
- The federal government's external debt surged to Rs 24.175 trillion in August 2023 up from Rs 22.031 trillion in June 2023.
- The IMF's World Economic Outlook for October forecasts a growth of 2.5% for the country's economy in current year, doubling to 5pc in next fiscal year.
- The IMF's latest growth forecast is lower than the government's 3.5pc GDP growth target for the current year.
- IMF has projected an increase of 0.6 per cent in the government expenditure for Pakistan from 19.5 per cent of GDP in 2023 to 20.1 percent in 2024.
- SBP said it expects the economy to grow in range of 2-3 percent in 2023-24.
- Pakistan's external debt servicing soared to record level of some \$18bn mark in the last FY23, the government repaid \$ 17.8bn during FY23 compared to around \$ 13.0bn in the previous year, depicting an increase of 37pc or \$4.8bn.
- The government has closed the first quarter of the current fiscal year (July-Sept 2023-24) with a budget deficit of 0.9% of the GDP or Rs962.801 billion.
- James McNee, First Secretary, Canadian Embassy in Pakistan, said Canada has a long history of exporting grains, canola, and other agricultural products to Pakistan; however, the country needs the political will to modify legislation on GMOs to transform its existing agricultural production.
- The Canadian envoy underscored that linkages have been established between grain institutes in Canada and Punjab province to further study the GMOs that are being raised in Canada for their suitability to the soil of this region.
- Around 2.14m children are suffering acute malnutrition in parts of Pakistan,
- Inflation is projected to remain high at 26.5 per cent in fiscal year 2024 and moderate to 17pc in fiscal year 2025.
- The real GDP growth is expected to only reach 1.7pc in fiscal year 2024. With the resumption of growth, poverty is expected to decline to 37.2pc in FY24.
- Pakistan's headline inflation soared to 31.4 per cent in September from 27.4pc in the previous month Inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), increased month-on-month by 2pc in September.
- Inflation in the first quarter (July to September) surged to 29.04pc in FY24 from 25.11pc over the corresponding period of last year.
- SBP has projected 20-22pc average inflation for FY24 from 29.2pc in FY23.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- The government is mulling imposing carbon tax on exports to the European Union (EU) to deal with Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), intended to achieve European carbon neutrality by 2050.

RESISTANCE

- The Zamindar Action Committee has blamed Wapda for destroying agriculture in Balochistan through persistent, unannounced power loadshedding, which has left people in the agriculture sector unable to repay commercial bank loans, severely affecting their livelihood.
- Hundreds of landlords organised protest rallies in various towns and cities, including Khuzdar, Qila Saifullah, Surab and Loralai, in response to the continuous and prolonged loadshedding. They took to the streets with placards and banners bearing anti-Wapda slogans and demands
- A ‘World Hunger Day’ was observed by the Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek and Roots for Equity in collaboration with the Asian Peasant Coalition and Pesticide Action Network.
- A peasant gathering was organised in Ghotki to observe the ‘World Hunger Day’ which was otherwise the World Food Day. According to a recent report by Unicef and the World Bank, about 333 million children (one in every six children) worldwide live in extreme poverty while 62 million children in South Asia are living in the same condition.
- The World Food Programme estimates that 345 million people worldwide suffer from severe hunger while according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the number of people suffering from hunger in the world in 2022 was between 691 million and 783 million.
- Representatives of farmers and a civil society organisation held ‘Peoples’ Caravan’ in Shikarpur to highlight the plight of small and landless farmers, especially women, in the wake of unprecedented inflation and exorbitant cost of agriculture and production.
- It was jointly organised by Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) and Roots for Equity as part of the Global Peoples’ Caravan for Food, Land and Climate Justice. According to officials, similar caravans would be organised in other parts of Pakistan in the coming weeks.
- “The caravans will build up to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the UN Climate Change Conference happening in Dubai, the UAE, from Nov 30 to Dec 12.
- Similar caravans or actions in various countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions are planned throughout October–November 2023,” shared Dr Azra Talat Syed of Roots for Equity, while explaining objectives of activity.

International News

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Pakistan was among the nations impacted by “an out of balance” hydrological cycle due to climate change in 2022, over 50 per cent of the global catchment areas experienced deviations from normal river discharge conditions in 2022.
- From 2000 to 2018, the total glacier mass balance decreased by more than 4pc. There has been a notable decrease in snow cover and a big increase in the volume of glacial lakes.
- According to UN estimates, currently, 3.6bn people face inadequate access to water at least a month per year. The number is expected to increase to more than 5bn by 2050.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- A staggering \$3.8 trillion loss in crop and livestock production has been reported over the past 30 years due to disasters, this equals an average annual loss of \$123 billion, or five per cent of global agricultural GDP.
- Asia experiences by far the largest share of total economic losses, almost equal to losses experienced in Africa, Europe and the Americas put together. However, losses in Asia only account for 4pc of the agricultural GDP

NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

- Since 2022, 58.8 million US chickens, turkeys and other birds have been wiped out by the disease, officially known as highly pathogenic avian influenza.
- Scientists in Britain have found they can partially protect chickens from bird flu infections by editing their genes.
- Global trade growth will be sharply lower than forecast this year as stubborn inflation, high interest rates and the war in Ukraine pressure economies around the globe, the World Trade Organization said.
- The United Arab Emirates and South Korea have concluded talks towards a bilateral trade deal, known as a CEPA.
- Russian nuclear agency Rosatom said it has set up a joint venture with Dubai’s DP World to develop container shipping through the Arctic as part of an initiative heavily promoted by President Vladimir Putin.
- A delegation of commodity importers from China signed agreements to buy billions of dollars’ worth of agricultural goods, mostly soybeans, during a ceremony in Iowa, the US Soybean Export Council (USSEC) said.
- China’s crop import purchases from the US are well below normal this year as Brazil, the world’ largest exporter of corn and soy, harvested bumper crops.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

- Kenya's President William Ruto will ask China for a \$1 billion loan to complete stalled road construction projects. The Chinese loans, which stand at more than \$8 billion, were used by former President Uhuru Kenyatta's government to construct infrastructure like roads, but many of these projects have since stalled after contractors left over unpaid bills
- The European Parliament backed giving an extra 50 billion euros (\$53 billion) in European Union money over the next four years to help rebuild a Ukraine.
- The United States, which has hit headwinds in Congress over providing more aid to Ukraine, has so far committed \$43 billion in military assistance and approved \$113 billion in aid, including humanitarian help.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

- The World Bank said that it has approved 600 million US dollars in financing for the Philippines to support reforms aimed at increasing digitalization.
- Pummelled by debt, poverty and natural disasters, African nations heard many pledges of support but saw little action at the first IMF-World Bank talks to be held on their soil since 1973

ENVIRONMENT

- A new roadmap to reduce the environmental risks from chemicals and waste was adopted at a United Nations conference as part of a drive to manage damaging chemical exposure.
- Iceland's controversial whaling season has come to an end with a total of 24 fin whales killed this year.
- Millions of undescribed plants and fungi species may already be under threat from extinction.
- Doctors in Gaza say patients arriving at hospitals are showing signs of disease caused by overcrowding and poor sanitation after more than 1.4 million people fled their homes for temporary shelters.
- Global emissions of planet-heating carbon dioxide are expected to rise around one per cent to reach a new all-time high in 2023.
- Scientists say carbon pollution will need to be cut almost in half this decade to meet the world's targets of limiting global warming and avoiding catastrophic climate impacts.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- Stronger demand for services and progress on lowering inflation have increased the chances that the global economy can escape recession, but fiscal and financial risks abound, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said.

- The IMF kept its 2023 global growth forecast unchanged but warned that the economy is “limping along” as inflation remains high and the outlooks for China and Germany were downgraded.
- The United States is performing better than other major economies, with the IMF upgrading its growth forecast from 1.8 percent to 2.1 percent for this year. It will slow to 1.5 percent next year, but it is 0.5-percentage-points higher than in the IMF’s July outlook
- Chinese economy is now expected to grow by 5.0 percent this year — down from 5.2 percent previously — and slow further to 4.2 percent in 2024, down from 4.5 percent.
- Some of the world’s poorest countries face budget cuts topping \$220 billion over the coming five years due to a debt crisis that has pushed dozens to the brink of default.
- FAO’s Sugar Price Index jumped by 9.8 percent compared to August, highest point since November 2010.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- The global electricity sector’s carbon emissions are projected to potentially reach their peak this year, damage caused by the climate crisis through extreme weather to be around \$16 million per hour over the past 20 years.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned the world is on course to cross the key warming threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s
- 2023 will be the hottest year on record, regions across the planet have been scorched by deadly heat waves.
- With climate warming leading to more air conditioning use worldwide, dozens of countries including China, India and the United States are being asked to commit to a global pledge that would require at least a 68 per cent reduction in cooling-related emissions by 2050.
- Last month was the hottest September on record by an “extraordinary” margin as the world flirts dangerously with breaching a key warming limit.
- A multinational group on Antarctic conservation failed to break a years-long deadlock and agree new marine reserves in the region, despite record low ice.
- A crucial meeting on climate “loss and damages” ahead of COP28 ended in failure, with countries from the global north and south unable to reach an agreement. Nepal’s snow-capped mountains have lost close to one.

NATIONAL NEWS

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Experts advise promotion of urban, vertical agriculture

Agricultural and water experts, and progressive farmers have emphasised the need for conserving water in the lower areas of Sindh and promoting urban and vertical agriculture. They said the drip irrigation system should be used for agriculture on 50pc Sindh's uncultivated agricultural land. They were speaking at a consultation seminar titled "Food-Water Nexus: Connecting Dots", hosted by the Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) in collaboration with the Research and Development Foundation (RDF) and Welthungerhilfe, a German organisation, held at the Senate Hall.

SAU VC Dr Fateh Marri said there had been no significant development in agricultural production for the past 30 years so there was a need to promote technologies related to urban agriculture and more efficient use of water. Ghulam Mustafa Ujjan, general manager (transition) at the Sindh Irrigation and Development Authority (Sida), said students should be involved in research on agricultural, economic and water policies while the government, private institutions and farmers should jointly work on water. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 15*)

1.1 # Land

Cancellation of illegal allotment of forest land, removal of encroachment ordered

Sindh Caretaker Chief Minister retired Justice Maqbool Baqar has directed the provincial forest and wildlife departments to start GIS (Geographic Information System) mapping of Khirthar National Park land, cancel illegal allotments and retrieve illegally occupied forest land. Secretary of forest and wildlife departments Najam Shah informed the chief minister that the province had 3.4 million acres of forest land. He said the irrigated plantations were in the command area of Guddu, Sukkur and Kotri barrages and received water from the canal network, adding that these were also called inland or man-made forests. He said that the mangrove forests located along the coastline in Karachi, Thatta, and Badin districts were environmentally, ecologically, and economically important, and their dependence for growth and stability was on the receipt of freshwater below Kotri barrage and sediment load. Mr Shah said that out of 232,205.7 acres of encroached forest land, 191,175.2 acres had been retrieved, and still 41,030.5 acres were under encroachment. The chief minister was told that 34,713.05 acres of forest land were illegally allotted, of which 21,274.56 acres had been cancelled. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 15*)

Sindh govt to launch land record digitization project

Sindh government is starting an ambitious project of digitization of land records of entire province, as Minister of Revenue, Industries & Commerce Mohammad Younus

Dagha said around 580 officials from provincial finance and revenue departments have been transferred during this caretaker setup to ensure transparency within the system.

Pakistan's fundamental concern is only management, not resources. There is immense scope for value addition in the fields of human resource, agriculture and mining. These three sectors, if properly utilized and managed at least for 10 years, will have the potential to steer the country out of the economic quagmire. Sindh Government has set a target of online facilitation and mobile app for the improvement of revenue records and getting information online. (*Business Recorder, October 13th, 2023, Page 2*)

Six killed as rival groups clash over farmland

Six people were killed and five wounded in a fierce gun battle between armed men of two rival groups of Kalhoro and Junejo clans in Shikarpur district. More than 40 persons had lost their lives in clashes between the two groups since the dispute between them started over a piece of agricultural land. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 15*)

1.2 # Peasants

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HWA supports women's rights on Int'l Day of Rural Women

On this International Day of Rural Women, Hari Welfare Association (HWA) is deeply concerned by the failure of federal and provincial governments to safeguard the rights of rural women in Pakistan. This day serves as a stark reminder of the work that still needs to be done to ensure the rights and welfare of women in rural areas of Pakistan. HWA raises a critical issue where government programmes, such as Ehsaas and Benazir Income Support Programme, are failing to enable rural women to become self-sustaining. These programmes provide financial aid but do little to empower women to build livelihoods of their own.

HWA President Akram Ali Khaskheli expressed disappointment in the lack of implementation of the SWAWA passed in 2019. This act is a pivotal step towards recognizing the work of women in the agriculture sector, promoting their participation in decision-making, and fostering empowerment. Unfortunately, more than three years have passed, and no steps have been taken to enforce this law, which is vital for the rights of women involved in farming, livestock, fisheries, and related sectors. The Act acknowledges several important rights, including the right to equal pay for equal work, the right to unionize, the right to a written contract, and access to social security and welfare benefits. However, its implementation faces structural challenges within agriculture industry and complex bureaucratic procedures.

Khaskheli said that the lack of access to education, particularly in rural areas, exacerbates the suffering of women. Rural women are often denied schooling due to the absence of educational facilities, female teachers, or societal norms controlled by feudal and tribal systems. This low literacy rate contributes to their vulnerability and impedes their access to economic and political opportunities. In rural Sindh, more than 70% of

women are employed in agriculture, yet they and their families continue to endure poverty, malnutrition, and hunger. Gender-based discrimination, particularly in nutrition and food distribution, further compounds their plight.

Akram Ali Khaskheli highlights the prevalent issue of hazardous working conditions in the cotton production industry. Despite laws and regulations aimed at protecting women and children, especially girls, many are forced into hazardous work conditions, including cotton harvesting, pesticide application, and exposure to dangerous machinery and environmental risks. HWA President calls on federal and provincial governments to prioritize the well-being of rural women. They must establish livelihood programmes in rural areas, support social systems for the protection of women and girls, provide land to women in rural areas, and ensure that social security programmes cover all rural women. (*Business Recorder, October 15th, 2023, Page 5*)

HWA launches report ‘State of Peasants’ Rights in Sindh in 2022’

During the local government elections held in June and July 2022, peasants and rural workers were entirely overlooked and not included in the party-based electoral process in Sindh, these and many other facts were pointed out by the speakers at the launching ceremony of the eighth report, titled “The State of Peasants’ Rights in Sindh in 2022” at the HWA office Nawabshah. “The report is produced by HWA which sheds light on the challenging circumstances faced by peasants and rural workers in Sindh and the entirely indifferent attitude of the governments towards addressing their concerns.

This report comprehensively reviews the legislative, policy, and administrative frameworks in place and highlights the challenges faced by peasants and rural workers. The report highlights the need for enforcement of laws such as the Sindh Tenancy Act 1950, the Sindh Tenancy Amendment Act 2013, the Sindh Bonded Labor (Abolition) System Act 2015, and the Sindh Industrial Relations Act 2013.

In the fiscal year 2022-2023, the GoS allocated Rs16.6 billion for the agriculture sector, which was higher than the previous budget. However, this budget was deemed insufficient for the changing ground realities and increased cost of production. The report points out that while the GoS announced subsidies for small farmers in 2021, there was no news about the distribution of subsidies to small-scale peasants in 2022; leaving these vulnerable groups without the support they were promised.

Following heavy rains and floods in August 2022, the GoS introduced the Sindh Resettlement and Rehabilitation Policy (2022). However, this policy fell short of adequately addressing the needs and rights of peasants, especially the poor landless peasants who were severely affected by the floods. Social protection measures for peasants and rural workers were notably absent from this policy. Landless peasants, sharecroppers, and rural workers were the most severely affected, losing their livelihoods, livestock, and shelters. Unfortunately, the GoS’s measures were inadequate to compensate for these losses, and the response to the devastation faced by these groups

was weak. The report notes the significant influence of landlords and individuals associated with agriculture in provincial and national parliaments. This influence was evident in the absence of any specific legislative measures addressing the rights of peasants and rural workers in 2022. (*Business Recorder, October 16th, 2023, Page 4*)

1.3 # Water

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15pc water shortage expected in Rabi season

Even though it is in a better position than last year and 10-year average availability, the country is estimated to face 15 per cent water shortage during the ongoing Rabi season that began on October 1. Total water requirement for Rabi crops, under the Water Apportionment Accord of 1991, is about 37-38MAF. Water availability of 31.66 million acre feet (MAF) at canal heads was about 8pc higher than last year's actual availability of 29.39MAF and 10-year average of 29.42MAF. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

'Country may face water scarcity by 2025'

Experts warned that if the depletion of water resources continues, Pakistan shall face severe water scarcity by 2025. Khan Faraz, an agriculture expert talking to media persons said that despite unprecedented precipitation, water shortage in the country has increased to 30 percent. It stands at 14 out of 17 extremely high-water risk countries. The demand for water is 274 MAF, whereas, the supply remains around 191 MAF. Presently, the country remains on the list of ten-most water-stressed countries. Around 94 percent of the groundwater is used in the agriculture sector while 80 percent of the water is consumed by mainly four crops, rice, cotton, sugarcane, and wheat. These crops contribute only 5% to the GDP. (*Business Recorder, October 7th, 2023, Page 3*)

Irrigation officer dismisses Wasa claim of water shortage in Indus

Kotri barrage's chief engineer has dismissed Wasa officers' claim about acute water shortage in the river downstream Kotri and said that they have misguided their chief about the water position. (*Dawn, October 22th, 2023, Page 15*)

Food security: SIFC urged to lay focus on saline water irrigation

Saline water irrigation in Thar and other desert areas where salt water lakes are present can turn our deserts into grain basket and the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) should divert its sharp focus to this area, said PDP. He said that many countries in the world successfully use saline water to grow crops with salt-tolerant seed varieties. He said as per media reports in Pakistan a wheat research institute had successfully produced a salt-tolerant wheat seed, but this ambitious project was silently put on the back burner instead of practical implication. It is also said that the Sindh government had imported salt-tolerant seed varieties of different crops in the past, but then nobody knew about their fate. (*Business Recorder, October 23th, 2023, page 5*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

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2.1 # Agricultural Taxes

Govt considers imposing taxes on agriculture, retail, real estate sectors

The caretaker government is considering amendments to taxation regime for retail, agriculture and real estate sectors. Imposition of wealth tax on moveable assets is also being proposed. (*The News, October 1st, 2023, Page 1*)

World Bank urges Pakistan to eliminate tax exemptions

The World Bank (WB) urged Pakistan to close all tax exemptions and bring incomes from agriculture, properties and retail businesses under the effective tax net to generate an additional revenue of up to four per cent of GDP (about Rs4 trillion) in the short term. Senior economist Tobias Haque said that real estate and agriculture should yield a revenue of 2pc and 1pc, respectively, of the GDP (or about Rs2.1 trillion and Rs1tr, respectively, according to official GDP size). This should be done immediately to “reduce or refine the current 12.5-acre tax exemption threshold to bring more agriculture land into the tax net” and ensure appropriate categorisation of land on the basis of size, location, irrigation status and area-based productivity aspects into tax rates. Pakistan’s total revenue collection averaged 12.8pc of GDP in past decade, substantially lower than South Asian average of 19.2pc. Ironically, on top of that, total revenue has been declining over time. (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 1*)

2.2 # Fertilizer

Urea requirement

The Ministry of Industries and Production presented a summary outlining strategies to fulfil the urea requirements for the rabi season of 2023-24. The ECC sanctioned the immediate import of 200,000 tonnes of urea fertilisers. The committee also mandated a continuous gas supply for the fertiliser industry. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

Importance of pest control highlighted

Speakers at a training program on urban pest management at the University of Karachi highlighted the critical need for trained professionals in the pest control industry. (*Business Recorder, October 30th, 2023, Page 4*)

2.3 # Industrial Production of Agriculture

Growers` body rejects corporate farming

Rejecting the idea of corporate farming, representatives of the Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) have called for fixing sugar cane rate at Rs600 per 40kg and commencing cane crushing immediately. The government was planning corporate farming and had initiated project in the Cholistan area of Punjab where vast lands were given to another country while machinery for it would be provided by China. They said the paddy price had dropped from Rs4,500 to Rs2,800 due to cartelisation by rice millers who were

looting paddy growers. They urged the government to ensure payment of the price of old paddy crop to the growers. (*Dawn, October 17th, 2023, Page 15*)

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2.4 # Seed

New varieties of oilseed, sugarcane recommended for commercial cultivation

The Variety Evaluation Committee of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has recommended 10 new high yielding genotypes of oilseed crops and two of sugarcane for commercial cultivation in the country. Among the new varieties, four are sunflower hybrid, three mustard highbred varieties and one variety of each soybean, rapeseed, and groundnut while two varieties of sugarcane for commercial cultivation in the potential ecologies.

Meeting at the ministry of national food security and research was informed that at present there is large gap of 66 per cent between supply and demand of certified seeds in the country. The meeting discussed the seed system of the country and reviewed challenges faced by the sector and its future prospects. The Seed Amendment Act, 2015, liberalised the seed sector which resulted in mushroom growth of domestic private seed companies. The extensive consultation was carried out to streamline the seed sector by using advanced genomic technologies as well as of IT system for transparency.

