

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

May, 2024

Roots for Equity

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

May, 2024

Editor

Azra Talat Sayeed

Sub-Editor

Mujtaba Zaidi

Contributors

Imamuddin

Yasir Iqbal

Roots for Equity

Index

Topics	Page No.
Preface	I
Glossary	III
News Excerpts	VI
National News	XIX
International News	XXX

Preface

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

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

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

(IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, Asian Development Bank; aid agencies such as the USAID and others as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

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

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

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

Glossary

ADB	Asian Development Bank
AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir
AKFED	Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development
ASSA	All Sindh Sangeetkar Association
B2B	Business-to-Business
BUJ	Balochistan Union of Journalists
BYC	Baloch Yakjahti Committee
C3S	Copernicus Climate Change Service
CATIC	China National Aero-technology Import and Export Corporation
CCL	Cash Credit Limit
CCP	Competition Commission of Pakistan
CDWP	Central Development Working Party
CFIA	Canadian Food Inspection Agency
CLICK	Competitive and Livable City of Karachi
CME	Continuing Medical Education
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
DHQ	District Headquarters
DPP	Department of Plant Protection
DRAP	Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan
EAC	Economic Advisory Council
EFF	Extended Fund Facility
EPWA	EOBI Pensioners Welfare Association
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FEA	Foreign Economic Assistance

FED	Federal Excise Duty
FMPAC	Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council
FPCCI	Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry
HDT	Haq Do Tehreek
HPAI	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza
HWA	Hari Welfare Association
ICTs	Information and Communication Technologies
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRSA	Indus River System Authority
JSMU	Jinnah Sindh Medical University
KEP	Kissan Etihad Pakistan
MCSP	Mother and Child Support Programme
MRP	Minimum Retail Price
NDMA	National Disaster Management Authority
NGOs	Non-Government Organisations
NPL	Nestle Pakistan Limited
NYPD	New York Police Department
OA4P	Oxford Action for Palestine Group
PASSCO	Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Supplies Corporation
PBS	Pakistan Bureau of Statistics
PCRWR	Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources
PEF	Punjab Education Foundation
PEIMA	Punjab Education Initiatives Management Authority
PFAS	Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
PFUJ	Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

PIDE	Pakistan Institute of Development Economics
PIMS	Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences
PKI	Pakistan Kissan Ittehad
PPA	Pakistan Poultry Association
PPSE	Pakistan Private Sector Energy
PSP	Pakistan Seraiki Party
PULSE	Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement
PYPA	Pakistan Young Pharmacists Association
RECHS	Revenue Employees Cooperative Housing Ltd
SBIP	Sindh Barrage Improvement Project
SBP	State Bank of Pakistan
SCBA	Supreme Court Bar Association
SIFC	Special Investment Facilitation Council
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SOEs	State-Owned Enterprises
SSP	Sehat Sahulat Programme
SWAT	Sindh Water Agriculture Transformation Project
SWAWA	Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act
TAG	Technical Advisory Group
TCP	Trading Corporation of Pakistan
TTAP	Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan
USAID	US Agency for International Development
UVAS	University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences
WB	World Bank
WWF	World Wildlife Fund
YDA	Young Doctors Association

Back

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pakistan, in collaboration with the Laudes Foundation, unveiled the ‘Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative Pakistan’ initiative, aimed at revolutionising farming practices and business models to tackle challenges faced by smallholder farmers, with a special focus on women as well.
- The initiative’s significant scale, spanning over a million hectares globally and benefiting hundreds of thousands of farmers, with specific plans to cover over 100,000 hectares and assist more than 50,000 farmers in Pakistan alone.
- Federal Minister for Marine Affairs Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh inaugurated Free Zone Agriculture Industrial Park in Gwadar.
- A landlord tortured his farm worker to death for quitting job.
- Members of the Balochistan Assembly demanded the federal and provincial governments to compensate growers and farmers who have suffered huge financial losses due to recent rains.
- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa food department said that now only 100 metric tonnes of wheat would be purchased from a farmer instead of 500 metric tonnes as announced earlier.
- The Punjab government informed the apex court that mass urbanisation and the resulting reduction in agricultural land naturally impacts food security and increases food imports in several interconnected ways.
- Pakistan was a leading South Asian exporter of wheat. This trend has reversed in recent years, and it is reported that Pakistan (government and private sector combined) imported wheat amounting to USD 1 billion during July-March for FY2024.
- The Punjab government report stated that a Special Cabinet Committee has recently been constituted by chief minister Punjab to deliberate on the issues of conversion of agricultural land into residential/commercial use, which is holding regular meetings in order to devise the best policy for curbing such illegal and irregular development.
- Punjab Chief Minister has directed essential steps to be undertaken for digitisation of land records in the province.
- The land record digitisation process is being undertaken with the cooperation of the World Bank under ‘Plus Project.’
- The land acquisit of 1894 provides the template for public land acquisition, allowing the Pakistani authorities to acquire land for vaguely defined “public

purposes” which may include use by public-private partnerships and even private, for-profit companies.