Country head of the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) for Pakistan presented salient features of a report titled, `National Seed Sector: Prospects and Challenges`. Moreover, the national breeders` intellectual property right is being pirated, it points out. The meeting also discussed the issues related to biotech seeds and resolved to settle this in compliance with national and international rules.

At PARC, the evaluation committee meeting on oilseed and sugar crops was chaired by VEC Chairman Dr Imtiaz Hussain. During the meeting, 21 proposals for soybean, canola, rapeseed, mustard, sunflower, groundnut, and sesame candidate varieties/ hybrids as well as four proposals of sugarcane were assessed. After thorough evaluation and discussion, the committee recommended four new sunflower hybrids, three mustard varieties/ hybrids, one variety each of soybean, rapeseed and groundnut while two varieties of sugarcane for potential ecologies. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 3*)

2.5 # Subsidies

Punjab to offer subsidy on canola cultivation

The Punjab government has decided to promote oil seeds cultivation in the province by offering subsidy to farmers in a bid to cut the country's edible oil import bill, and improve their incomes by encouraging cultivation of non-conventional crops. Foreign currency-starved Pakistan had imported edible oil, mostly palm oil, worth US\$4.5 billion in 2022. As per the decision, the provincial agriculture department will offer Rs5,000 per acre subsidy for total 100,000 acres to be brought under canola hybrid

(imported) variety cultivation this Rabi season, sowing for which will begin within days. A farmer may claim the subsidy for a maximum of five acres.

To promote good agricultural practices in oil seed cultivation, the department will also set up 200 demonstration plots in the districts where canola is mostly sown, and the government will offer Rs20,000 per acre to the farmers interested in setting up a model plot and to be selected for the purpose through balloting. The agriculture authorities are also encouraging inter-cropping of canola with other Rabi crops, including wheat, sugarcane and berseem (a fodder) and offering Rs5,000 per acre subsidy on it. At least 10,000 seed kits will be distributed among the farmers under the scheme, requiring them to cultivate one row of canola after each 8-10 rows of wheat and berseem, and on crests of fields of sugarcane sown in September.

Dr Ishtiaq Hassan, Director General (extension), says that apart from inter-cropping, the farmers will also be given 20,000 seed kits, each worth Rs300, for sowing canola at least on one kanal of land and winter season vegetables' seeds for 10 marla land to reintroduce kitchen gardening among the rural population.

He says that as for farmers' complaint about the past interventions for promoting oil seed cultivation that they could not find buyers for their crop because of a lack of oil extraction machinery in and around their settlements, the department has decided to give 50 percent subsidy on at least 100 small oil extracting units in villages. A sum of Rs600,000 will be offered for installing each oil extraction unit, the DG adds.

Dr Hassan says that as an added incentive, a prize of Rs500,000 will be given to the grower getting the best per acre yield in the province, whereas at district level prizes will be given to first, second and third position-holders worth Rs300,000, Rs200,000 and Rs100,000, respectively. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 2*)

Imported fertilizer for Rabi season: Subsidy to be borne by provinces

The subsidy on imported fertiliser for Rabi season will be borne by provinces as per recommendations finalised by the Ministry of Industries & Production after coordinating with the Ministries of Finance, Petroleum and National Food and Security. (*Business Recorder, October 29th, 2023, Page 1*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

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Punjab to take steps to boost agri output

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Dr. Kausar Abdullah Malik called on Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi and exchanged views over the steps that could be taken to increase different crops' production in the province. The minister congratulated the chief minister on getting record cotton production this year. They agreed on stabilizing the rate of cotton crop in collaboration with the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP). (*Business Recorder, October 16th, 2023, Page 1*)

Digitisation of agri markets launched

The Market Committees Management Information System was officially launched in Lahore. Caretaker Agriculture Minister SM Tanvir opened the system. He said Punjab's agricultural markets generate Rs2.9 billion annually. He said digitisation of this system would improve tax collection processes & maintain accurate records of market activities while reducing instances of black marketing. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 2*)

Experts call for switching to biofortified crops to deal with malnutrition challenge

The experts have warned climate change-related unexpected temperature variability and extreme weather events are not only resulting in lower agricultural yields as well as in reduction of nutritional value of staple crops in Pakistan, and called for switching to biofortified crops to deal with growing malnutrition in the country.

The Planning Commission of Pakistan in a report claimed that the agriculture, food, livestock and fisheries sectors suffered a loss of 800 billion rupees (USD 3.7 billion) in the devastating floods that hit Pakistan in 2022. The report estimates the long-term losses to these sectors at around Rs 1.98 trillion (USD 9.24 billion).

In the wake of back to back natural calamities and weather-related disasters, they were trying to convince local farmers to switch to biofortified crops such as zinc wheat, which are more nutritious having adequate amounts of Zinc, Iron and other micronutrients and added that experts were also trying to come up with new varieties of wheat and rice, which are not only nutritious but their yield is also high as compared to traditional varieties. (*Business Recorder, October 22th, 2023, Page 2*)

Country may achieve agri growth target for 2023-24

The country is likely to achieve the agriculture growth target of 3.5 percent set for 2023-24 by meeting the target of major crops including cotton and rice production which would contribute positively to the budgeted GDP growth target of 3.5 percent. Agriculture sector, contributes 22.9 percent to GDP and 37.4 percent in employment generation, ensures food security and provides raw material to the industrial sector.

The official said that cotton production for 2023-24 was estimated at 11.5 million bales from an area of 2.4 million hectares, showing an increase of 126.6 percent in production over the last year. Rice production for 2023-24 is estimated at 8.64 million tons from an area of 3.35 million hectares showing an increase of 12.7 percent and 18 percent in area and production respectively over last year. The official said that sugarcane production is estimated at 78.5 million tons from an area of 1.7 million hectares showing a decrease of 10.74 percent and 10.9 percent in area and production respectively over the last year. Pakistan produced 10.3 million tons of maize showing a decrease of 6.07 percent in production and 2.40 percent in area over last year.

Production of Mung bean for 2023-24 is estimated at 143.6 thousand tons from an area of 198 thousand hectares showing an increase of 6.42%, Maash production for 2023-24

is estimated at 5.28 thousand tons from an area of 7.36 thousand hectares showing an increase of 24.65% and chilies production is estimated at 1.36 thousand tons from an area of 122.1 thousand hectares showing an increase of 2.33%. In the animal husbandry section of MNFS&R said that the share of livestock in the agriculture sector is likely to increase by 64 percent. (*Business Recorder, October 24th, 2023, Page 3*)

'Pakistan National Pavilion' inaugurated at Sichuan Agriculture Expo

Pakistan's Ambassador in China, Moin ul Haque inaugurated the Pakistan National Pavilion at the Sichuan Agriculture Expo in Chengdu. More than a dozen Pakistani companies displayed their agricultural products at the Pavilion. Expo will inject impetus into the ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and China in the agriculture sector. (*Business Recorder, October 29th, 2023, Page 8*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

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Cotton production surges to over 5 million bales

Cotton production by the end of September surpassed the total output of the crop recorded in the last season, data released by the PCGA. However, there has been an abnormal difference between the crop statistics of the PCGA and Punjab agriculture authorities. As per the PCGA figures cotton arrivals at ginning factories across the country reached 5.025 million bales by Sept 30, which is 71.15 per cent more when compared with 2.936m bales for the same period last year; rather it exceeds the total lint output of 5m bales last year.

Business Club Commodities` Hasseb Ahmed says textile mills have so far purchased 4.179m bales against 2.319m bales last year, an increase of 80.2pc, whereas exporters have picked over 0.248m bales against just 4,900 bales last year. The fortnightly flow was recorded at 1.091m bales as opposed to 0.749m bales during the same fortnight (Sept 15-30) last year. Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq attributes more than expected phutti arrivals at ginning units to haste in picking by the growers on fears of whitefly attack. He says the pest attack and weather conditions have hit the cotton quality, particularly in Punjab, where so far 2.069m bales have arrived in ginning factories, registering an increase of 34pc over the same period last year.

Lint production in Sindh has been reported as 2.956m bales, which is 113pc more than the same period last year. Wide gap in output data The Punjab Crop Reporting Services (CRS) claims as of Sept 30 the province produced 3.366mbales, registering a 64pc increase over 2.047m bales produced in the same period last year.

Referring to the claim, Mr Haq says that a huge difference of around 1.2m bales in the PCGA and Punjab CRS data is unlikely. The Punjab government believes that some ginners are involved in `under-reporting` of cotton arrivals to avoid taxes, he says, adding that earlier the Punjab Agriculture Department (Extension) had claimed cultivation of cotton in the province at 4.8m acres, while the CRS report put the acreage

as 3.5m acres but the report was not made public. He says that the Punjab government had later collected cotton cultivation data through Suparco but its report was also not made public. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 9*)

SAI slams millers for paying far low rates to paddy growers

SAI has expressed its concern over illegal deduction of two-three kilos on every 40kg by millers while procuring paddy crop to cause more losses to growers, who are already being offered up to Rs1,700 per 40kg less than the offered rate. Millers had offered Rs4,500 per 40kg to growers before harvesting was started but now they were not ready to pay more than Rs2,800-Rs3,500 per 40kg. (*Dawn, October 6th, 2023, Page 17*)

Punjab expecting bumper cotton crop: Gohar

Caretaker Federal Minister for Commerce and Industry Dr Gohar Ejaz says Punjab will witness bumper cotton crop this year. He said eight million cotton bales are expected in this crop, and approximately three billion dollars will be saved in terms of foreign exchange. He also said that the province of Punjab had produced 3.3 million bales besides 1.6 million bales in the province of Sindh. According to him, Pakistan has become part of five major cotton producers in the world. He also announced Rs100 million funds for the Cotton Research Centre on behalf of APTMA. The cotton bales produced this year are likely to be more than 12 million which was five million in the past year, he expressed that the production of cotton increased by 71% annually. The minister stated that the cotton bales delivered to factories till September 30 were more than 5million. (*Business Recorder, October 8th, 2023, Page 3*)

Cotton farmers claim govt rigs crop size to benefit millers

Cotton farmers accused the government of deliberately overestimating the size of the crop in the middle of the harvesting season to drive down prices and benefit textile millers from cheap raw material. They were reacting to a statement by the Dr. Gohar Ejaz, who projected a healthy size of cotton crop at 12 million bales this year. Ejaz, is also the patron-in-chief of APTMA. Haji Ramzan, KBP spokesperson, claimed that cotton production in Punjab would hardly be around 6 million bales. “No doubt crop size is better than last year’s flood-ravaged cotton crop in the province, however severe pest attack has badly hit plants and negatively impacted its yield”.

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI), another farmers’ group, also contradicted the cotton production figures presented by the federal and provincial governments. Khalid Khokhar, president of PKI, claimed that cotton price has already nosedived to Rs 7,500 per maund and may slide further to Rs 7,000 after the statements of the federal minister and Punjab chief minister. (*The News, October 8th, 2023, Page 17*)

Cotton farmers urged to hold out for ‘fair prices’

The caretaker government has called for strict enforcement of the cotton support prices set earlier this year, with Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar ordering action against

those exploiting the situation and buying cotton below the predetermined rate of Rs8,500 per 40kg. (*Dawn, October 16th, 2023, Page 1*)

Cotton production jumps 22pc to almost 6m bales

Cotton output increased by 22 per cent by Oct 15 compared to the total production of the crop the previous year, data by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association. However, cotton production decreased by 16pc during this period in Punjab, while there was a record 84pc increase in Sindh. By Oct 15, a total of 5.99 million bales of cotton have arrived at the ginning factories across the country, which is 1.08m bales or 16pc more than total production of previous cotton season. (*Dawn, October 19th, 2023, Page 9*)

3.2 # Food Crop

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SCA seeks PM's intervention to end paddy growers' exploitation by millers, exporters

The Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA) has appealed to the caretaker prime minister to intervene in the 'cartelisation' of Sindh's rice millers, who are denying a just price to paddy growers for their produce. SCA senior vice president Nabi Bux Sathio pointed out that last year Pakistan had exported 3.8m tonnes of rice and earned \$2.28bn foreign exchange. Out of this 3.8m tonnes, 2.5m tonnes were a coarse variety of rice to which Sindh contributes about 85pc share. He said that exporters fetched \$600 per tonne of coarse variety rice at the highest possible rate at the end of the export season. USDA indicated that Pakistani coarse variety rice would attract \$700 per tonne in the international market. Sindh growers are expecting the price of paddy between Rs4,500 and Rs5,000 per 40kg. Mr Sathio said that it was on record that a month ago, rice millers were procuring paddy at Rs4,500 to Rs4,700 per 40kg. "But due to the cartelisation of millers and a nexus between them and rice exporters, the rate of paddy plummeted to Rs3,200 to Rs3,000 per 40kg". (*Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 15*)

Wheat output estimated at over 32m tonnes

The Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) has fixed the wheat production target at 32.12 million tonnes for rabi season 2023-24, an increase of 12.20 per cent over last year's 28.2m tonnes. Punjab has been projected to produce 25 million tonnes of wheat while Sindh's target is 4m tonnes followed by KP's 1.6m tonnes and Balochistan's 1.5m tonnes. The production target would be achieved from 8.9 million hectares. The committee observed that the availability of certified seed will remain satisfactory. The supply of urea and DAP is expected to remain stable in rabi. The (Irsa) committee has anticipated a water shortage of 15pc for Punjab and Sindh during the rabi season. The committee reviewed the performance of the kharif crops for 2023 and was informed that cotton production for 2023 is provisionally estimated at 11.5 million bales from an area of 2.4 million hectares showing an increase of 126.6pc in production over last year. Rice production is provisionally estimated at 8.64m tonnes from 3.35m hectares, an increase of 12.7pc and 18pc in area and production. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 9*)

Wheat cultivation in Punjab: Faisalabad Division secures the top position

Faisalabad Division secured highest position last year in the Punjab province by achieving average per acre wheat yield of 38 per maund. Collectively 16 million acres of land would be brought under cultivation of wheat in the province this year. (*Business Recorder, October 22th, 2023, Page 3*)

Experts underscore need for boosting wheat yield

Agriculture experts called for increasing per acre yield productivity, keeping in view, highly ambitious wheat production target of over 33 million tons expected for the 2023-24 season. The primary focus in this connection is to go for vertical growth by enhancing per acre yield. Although, sown on a large area of the country, there have been crises of the crop shortage in the past whenever the support prices fixed were not considered profitable by the farmers. (*Business Recorder, October 22th, 2023, Page 5*)

4 # NON – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Dairy

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UVAS survey finds issues with loose milk quality

A nationwide survey on milk quality and safety, conducted by UVAS, indicates that 54 per cent of loose milk samples were found unsuitable for human consumption, and a striking 92 per cent did not comply with quality and safety standards. This survey was done in 11 cities across Pakistan and included the collection of 1,206 samples. According to the report, Pakistan is 4th largest milk producing country, but around 95 percent of the milk consumed is loose milk, this supply chain system lacks proper transportation and storage facilities. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 2*)

4.2 # Fishery

Expert highlights trout fish production potential

The abundance of suitable water in quality and quantity in the shape of springs, streams, rivers and lakes provides opportunity for production of trout fish in million of metric tons per annum. However, it needs translation into a formal billion dollar industry. This has been stated by a renowned expert on fisheries sector of KP, GB and AJ&K, Omar Hayat Khan. He said that number of jobs can be created in only one component of Fisheries that is Trout Fish Farming. (*Business Recorder, October 2nd, 2023, Page 2*)

Importance of longline fishing to conserve marine resources highlighted

Speakers at the launch of three boats at Korangi Fish Harbour emphasised the need for changing fishing gear in local operations from gillnets to longline. They said that it had already been done at a small scale in the coastal areas of Karachi where the new practice had reduced incidents of entanglement and death of threatened species, including that of sharks, whale sharks, marine turtles and dolphins. They stressed the need for replicating the modified practice at a larger scale. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 13*)

US team's visit sparks action on shrimp export ban

The impending visit of an American delegation to review the installation of turtle excluder devices (TEDs) in shrimp-catching nets has prompted stakeholders, fisheries departments, and others to take action, addressing a problem that has persisted for years. Pakistan's shrimp exports to the US has been banned since 2017 because fishermen were not using the TED in their nets, endangering turtles. Like other countries around the globe, the US also considers turtles an endangered species. TEDs are metal devices, shrimp can pass, while larger species like turtles bump against the metal grid and exit. Stakeholders believe that Pakistan has missed out \$150 million in annual exports to the US. Stakeholders and fishermen are now making efforts to comply with the US' requirement to install TEDs in shrimp-catching nets within the next three to four months, aiming to revive shrimp exports to the US. (*Dawn, October 21st, 2023, Page 9*)

4.3 # Livestock

Disease leading to death of over 30 ibex in Khirthar identified

The disease responsible for the mysterious death of more than 30 Sindh Ibex over the past two months has finally been identified as the highly contagious Peste des Petits Ruminants after post-mortem examination. Experts discovered alarming presence of the ailment among Ibex population in the Khirthar National Park. There was urgent need of putting in place rigorous vaccination protocols for all animals and taking other stringent measures to contain disease. The age of the deceased Ibex ranged from 2 to 10 years. The diseased had killed over 40 animals in 2016. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 15*)

4.4 # Poultry

Why chicken prices are soaring

Retail price of chicken has gone up almost 35% from a year ago, higher than the overall inflation rate over the same period. Chicken is expected to become substantially expensive in the coming months. Chicken is becoming expensive because its production is dropping like a stone. The main reason for the reduced production, says Mr Sattar, is that the government banned the import of soybean a key ingredient of poultry feed in October 2022 on the pretext of its genetically modified (GM) nature. Feed constitutes about 75pc of the input cost in poultry. A rich source of protein mainly produced by the United States, Brazil and Argentina, soybean makes up 30pc of poultry feed. Its imports totalled 1.9 million tonnes in the last calendar year with the US share being 32pc, according to the US Soybean Export Council (USSEC).

There're only about half a dozen companies that import all of grandparent stock or GPs in Pakistan. GPs are the birds that produce the parent stock which, in turn, produce broilers for mass consumption. According to Mr Sattar, annual imports of GPs have come down from 267,000 birds to just 65,000 this year. This means the number of broilers available for consumption in Pakistan will be down almost 76pc this year to just 269m from about 1.1bn a year ago.

Tariq Bashir Cheema, who served as federal minister for national food security and research in the cabinet of Shehbaz Sharif, took the lead in getting the imports of GM soybean banned late last year. Pakistan has been importing non-GM soybean from African countries, but its quality is low and it costs more because it arrives in containers, not shiploads. Mr Cheema told that the poultry industry is acting like a `mafia` to force the authorities to allow the use of a `known carcinogenic ingredient`. `They`re playing with the lives of people. GM soybean causes cancer. They operate like a cartel. They want everyone to consume chickens raised on GM feed just to save a few bucks`. More than 90pc of all soybean, corn and cotton crops in the US are currently GM. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 9*)

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5 # TRADE

Submission for wrong consignment costs heavy penalty to exporter

A minor mistake of submitting a phytosanitary certificate for a wrong consignment by the Customs clearing agents leads to a position of heavy penalty to the exporter. The department issued a show-cause notice after the exports of pitted dates alleging that the phytosanitary certificate issued by the Department of Plant Protection was tampered with active support of the clearing agent. Customs department assumed that exporter, with the active connivance of his clearing agent, exported the goods in violation of the Export Policy Order, 2020. (*Business Recorder, October 1st, 2023, Page 2*)

Exports reverse declining trend in September

Pakistan's merchandise exports registered year-on-year a modest growth of 1.15 per cent in September, reversing the trend after 12 consecutive months of contraction, data released by PBS. However, on a month-on-month basis, the export proceeds increased 4.18pc to \$2.465bn in September. The export of goods in the first quarter (July to September) dipped by 3.78pc to \$6.89bn this year against \$7.17bn over the corresponding period of last year. The commerce ministry reported that more than 1,600 textile units had closed down in the past 16 months.

Imports also plunged by 25.30pc to \$3.95bn in September from \$5.29bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, the imports declined by 12.68pc. The import bill fell 25.36pc to \$12.18bn in July to September FY24 from \$16.32bn over the corresponding months of last year. The imports fell 31pc to \$55.29bn in FY23 from \$80.13bn in FY22. The government has projected an import target of \$58.69bn for FY24 against \$55.29bn in FY23, an increase of \$3.4bn or 8.14pc.

The trade deficit narrowed 42.25pc to \$5.28bn in July-Sep FY24 from \$9.15bn over the corresponding quarter of last year. The trade deficit fell 47.86pc to \$1.48bn in Sept from \$2.85bn over corresponding month of last year. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 9*)

Jul-Sep trade deficit shrinks 42.25pc to \$5.289bn YoY

Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed down by 42.25 percent in the first quarter (July-Sept) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 as it stood \$5.289 billion compared to \$9.159 billion during the same period of last fiscal year, says the PBS. The monthly data released by the bureau noted that the country's exports decreased by 3.78 percent to \$6.899 billion during July-September 2023-24 compared to \$7.170 billion in the corresponding period of the last fiscal year. Imports declined by 25.36 per cent to \$12.188 billion during the first quarter of the current fiscal year as compared with \$16.329 billion in the same period of the last fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, October 03rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Fee slapped on Afghan transit trade

In a significant move to curb the illegal entry of goods into the country, the government announced a 10 per cent processing fee on items imported under the Afghan transit trade agreement. The decision aims to deter smuggling and ensure proper taxation. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 1*)

GSP+ status extended for four years

The European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the current generalised system of preferences (GSP) for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on exports to the European market. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 11*)

Surge in Afghan transit cargo raises smuggling concerns

In a significant development since the Taliban's takeover of Kabul, the flow of Afghan transit cargoes has witnessed a substantial surge in one year. The number of containers under Afghan transit trade transporting goods through Pakistan has increased by nearly 39 per cent, reaching a total of 102,886 containers in the 2022-23 from 74,316 containers in the previous year, according to official data compiled by Pakistan Customs. The first two months of the current fiscal year have seen a persistent upward trend in cargo volumes, totalling nearly 15,000 containers. The projected total for containers in fiscal year 2024 is approximately 130,000. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 11*)

Pakistan-Turkiye trade volume can soar to \$20bn-\$25bn: envoy

Dr. Mehmet Pacaci, Ambassador of Turkiye said that in the long-term, bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Turkiye can reach USD 20-25 billion. Suleman Chawla, SVP FPCCI, stressed that Pakistan should aggressively explore new avenues to export to Turkiye as current bilateral trade volume of USD 1.3 billion is way below the true potential; and, expansion of economic relations must incorporate industrial collaborations and transfer of technology. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 2*)

Pak-Iranian border can be turned into 'economic border': envoy

Iranian Ambassador in Pakistan Dr Reza Amiri Mughaddam suggested that 950-km long Pakistan and Iran common borders can be turned into the economic border, which will bring economic prosperity and peace in the region. He also said that Iran wants so

strong trade ties with the Pakistan that Iran both has a common currency. Secondly, border can be used for trade and thirdly both countries can trade in Chinese Yuan. Now a days Russia and Pakistan are doing trade in Yuan, he said adding that Iran and Pakistan have good relations with Russia so both countries can trade with each other in Yuan.

Pakistan can export live animals, meat, wheat and rice to Iran while Pakistan can import fuel, building materials and food products. Iran is also producing knowledge-based products, as well as, exporting tractors to Europe. Pakistan is an agriculture country and Iran can give tractors to Pakistan. CPEC is an important project for Pakistan and Iran can provide cheap electricity to Pakistan for these projects. Reza said last year the trade volume between the two countries is two billion forty Crore dollars. The unofficial trade and trade of fuel are other than that. (*Business Recorder, October 23th, 2023, page 12*)

5.1 # Exports

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Exports to China soar 5.16pc to \$350.297m YoY: SBP

Pakistan's exports of goods and services to China witnessed an increase of 5.16 percent during the first two months of the current fiscal year 2023-24, as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, SBP has reported. The overall exports to China were recorded at \$ 350.297 million during July-August 2023-24, against exports of \$ 333.077 million during July-August 2022-23, showing growth of 5.16%.

On year-on-year basis, the exports to China also surged by 25.09 percent from \$ 159.021 million in August 2022, against the exports of \$ 198.932 million in August 2023. Meanwhile, on month-on-month basis, the exports to China rose by 31.42 percent during August 2023, as compared to the exports of \$ 151.365 million in July 2023. Overall Pakistan's exports to other countries witnessed a decrease of 8.26% in the first two months, from \$4.951b to \$4.541b. (*Business Recorder, October 7th, 2023, Page 3*)

'Organic Meat': First Pakistani firm to export meat to China

In a groundbreaking development for Pakistan's meat industry, a local meat company named Pakistan's Organic Meat has achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Pakistani entity to be registered with the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). (*Business Recorder, October 9th, 2023, Page 7*)

No ban on meat exports to UAE, Senate body told

The Senate Standing Committee on Commerce was told that there was no ban on the export of meat to the UAE. The statement was made on reports of a ban allegedly slapped by UAE authorities after they found fungus in a meat consignment imported from Pakistan. The senator also spoke about foreign trawlers with built-in processing equipment smuggling fish worth \$3 to \$4bn. The commerce secretary informed the committee that Afghan exports are approximately worth \$1 billion, but imports have risen to \$6bn in FY23. (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 3*)

SCCI seeks rationalisation of duties, tariffs on export items

Business community has demanded rationalisation of duties and tariffs on export items to enhance trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The demand was made during a meeting of representatives of different bodies of traders at Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI). (*Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 8*)

Exports of agro and food products to cross \$7bn mark in FY24: CE TDAP

During the first quarter of the financial year of 2023-2024, exports of agro and food products from Pakistan has been increased by 37.4 percent as compared to the same period during 2022-2023. Major increases were in export of Sesame seed (427pc), Maize (109pc), Ethyl alcohol (559pc), Meat (16pc), Rice (14pc), Fruits and Vegetables (11.8pc), Fish and Fish products (3pc). (*Business Recorder, 11 October, 2023, Page 7*).

EU carbon emission rules set to rattle Pakistan's export sector

If you think the current affordability crisis in the country's energy sector is bad, look out for the sustainability crisis that's about to rattle our already struggling export sector. Analysts say the long-term future of every business that exports goods to the European Union (EU) depends in large part on the kind of electricity it uses to manufacture its products. Starting this month, all businesses based in the EU countries are required to report on imported products that are "carbon emission-intensive".

Products made by Pakistan's export industries will become expensive within 10 years if their processing involves electricity generated by coal-based power plants. Officially called the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), the new set of trade rules will impose carbon fees on all imports into the EU from non-members. It means the single largest destination of Pakistani exports (bloc-wise) will be using renewable energy as a trade barrier. For now, the EU is imposing the CBAM on imports in six sectors, namely cement, aluminium, hydrogen, iron and steel, fertiliser and electricity. "By 2030, the CBAM regime will apply to all industries, including textiles, which constitute the largest chunk in Pakistan's exports". (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 9*)

Textile exports contract for third month in a row

Textile and clothing exports fell for third month in a row due to growing production costs and liquidity crunch, according to PBS. The export value of textile and clothing exports shrank 9.95 per cent in the first quarter (July-September) FY24 to \$4.12 billion from \$4.58bn in the corresponding period last year. In September, the textile and clothing exports contracted 10.88pc to \$1.36bn from \$1.52bn in the same month last year. The exports of textile and clothing contracted by 14.63pc to \$16.50bn in FY23. However, the total merchandise exports dipped 12.71pc to \$27.54bn from \$31.78bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, October 19th, 2023, Page 9*)

Food exports rise 18pc in July-Sept

Pakistan's food exports grew more than 18 per cent in the first quarter of fiscal year 2023-24 to \$1.28 billion, according to PBS. In Sept, Pakistan's annual food inflation

was over 34pc. PBS data showed the country's rice exports rose 0.98pc in the first three months of FY24 owing to higher exports of basmati rice. Basmati rice exports witnessed a growth of 20.48pc to \$406.38 million in July-September. The reason for the increase in basmati rice exports is India's rice export prohibition and an increased rice output in Pakistan. As a result, the average basmati rice price increased dramatically in the domestic market. In quantity, basmati rice exports saw an increase of 3.68pc during the months under review.

Pakistan exported fish and fish products worth \$83.06m in the first quarter of FY24, showing a growth of 3.75pc from a year ago. Pakistan exported \$112.98m worth of meat in the first quarter, showing a growth of 20.05pc. The reason for the increase in meat exports is the introduction of new markets like Jordan, Egypt, and Uzbekistan. Export of fruits saw an increase of 12.43pc in the first three months to \$88.66m. However, vegetable exports dipped 30.35pc to \$51.41m this year. Pakistan's spices exports increased 23.51pc to \$23.75m in the first quarter. The export of oil seeds, nuts and kernels increased 405.85pc to \$185.99m in the three months under review. Sugar exports stood at 33,102 metric tonnes in the first quarter of the current fiscal year against no exports during the same period last year. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 9*)

Uptick in quarterly non-textile exports

Pakistan's exports of non-textile products saw a paltry growth of 1.33 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year from a year ago. The growth was observed despite a sharp drop in the country's main exports of textiles and clothing in the same period, according to data compiled by PBS. Exports showed no growth since September 2022 on a year-on-year basis. (*Dawn, October 22th, 2023, Page 9*)

Regional exports increase 3pc in July-September

The first quarter of the current fiscal year witnessed a marginal growth of 3% in exports to nine regional countries, mainly driven by an increase in shipments to China, data compiled by SBP. The country's exports to Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives rose to \$981.39 million in July-September FY24. In FY23, exports to regional countries dipped 21.1pc to \$3.331bn on a year-on-year basis. Pakistan's bulk of the regional exports share, which accounts for 60pc, is with China while the rest is with the remaining eight countries.

Exports to China increased 28.4pc to \$633.37m in July-Sept FY24 from \$501m over the corresponding months of last year. In FY23, the exports to China declined 27.3pc to \$2.02 from \$2.78bn in FY22. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan posted a positive growth of over 1pc to \$128.53m in July-Sept FY24 from \$127.15m in the same months last year. No exports were made to Iran on the official channel in the first quarter of the current fiscal year.

The country's exports to India declined 58pc to \$0.044m in 3MFY24 from \$0.101m in corresponding months last year. Exports to Bangladesh decreased 38pc to \$144.50m

from \$234.14m in July-Sept 2022. Exports to Sri Lanka dipped by 11.12pc to \$72.19m in 3MFY24 from \$87.74m in the same period last year. On the other hand, exports to Nepal declined year-on-year by 3.3pc to \$0.797m in 3MFY24. Shipments to the Maldives increased by 12pc to \$1.96m from \$1.75m. No export to Bhutan was recorded in 3MFY24. (*Dawn, October 27th, 2023, Page 9*)

5.2 # Import

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Govt to ban import of luxury items through Afghan transit trade

The government has decided to ban the import of luxury items through the Afghan transit trade. The volume of Afghan transit trade has increased by 2.5 billion dollars to 6.71 billion dollars in just one year. (*The News, October 1st, 2023, Page 12*)

First private cargo of Russian crude arrives

Pakistan refiner Nergyico has imported the country's first private-sector shipment of Russian crude oil as the cash-strapped nation takes advantage of Moscow's discounts on its oil exports. The country has started snapping up crude oil that Russia has discounted after its exports were banned from European markets. Pakistan's first cargo, imported by the government, arrived in June and a second government-to-government shipment is under negotiation. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 9*)

FBR to charge 20pc import duty

FBR will charge 20 percent customs duty on the import of 'washing preparation in bulk packing (10 kgs slab)'. (*Business Recorder, October 5th, 2023, Page 1*)

Q1FY24: Petroleum group imports post 28pc negative growth

Petroleum group imports witnessed a negative growth of 28.03 percent during the first quarter (July-September) of the current fiscal year and stood at \$3.501 billion when compared to \$4.865 billion during the same period of last fiscal year, PBS said. Petroleum group imports declined by 14.90 per cent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis and stood at \$1.330 billion in September 2023 when compared to \$1.563 billion during September 2022. (*Business Recorder, October 19th, 2023, Page 4*)

ECC okays massive hikes in gas tariffs

The ECC also allowed the cost-effective import of one million tonnes of milling wheat, via TCP, during the current fiscal year using an open tendering process. This measure is aimed at maintaining strategic reserves. Furthermore, the ECC has endorsed a proposal that encourages the private sector to import specific milling wheat, provided it aligns with the criteria set out in the Import Policy Order 2022. The ECC has also instructed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to arrange for a third-party verification of the country's wheat stock. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

Import of 200,000 MT of urea fertiliser allowed: ECC approves increase in gas tariff

ECC of the Cabinet has approved increase in gas tariff for the ongoing fiscal year and allowed import of 200,000 metric tonnes of urea fertiliser for the Rabi season. ECC also

approved the proposal for encouraging the private sector to import specified milling wheat under Ministry of Finance notification of 14th November 2008. (*Business Recorder, October 24th, 2023, Page 1*)

Customs' values on import of 26 types of spices, herbs, gums fixed

Directorate General of Customs Valuation Karachi has fixed new Customs values on the import of 26 different types of spices, herbs and edible/natural gums. (*Business Recorder, October 25th, 2023, Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

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6.1 # Fertilizer Company

PD proposes gas prices for Mari-based fertiliser plants

Petroleum Division has proposed gas sale prices for Mari-based fertiliser plants at Rs.580/ mmbtu for feed stock and Rs.1,580/ mmbtu for fuel-stock from October 1, 2023. Petroleum Minister Muhammad Ali has tailored a plan to unify feed gas prices of fertiliser industry at par with industrial rate of Rs 1,260/ MMBTU instead of subsidised rates, amid accusations that fertiliser industry is not passing on subsidy to the farmers. The new proposal, if implemented, will result in an increase in urea price by Rs 800 per bag from Rs 3,800 to Rs 4,600 per bag whereas the imported price of urea is Rs 7,700 per bag. (*Business Recorder, October 2nd, 2023, Page 1*)

6.2 # Food Company

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Nestlé Pakistan posts third-quarter results

Nestlé Pakistan recorded revenue of Rs151,153 million for the third quarter of 2023, an increase of 24.9 percent as compared to the same period last year. This increase in revenue can be attributed to broad-based growth across our products and demand generating activities. Despite headwinds, high inflation and limited foreign exchange availability for imports, among others - a tighter control on fixed costs by the Company as well as focus on localization of raw and packaging materials led to an improvement in operating profit. (*Business Recorder, October 20th, 2023, Page 7*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

AIIB and World Bank approve \$600m for Rise-II

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the World Bank will co-finance Pakistan's second Resilient Institutions for Sustainable Economy (Rise-II) programme with a \$600 million loan, aiming to enhance the policy and institutional framework to improve fiscal management and regulatory conditions that support growth and competitiveness. According to the cost and financing plan, AIIB will provide \$250m for Rise-II, while the World Bank will contribute \$350m through the International Development Association (IDA). (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 9*)

Inflow of foreign loans surges in first quarter

Pakistan's foreign assistance inflows rose by about 58 per cent in the first quarter of the current fiscal year. In its monthly report on Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA), the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) said against its annual target of \$17.6bn, total FEA in the July-September quarter amounted to \$3.527bn when compared to just \$2.234bn of the same period last year, an increase of 58pc. Total inflows recorded by the EAD in September came in at \$321 million against \$316m in August. Major FEA during the first quarter flowed in at \$2.89bn in July soon after Pakistan reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a fresh short-term programme. This FEA is in addition to \$1.2bn released by the IMF on July 13 as the first tranche of the \$3bn Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) and \$1bn by the United Arab Emirates that are separately accounted for by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The bulk \$2bn of foreign loans reported by the EAD came from Saudi Arabia as a time deposit followed by a \$508m guaranteed loan to Pakistan Air Force (PAF) by China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATIC). Of the remaining inflows included \$490.48m from multilateral agencies and \$324m from bilateral lenders. Another \$204.5m flowed in from overseas Pakistanis in Naya Pakistan Certificates (NPCs). The government has estimated about \$17.62bn in foreign assistance in the budget for the current fiscal year, including \$17.385bn in loans and the remaining \$235m in grants. As such, total loan disbursements in the first three months stood at \$3.49bn and \$34m in grants. The EAD said that out of \$3.527bn, the bulk of \$2.65bn was received for budgetary support or programme loans and about \$874m as project aid.

During the last fiscal year, the government had budgeted \$22.8bn foreign assistance in FY23 but could materialise only \$10.8bn throughout the year about 46pc of the target because of the suspension of the IMF programme, leaving a \$11.8bn slippage, resulting in depletion of foreign exchange reserves. Mainly because of this, the country's total external public debt slightly declined to \$85.2bn as of March 31 from \$86.56bn as of Dec 31, 2022, according to the EAD's quarterly report for the third quarter of last fiscal year ending March 31.

Out of total external public debt of \$85.18bn, government owed \$64bn to multilateral and bilateral development partners including IMF which meant more than two-thirds (i.e. 75pc) of the total external public debt was on concessional terms with a longer maturity, 16pc (i.e. \$13.5bn) from international capital markets and foreign commercial banks, and 7pc (i.e. \$7bn) of the total external public debt constitutes deposits from friendly countries like China and KSA. (*Dawn, October 17th, 2023, Page 9*)

7.1 # America

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US renews pledge to support Pakistan in post-flood situation

The United States (US) has and will continue to stand with Pakistan and its vulnerable communities as one year after the devastating floods, millions of Pakistanis still need urgent support, US Ambassador Donald Armin Blome reaffirmed. Ambassador Blome's recent visit to Sindh underscores the continued US commitment to aiding Pakistan's most vulnerable regions in their recovery. The US is actively supporting critical sectors such as education, water, and healthcare to address pressing needs.

As Unicef reported, more than 1.5m children require lifesaving nutrition interventions; floods damaged vital infrastructure, including 30,000 schools, 2,000 health facilities, and 4,300 water systems; and access to safe drinking water and sanitation remains worryingly low. Blome celebrated the opening of the 100th school constructed as part of the Sindh Basic Education Program. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023 Page 3*)

7.2 # Japan

Japan to provide \$5.3m grant-in-aid for reconstructing educational facilities

The Government of Japan has agreed to provide new grant assistance worth 794 million Japanese Yen (equivalent to around USD 5.3 million/ around Rs 1.530 billion) for reconstructing educational facilities in flood-affected areas in Sindh. (*Business Recorder, October 19th, 2023, Page 2*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

ML-1 'off track' despite slashed cost

The implementation of the Main Line-1 (ML-1) railway project, stretching from Karachi to Peshawar over 1,726 kilometres, remains subject to IMF approval and the finance ministry's ability to provide sovereign guarantees for a \$6.67 billion loan from China, even though the project's budget has been cut by 32 per cent. Meanwhile, time is running out for authorities in Islamabad and Quetta to secure a \$400 million concessional loan from the World Bank amid a lack of progress on a major flood rehabilitation project in Balochistan, owing to hiccups arising out of bureaucratic issues and project preparation challenges.

This was the crux of a detailed background media briefing by a senior official, who also clarified that a hefty \$4.2bn pledge by the Islamic Development Bank at the Geneva Conference for last year's devastating floods included a \$3bn oil financing "that was not part of the pledges for floods", leaving financing from the Jeddah-based lender for flood rehabilitation and reconstruction at about \$1bn. Therefore, the total Geneva pledges for flood rehabilitation amounted to \$7.4bn — significantly lower than the \$8.7bn to \$10.9bn reported by the then government through various announcements.

Talking about flood rehabilitation, the official said that about \$4bn worth of projects out of \$7.4bn pledges made by various lenders — chiefly the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and the Islamic Development Bank — had been approved and under various stages of implementation. The remaining projects of about \$3.4 were at the preparation and approval stages. The official said a major part of the donor-funded flood projects were in Sindh, where the progress was satisfactory both in terms of implementation and disbursements by the lenders, but a major project for Balochistan involving \$400m financing from the World Bank could not make any headway. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023 Page 1*)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

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ADB team discusses food security with UAF

A delegation of ADB visited the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) and discussed agricultural issues, mechanisation, water and food security. ADB is launching a new project to promote modern trends and mechanisation in agriculture in various member countries including Pakistan. (*Dawn, October 16th, 2023, Page 8*)

ADB okays help for Sindh coastal project

ADB has approved technical assistance for Sindh Coastal Resilience Sector project that will support the development of a resilient coastal region in the province. The project will focus on Thatta, Sujawal and Badin districts since conditions in these coastal area districts have been degraded by a confluence of environmental factors, resulting in land subsidence, flooding, erosion, and saline intrusion. The technical assistance of \$2 million has been provided by the Japan Fund for Prosperous Resilient Asia and the Pacific. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 5*)

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Climate goal reliant on massive new private sector investment: IMF

The private sector must drastically increase its climate-related investments, most crucially in developing countries, for the world to reach net zero carbon by 2050, IMF said. To attain the 2050 goal, \$2 trillion would need to be invested annually by 2030, according data from the International Energy Agency (IEA) cited in the report. But this is far above the estimated \$400 billion planned for the next seven years. The good news is that 90 percent of the technologies needed to reduce emissions by 2030 already exist. But to reach sufficient deployment, according to the report, private sector must double its contribution from 40 percent to 80 percent. The report is part of the fund's Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR), which will be released in full at the IMF and World Bank's annual meetings. (*Business Recorder, October 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

8.3 # World Bank

Pakistan emerges as top International Development Association borrower in 2023

Pakistan was the top borrower of the International Development Association (IDA) in fiscal year 2023, securing \$2.3 billion in funding, the World Bank said in its annual report. The bank helped Pakistan respond to devastating floods with nearly \$1.7bn for five projects in the worst-affected Sindh province to build resilient housing, restore crop production, provide health services for mothers and children, and strengthen social protection and the local government’s disaster response capacity. The document, titled “World Bank Annual Report 2023: A New Era in Development”, states that the international institution approved \$10.1bn in lending for 37 operations in the South Asian region during the fiscal year 2023 — \$4.3bn in International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) commitments and \$5.8bn in IDA commitments. World Bank also supported 61 advisory services and analytical products for eight countries. These provided technical advice on issues such as debt management, governance, job creation, social protection, air pollution and climate resilience.

The report forecast that South Asia’s GDP is expected to grow 5.6 per cent in 2023 and to remain moderate at 5.9pc in 2024, following an initial post-pandemic recovery of 8.2pc in 2021. The decline in poverty is expected to recover in line with economic growth, with the number of people living on less than \$3.20 a day across the region forecast to be 754 million in 2023, lower than the estimates in 2019. South Asia is highly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and natural disasters. Over the past two decades, climate-related disasters have affected 750m people, more than half of people in the region. Across South Asia, the Covid-19 pandemic led to a collapse in human capital for millions of children and young people. Today’s students could lose more than 14pc of their future earnings, while today’s toddlers could see a 25pc decline in earnings when they reach adulthood.

South Asia is confronting intensifying heatwaves, cyclones, droughts and floods. The changing climate could sharply diminish living conditions for up to 800m people. In Punjab, which accounts for 73pc of Pakistan’s total food production, a \$200m project is promoting climate-smart technologies and practices to improve water-use efficiency, build resilience to extreme weather, and increase small-scale farmers’ incomes. Between April 2022 and June 2023, the World Bank approved 529 standalone and regional operations covering more than 110 countries across the four pillars of the framework, totaling \$104.9bn, including \$53.1bn under IBRD and \$51.8bn under IDA. Of the total amount, \$23.7bn was committed for countries affected by fragility, conflict and violence, and \$2bn for small states.

Through the Global Crisis Response Framework, the World Bank has been responding at unprecedented levels to the converging crises, approving 322 operations in more than 90 countries for a total of \$72.8bn in fiscal 2023. This includes \$38.6bn from IBRD.

Under the first year of IDA20, the organisation committed \$34.2bn for the poorest countries. To help these countries address the ongoing impacts of the Covid-19 crisis, the bank front-loaded financial resources in 2023, building on the momentum from 2022. The total climate finance amounted to a record high of \$29.4bn, accounting for 40pc of total IBRD and IDA finance in fiscal 2023. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 1*)

\$400m WB loan not in jeopardy, says ministry

The Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives of Pakistan has issued a statement that the World Bank loan amounting to US\$400 million for flood relief is not in jeopardy and that pledges made by donors exceed the requirement. The PDSI has clarified that as per the financing agreement agreed in the 4RF (Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework), the external financing required is US\$8.15 billion for three years. Against that requirement, the Government of Pakistan has successfully obtained pledges worth US\$10.9 billion, which is US\$2.70 billion in excess of the requirement. The PDSI has so far approved 13 projects from CDWP/ ECNEC worth US\$3 billion, which is way ahead of yearly target. (*Business Recorder, October 16th, 2023, Page 1*)

World Bank team discusses progress of SWAT project with Sida, agriculture dept

A World Bank task team visited Sida secretariat to discuss the SWAT project, being funded by the bank. Task team leader Greg Browder told the officials that agricultural productivity was supposed to be increased through the project by introducing modern techniques in the agriculture sector, besides helping the agriculture and irrigation departments in mending the system. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 15*)

World Bank projects 1.7pc growth rate

The World Bank has projected positive growth return for Pakistan in fiscal year 2023-24, but at a rate of only 1.7 per cent, while saying that the economy remains dependent on capital inflows to finance substantial fiscal and current account deficits. The bank in its latest report, “South Asia Development Update Toward faster, cleaner growth”, stated that Pakistan’s economic situation is fragile. Pakistan’s economy is estimated to have shrunk by 0.6 per cent in the fiscal year 2022-23, reflecting widespread damage from the 2022 floods, elevated inflation, and difficulties with its balance of payments. The Bank stated that import controls intended to narrow the trade deficit have also impeded the supply of industrial raw materials and depressed growth more than expected. (*Business Recorder, October 31st, 2023, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

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9.1 # Development Policy

Capacity issues hinder uplift projects in flood-hit areas

Many development projects could not be initiated in flood-affected areas due to capacity issues of the provinces, whereas, foreign countries and international donor agencies are ready to finance \$ 7.4 billion as pledged under the Geneva Donor conference. A senior

official of Planning Ministry said that the international donor agencies are ready to finance the development projects but there are capacity issues, particularly of Balochistan province. He said that a development project of \$ 400 million could not be initiated in flood-affected areas of Balochistan due to capacity issues. He said that the international donor agencies pledged \$ 10 billion (\$ 7.4 billion for development projects and \$2.6 billion for fuel) for development projects of 17 sectors. He said that the World Bank had pledged \$2.1 billion, the Asian Development Bank \$1.5 billion, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank \$1 billion, Saudi Arabia \$1 billion, and other countries at the Geneva conference in 2022. When asked about the grant for projects, he said that there is a \$ 850 million grant for development projects. An official said that Sindh has most of the portion of financing (\$7 billion) for flood-affected areas. He said that there are \$500 million for housing. (*Business Recorder, October 14th, 2023, Page 10*)

Hundreds of uplift projects face the axe

Government has decided to scrape or shelve hundreds of development projects/schemes including non-starter projects and eliminate ion of subsidy on urea and BISP funding on the basis of 50:50 percent between centre and provinces. Provincial projects have made inroads into the federal PSDP at the cost of federal nature projects. Presently, 33% of financial resources are claimed by the provincial projects in the federal PSDP 2023-24 with allocation of Rs 314 billion. (*Business Recorder, October 26th, 2023, Page 1*)

9.2 # Neo-Liberal Policies

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PIA's sell-off plan discussed with WB

Privatisation Minister Fawad Hassan Fawad reiterated the government's firm resolve to divest major loss-making state-owned enterprises to avoid a substantial financial drain of resources and make them efficient. During a meeting with World Bank Resident Director Najy Benhassine, the minister also discussed the privatisation agenda with a specific focus on the divestment of PIA and other state-owned entities for optimising the performance of ex-Wapda Discos. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 11*)

PSM to be privatised on G2G basis

The caretaker government has reportedly decided to privatise Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) on Government to Government (G2G) basis, as Privatisation Commission has failed to finalise restructuring plan in eight years. On October 4, 2023, the Apex Committee comprising caretaker Prime Minister and the Army Chief discussed privatisation of State Owned Entities (SOEs) such as PTCL, Pakistan Steel Mills, Discos, HEC, RLNG plants, legacy privatisation projects K-Electric, PTCL/Etiscalat).

Pakistan Steel has three large institutional creditors, SSGC, Government of Pakistan and National Bank of Pakistan. All three creditors, including the Government of Pakistan are booking mark up on this debt at considerably high rates. Consequently, these debts are adding Rs.20 billion approximately every year in interest charges to the losses of PSM which is close to 70% of the total annual losses of the corporation.

PSM now owes GoP Rs.102 billion in principal and Rs.48 billion in interest, National Bank of Pakistan is owed Rs.38 billion in principal and Rs.38 billion in interest and finally SSGC is owed Rs.23 billion in principal and a disputed amount of LPS on this amount. SSGC is asking for Rs 40 billion LPS on base amount of Rs 23 billion. (*Business Recorder, October 6, 2023, Page 1*)

World Bank flags concerns over privatisation approach

The World Bank has raised concerns over Pakistan's approach to privatising its state-owned entities (SOEs) and highlighted the adverse impacts of judicial activism, political nuisance, sale of K-E and what it called the botched Sarmaya-i-Pakistan model. The financial institution cautioned the government of looming litigation in divestments to foreign states under government-to-government contracts and instead advised public offerings through stock exchanges followed by privatisation under transparent oversight of a special joint committee of the parliament. (*Dawn, October 9th, 2023, Page 1*)

WB team to share Discos' sell-off plan within a week

The World Bank has agreed to help Pakistan for the privatisation of power distribution companies (Discos), and the bank's energy specialists pledged to present the most suitable mode of privatisation of Discos to the ministries of energy and privatisation within a week. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 5*)

Govt's sell-off agenda attracts World Bank's attention

Simon Stolp, South Asia Practice Manager for Energy at the World Bank, and his team met with Fawad Hasan Fawad, the Federal Minister for Privatisation. The primary focus was to discuss the government's agenda for privatisation, with a specific emphasis on the performance of Discos in Pakistan's power sector. Privatising Discos to create private-sector monopolies. (*Business Recorder, October 12th, 2023, Page 1*)

French envoy, Fawad discuss privatisation strategy

Nicolas Galey, French Ambassador to Pakistan met Fawad Hasan Fawad. Ambassador Galey expressed a profound interest in gaining insights into Pakistan's privatisation strategy. In response, Federal Minister Fawad provided a comprehensive overview of the privatisation plan. The meeting embodied the unwavering dedication of Pakistan and France to intensify their strategic partnership and explore new frontiers for economic and cultural exchange. (*Business Recorder, October 14th, 2023, Page 1*)

9.3 # Agricultural Policy

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Planning ministry gears up efforts to implement agriculture projects

The ministry of planning and development has geared up efforts to implement projects related to the agricultural sector for which billions of rupees were allocated under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2023-24 to tap the huge potentials of the sector. The agriculture sector is already on the top priority list of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in view of its importance in the country's

economy. The SIFC targeting five key areas: agriculture, defence production, mining/minerals, information technology and telecommunication and energy.

The SIFC has taken the lead and the agriculture is the top priority besides other sectors. The projects on which the planning commission has decided to gear up efforts, include cage culture cluster development project; commercialisation of potato tissue culture technology; and establishment of consumer-sourcing seed authenticity system and strengthening of labs of federal seed certification and research and development etc. Besides, the Prime Minister's Initiatives for Green Revolution project worth Rs5000 million is also a landmark project initiated to address key constraints to productivity of agriculture.

The government has emphasised on promotion of technology to reduce post-harvest losses, value addition for grain, fruits and vegetables, productivity enhancement of major crops, engage women and youth in agriprenure, agri-business and to promote and support agricultural research. The green revolution played a key role in the country's economy back in 1960s while saving millions of people from famine. This initiative will contribute greatly to the national economy, the ministry said.

Pakistan's potential to export food products is limited due to strict international standards. Keeping in view the significance of fruits and vegetables a horticulture support programme is another project which is being started with Rs1000m to address key constraints to horticulture crops. The project has been designed to reduce on-field and post-harvest losses of selected fruits and vegetables and to integrate and strengthen horticultural value chains by introducing value-adding technologies at every step of the value chain through public-private partnerships.

Another project, the Prime Minister's National Programme for Solarisation of Agricultural Tube wells in Pakistan worth Rs377,017m is being launched to switch 100,000 tube-wells of the country to solar system in three years in the country. Furthermore, the government has established a Land Information and Management System Center of Excellence (LIMS-CoE) to improve modern agri-farming by utilising more than 9m hectares of uncultivated state land.

The main goals of the centre included consolidation and reclamation of uncultivated wasteland, optimal decision-making regarding what and where to grow, creation of a master plan for modern farming, adoption of state-of-the-art agriculture management practices, the practice of agri-intelligence for digital and precision agriculture, better utilisation of cutting-edge technology to enhance yield, and effective decision support system. The GIS-based LIMS will greatly improve the national agri-yield by systemising the digitisation of agriculture, providing real-time information to local farmers about soil, crops, weather, water resources and pest monitoring through remote sensing and geospatial technologies as well as minimising the role of middlemen through the efficient marketing system. (*Dawn, October 30th, 2023, Page 5*)

10 # ENVIRONMENT

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10.1 # Biodiversity

WB pledges help in conserving Indus Dolphin

A World Bank delegation led by its South Asia officials dealing in environment and natural resources visited the Indus Blind Dolphins Centre and reaffirmed the bank's commitment to help Pakistan conserve and protect the rare species. Over the years, the population here has increased from a mere 132, recorded in a 1970 survey, to a remarkable 1,419 in 2019. (*Dawn, October 9th, 2023, Page 15*)

Karachi losing mangrove cover due to land allotment, Senate panel told

While the overall cover of mangroves in the Indus delta has increased over the years, Karachi continues to lose these precious "protected" forests on account of land allotment by the Board of Revenue and the Karachi Port Trust. The mangrove cover in the Indus delta has increased from 160,000 hectares in 2010 to 240,000 hectares this year. Unfortunately the mangroves surrounding Karachi have shrunk from 2,000 hectares in 2010 to 1,800 hectares today mainly due to land allotment. The areas of the Indus delta, he pointed out, had increased due to sea intrusion from 600,000 hectares in 2010 to 667,000 hectares today. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 13*)

10.2 # Health

Pakistan sees 10pc rise in heart-related deaths in last seven years: experts

In a country where around 40 million adults are living with hypertension or high blood pressure, people in their early 20s and 30s are having heart attacks and dying relatively at an early age, Pakistan had witnessed a 10 percent increase in heart-related deaths since 2016. According to the most recent WHO data on heart attack ratio in Pakistan, 240,720 people died from the coronary heart disease in Pakistan in 2020, accounting for 16.49 percent of all fatalities but the number is far more as data is missing from rural areas, and undocumented death. (*The News, October 1st, 2023, Page 15*)

214 new dengue cases reported

As many as 214 new dengue patients were reported from across the province during the last 24 hours. A total of 6,431 confirmed cases of dengue were reported in all districts of Punjab so far this year. (*The News, October 15th, 2023, Page 2*)

Multi-million rupee project launched to promote research in health sciences

A multi-million rupee project was launched to promote research in medical and health sciences, where orthopaedics from across the country would be offered financial assistance for conducting research. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 14*)

Poliovirus detected in samples from all provincial capitals

A rise in positive environmental samples for polio has been detected across the country this month, with 11 new detections in seven cities, including Karachi, Lahore,

Peshawar, Quetta, Bannu, Pishin and Chaman. The recent spike brings the tally of positive environmental samples in the country to 54 this year. The number of confirmed human polio cases stands at four. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 3*)

‘Brain-eating amoeba’ claims another life

The Sindh health authorities reported the city’s ninth death from *Naegleria fowleri*, popularly known as ‘brain-eating amoeba’. Since 2012, over 100 cases of *naegleria* have been reported in Karachi. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 13*)

Respiratory tract infections on the rise in Karachi

An alarming increase in the cases of respiratory tract infection has been witnessed in the metropolis during the past few weeks, prompting health authorities to issue an advisory on prevention and control of influenza. This was the second spike in the cases of the illness causing flu-like symptoms over the last two months. Meanwhile, the health department in its advisory suggests vaccination against influenza, describing it as the most important step for protection. (*Dawn, October 26th, 2023, Page 13*)

Two deaths in a week due to ‘brain-eating’ amoeba cause alarm in Karachi

The Sindh health authorities reported a second death within a short span of one week from *Naegleria fowleri* in the city, raising the death toll from the deadly infection to 10 this year. Officials of the KWSC officials rejected the possibility of any lapse in their system and insisted that the department ensured proper chlorination at different levels of the supply system. (*Dawn, October 31st, 2023, Page 13*)

10.3 # Pollution

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Amid ongoing mega projects, Lahore tops cities with worst air quality

Simultaneous construction of various mega infrastructure development projects, traffic issues, industries’ operation and other factors are not only causing pollution, but also affecting the public mobility in Lahore, which was on top of the list of 109 cities world over in terms of poor air quality index, IQAir. (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 2*)

Markets in Lahore to shut on Wednesdays to counter smog

As Lahore often tops the list of the world’s most polluted cities, the divisional administration announced the decision to close down all commercial markets of the provincial capital and its adjoining districts on every Wednesday. (*Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 1*)

‘Pollution, crumbling infrastructure taking their toll on Karachiites’

The Karachi Citizens’ Forum (KCF) organised a seminar at the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) House to look into ‘a holistic approach to solving the problem of Karachi’s crumbling infrastructure and its disastrous toll on human health and the city’s beleaguered ecosystem’. According to the Global Liveability Index for 2023, out of 173 unlivable cities of the world, Karachi is 169th. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, page 13*)

Phasing down coal: UN report details challenges, opportunities

Pakistan is facing the critical task of phasing down its coal power plants, necessitating a careful examination of various factors like energy security, environmental impacts, socio-economic impacts of just transition, and feasibility of power generation alternatives, says a new United Nations report. One of the main challenges of phasing out coal in Pakistan is the existing coal capacity and long-term agreements associated with coal projects, such as those under the CPEC. The government faces difficulties in shutting down these plants immediately due to capacity payments and circular debt issues, says the report, “Phasing-Down the Use of Coal in Pakistan”, published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 9*)

Cases against farmers for burning crop residue

The Agriculture Department has got five cases registered against the farmers for burning crop residue in the region. Burning crop residues now incurs a fine of Rs15,000 per acre, and FIRs are being registered against violators. Farmers are advised against burning crop residue to avoid fines and arrests. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 2*)

Lahore becomes world’s most polluted city with worst air quality

Even before the start of cold weather conditions, smog has engulfed Lahore as it became the most polluted city in the world with the most hazardous levels of air quality. The air quality index of Lahore was 376—most polluted in the world—followed by Delhi at 333. It should be noted that air is good to breathe in only if the AQI US is up to 50. Beyond 100, it becomes unhealthy for sensitive groups and unhealthy for all beyond 150. (*Dawn, October 30th, 2023, Page 2*)

11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

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Circular debt grows despite tariff hikes

Power sector circular debt continues to grow despite all the repeated tariff increases on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis as the government takes a strategic move towards billing in the consumer tariffs capacity charges payable to power producers. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 9*)

World Bank warns of sluggish growth, high inflation

Projecting a persisting mix of sluggish growth rate and high inflationary trends with significant downside risks, the World Bank advocated Pakistan for a sharp fiscal adjustment of about 4pc of GDP and decisive implementation of broad-based reforms committed to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to get out of the fiscal and macroeconomic quagmire. `Predicated on the robust implementation of the IMF Standby Arrangement (SBA), new external financing and continued fiscal restraint, real GDP growth is projected to recover to 1.7pc in FY24 and 2.4pc in FY25`, said the World Bank’s latest `Pakistan Development Update: Restoring Fiscal Sustainability` released. It estimated the rate of inflation at 26.5pc for the current fiscal year and 17pc for FY25.

More than 12.5 million people are estimated to have fallen below the international poverty line (\$3.65 per day) from the vulnerable stage or 39.4pc of the population under the poverty line FY23 down from 34.2pc in FY22. The growth forecast is slightly lower than 2pc the Washington based agency had forecast in June and less than half the 3.5pc target set by the government. Last month, the ADB projected Pakistan's GDP growth rate at 1.9pc and rate of inflation at 25pc for the current fiscal year. The WB forecast Pakistan's fiscal deficit at 7.7pc of GDP in FY24 and primary deficit at 0.4pc of GDP unlike IMF's 0.4pc of primary surplus for the current year, showing a wide gap of 0.8pc of GDP or about Rs850bn. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 9*)

High interest rates blamed for Rs7tr hike in national debt

Pakistan's domestic debt is estimated to have shot up by more than Rs7 trillion since January last year just because of an increase in the State Bank's policy rate from less than 10 per cent to 22pc, a Senate panel was told. (*Dawn, October 5th, 2023, Page 3*)

Govt debt stocks hit historic high of Rs64trn by Aug-end

The federal government's total debt (domestic and external) stocks continued upward journey, reaching historic mark of Rs 64 trillion by the end of August 2023, mainly due to exchange rate volatility. The SBP reported that the central government's total domestic and external debt stocks rose by 5 percent during the first two months of this fiscal year (FY24). The federal government's external debt surged to Rs 24.175 trillion in August 2023 up from Rs 22.031 trillion in June 2023. External debt included Rs 24.106 trillion of long-term debt and Rs 69 billion of short-term loans. The total domestic debt is composed of Rs 26.67 trillion permanent debt, Rs 2.933 trillion unfunded debt and Rs9.633tn floating. (*Business Recorder, October 6th, 2023, Page 1*)

IMF expects faster economic recovery in optimistic outlook

The IMF's World Economic Outlook for October forecasts a growth of 2.5 per cent for the country's economy in the current year, doubling to 5pc in the next fiscal year. This is a significant jump compared to the 0.5pc contraction witnessed last fiscal year. This meant the Fund also expected quicker economic recovery than it had forecast earlier at 5pc GDP growth rate in the 2026-27 fiscal year.

The IMF's latest growth forecast is lower than the government's 3.5pc GDP growth target for the current year but well above the recent forecasts from the Washington-based World Bank and ADB. The World Bank, which predicted Pakistan's growth rate at 1.7pc for this fiscal year and 2.4pc in the next, claimed at a recent media event that its estimates were based on the August-September data.

The Fund previously estimated inflation at 27pc for fiscal 2023 but revised it to 29.2pc. For this fiscal year, it revised the inflation projection to an average 23.5pc from 22pc earlier, although it noted that year-end inflation could drop to as low as 17.5pc. The IMF noted the current account deficit at 0.7pc of GDP during fiscal 2023, up from its

previous estimate of 1.2pc. It kept the projection unchanged at 1.8pc for the current fiscal year and 1.7pc by the 2027-28 fiscal year.

On the other hand, the fund estimated the unemployment rate to have risen to 8.5pc in fiscal 2023 from 6.2pc in 2022, up significantly higher than the earlier projection of 7pc. For the current fiscal year, the unemployment rate has been projected at 8pc. In contrast, the World Bank last week estimated inflation at 26.5pc for the current fiscal and 17pc for 2025. Interestingly, the World Bank had shown a growth rate slightly lower than 2pc it had forecast in June and less than half the 3.5pc target set by the government. Last month, the ADB projected Pakistan's GDP growth rate at 1.9pc and inflation at 25pc for the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, October 11th, 2023, Page 1*)

IMF sees slight rise in govt expenditure

IMF has projected an increase of 0.6 per cent in the government expenditure for Pakistan from 19.5 per cent of GDP in 2023 to 20.1 per cent in 2024. According to the IMF report "Fiscal Monitor", the government gross debt for Pakistan is projected to decline from 76.6 per cent of GDP in 2023 to 72.2 per cent in 2024. The Fund has projected a decline in the net debt for Pakistan from 71.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023 to 68.3 per cent in 2024. The government revenue is projected at 12.5 per cent of GDP for 2024 and 12.4 per cent for 2025 against 11.4 percent during the same period of 2023 and 12.1 per cent in 2022. The Fund has projected government's primary balance at 0.4 per cent for 2024 against -1.2 per cent in 2023.

The World Bank has projected primary balance for Pakistan at negative 0.4 per cent (-0.4) for the current fiscal year 2023-24, as opposed to 0.4 per cent surplus (0.4) by the IMF, while claiming last week that its data is updated relative to the Fund. Further, the government's overall balance is projected at -7.6 per cent for 2024 against -8.1 per cent in 2023. According to the report the country's debt to average maturity in 2023 is estimated at 33.8 per cent of GDP. There would be total gross financing need of about 23.7 per cent of GDP in 2023. Gross financing need is defined as the projected overall balance and maturing government debt in 2023. The projected interest rate – growth differential 2023-28 is -6.1 per cent while the non-resident holding of general government debt, 2022 is projected at 29.5 per cent of the total. (*Business Recorder, October 12th, 2023, Page 1*)

\$3.527bn borrowed from multiple financing sources

The country borrowed \$3.527 billion from multiple financing sources during the first quarter (July-September) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 compared to \$2.234 billion borrowed during the same period of 2022-23, revealed the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) data. The \$3.527 billion included \$2 billion received from Saudi Arabia under the head of time deposit during July 2023. The data further shows that the government had budgeted estimates of \$4.5 billion from the foreign commercial banks for the

current fiscal year 2023-24, however no money was received under this head during the first three months of current fiscal year.

The government had budgeted \$1.5 billion from issuance of bonds, however, the country is yet to issue the bonds, hence no amount is received so far. The government had budgeted \$17.619 billion from multiple financing sources for the current fiscal year including \$17.384 billion loans and \$234.60 million grants. The country borrowed \$10.844 billion from multiple financing sources including \$2.206 billion from foreign commercial banks during the fiscal year 2022-23 against the budgeted foreign assistance of \$22.817 billion. However, the \$10.844 billion did not include the rollover of friendly countries' deposits amounting to \$6 billion (i.e. \$3 billion each from China and Saudi Arabia), and re-financing of Chinese loan of \$1.3b. The country received \$204.51 million under the head of "Naya Pakistan Certificate" during the first three months of current fiscal year 2023-24.

The country received \$490.48 million from multilaterals and \$324.05 million from bilateral during July-September 2023-24. The non-project aid was \$2.653 billion including \$2.253 billion for budgetary support and project aid was \$873.97 million. China disbursed \$508.34 million under the head guaranteed for the JF-17 B project funded by China National Aero-technology Import and Export Corporation (CATIC). China further disbursed 0.35 million in July-September against the government budgeted of \$18.54 million for the current fiscal year. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) disbursed \$61.75 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$2.086 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24.

Saudi Arabia disbursed \$300 million against the budgeted \$600 million under the head of oil facility during July-September 2023-24. The USA disbursed \$13.98 million in the first three months against the budgeted \$21.60 million for the fiscal year. Korea disbursed \$4.85 million and France \$1.28 million during the current fiscal year. The IDA disbursed \$240.93 million in July-September against the budgeted \$1.489 billion for the current fiscal year and IBRD \$58.45 million against the budgeted \$840.36 million. IsDB (Short-term) disbursed \$100 million in July-September against the budgeted \$500 million for the current fiscal year and AIIB disbursed \$22.96 million, while IFAD disbursed \$6.38 million against the budgeted \$42.68 million for the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, October 14th, 2023, Page 1*)

Economy to grow at 2-3pc, says SBP

SBP said it expects the economy to grow in the range of 2-3 per cent in 2023-24. According to the annual report for the fiscal year ending on June 30, the lagged impact of monetary tightening and other contractionary measures are expected to keep domestic demand in check going forward. Inflation is likely to decelerate in the range of 20-22pc in 2023-24 because of the prospects of improvement in the supply situation. There's a likely increase in the production of important crops and imports. In addition,

slightly improved global and domestic growth prospects are expected to bolster foreign exchange earnings from exports of goods and services. Moreover, stagnant crop yields and a lack of attention to the development of the food supply chain, and to address food market imperfections, have led to sustained reliance on imported food commodities. These trends underpin the unsustainable current account balance, which has increased country's vulnerability to global supply shocks. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

External debt servicing soars to record level in FY23

Pakistan's external debt servicing soared to record level of some \$18 billion mark in the last fiscal year (FY23), the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. According to SBP's Annual Report on the State of Pakistan's Economy for FY23, the government repaid \$ 17.8 billion during FY23 compared to around \$ 13.0 billion in the previous year, depicting an increase of 37 percent or \$4.8 billion. It includes debt servicing of principal and interest payments of public external debt. However, the debt servicing on foreign liabilities declined to \$ 224 million during FY23 from \$ 330 million in FY22 due to reduction in stock. (*Business Recorder, October 24th, 2023, Page 1*)

Govt closes Q1 with budget deficit of 0.9pc of GDP

The government has closed the first quarter of the current fiscal year (July-Sept 2023-24) with a budget deficit of 0.9 percent of the GDP or Rs962.801 billion, according to the Finance Ministry, for the first quarter of the current fiscal year showed total expenditure of Rs3.648 trillion against the total revenue of Rs2.685 trillion. Punjab and KP provinces' budgets were in deficit by Rs28.550 billion and Rs10.314 billion, respectively. However, a budget surplus of Rs19.099 billion by Sindh and Rs71.168 billion by Balochistan helped create a provincial surplus of Rs51.503 billion. .

According to fiscal operation data, the current expenditure stood at Rs3.172 trillion which included mark-up payments Rs1.379 trillion, defence expenditure Rs343.068 billion, pension Rs203.303 billion, running of civil government Rs131.917 billion, subsidies Rs2.488 billion and grants to others Rs177.303 billion. Development expenditure and net lending stood at Rs282.387 billion. Federal PSDP was Rs40.925 billion and provincial Rs245.53 billion while statistical discrepancy was at Rs193.563 billion. The overall budget deficit was recorded at Rs962.801 billion or 0.9 percent. The financing of the budget deficit was met through net external borrowing of Rs425.170 billion and domestic (net) borrowing of Rs537.631 billion. The primary balance was recorded at Rs416.811 billion (0.4 percent).

Tax revenue was recorded at Rs2.216 trillion with the Federal Board of Revenue taxes stood at Rs2.041 trillion with direct taxes of Rs934.789 billion and indirect taxes of Rs1.106 trillion which included taxes on international trade (Customs) Rs252.220 billion, sales tax Rs726.944 billion, and federal excise Rs127.594 billion. Provincial tax collection was Rs175.391 billion. Total non-tax revenue collection was Rs468.815 billion with federal non-tax revenue of Rs452.069 billion which included mark-up

(provinces) Rs18.142 billion, mark-up (PSEs and others) Rs66.762 billion, dividend Rs33.816 billion, profit PTA and others Rs3.581 billion, defence receipts Rs6.6 billion, passport fee Rs14.541 billion, discount retained on crude oil Rs6.317 billion, royalties on oil/ gas Rs41.652 billion, windfall levy against crude oil Rs5.710 billion, petroleum levy on LPG Rs870 million, gas infrastructure development cess Rs378 million, petroleum levy Rs222.067 billion, and others Rs32.633 billion, and provincial Rs33.888 billion. (*Business Recorder, October 26th, 2023, Page 1*)

11.1 # Food

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2,000 wheat bags seized

As many as 2,000 bags of wheat were recovered from a warehouse in Kori SITE area in an operation against hoarders of wheat, fertilisers and essential commodities. (*Dawn, October 1st, 2023, Page 15*)

Notices issued on plea against official milk price

The Sindh High Court issued notices to the chief secretary, Karachi commissioner and other respondents on a petition impugning official price of fresh milk. Commissioner of Karachi had issued a notification in question and fixed the official price of fresh milk for dairy farmers/producers at Rs180 per litre, Rs188 for wholesalers and the retail price of milk was fixed at Rs200 per litre. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 13*)

Cross-border trade essential to address food security challenges: speakers

Cross-border trade is important for Pakistan to address food security challenges amid climate change, while on the other hand, the Asian region has tremendous cross-border trade potential capable of offsetting the food security crisis, observed the speakers at the webinar organised by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), titled “Innovation for Food Security and Regional Trade for Agriculture Promotion,” held in Islamabad. James McNee, First Secretary, Canadian Embassy in Pakistan, said Canada has a long history of exporting grains, canola, and other agricultural products to Pakistan; however, the country needs the political will to modify legislation on GMOs to transform its existing agricultural production. The Canadian envoy underscored that linkages have been established between grain institutes in Canada and Punjab province to further study the GMOs that are being raised in Canada for their suitability to the soil of this region. (*Dawn, October 21st, 2023, Page 4*)

11.2 # Food Scarcity

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Strategy developed to prevent malnutrition among women

The Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) with technical support from Nutrition International has developed and launched a national social and behaviour change (SBC) strategy to protect and promote healthy diets, practices and services among women of the country. The focus will be on preventing all forms of malnutrition among women during the preconception, pregnancy and postpartum stages of nutritional vulnerability.

It may be mentioned that poor maternal and child health has been a long-standing issue in Pakistan. The National Nutrition Survey 2018 revealed that Pakistani women of reproductive age (15-49 years) faced the triple burden of malnutrition - undernutrition, overweight/obese and micronutrient deficiencies.

The survey estimated that 14pc of the reproductive age women were underweight while 24pc and 13pc were overweight and obese, respectively. Similarly, almost half of all pregnant women in Pakistan were anaemic and 22pc are vitamin A deficient. Adolescents make up nearly 22pc of Pakistan's population. The nutrition indicators reflect an abysmal state of adolescents' nutritional status in country - almost one in eight adolescent girls (12pc) is underweight, 11pc of adolescent girls are overweight and over half (56pc) are anaemic. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 4*)

Over 2m children face acute malnutrition in Pakistan: IPC

Around 2.14 million children are suffering acute malnutrition in parts of Pakistan, according to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) released. The acute malnutrition (AMN) analysis conducted in 32 districts of Balochistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh indicated that 23 districts are classified in phase 4 (critical), five in phase 3 (serious) and four in phase 2 (alert). In the analysed districts across the three provinces, approximately 64 per cent of the population faced multidimensional poverty. The primary contributing factors to acute malnutrition encompassed a range of challenges, including inadequate food quality and quantity, heightened food insecurity, insufficient sanitation coverage, elevated rates of diarrhea, acute respiratory infections (ARIs) and fever, as well as suboptimal health-seeking behaviour.

Furthermore, concerns arise from low to medium levels of exclusive breastfeeding, early childbearing, low birth weight, and a prevalence of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women (PLWs) in various districts. Acute malnutrition is influenced by a combination of contributing factors, including insufficient food quality and quantity within households, inadequate sanitation coverage, elevated rates of diarrhea, acute respiratory infections and fever, as well as a poor healthcare-seeking behaviour.

Furthermore, the districts face additional challenges such as suboptimal exclusive breastfeeding rates and a high prevalence of malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women in several areas. The impact of the 2022 flooding further exacerbated the problem of acute malnutrition in most flood-affected districts, as it disrupted the health system and hindered access to healthcare services (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 5*)

Project launched to address malnutrition in five Sindh districts

In response to the growing malnutrition crisis in Sindh, a two-year project targeting five severely affected districts was launched. The project — co-funded by the European Union — will be implemented jointly by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Medical Emergency Resilience Foundation (MERF) and the Strengthening

Participatory Organisation (SPO). It would cover the districts of Kashmore, Ghotki, Sukkur, Khairpur and Naushahro Feroze. (*Dawn, October 28th, 2023, Page 14*)

11.3 # Poverty

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Rising food, energy prices drive surge in poverty across Pakistan: World Bank

Poverty is estimated to have increased in Pakistan during the previous fiscal year due to record high food and energy prices, weak labour markets and flood-related damages, a World Bank report said. Poverty is estimated to have increased due to deteriorating wages and job quality, along with high inflation that eroded purchasing power, particularly of people experiencing poverty. Inflation is projected to remain high at 26.5 per cent in fiscal year 2024 and moderate to 17pc in fiscal year 2025 amid high-base effects and lower global commodity prices. The real GDP growth is expected to only reach 1.7pc in fiscal year 2024, with tight fiscal and monetary policy, persistent inflation and weak confidence due to political uncertainty surrounding upcoming elections. With the resumption of growth, poverty is expected to decline to 37.2pc in fiscal year 2024. The current account deficit is projected to gradually widen to 1.5pc of GDP in fiscal year 2025. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 3*)

Man killed for failing to pay back Rs50 loan

In a shocking incident of human pettiness, three men killed their colleague after he failed to return one of them Rs50 loan in Mandhra village, about 18 kilometres from here near Moenjodaro. (*Dawn, October 27th, 2023, Page 15*)

11.4 # Inflation

Inflation hits 31.4pc amid unprecedented energy prices

Pakistan's headline inflation soared to 31.4 per cent in September from 27.4pc in the previous month as the country grappled with soaring energy prices that eroded the purchasing power of common people who are already struggling with poverty and unemployment. Inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), increased month-on-month by 2pc in September, data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The year-on-year surge in inflation in September was also driven by significant increases in the prices of essential food items. Wheat flour saw a staggering rise of 81.29pc while rice experienced a rise of 64.71pc. Inflation in the first quarter (July to September) surged to 29.04pc in FY24 from 25.11pc over the corresponding period of last year. State Bank of Pakistan has projected 20-22pc average inflation for FY24 from 29.2pc in FY23. The International Monetary Fund has forecast the average CPI inflation for FY24 to be 25.9pc, a significant easing from the previous year's 29.6pc. The federal government has set an annual inflation target of 21pc for the current fiscal year.

In FY23, the annual inflation remained at 29.18pc and surpassed its budgetary target of 11.5pc owing to the unprecedented rupee depreciation, increased domestic taxes, and rising global commodity prices. Inflation was recorded at 12.15pc in FY22. Core

inflation, which excludes food and energy prices, reached 18.6pc in urban areas and 27.3pc in rural areas. The government has raised the interest rate to the highest level in the country's history, reaching 22pc. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 9*)

Sept CPI rises 4 percentage points to 31.4pc MoM

The Consumer Price Index (CPI) rose by 4 percentage points in September to 31.4 percent against the previous month's 27.4 percent, core inflation rose by 0.2 percentage points – from 18.4 in August to 18.6 percent in September while wholesale price index rose by 0.92 percent in July-September 2023-24 to 24.61 against 24.61 percent in August all on year on year basis, as per the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

Average inflation in the first quarter (July-September) of current fiscal year 2023-24 is 29.04 percent compared to 25.11 percent during the same period of last year. On month-on-month basis, it increased to 2 percent in September 2023 as compared to an increase of 1.7 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 1.2 percent in September 2022.

The Sensitive Price Index (SPI) inflation on YoY increased to 32 percent in September 2023 as compared to an increase of 27.9 percent a month earlier and 28.6 percent in September 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 1.7 percent in September 2023 as compared to an increase of 4.1 percent a month earlier and a decrease of 1.4 percent in September 2022.

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) inflation on YoY basis increased to 26.4 percent in September 2023 as compared to an increase of 24.3 percent a month earlier and an increase of 38.9 percent in September 2022. On MoM basis, it increased by 3.1 percent in September 2023 as compared to an increase of 4.2 percent a month earlier and an increase of 1.4 percent in corresponding month of last year i.e. September 2022. (*Business Recorder, October 3rd, 2023, Page 1*)

Official price of milk raised by Rs20 a litre

The city administration increased the official price of milk from Rs180 to Rs200 per litre. The milk retailers, however, have been selling fresh milk at the rate of Rs230 per litre, although the price of the commodity was officially fixed at Rs180 per litre in December last. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 13*)

WPI: Non-food prices take over

The Wholesale Price Index (WPI) registered another month-on-month increase – for the fourth month running – clocking in at 26.4 percent for September 2023. (*Business Recorder, October 5th, 2023, Page 2*)

ECC okays massive hikes in gas tariffs

Economic Coordination Committee of the Cabinet greenlighted a substantial hike in natural gas prices, escalating by up to 194 per cent which will be implemented from Nov 1. In addition to this, consumers will also witness an unprecedented surge in fixed

monthly charges, up to 3,900pc for protected and non-protected consumers. The two companies in question, SSGC and SNGPL, have already reported a deficit of Rs46 billion for the period from July to September. The fixed monthly charges for domestic protected consumers have seen a substantial rise from Rs10 to Rs400. It is pertinent to mention that natural gas reserves of the country are depleting at a compound annual growth rate of 5-7pc. (*Dawn, October 24th, 2023, Page 9*)

Gas prices to go through the roof

The caretaker cabinet approved a whopping increase of up to 3,900 per cent in the fixed monthly charges, and 194 per cent in the consumer rates for natural gas, which will open floodgates to a fresh bout of inflation. (*Dawn, October 31st, 2023, Page 3*)

11.5 # Weekly Inflation

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Short-term inflation stays above 37pc

Short-term inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), saw a year-on-year increase of 37.07 per cent for the week ending Oct 5. The short-term inflation has been on the rise for the fourth consecutive week, primarily driven by a surge in retail prices of petroleum products. This increase has a domino effect on various sectors, particularly amplifying transportation costs. This is the highest increase in three weeks because things are getting expensive every week. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 9*)

Weekly inflation hits 38.28pc

Short-term inflation hit a new high for the fifth week in a row as the retail price of petroleum products soared. Measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), short-term inflation saw a year-on-year increase of 38.28 per cent for the week ending on Oct 12. This is the second-highest increase in five weeks. It was primarily driven by a surge in the retail prices of electricity, petroleum products, LPG and essential food items. Short-term inflation rose 0.3pc from the preceding week. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 9*)

Short-term inflation clocks in at 35.4pc

Short-term inflation soared to 35.45 per cent on a year-on-year basis in the week ending on October 19. Measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), the benchmark saw a sharp rise mainly due to an increase in the prices of essential food items and electricity. The SPI has remained above 30pc for six consecutive weeks. Short-term inflation dipped 1.7pc from the preceding week. (*Dawn, October 21st, 2023, Page 9*)

Weekly inflation rises 29.6pc

Short-term inflation rose 29.65 per cent on a year-on-year basis in the week ending on Oct 27 despite a hefty cut in prices of petroleum products. Measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), the rate decelerated below 30pc following a steady increase over five successive weeks. On a week-on-week basis, the SPI slightly eased 0.33pc mainly because of a drop in petrol price. (*Dawn, October 28th, 2023, Page 9*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

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‘IMF, WB strategies fuel climate damage’

The operating frameworks of IMF and the World Bank Group (WBG) are ill-suited to respond to the climate crisis as their successive interventions have locked in fossil fuels, caused large-scale hydro impacts and led the country to tap into local coal reserves. According to a report released in a webinar by the Alternative Law Collective, Alliance for Climate Justice and Clean Energy, and Recourse, the global financial entities have failed to review their policies and mandates to ensure that they become more accountable and 1.5-degree-celsius-aligned institutions.

The WBG is actively championing large-hydro projects that ignore climate risks something witnessed earlier in the cases of the Left-Bank Outfall Drain and Tarbela Dam. Mr Moulvi reminded the participants that the 2019 Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of \$6bn withdrew tax exemptions on renewable energy (RE) technology and imposed ‘severe cuts’ on public spending, including reversals of fuel and electricity subsidies.

Subsequently, the WBG published Pakistan’s Country Climate Development Report 2022, which contained no diagnostic study of its role in perpetuating climate-averse hydro and power sector developmental frameworks. It presented no analysis of debt and climate connection and took no clear stance on local coal while pushing for more private investments in RE.

Amid the 2022 floods, Mr Moulvi said, the IMF delayed Pakistan’s ninth EFF review, costing \$2.2bn in the net outflow. Moreover, the 2023 Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF signed in the immediate aftermath of the floods ramped up the austerity measures, including more fuel and electricity subsidy cuts. It also encouraged private investments for ‘climate adaptation’ against its reading of the market without providing any diagnostics of the climate harms caused by its fiscal and developmental strategies.

For example, budgetary reforms under the SBA programme prescribe Rs12bn support for an Asian Development Bank-funded coal project and Rs19bn for large hydropower investments, he pointed out. These institutions have generally followed a historic approach that fails to recognise the interactive and dynamic interlinkages between their fiscal and macroeconomic policies, and the broader everyday realities of economic exploitation, gender inequality and climate change. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 9*)

12.1 # Climate Financing

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Govt mulling slapping carbon tax on exports to EU

The government is mulling imposing carbon tax on exports to the European Union (EU) to deal with Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), intended to achieve European carbon neutrality by 2050. The European Green Deal provides a roadmap with actions to boost the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean, circular economy and stop climate change, revert biodiversity loss and cut pollution. It outlines

investments needed and financing tools available, and explains how to ensure a just and inclusive transition. The European Green Deal covers all sectors of the economy, notably transport, energy, agriculture, buildings, and industries such as steel, cement, ICT, textiles and chemicals. (*Business Recorder, October 16th, 2023, Page 1*)

Green Climate Fund okays \$120m for vulnerable communities

The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has approved \$120 million in climate adaptation financing to support the Asian Development Bank's 'Community Resilience Partnership Programme' (CRPP), which aims to strengthen climate resilience in poor and vulnerable communities by scaling up climate adaptation investments at the local level. GCF is a global fund created to help developing countries address the challenge of climate change. Asian Development Bank (ADB) has supported developing member countries to access \$1 billion since becoming an accredited GCF entity in 2015. (*Dawn, October 26th, 2023, Page 4*)

12.2 # Climate Policy

World urged to help Pakistan fight climate change challenges

Speakers at a roundtable conference urged the international community to come forward and support Pakistan in its fight against climate change. These views were expressed by the participants comprising officials of government ministries, representatives of civil society and international development partners at a roundtable conference organised by the National Disaster Risk Management Fund (NDRMF) in connection with the upcoming COP-28, scheduled to be held in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) from November 30 to December 12. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 4*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

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14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Landslide

Tourist killed as landslide hits car in Kaghan valley

A tourist from Lahore was killed after a landslide struck his car on the Mansehra-Naran-Jalkhad Road in Kawai area of Kaghan valley. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 9*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Calls for judicial probe into Sakrand killings grow as Baqar forms committee

While the caretaker CM of Sindh had formed a 3-member body to conduct an inquiry into a deadly raid that led to the killing of four persons in a Sakrand village, civil society, political parties and victim families demanded a judicial probe and arrest of those responsible for the killing of "innocent peasants". (*Dawn, October 1st, 2023, Page 13*)

QWP stages rally against hike in POL prices

The workers of the local chapter of Qaumi Watan Party took out a rally to condemn the recent hike in petroleum products prices. They marched from Haripur Press Club to Siddique-e- Akbar Chowk chanting slogans. (*The News, October 1st, 2023, Page 3*)

SPSF holds rallies for early polls, cut in prices of commodities

Activists of Sindh Peoples Students Federation (SPSF) took out rallies in several cities and held demonstrations outside the respective press clubs against unprecedented price hike and electricity and gas tariffs in the country. The participants kept raising slogans against the price spiral during the course of the protest and demanded substantial relief to the general public. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 15*)

Shutter-down strike across Balochistan

A shutter down strike was observed throughout the province on the call given by the Etihad Ahl-e-Sunnat, Balochistan, against the Mastung tragedy. All markets and trade centres were closed in Quetta, Mastung, Ziarat, Kalat and other cities and towns of Balochistan. Rallies were taken out to condemn the attack and offer Fateha for the victims. Political parties and various business organisations had announced their support for the strike. (*Business Recorder, October 2nd, 2023, Page 3*)

Protest against KE causes gridlock on Clifton roads

A large number of commuters remained stuck for over six hours in a traffic mess in Clifton and adjoining localities as residents of P&T Colony and Gizri staged a sit-in outside the head office of the K-Electric in Defence Housing Authority against prolonged loadshedding. The protesters said that frequent power outages had made their lives miserable as the K-Electric was carrying out unscheduled and extended loadshedding in the vicinity. (*Dawn, October 3rd, 2023, Page 13*)

Battagram residents block KKH over power disconnection

People took to the streets against the Peshawar Electric Supply Company and district administration for disconnecting electricity supply to their villages on the pretext of action against power thieves and defaulters. Residents of Joze, Rajmera, Khadlo and Habib Banda villages held a protest rally. The protesters were chanting slogans against the district administration and Pesco officials. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 4*)

More taxes on salaried class opposed

A World Bank proposal to increase revenue by raising taxes on the salaried class has invoked the ire of professionals across the country, who are already reeling from high inflation. (*Dawn, October 5th, 2023, Page 3*)

Teacher`s murder sparks protests

Residents of Dahimal and surrounding villages kept the Gilgit-Shandur Road blocked against the murder of a schoolteacher in Ghizer district of GB. The students of Hamaran Bathrait Government School also staged a protest. (*Dawn, October 5th, 2023, Page 4*)

Rally demands release of missing persons

Scores of people, including women and children, staged a rally against enforced disappearances of people of Balochistan and demanded their release. The rally started from Arts Council and culminated at Karachi Press Club. The protesters carried banners demanding release of missing persons of province. They said if there were any charges against the missing persons, they should be presented before the court of law and if found guilty, should be punished accordingly. (*Dawn, October 5th, 2023, Page 13*)

Kashmiris take to streets again for tax-free electricity

Thousands of people took to the streets in different cities and towns of AJK as part of their steady campaign in favour of their demands, including tax-free electricity, subsidised wheat flour, and abolition of the unwarranted perks and privileges of the political and bureaucratic elite. The rallies and demonstrations were held amid a complete shutter-down and wheel jam strike in Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions and partially in Mirpur division. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 4*)

Afghan artists protest against possible expulsion

Afghan musicians, singers and artists staged a protest in front of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees office, expressing serious concerns over Pakistan's decision to expel illegal foreign nationals, including those from Afghanistan. They were carrying musical instruments, banners and placards as they chanted slogans. The UNHCR officials did their counselling regarding their concerns, after which they returned. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 5*)

Several thousand join protest against police after man's murder in Thull

Several thousand people belonging to many political and religious parties as well as nationalist groups and civil society organisations joined in the ongoing campaign against the Jacobabad police for their indifference towards citizen's safety and security. Activists and supporters proceeded to Thull town from various districts to join the protest, continuing at a camp for the last 15 days. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 17*)

Growers in Balochistan protest against loadshedding

The Zamindar Action Committee (ZAC) has blamed Wapda for destroying agriculture in Balochistan through persistent, unannounced power loadshedding, which has left people in the agriculture sector unable to repay commercial bank loans, severely affecting their livelihood. Hundreds of landlords organised protest rallies in various towns and cities, including Khuzdar, Qila Saifullah, Surab and Loralai, in response to the continuous and prolonged loadshedding. They took to the streets with placards and banners bearing anti-Wapda slogans and demands. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 5*)

Farmers plan rallies for foreign debt write-off

Farmers will hold rallies in various cities to demand that the international money lenders write off loans of Pakistan and other poor countries as well as compensating for the economic losses of Pakistan due to a climate change. Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee

told that protest rallies would be organised in Lahore, Karachi, Multan, Toba Tek Singh, Shikarpur and other towns to coincide with the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank in Morocco. The demonstrators would also seek cancelling debts of flood victims in Kasur, Pakpattan, Depalpur and other Punjab districts and allocating funds for their rehabilitation.

They said IMF and World Bank policies had failed across the world and had led to an increase in poverty and inequality instead of reducing the same because these lenders force governments of the poor countries to impose more taxes on the poor, increase taxes on utilities for paying back the loans. The two institutions in cooperation with other lenders had spread a net of debts resulting in economic destruction and pushing hundreds of thousands of people below the poverty line. The fossil fuel projects they financed played havoc with the climate in the countries, which had no role in this destruction, and these poor nations were not being compensated for the losses, the farming community leaders regretted. They demanded that Islamabad should immediately stop paying back foreign loans and the funds thus saved should be diverted towards welfare of the down-trodden segments of society and rehabilitation of the farmers who were financially damaged. (*Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 2*)

230 protesters arrested in Lahore in crackdown on govt employees' sit-in

Lahore police launched a crackdown and arrested more than 230 protesters of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Punjab, many of them teachers, who were holding a sit-in outside the Civil Secretariat against the proposed privatisation of public schools, amendments to pension regulations and end of leave encashment. The alliance had launched the protest campaign and blocked the Lower Mall for traffic. The protest turned into a sit-in after the government turned a deaf ear to the protesters' demands.

A total of 34 organisations representing the employees from various Punjab government departments, including health, education and higher education, along with members of the All Pakistan Clerks Association (ApcA), were participating in the sit-in. Lahore police and district administration launched a crackdown on the protesters, including teachers, and arrested 91 of them.

TOBA TEK SINGH: Police arrested a number of male and female teachers and students of schools after their protest turned violent in the Samanabad area of Faisalabad.

GUJRAT: Hafizabad police booked at least 100 students of two schools of Pindi Bhattian on charge of blocking the link road connecting the town with M-2.

SAHIWAL: Demonstrations were held at Faisalabad, Layyah, Sahiwal, Okara, DG Khan, Vehari, and Sheikhpura where the AGEGA members protested the arrest of their leadership and comrades in Lahore.

The AGEGA leadership has given a full strike call to all public schools and colleges of Punjab. Faizan Rana, the senior vice president of the PPLA, told Dawn that all Lahore colleges and schools would remain closed.

OKARA: The teachers observed a strike and held a protest in front of the press club. . The Apca local chapter also joined the protest.

MUZAFFARGARH: The teachers and other government employees held a protest against the new government rules of pension, gratuity and leave encashment at Jatoi. In Muzaffargarh, female teachers held a demonstration in front of the press club.

BAHAWALPUR: The teachers of public schools held a strike for the acceptance of their demands. (*Dawn, October 13th, 2023, Page 2*)

GT Road blocked against killing of Peshawar student

The students of Edwardes College Peshawar held a protest demonstration and demanded early arrest of robbers involved in the murder of their fellow student. The relatives of slain student also participated in the protest. Holding banners and placards, members of different student organisations took out the protest procession from the college and held demonstration. (*Dawn, October 13th, 2023, Page 8*)

Gwadar shuts down over water shortage dispute

A complete shutter down strike was observed in the port city of Gwadar over a shortage of drinking water. Following a call for a strike by the Citizen Committee Gwadar, all bazaars, shops, business centres, shopping plazas, and private banks remained closed throughout the day in Gwadar city and surrounding areas. The port city had been facing a water crisis for the last week, and despite the difficulties faced by the people, the authorities concerned did not take steps to resolve the water supply issue. Meanwhile, the sit-in, which had continued for the last four days at D-Baloch Point in Turbat against the suspension of power supply to Mand, Tump, and other border areas for over a week, has been called off after successful negotiations. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 5*)

16 reporters covering growers' demo in Kahirpur's Hingorja booked

The Kahirpur police registered an FIR against 16 reporters along with around 100 people, who were holding a protest in Hingorja against a lesser rate than the officially fixed price of cotton. The journalists were covering the protest demonstration held outside a cotton factory when police arrived and started applying a baton charge on the protesters in an attempt to disperse them. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 13*)

Handover of 1,000 schools to NGO sparked teachers' protests in Punjab

Thousands of teachers across Punjab are resisting the caretaker government's decision to privatise 1,000 public schools in Punjab and amend the pension regulations. By holding protests and strikes in the major cities as well as the districts, they are demanding the government revoke its decision to hand over the schools to the Muslim Hands

Pakistan, a non-governmental organisation (NGO). The Punjab Teachers Union claims that the government is planning to privatise 10,000 schools, not 1,000, and that it is targeting the schools with the best infrastructure. (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 2*)

Lawyers observe strike to show solidarity with protesting teachers

Bar associations of Attock, Hassanabdal and Taxila observed a strike and boycotted court proceeding to express solidarity with teachers who have been protesting for the fifth consecutive day. The protest call was given by All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) against the implementation of new leave encashment and pension rules, which would affect teachers and other government employees serving in various provincial departments.

Closure of primary, middle and high schools and colleges brought academic activities across the district to a complete standstill. Similarly, routine affairs in various government departments of the districts, including offices of the commissioner, deputy commissioners, assistant commissioners, district council, health, education, Municipal Corporation and municipal committees were also disrupted due to the strike. Total of 34 organisations representing employees from various Punjab government departments, including health, education and higher education, along with members of the All Pakistan Clerks Association (ApcA), were participating in the sit-in. In Taxila, protesters held placards and banners during the sit-in staged at Government High School Taxila. Teachers from rural and urban areas participated. (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 4*)

Govt bans rallies in Balochistan

The Balochistan home and tribal affairs department has prohibited public gatherings and rallies and banned the blocking of main avenues and highways in Red Zone across the province under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. As per a home department notification released, an immediate ban on gathering of five or more individuals has been implemented on national highways, other roads, and within Red Zone areas throughout the province. (*Dawn, October 16th, 2023, Page 5*)

'World Hunger Day' observed

A 'World Hunger Day' was observed by the Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek and Roots for Equity in collaboration with the Asian Peasant Coalition and Pesticide Action Network. A peasant gathering was organised in Ghotki to observe the 'World Hunger Day' which was otherwise the World Food Day. According to a recent report by Unicef and the World Bank, about 333 million children (one in every six children) worldwide live in extreme poverty while 62 million children in South Asia are living in the same condition. The World Food Programme estimates that 345 million people worldwide suffer from severe hunger while according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation, the number of people suffering from hunger in the world in 2022 was between 691 million and 783 million. (*Dawn, October 17th, 2023, Page 15*)

Teachers` protest continues

All educational activities in public schools and colleges across the province remained completely suspended for the second consecutive day in protest against the arrest of 126 teachers. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 2*)

Govt employees, teachers` strike enters 13th day

The government employees and teachers strike in Attock entered its 13th day, causing inconvenience to the public as well as students. The strike, led by All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) and All Pakistan Clerks Association (APCA) is against changes to leave encashment pension rules. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 4*)

Plight of small farmers highlighted in Shikarpur caravan

Representatives of farmers and a civil society organisation held ‘Peoples’ Caravan’ in Shikarpur to highlight the plight of small and landless farmers, especially women, in the wake of unprecedented inflation and exorbitant cost of agriculture and production. It was jointly organised by Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) and Roots for Equity as part of the Global Peoples’ Caravan for Food, Land and Climate Justice. According to officials, similar caravans would be organised in other parts of Pakistan in the coming weeks.

“The caravans will build up to the 28th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP28) of the UN Climate Change Conference happening in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from Nov 30 to Dec 12. Similar caravans or actions in various countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and other regions are planned throughout October-November 2023,” shared Dr Azra Talat Syed of Roots for Equity, while explaining objectives of the activity.

According to her, the COP28 provides an excellent platform to draw global attention from the public, mass media and policymakers to the rural people’s demands to address the interconnected issues of hunger, land and resource grabs, and the climate crisis. “Rural people’s movements are rising to confront unprecedented global hunger, displacement and environmental and climate destruction.

“They are holding into account imperialism – the global empire of the wealthiest countries’ finance oligarchs and their monopoly corporations. It’s important that we expand these movements for truly deep-rooted policy reforms to take place especially in the rural sector, which is the most vulnerable”. (*Dawn, October 19th, 2023, Page 14*)

Lahore police baton-charge protesting teachers and lady health workers

Police arrested over 100 more teachers, lady health workers (LHWs) and other government employees while they also baton-charged them during their protest here for restoration of leave encashment, reversal of changes to pension regulations and cancellation of privatisation plans for public schools. The All Government Employees

Grand Alliance (Agega) was holding a rally from the PMG Chowk to Aiwan-i-Adl when a heavy police contingent reached there. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 2*)

Chaman border protest escalates over passport, visa policy

Workers, supporters and members of all party traders' alliance continued their sit-in in Chaman for the second consecutive day, protesting against the government's decision to make valid passports and visas mandatory for crossing Pak-Afghan border. However, the border officials allowed Pakistani and Afghan travellers to cross the border by showing Pakistani NIC and Afghan Tazkira. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 3*)

Paddy growers rally against millers

A large number of paddy growers, along with their children, took out a rally in Tangwani town of Kandhkot-Kashmore district against rice millers and traders for refusing to offer more than 50 per cent of the agreed upon price of their crop without any valid reason. They said that as against the rate of Rs5,000 per 40-kg, agreed upon before harvesting paddy, they were offering not more than Rs2,500 per 40-kg. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 15*)

Rice farmers stage sit-in against low price

The rice farmers of Garhi Khairo staged a protest sit-in against paddy price being offered to them by traders. Protesting farmers leaders have said that the government of Sindh has fixed paddy price at 4,500 per maund but traders offering them and purchasing rice at 2200 to 2300 rupees per maund. The price offered by traders even could not meet the farmers production expenditure, protesters said. Rice prices experienced a record hike of nearly 90 percent in the last year due to the devastating floods that erased nearly 1.9 million tons or 80 percent of the expected crop production in Sindh alone. (*Business Recorder, October 23th, 2023, page 5*)

Railway workers stop trains against non-payment of salaries

Pakistan Railway workers stopped trains from going to different parts of the country from Rawalpindi for over two hours in protest against non-payment of salaries for two months. They said the workers were facing poverty and unable to meet their kitchen expenses. They said it had become impossible for the workers to pay school fees, electricity, gas bills, purchase medicines and daily-use items. They said during the worst inflation, non-payment of salaries for months had forced the railway workers to borrow money from friends and relatives. If the workers are not paid their pays on time, trains will be stopped by the workers across the country. After negotiations between the management and leaders of the workers, the protest was called off. The management promised to pay the salaries within two days. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 4*)

Peshawar CNG stations go on strike against gas price hike

CNG stations observed a complete strike against an increase in the price of natural gas troubling motorists and commuters. The strike call was given during a sit-in staged by

owners of CNG stations on the University Road. The protesters held placards and banners and shouted slogans against authorities. (*Dawn, October 26th, 2023, Page 8*)

Employees launch movement against corruption in irrigation department

Employees of irrigation department, Sukkur, launched a movement with the slogan of ‘Eliminate corruption and save irrigation’ purportedly to ‘cleanse the department of the menace that had hollowed out one of the oldest institutions of the province’. (*Dawn, October 26th, 2023, Page 15*)

Bigwigs in Chaman to calm border protest

Top civil and military officials arrived in Chaman to hold talks with protesters opposing new restrictions imposed on crossing the border with Afghanistan. For the past five days, thousands of political workers, traders and tribesmen have been protesting against the government’s decision to only allow travellers with a passport and visa to enter from Afghanistan. Now, the state has decided to regulate border crossing and allow only those with all legal documents. (*Dawn, October 27th, 2023, Page 4*)

Transporters go on strike in Swabi

Transporters observed a wheel-jam strike after the owners of CNG stations closed their outlets in the Razaar tehsil in protest against what they said massive hike in the price of the commodity. The CNG station owners said that the huge increase in the price of the commodity by the caretaker government had forced them to close the stations to pressurise the authorities to withdraw the hike because it was not possible for them to run their businesses. (*Dawn, October 28th, 2023, Page 8*)

Rallies, ‘power riots’ play havoc with Karachi’s traffic system

Commuters and road users experienced severe transportation problems due to protests and rallies taken out in the city against power and water shortages and several other rallies over host of issues, including marches in support of Palestine, in the metropolis. The protest demonstrations in various localities triggered prolonged traffic jams on M.A. Jinnah Road near the Numaish intersection, Sharea Faisal on Karsaz, Teen Talwar in Clifton, University Road near NED University and Preedy Street in Saddar, causing immense inconvenience to commuters. (*Dawn, October 29th, 2023, Page 15*)

AT student wing rally slams fee hike

Activists of Sindhi Shagird Tehreek, the student wing of Awami Tehreek (AT), held a rally against increase in student fees, ban on student unions, inadequate budgetary allocations for universities and appointment in the Sindh Public Service Commission (SPSC) on monetary considerations. Speaking to the participants, the leaders described the hike in fees as ‘economic murder’ of students. They said that the Sindh University increased the fee by 15pc this year. They noted with concern that the over the last seven months, the university had increased the fee by 45pc. The SST leaders criticised continued ban on students unions, and remarked that it was tantamount to the “imposition of martial law”. (*Dawn, October 31st, 2023, Page 15*)

15.1 # Pro-Palestinian Protest

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Pakistan rallies condemn Israeli brutalities

Pakistanis staged large rallies all across the country to condemn the ongoing bombardment of the besieged Gaza by the Israeli forces. Members of various political, religious, human rights, trader and civil society organisations of all hues flooded streets in Karachi, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi, Hyderabad, Multan, Faisalabad, Larkana, Hub, and other towns after the noon prayers. Holding placards and banners, they shouted slogans in favour of the oppressed people of Palestine and against the Israeli atrocities. The protesters demanded an immediate end to the Israeli attacks on the unarmed and innocent people of Palestine. People in Khuzdar, Kalat, Sibi, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, Qila Abdullah, Zhob, Noshki, Dera Murad Jamali, Usta Mohammad, Gwadar, Hub, Kharan, Jhal Magsi, and Loralai gathered at prominent places to express solidarity with the people of Gaza. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 3*)

Rallies held across Sindh against Israeli aggression

Activists of religious and political parties, human rights organisations and civil society took to the streets across the province and protested against recent attacks by the Zionist state on Gaza, demanding an immediate halt to the violence against unarmed Palestinians. From right-wing religious organisations to ruling and opposition political parties of the past and from civil society activists to labour rights campaigners, all put aside their differences and raised a collective voice against the Israeli aggression. The protesters regretted that rulers of Islamic countries had failed to respond collectively to the Israeli attacks and stand up in support of Palestinian people. Quoting Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh, the protesters said that Israel was committing ‘genocide’ in its war against Hamas fighters in Gaza. They described the US and rights organisations like the UN as ‘puppets of Israel’ and alleged that they were also involved in terrorism in Gaza. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, page13*)

Rallies against Israeli barbarism continue across Karachi

Demonstrations and rallies continued to protest against Israel’s brutal assault on Gaza and express solidarity with Palestinians. Palestine Foundation staged a women-only rally on main M. A. Jinnah Road, where a large number of women and children marched carrying Palestinian flags and placards. They urged the Muslim world to raise voice against Israeli atrocities on Palestinians and the “evil design” to establish the state of Israel on holy Arab land. The demonstrators also appealed the western world to join hands to express solidarity with the oppressed Palestinians whose rights had been usurped by Zionist forces. A lasting peace in Gaza and Palestine cannot be achieved without Israel putting an end to its settler expansion and reverting to the borders as they stood before 1967. Bombing of the hospital—a clear violation of international humanitarian law; is a heartbreaking reminder of the disproportionate and indiscriminate use of force by Israel in the region.

Civil society stages rally in Clifton

Similarly in Clifton, a large number of people converged at Do Talwar on the call of different organisations of civil society. The speakers at the demonstrations said that this was not a war but rather genocide. There were no symmetries that could be drawn between the oppressor and the oppressed to declare both as victims, they added. They demanded all the world nations, individually and collectively, as well as all world organisations to call for an immediate ceasefire, and to uphold international humanitarian law and the rules of war. (*Dawn, October 22nd, 2023, Page 13*)

Women marchers demand United Nations act to end Israeli atrocities

Aurat March and Pakistan Maholiati Tahaffuz Movement held a march from Do Talwar to Teen Talwar to show solidarity with the Palestinian people. Meanwhile, the Palestine Foundation Pakistan (PLF) organised a "Women March for Palestine" in Karachi to express solidarity with the people of Palestine and victims of the Israeli bombing on Gaza. Demonstrators, including women and children, were carrying placards and banners in their hands, on which the slogans of "Stop the Genocide of the Oppressed Palestinians", "Israel is an illegitimate state", and "Death to America" were written. The protesters also made an effigy of Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and burned it at the end of the rally. (*The News, October 22th, 2023, Page 14*)

Peshawar protesters urge UN to stop Israeli atrocities in Gaza

Workers of different political parties and student organisations staged protests demonstrations to condemn the Israeli brutalities against Palestinians and express their sympathies with the families of victims in Gaza. The rallies were also attended by children. The participants of the rallies were carrying symbolic coffins to express solidarity with the people of Palestine. The children participating in the protest kept chanting slogans against killing of innocent Palestinians by Israeli forces.

The children demanded of Muslim Ummah to support Palestinians and take effective action against Israel. They also criticised the American government for supporting Israeli brutalities. They said that Israel was killing innocent Palestinian including minors, teenagers and women. They appealed to the international community to play role in restoration of peace in Palestine. The participants of the rallies were holding banners and placards inscribed with different slogans in support of Palestinians. They also expressed grave concerns over increase in casualties and arrests of innocent citizen.

The protesters urged United Nations to stop the genocide of innocent Palestinians and ensure provision of medical treatment and food items to them. They vowed to stand with their Palestinian brethren till last drop of blood. Addressing the protest rallies, the speakers expressed their disappointment about the silence of Islamic countries over the Israeli aggression. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 9*)

Protest march, candlelit vigil held for Palestinians in Karachi

While a large number of citizens, including women and children, marched from M.A. Jinnah Road to the US Consulate General to condemn the Israeli atrocities in Gaza and US support for the Zionist state's barbarism, members of the Hindu, Christian and Sikh communities were among the participants who held a candlelit vigil outside Governor House for the oppressed Palestinians.

A candlelit vigil for the oppressed Palestinians was organised by Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori outside the Gate No1 of Governor House. People from all walks of life, members of civil society, media representatives attended the event. Members of Hindu, Christian and Sikh communities also participated in the event. They expressed their solidarity with the Palestinian brothers facing brutal attacks of Israeli forces. The stage made at Governor House was decorated with Palestine flags and banners. (*Dawn, October 23th, 2023, Page 13*)

Massive pro-Palestine protests lament state 'inaction' on Gaza situation

The government's position on the situation in Gaza was criticised as tens of thousands of people attended protests organised to condemn Israeli atrocities against Palestinians. (*Dawn, October 30th, 2023, Page 3*)

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

1.1 # Water

Pakistan among nations hit by ‘out of balance’ water cycle

Pakistan was among the nations impacted by “an out of balance” hydrological cycle due to climate change in 2022, the World Meteorological Organisation said and called for a fundamental policy shift towards better monitoring. The ‘State of Global Water Resources 2022 Report’ published by the WMO said over 50 per cent of the global catchment areas experienced deviations from normal river discharge conditions in 2022. Most of these areas were drier than normal, while a smaller percentage of basins displayed above or much above normal conditions. From 2000 to 2018, the total glacier mass balance decreased by more than 4pc. There has been a notable decrease in snow cover and a big increase in the volume of glacial lakes. This has impacted river runoffs at the Indus, Amu Darya, Yangtze and Yellow River basins, indicating climate change’s evolving influence on the region.

A heatwave early in the year increased meltwater from glaciers, increasing river levels, which were then swelled by severe monsoon rainfall, more than twice the average in July and August. The report said throughout 2022, anomalies in soil moisture and evaporation impacted the river discharge conditions. Europe saw increased evaporation and decreased soil moisture and river flows during the summer because of a major heatwave and drought. Severe droughts impacted many parts of Europe, posing transportation challenges in rivers like the Danube and Rhine and disrupting nuclear electricity production in France due to the lack of cooling water. The extremely low water levels affected navigation on Mississippi River in US due to a continuous drought.

The hydrological cycle is spinning out of balance as a result of climate change and human activities. Droughts and extreme rainfall events are wreaking a heavy toll on lives and economies. Melting snow, ice and glaciers have increased hazards like floods and threaten long-term water security for many millions of people. There must be improved monitoring, data-sharing, cross-border collaboration and assessments of water resources — and an accompanying increase in investments to facilitate this. The report highlighted the lack of accessible verified hydrological data. Africa, the Middle East and Asia, in particular, have too little available observational data. According to UN estimates, currently, 3.6bn people face inadequate access to water at least a month per year. The number is expected to increase to more than 5bn by 2050. (*Dawn, October 13th, 2023, Page 12*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Disasters wipe out \$3.8tr in crop, livestock output in 30 years: FAO

A staggering \$3.8 trillion loss in crop and livestock production has been reported over the past 30 years due to disasters, according to FAO. This equals an average annual loss of \$123 billion, or five per cent of global agricultural GDP. The report, titled ‘The Impact of Disasters on Agriculture & Food Security’, brings first-ever global estimation of the impact of disasters on agricultural production focused on crops and livestock.

The FAO said that average losses over 30 years have increased across all the main agricultural product groups, with an average of 69 million tonnes of cereals, 40m tonnes of fruits and vegetables and 16m tonnes of meat, dairy products and eggs lost annually due to extreme events. It revealed that over the last three decades, disasters — defined as serious disruptions to the functioning of a community or society — inflicted the highest relative losses on lower and lower-middle-income countries, up to 15 per cent of their total agricultural GDP.

Data from post-disaster needs assessments shows that nearly 23pc of total economic losses due to disasters were sustained by the agriculture sector. Lower-income and lower-middle-income countries sustained the highest losses due to extreme events, up to 10pc of their agricultural GDP. Global crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing armed conflicts have impacted agricultural production as well as input and output markets, resulting in negative effects on the wider agri-food system and overall food security.

The FAO said that agriculture around the world is increasingly at risk of being disrupted due to multiple hazards and threats such as flooding, water scarcity, drought, declining agricultural yields and fisheries resources, loss of biological diversities and environmental degradation. Variations in water supply and extreme temperatures are two of the biggest factors that directly and indirectly impact the agricultural production.

In extreme cases, disasters result in the displacement and outward migration of rural populations. Pakistan’s southern province of Sindh is an illustrative example of how the combination of slow and sudden onset hazards triggered displacement, negatively impacting food systems and increasing food insecurity. Asia experiences by far the largest share of total economic losses, almost equal to losses experienced in Africa, Europe and the Americas put together. However, losses in Asia only account for 4pc of the agricultural GDP. In Pakistan, disaster risk reduction best practices were tested on wheat, cotton, rice, sugar cane and vegetable and oilseed crops, including okra and sunflower, during the two main cropping seasons — kharif and rabi — in districts of the Punjab and Sindh, which are highly vulnerable to climate change and among the most vulnerable districts within the Indus Basin. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 12*)

4 # NON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

4.1 # Poultry

Bird flu infects US poultry flock

The US has detected its first case of avian flu on a commercial poultry farm since April, in a flock of 47,300 turkeys in South Dakota. Infected flocks are culled to prevent spread of the virus, potentially tightening the poultry meat and egg supply if more cases occur. Since 2022, 58.8 million US chickens, turkeys and other birds have been wiped out by the disease, officially known as highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), according to the USDA. The losses drove prices for turkey meat and eggs to record highs last year, raising costs for inflation hit consumers. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 10*)

Gene editing offers protection against bird flu

Scientists in Britain have found they can partially protect chickens from bird flu infections by editing their genes, signalling a new potential strategy to reduce the spread of the deadly virus. Highly pathogenic avian influenza, known as bird flu, has spread to new corners of the globe since 2022, wiping out millions of poultry birds and sending egg and turkey prices soaring. Experts warn that mutations could potentially threaten a human pandemic, though the current strain has not caused significant disease in people. Researchers said they used the gene-editing tool CRISPR to make specific changes to a gene called ANP32 that is essential to support flu viruses inside chickens' cells. (*Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 11*)

5 # TRADE

Inflation, high rates and war crimp global trade: WTO

Global trade growth will be sharply lower than forecast this year as stubborn inflation, high interest rates and the war in Ukraine pressure economies around the globe, the World Trade Organization said. Strains in China's vast property market also prompted the WTO to cut its trade growth forecast to just 0.8 percent this year, less than half the increase it had previously projected. The WTO expects real world GDP to increase by 2.6 percent at market exchange rates this year, and by 2.5 percent in 2024. (*Business Recorder, October 6th, 2023, Page 10*)

UAE and South Korea complete talks for trade deal

The United Arab Emirates and South Korea have concluded talks towards a bilateral trade deal, known as a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). Trade and investment ties between the Gulf state and South Korea have been steadily advancing; in the first half of 2023, bilateral non-oil trade reached \$3 billion, similar to the same period last year, but up 21pc over 2021. (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 10*)

Russia, Dubai's DP World to develop Arctic sea route

Russian nuclear agency Rosatom said it has set up a joint venture with Dubai's DP World to develop container shipping through the Arctic as part of an initiative heavily

promoted by President Vladimir Putin. The deal with one of the world's top port operators is the most tangible sign yet of Moscow's ability to attract big international partners to help it realise its ambitious plans for what it calls the Northern Sea Route. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 10*)

China signs US agriculture purchase agreements in first ceremony in years

A delegation of commodity importers from China signed agreements to buy billions of dollars' worth of agricultural goods, mostly soybeans, during a ceremony in Iowa, the US Soybean Export Council (USSEC) said. The agreements, signed at the China-US Sustainable Agricultural Trade Forum, were the first such bulk signings since 2017 between top soybean importer Beijing and the US, the world's second-largest supplier of the oilseed. The deals also included corn, sorghum and wheat, the US Soybean Export Council said.

China's crop import purchases from the US are well below normal this year as Brazil, the world's largest exporter of corn and soy, harvested bumper crops. As of Oct. 19, soybean purchases by China from the latest US harvest were down 39% from the same time last year, according to USDA. Its corn purchases were down 73% from a year prior. China recently made rare purchases of US soft red winter wheat, however, after rains damaged quality of Chinese harvest. (*Business Recorder, October 25th, 2023, Page 5*)

5.1 # Export

India reviewing floor price for basmati rice exports

The Indian government said it is actively reviewing the floor price it has set for basmati rice exports even as it continues to curb overseas shipments. The decision comes after New Delhi, the world's biggest rice exporter said it will maintain a \$1,200 per ton minimum export price (MEP) on basmati rice shipments, which was first imposed in August to calm local prices. (*Business Recorder, October 16th, 2023, Page 12*)

India sets \$800 per ton minimum export price on onions till end-Dec

India has set a floor price of \$800 per metric ton minimum export price on onions up to Dec 31, the government said, in a bid to ensure adequate domestic availability and to stabilise prices. The government also announced procurement of 200,000 tons of onions for its buffer, over and above the 500,000 tons already procured. The south Asian nation had in August imposed a 40% export duty on onions up to Dec. 31 to improve domestic availability of the vegetable. (*Business Recorder, October 29th, 2023, Page 8*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN

Kenya to seek \$1bn loan from China

Kenya's President William Ruto will ask China for a \$1 billion loan to complete stalled road construction projects. Ruto's plan, which also includes a request to lengthen the maturity periods of existing loans, marks a shift in his stance on Chinese debt after his coalition criticised his predecessor's borrowing spree from China during last year's election campaign. The Chinese loans, which stand at more than \$8 billion, were used by former President Uhuru Kenyatta's government to construct infrastructure like roads, but many of these projects have since stalled after contractors left over unpaid bills. (*The News, October 8th, 2023, Page 18*)

European Parliament approves 50bn euros more for Ukraine

The European Parliament backed giving an extra 50 billion euros (\$53 billion) in European Union money over the next four years to help rebuild a Ukraine. The proposal, advanced by the European Commission in June, would see a mix of grants and loans go to Ukraine as a line in the bloc's long term 2024-2027 budget. The United States, which has hit headwinds in Congress over providing more aid to Ukraine, has so far committed \$43 billion in military assistance and approved \$113 billion in aid, including humanitarian help. In March, the World Bank estimated Ukraine's total long-term reconstruction costs at more than 380 billion euros. (*Business Recorder, October 18th, 2023, Page 5*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

WB approves 600m USD loan to boost Philippines' digital transformation

The World Bank said that it has approved 600 million US dollars in financing for the Philippines to support reforms aimed at increasing digitalization. The Philippines' First Digital Transformation Development Policy Loan aims to promote the digital transformation of government and digital infrastructure policies, expand financial inclusion through digital finance, and stimulate the growth of digital services. (*Business Recorder, October 1st, 2023, Page 8*)

Africa hears pledges but little action at IMF-World Bank talks

Pummelled by debt, poverty and natural disasters, African nations heard many pledges of support but saw little action at the first IMF-World Bank talks to be held on their soil since 1973. More than 20 African countries are either already in or on the edge of debt distress. In some countries, more than 40 percent of the state budget goes to servicing the debt -- an unsustainable level in countries that need to maintain basic public services such as water and electricity. But negotiations to restructure debts have become more complicated over the years as new creditors such as China, Saudi Arabia and Brazil have emerged, in addition to private lenders. Now countries must negotiate terms with China and the Paris Club of creditors, which mostly comprises Western nations with very different policies to Beijing.

One example is Zambia, which defaulted on \$18.6 billion in foreign debt during the pandemic in 2020. The country's debt totalled \$32.8bn at the end of 2022. For more than two years, the country has been negotiating with creditors led by China and France on \$6.3bn of loans. An agreement in principle was announced in June and a memorandum of understanding was finally agreed during the meetings in Marrakesh. It must now be signed by each official creditor. (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 12*)

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

10 # ENVIRONMENT

UN adopts plan to reduce chemicals harm

A new roadmap to reduce the environmental risks from chemicals and waste was adopted at a United Nations conference as part of a drive to manage damaging chemical exposure. The Global Framework on Chemicals was adopted by governments, companies, and NGOs at the fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management, held in Bonn, Germany, and organised by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The plan sets out 28 concrete targets and guidelines for key sectors across the entire lifecycle of chemicals, from production to waste. Germany pledged 20 million euros towards implementing the framework. (*Dawn, October 1st, 2023, Page 10*)

24 whales killed in Iceland this year

Iceland's controversial whaling season has come to an end with a total of 24 fin whales killed this year, as the practice faces an uncertain future under heavy criticism. Iceland is one of just three countries that allow commercial whaling — along with Norway and Japan — in the face of fierce criticism from environmentalists and animal rights' defenders. Iceland temporarily suspended its whale hunt on June 20 for two months after a government-commissioned report concluded the hunt did not comply with the country's Animal Welfare Act. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 11*)

Researchers call for urgent action to save unidentified plants

Millions of undescribed plants and fungi species may already be under threat from extinction, researchers at London's Kew Gardens said, calling for urgent action to protect them. (*Published in Dawn, October 11th, 2023, Page 10*)

10.1 # Health

Doctors report outbreak of disease among Gaza's displaced

Doctors in Gaza say patients arriving at hospitals are showing signs of disease caused by overcrowding and poor sanitation after more than 1.4 million people fled their homes for temporary shelters under Israel's heaviest-ever bombardment. Aid agencies have repeatedly warned of a health crisis in the tiny, crowded Palestinian enclave under an Israeli blockade that has cut off electricity, clean water and fuel, with only small UN convoys of food and medicine getting in. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 11*)

Over 100 die from cholera, dengue in war-torn Sudan

A total of 1,049 cases of cholera, 73 of them fatal, were recorded in Khartoum. Nine Sudanese states have recorded cases of mosquito-borne dengue, with 49 deaths from a total of 3,316 cases, the ministry said. Gedaref state, which borders Ethiopia, reported 2,152 of the cases and 33 of the deaths. The health ministry report said 70 percent of hospitals in war-torn areas are out of service. (*The News, October 29th, 2023, Page 10*)

10.2 # Pollution

Carbon pollution expected to hit new record this year, say researchers

Global emissions of planet-heating carbon dioxide are expected to rise around one per cent to reach a new all-time high in 2023, the climate scientist behind the preliminary research said. Scientists say carbon pollution will need to be cut almost in half this decade to meet the world's targets of limiting global warming and avoiding catastrophic climate impacts. Instead they have continued to rise with current expectations that the year will see emissions up between 0.5pc and 1.5pc. It would be very unlikely that emissions decline in 2023. (*Dawn, October 18th, 2023, Page 10*)

11 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

Soft landing possible, but fiscal, debt risks abound: IMF chief

Stronger demand for services and progress on lowering inflation have increased the chances that the global economy can escape recession, but fiscal and financial risks abound, IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva said. Georgieva, setting the stage for next week's annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, said successive shocks since 2020 had slashed \$3.7 trillion from global output, current growth remained well below pre-pandemic levels, and medium-term growth prospects had weakened further. Stubborn inflation meant interest rates would have to remain "higher for longer" and economic fragmentation threatened to hit emerging and developing economies hardest, she said. (*Business Recorder, October 6, 2023, Page 1*)

IMF says world economy 'limping'

The IMF kept its 2023 global growth forecast unchanged but warned that the economy is "limping along" as inflation remains high and the outlooks for China and Germany were downgraded. The IMF's updated World Economic Outlook still sees growth of 3.0 percent for this year but it cut its forecast for 2024 to 2.9 percent, down 0.1 percentage points from its July report. Inflation, which has fallen sharply since last year, is predicted to remain elevated at 6.9 percent this year, up slightly from July, and 5.8 percent in 2024, up 0.6 percentage points. Central banks have raised interest rates sharply in efforts to contain inflation.

The United States is performing better than other major economies, with the IMF upgrading its growth forecast from 1.8 percent to 2.1 percent for this year. It will slow to 1.5 percent next year, but it is 0.5-percentage-points higher than in the IMF's July

outlook. By contrast, China's outlook for the next two years was lowered under the weight of a real estate crisis threatening the world's second biggest economy. The Chinese economy is now expected to grow by 5.0 percent this year — down from 5.2 percent previously — and slow further to 4.2 percent in 2024, down from 4.5 percent. (*Business Recorder, 11 October, 2023, Page 1*)

11.1 # Food Scarcity

Food, fresh water rapidly running out: WFP

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) warned that crucial supplies were running dangerously low in the Gaza Strip after Israel imposed a total blockade. It's a dire situation in the Gaza Strip that we're seeing evolve with food and water being in limited supply & quickly running out. (*Business Recorder, October 13th, 2023, Page 1*)

11.2 # Poverty

Poorest states face \$220bn spending cuts

Some of the world's poorest countries face budget cuts topping \$220 billion over the coming five years due to a debt crisis that has pushed dozens to the brink of default, according to an Oxfam International report released. A record number of developing nations are in debt distress as rising global interest rates, soaring inflation and a series of economic shocks following the Covid-19 pandemic hammer state finances. (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 9*)

IMF, World Bank urge funds for poverty, climate fights

The heads of the IMF and World Bank urged member nations to boost the funding firepower of the global lenders to help poorer countries combat poverty and climate change. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 9*)

11.3 # Inflation

Sugar hits 13-year high: FAO

Global sugar prices soared to their highest level in almost 13 years in September as the El Nino weather phenomenon hit production in India and Thailand, FAO said. FAO's Sugar Price Index jumped by 9.8 percent compared to August, highest point since November 2010. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 9*)

US inflation is 'still too high': Fed Chair Powell

US inflation is "still too high" despite a recent slowdown, Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said, leaving the door open for a new interest rate hike. Additional evidence of "persistently above-trend growth," or a reversal of the recent decline in job openings and softening of wage growth could cause the Fed to reconsider its current rate pause. (*Business Recorder, October 20th, 2023, Page 5*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate indicators likely to remain positive

The Climate indicators like El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO) and Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) are likely to remain positive from Oct till Dec 2023, the Met Office has said. The positive phases of ENSO and IOD may cause slightly above normal rains and temperatures in the country during October, November and December 2023, it said in its outlook. (*Business Recorder, October 5th, 2023, Page 19*)

Climate tipping point closer than previously thought, new studies show

As climate activists around the world step up their protests over the way the developed world is ignoring environmental and climate-related red flags, startling new scientific data suggests that the climate crisis – forecast to reach its zenith around the year 2050 – may have been brought forward by no less than a decade. In addition, fresh data from climate think tank Ember estimates that the global electricity sector’s carbon emissions are projected to potentially reach their peak this year, while another study has put the damage caused by the climate crisis through extreme weather to be around \$16 million per hour over the past 20 years.

The findings by Nature Geoscience examine five different scenarios which includes very high emissions, high emissions, medium emission, low and very low emissions scenarios, and in each of them, the world is projected to experience a warming of at least 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. In addition Ember’s Global Electricity Review 2023 underscores the rapid growth of renewable energy, approaching the necessary pace to triple capacity by the decade’s end, aligning with the critical 1.5°C pathway for addressing climate change. Notably, the report highlights a minimal increase in emissions in the first half of this year compared to the previous year. The data from the climate think-tank covers 78 countries that represent around 92 per cent of the world’s electricity demand, and focuses on the January-June period of the current year.

However, consensus among both studies is that achieving the most optimistic scenario, wherein carbon dioxide emissions reach net zero around 2050, is crucial for Earth to eventually return to a temperature below the critical threshold. Given the prevailing extreme temperatures of 40 to 50 °C, this goal may appear challenging but remains essential for mitigating climate impacts. The reports’ shared conclusion is that ongoing extreme events are steadily pushing ecosystems towards critical ‘tipping points,’ leading to irreversible changes. For instance, two degrees temperature rise could endanger up to 18pc of land species, escalating to 50pc at four degrees.

This also highlights that ecosystems in the Arctic, mountainous regions, and coastal areas that are highly susceptible are facing the highest risk from these transformations. Ice and glacier melt which is happening at an accelerated rate already will play a part in a major rise of sea level which would be irreversible for centuries. “Additionally, ecosystems such as forests, peatlands, and permafrost, which naturally store greenhouse

gases, are in danger of being driven into a state where they release these gases, further exacerbating global warming”. (*Dawn, October 10th, 2023, Page 12*)

Yellen urges more IMF, WB reforms for climate fight

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said, she backed efforts to boost the lending firepower of the IMF and World Bank to combat poverty and climate change. (*Business Recorder, October 11th, 2023, Page 11*).

Climate ‘countdown clock’ report unveiled

In a year marked by devastating extreme weather events, Dubai will host key UN negotiations starting on November 30 aimed at curbing greenhouse gas emissions and helping the developing world deal with climate impacts. The UN scientific advisory panel in charge of summarising climate change research has produced comprehensive and authoritative assessment reports in cycles of five to seven years since 1988. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has warned the world is on course to cross the key warming threshold of 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels in the early 2030s. But the lengthy time lag between its gargantuan reports has sparked concern that backward-looking research is less useful for policymakers responding to a fast-moving climate emergency. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023, Page 10*)

Life on Earth under ‘existential threat’: climate scientists

Climate change poses an “existential threat” to life on Earth, prominent scientists warned in an assessment of this year’s avalanche of heat records and weather extremes that they said are hitting more ferociously than expected. With expectations that 2023 will be the hottest year on record, regions across the planet have been scorched by deadly heat waves. Others have been hit by floods, or in some cases, have suffered both extremes in quick succession. (*Dawn, October 25th, 2023, Page 10*)

12.1 # Carbon Emission

Major states told to ensure 68pc cut in cooling emissions by ’50

With climate warming leading to more air conditioning use worldwide, dozens of countries including China, India and the United States are being asked to commit to a global pledge that would require at least a 68 per cent reduction in cooling-related emissions by 2050. The Global Cooling Pledge set to be announced at the upcoming United Nations climate summit, COP28 represents a tough request given the cooling industry is only expected to grow. The emissions from both the refrigerants and the energy used in cooling now account for about 7pc of global greenhouse gas emissions, and are expected to triple by 2050 as temperatures continue to rise. (*Dawn, October 20th, 2023, Page 10*)

12.2 # Climate Crisis

September hottest on record by `extraordinary` margin: EU monitor

Last month was the hottest September on record by an “extraordinary” margin as the world flirts dangerously with breaching a key warming limit, the EU climate monitor said. Much of the world sweltered through unseasonably warm weather in September, in a year expected to be the hottest in human history and after the warmest-ever global temperatures during the Northern Hemisphere summer. September’s average surface air temperature of 16.38C was 0.93C above the 1991-2020 average for the month and 0.5C above the previous 2020 record, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said in a report. Temperature records are normally broken by much smaller margins closer to one-tenth of a degree. The report said the figure was “the most anomalous warm month” in its dataset going back to 1940 and around 1.75C hotter than the September average in the 1850-1900 pre-industrial period. (*Dawn, October 6, 2023, Page 12*)

Despite record low ice, nations fail to agree on Antarctic reserves

A multinational group on Antarctic conservation failed to break a years-long deadlock and agree new marine reserves in the region, despite record low ice. The Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources ended a fortnight of meetings in Australia once again unable to reach a deal on three new marine protected areas (MPAs). The proposed sanctuaries around Antarctica would safeguard nearly four million square kilometres (1.5 million square miles) of ocean from human activities, in the largest act of ocean protection in history. The proposed protected areas would have limited human activity, particularly fishing, and environmentalists. (*Dawn, October 28th, 2023, Page 10*)

12.3 # Climate Financing

EU launches first phase of world`s first carbon tax

The European Union launched the first phase of the world’s first system to impose CO2 emissions tariffs on imported steel, cement and other goods as it tries to stop more polluting foreign products from undermining its green transition. The planned tariff has caused disquiet among trading partners and at a forum last month, China’s top climate envoy Xie Zhenhua urged countries not to resort to unilateral measures such as the EU levy. The bloc will not begin collecting any CO2 emission charges at the border until 2026. However, marks the start of an initial phase of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) when EU importers will have to report the greenhouse gas emissions embedded during the production of imported volumes of iron and steel, aluminium, cement, electricity, fertilisers and hydrogen. Importers will from 2026 need to purchase certificates to cover these CO2 emissions to put foreign producers on a level footing with EU industries that must buy permits from the EU carbon market when they pollute. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 10*)

12.4 # Climate Policy

Climate ‘loss and damage’ talks end in failure

A crucial meeting on climate “loss and damages” ahead of COP28 ended in failure, with countries from the global north and south unable to reach an agreement. The agreement to set up a dedicated fund to help vulnerable countries cope with climate “loss and damage” was a flagship achievement of last year’s COP27 talks in Egypt. But countries left the details to be worked out later. A series of talks held this year have tried to tease out consensus on fundamentals like the structure, beneficiaries and contributors — a key issue for richer nations who want China to pay into the fund. (*Business Recorder, October 22nd, 2023, Page 8*)

Rooftops of world caving, says UN chief in desperate plea for climate action

Nepal’s snow-capped mountains have lost close to one-third of their ice, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said and urged the world to “stop the madness” of climate change. Glaciers in the wider Himalayan and Hindu Kush ranges are a crucial water source for around 240 million people in the mountainous regions, as well as for another 1.65 billion people in the South Asian and Southeast Asian river valleys below. Scientists say they are melting faster than ever before due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters. Climate scientists say the earth’s temperature has increased by an average of 0.74 degrees Celsius over the past 100 years, but warming across South Asia’s Himalayas has been greater than the global averages. (*Dawn, October 31st, 2023, Page 12*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Cyclone

39 dead after Mexico hurricane leaves vast destruction

Acapulco was struggling to recover from an extraordinarily powerful hurricane which claimed 39 lives and provoked widespread power, water and telephone outages. As aid finally began to arrive after Hurricane Otis’ devastating landfall, the government upped the latest death toll from the previous report of 27. The current toll includes 29 men and 10 women. (*The News, October 29th, 2023, Page 11*)

13.2 # Flood

New York City paralysed by flash floods

Torrential downpour after a week of mostly steady rainfall brought flash flooding to New York City, disrupting subway service, inundating ground-level apartments and turning some streets into small lakes. Nearly 8 inches (20 cm) of rain drenched parts of New York City, allowing a sea lion at Central Park Zoo to briefly escape its enclosure. New York Governor Kathy Hochul declared a state of emergency due to the “life-threatening” floods, mobilising National Guard troops. Such heavy rainfall events have become more frequent, attributed to global warming and extreme weather patterns.

September marked one of the wettest on record, with 13.74 inches (34.9 cm) of rain and more anticipated. (*Dawn, October 1st, 2023, Page 12*)

Floods kill 10 in Sikkim; 23 Indian troops go missing

At least ten people were killed in India's state of Sikkim and 82 others, including 23 army personnel, were missing after heavy rainfall caused the glacial Lhonak lake to overflow, spurring catastrophic flooding in the region. The north-eastern state received 40.9 mm of rainfall according to the India Meteorological Department almost five times its normal rate of 8.6 mm for this time of the year. (*Dawn, October 5th, 2023, Page 10*)

22,000 affected after Sikkim lake flooding; 150 still missing

At least 42 people were killed after a glacial lake burst its banks and triggered flash floods in the Indian Himalayas this week as rescuers kept searching for almost 150 missing. Disaster, which came ahead of a popular festive and tourism season in scenic state, had impacted the lives of 22,000 people. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 10*)

China warns of big waves as typhoon approaches

China warned of big waves, heavy rain and strong wind as Typhoon Koinu approaches the southern province of Guangdong and Hainan island. Waves of up to nine metres were expected in the South China Sea under the impact of the storm. (*Dawn, October 8th, 2023, Page 12*)

Indian flood toll up to 77 as waters recede

At least 77 people are confirmed dead in the floods that hit India's northeast, authorities with destroyed roads and bridges leaving thousands more still cut off despite waters receding. (*Dawn, October 9th, 2023, Page 10*)

Hong Kong raises warning for typhoon, closes schools

Hong Kong issued its second-highest storm warning signal, prompting the closure of some transport services and schools, as Typhoon Koinu skirted the financial hub, bringing rains and powerful gusts. Before moving to Hong Kong, Koinu had grazed nearby Taiwan, bringing torrential rain and record-breaking winds to its outlying Orchid Island. Southern China is frequently hit during summer and autumn months by typhoons that form in the warm oceans east of the Philippines and then travel west. (*Dawn, October 9th, 2023, Page 12*)

Storm triggers floods, power cuts in Northern Europe

Deadly Storm Babet unleashed extensive flooding and damaged towns in Denmark and Norway on Saturday, while continuing to sweep across the UK. Three people died in Scotland and England and families were trapped in flooded homes as the storm battered Britain and Ireland. (*The News, October 22th, 2023, Page 10*)

13.3 # Wildfire

Australia fires force evacuations as country swelters

Out-of-control bushfires forced hundreds of residents and tourists to flee several towns in rural southeast Australia, as the country sweltered in extreme temperatures. Further north in Sydney, temperatures reached 35.5 degrees Celsius — the warmest October day since 2019. The hottest October day on record was 38.2C in 2004. (*Dawn, October 2nd, 2023, Page 10*)

Smoke from Brazil Amazon rainforest fires suffocates Manaus

Manaus, the largest city in Brazil's Amazonas state, has for days been engulfed by a toxic cloud of smoke from forest fires lit by what the government labeled "criminals". The fires in the Amazon have produced a blanket of grey smoke over the capital of the northern state of Amazonas. Air quality in the city is among the worst in the world, according to the World Air Quality Index. (*The News, October 15th, 2023, Page 12*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earthquake

17 hurt as two quakes rock Nepal

Two earthquakes rocked western Nepal, injuring 17 people, damaging homes and triggering a landslide that blocked a major highway, authorities said. The landslide after the quakes of magnitude 6.3 and 5.3 in the district of Bajhang, bordering India, blocked the road to the southern plains. Tremors from the quakes were felt as far away as the Indian capital of New Delhi, where people rushed out of their homes and office buildings in case the structures were compromised. Police said 17 people were injured and were being treated in hospital. (*Dawn, October 4th, 2023, Page 12*)

120 die as quake jolts Afghanistan`s cultural capital

The death toll from a magnitude 6.3 earthquake in western Afghanistan rose to about 120 with more than 1,000 others being treated for injuries. The United States Geological Survey said the epicentre was 40 kilometres northwest of the region's largest city Herat, and was followed by eight aftershocks with magnitudes between 4.3 and 6.3. (*Dawn, October 8th, 2023, Page 14*)

Afghan earthquakes kill 2,445, Taliban say, as deaths mount

More than 2,400 people were killed in earthquakes in Afghanistan in the deadliest tremors to rock the quake-prone mountainous country in years. They were among the world's deadliest quakes this year, after tremors in Turkey and Syria killed an estimated 50,000 in February. Janan Sayeeq, spokesman for the Ministry of Disasters, said in a message to Reuters that the toll had risen to 2,445 dead, but he revised down the number of injured to "more than 2,000". Earlier, he had said that 9,240 people had been injured. Sayeeq also said 1,320 houses had been damaged or destroyed. (*Business Recorder, October 9th, 2023, Page 12*)

Thousands of Afghans out in cold after deadly quakes

Thousands of Afghans who survived a powerful earthquake that killed more than 2,00 people were bracing for a winter of homelessness as rescuers made last-ditch efforts to find survivors. The United Nations said more than 12,000 people, from some 1,700 families, are estimated to have been affected. (*Dawn, October 12th, 2023, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Australians rally against Aboriginal deaths in custody

Protesters rallied against the disproportionate number of Aboriginal Australians dying behind bars, highlighting their plight as the nation prepares for a historic Indigenous rights referendum. Aboriginal Australians are among the most heavily incarcerated ethnic groups on the planet, according to official figures, and are far more likely to die in state custody than members of the general population. The many disparities faced by Aboriginal communities have been put under the spotlight ahead of next weekend's referendum, which will decide if Indigenous Australians are recognised in the constitution for the first time. (*Dawn, October 7th, 2023, Page 12*)

Activists scale tower of Bulgarian coal-fired plant, demand its closure

Greenpeace activists scaled the cooling tower of a coal-fired power plant in Bulgaria on Monday in protest over its pollution, demanding its immediate closure. The seven activists from Austria, Croatia, Romania, Greece and Bulgaria climbed the tower of the Maritsa 3 plant in southern Bulgaria at dawn and painted 'Crime' in large white letters on the tower. Another dozen activists stood outside the plant holding banners saying 'Stop fossil crimes', 'Future for people not for coal', 'End of the age of coal', and 'Activism is not a crime'. European Union member Bulgaria, which produces around 40pc of its electricity in coal-fired power plants, pledged to phase out coal by 2038, but activists say the date is too far off and demand the government bring it forward to 2030. The government's plan to phase out coal by 2038 triggered protests by miners across Bulgaria last week against the both plan and financial packages agreed so far to compensate workers. (*Dawn, October 17th, 2023, Page 10*)

Women strike in Iceland for equal pay

Tens of thousands of women in Iceland, including the prime minister, walked off the job to demand equal pay and protest violence against women. The protest day has been called six times since 1975, this was only the second time that organisers made it a full-day strike. The other times, women walked off the job at a symbolic hour after which they were technically no longer earning a salary compared to male colleagues. The average wage gap between men and women was 10.2 percent in 2021, according to Statistics Iceland. (*Business Recorder, October 25th, 2023, Page 12*)

Climate activists arrested after London 'slow march'

Police arrested 62 climate activists after they disrupted traffic with a "slow march", at the start of a new wave of promised action over Britain's oil and gas policies. The

protesters, from the Just Stop Oil group, walked slowly in the road around Parliament Square for around 10 minutes before they were arrested by London's Metropolitan Police. It has staged numerous protests aimed at disrupting events, institutions or aspects of daily life, leading to thousands of its activists being arrested and more than 100 jailed. In its latest phase of demonstrations, the group has promised to slow march in London "on an unprecedented scale" for next three weeks. (*Dawn, October 31st, 2023, Page 10*)

15.1 # Pro – Palestinian Protest

Pro-Palestinian protests banned in France

France has decided to ban pro-Palestinian protests as they are "likely to generate disturbances to public order". France is home to some of Europe's largest Muslim & Jewish populations & conflicts in the Middle East can stoke tensions there which interior minister said government aimed to avert with heightened police protection of Jewish sites, including schools and synagogues. (*Dawn, October 13th, 2023, Page 11*)

Protests across Muslim world

Meanwhile, hundreds of thousands of protesters poured onto the streets of several Muslim capitals in support of Palestinians. In Egypt, videos on social media showed hundreds of protesters near Cairo's Al-Azhar mosque chanting in solidarity with Gaza. In Baghdad, tens of thousands of Iraqis rallied in central Tahrir Square, waving Palestinian flags and burning the Israeli flag while chanting anti-U.S. and anti-Israeli slogans. In Lebanon, supporters of Iran-backed Hezbollah rallied in the southern suburbs of Beirut in support of Palestinians. In Turkey, crowds gathered outside mosques chanting against Israel & saluting Hamas. (*Business recorder, October 19th, 2023, Page 1*)

Anti-Israel protests continue in US despite harassment

An Arab advocacy group has claimed that the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency has detained some Palestinian Americans, apparently for participating in protest rallies against Israel. Earlier this week, students at the prestigious Harvard University also faced nationwide condemnation for writing a letter that blamed Israel for allegedly starting the process that led to this week's rocket attacks by Hamas.

At Columbia University, New York, hundreds showed up in a pro-Palestinian rally despite a widespread fear of retributions. At Georgetown University in Washington, the local chapter of a group called Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) hosted a vigil but declined to allow media access "due to increased harassment and threats of violence". Dozens of students from the University of California Los Angeles chapter of SJP held a march for Palestine. At the University of Washington, Seattle, a rally was held to 'uplift the just Palestinian resistance' and 'condemn the state of Israel'. Protesters held signs that read "Free Palestine" and "To Exist is to Resist". Similar protests were also held at TUFTS, University of Virginia, and a dozen other campuses.

Meanwhile, SJP and other groups plan to observe “days of resistance”, with demonstrations by its 200 chapters at colleges across North America during this weekend. The group, which advocates for an independent Palestine and said it believes “in freedom, solidarity, equality, safety and historical justice” for all. But SJP’s University of Arizona, Tucson chapter, canceled a protest, citing safety concerns after the school’s president called the gathering “antithetical to our university’s values”. Demonstrators are also planned at Times Square, New York. A pro-Israeli Muslim group – Muslims for Israel – also planned a protest outside the White House. Security officials have put parts of Washington and other areas across country on heightened alert to prevent violence during weekend protests. (*Dawn, October 14th, 2023 Page 11*)

Thousands rally in London, New York in solidarity with Palestinians

Thousands of people rallied in London and other UK cities for pro-Palestinian protests, amid police warnings that anyone showing support for Hamas could face arrest. (*Dawn, October 15th, 2023, Page 11*)

UK protests demand a `free Palestine`

The streets of central London were a sea of black and red over the weekend as passionate protesters for the Palestinian cause gathered to make their voices heard. Additionally, protesters assembled in various cities, including Liverpool, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. They carried flags and flares while urging world leaders to denounce the actions of the Israeli army. (*Dawn, October 16th, 2023, Page 11*)

Protests across Muslim world after hospital strike

Thousands rallied across the Arab and Muslim world to protest the deaths of hundreds of people by an Israeli attack on a Gaza hospital. The strike provoked outrage and condemnation from around the world, with protests on the streets of Iran, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Turkiye, Yemen and the Occupied West Bank.

In the Syrian capital Damascus, hundreds of people with Palestinian flags gathered near parliament, many wearing T-shirts bearing the image of President Bashar al-Assad. “Martyrdom or victory,” one banner read. In Tehran protesters gathered outside the British and French embassies. “Death to France and England,” protesters shouted, throwing eggs at walls of the French embassy compound in the Iranian capital. Several thousand people also gathered in Palestine Square in central Tehran to voice their anger.

Overnight Turks marched with Palestinian flags and chanted slogans denouncing Israel in at least a dozen Turkish cities, including outside the Israeli embassy in the capital Ankara. Police used pepper spray and water cannon to disperse thousands of protesters who tried to enter the compound of Israel’s consulate in Istanbul, Turkiye’s largest city. Five people were detained. (*Dawn, October 19th, 2023, Page 11*)

Muslims protest around world

Protesters from Jakarta to Tunis demanded an end to Israel's bombardment of Gaza after nearly two weeks of intense air and artillery strikes that authorities there say have killed 4,100 people. (*Business Recorder, October 21st, 2023, Page 1*)

100,000 protesters join pro-Palestinian march through London

About 100,000 people joined a pro-Palestinian demonstration in central London marching through the British capital to demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. (*Dawn, October 22nd, 2023, Page 12*)

Nearly 100,000 pro-Palestinians march in London: police

Police in London said nearly 100,000 people marched in the capital in an event organised by pro-Palestinian groups calling for "an end to the war on Gaza". (*The News, October 22th, 2023, Page 12*)

World unites in powerful show of support for Palestine

Europe or the Middle East, protests in support of the Palestine cause have spread worldwide, as even nations busy dealing with their own problems have seen citizens hit the streets. (*Dawn, October 23rd, 2023, Page 11*)

Thousands gather in Paris for first authorised pro-Palestinian demo since Oct 7 Hamas attacks

Thousands of people waving Palestinian flags and chanting "Gaza, Paris is with you" gathered on Sunday for the first pro-Palestinian demonstration allowed by police in the French capital since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. (*Business Recorder, October 23rd, 2023, Page 10*)

Hundreds of thousands attend pro-Palestinian rallies in Europe

Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators rallied in cities across Europe, the Middle East and Asia to show support for the Palestinians. In New Zealand's capital, Wellington, thousands of people holding Palestinian flags and placards reading "Free Palestine" marched to Parliament House. (*Dawn, October 29th, 2023, Page 14*)

Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters march in New York

Thousands of pro-Palestinian protesters poured onto the streets of Brooklyn, New York's largest district to voice their anger at Israel's bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Left-wing American Jewish activists are also up in arms against Israel's aggression against Gaza. (*Dawn, October 30th, 2023, Page 11*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

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