- Condition of women workers and peasants in rural Sindh remains precarious despite existence on paper of various laws aimed at addressing their issues as there is a notable gap in the implementation of laws on women and gender inequality persists in Sindh’s agriculture sector.
- 98.7 per cent of women in rural Sindh lack land ownership and initiatives such as Sindh Benazir Income Support Programme exist but concerns about women’s dependency instead of empowerment persist.
- In the rural areas of Sindh, peasant and laborer women are living in extremely poor conditions.
- Women workers and peasants work all day for a monthly wage ranging from 8,000 to 15,000 rupees.
- The homes of peasants and laborers collapsed during the recent rains, and their livestock have died in large numbers.
- There is no sustainable plan for the economic recovery of agricultural laborer and peasant women in Sindh, which is why rural women are still economically disadvantaged in this modern age.
- The Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act was enacted in 2015 to prevent forced labor, but even after nine years, it has not been implemented.
- Thousands of peasants and laborers are freed each year from the private jails and forced labor of landlords and kiln owners.
- The situation of forced labor is rapidly worsening, with 11,135 peasants and laborers, including 3,705 women, freed from landlords and kiln owners between 2013 and 2022 under court orders.
- Women trade unionists have complained that millions of flood-hit peasants are still living under the open sky because of slow pace of reconstruction of their houses.
- They demanded the government ensure payment of Rs32,000 wage to women working in agriculture sector in Sindh.
- As the irrigation department implements a rotational water supply programme, thousands of acres of land in Muzaffargarh face reduced cotton yield due to water shortages.
- A special audit report has revealed irregularities of Rs2.4bn and delays in construction of 100 dams in Balochistan. It added that work on 26 out of 100 dams was completed in 2021 instead of 2018. The delay ballooned construction costs by Rs261mn.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- Agri-tech has an essential role in enhancing Pakistan’s agricultural productivity, promoting the economic well-being of farmers, and ensuring the country’s food security.
- The government’s top priorities are digitalization and agriculture.
- HBL, Pakistan’s leading financial institution, has entered into a strategic partnership with Agrilift, to accelerate digitization efforts in the agriculture sector.
- Farmers’ registration for Kisan Card will begin from June 1 as currently fertilisers and pesticide dealers are being registered for the scheme.
- Rs300 billion Kisan Card scheme under which an interest-free easy loan of Rs150,000 would be offered to each qualifying farmer.
- Sindh Chief Minister Syed has said that farmers would be issued Benazir Hari Cards benefiting from various government programmes to consolidate Hari’s information for transparent and efficient implementation of interventions.
- The federal government is likely to impose sales tax on tractors as well as pesticides during the upcoming budget (2024-25).
- The farming community is concerned about government plans to impose sales tax on agricultural inputs in the budget 2024-25.
- The district agriculture department has got registered FIRs against 29 fertiliser and pesticide dealers after samples of products manufactured by 46 companies proved fake after laboratory tests.
- Urea sales hit a three-year low, plunging 49 per cent month-on-month to 328,000 tonnes in April and 33pc year-on-year.
- The cultivation of sesame in Pakistan has emerged as a promising solution to meet the country’s growing demand for edible oil.
- University of Agriculture, Faisalabad will cultivate soyabean on 100,000 acres of land to promote its production and achieve food self-sufficiency.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

- Extended and massive rainy spell in April, higher-than-usual temperatures and anticipated normal monsoon rainfall have improved kharif crop output prospects.
- The output of agriculture sector rebounded, with 6.8 percent growth in the first half of FY24 compared to 1.8 percent in last year.
- Farmers in Punjab have so far brought 2.76m acres of land under cotton cultivation in province which is 50% of the target fixed in this season.
- Cotton picking has started in most coastal towns of Sindh and a few areas of Punjab as some ginners have announced making their factories operational in the first week of June.
- One ginning unit has become operational in Hyderabad and one in Burewala (Punjab) as the farmers are mostly worried and engaged about their recently

harvested wheat crop ignoring cotton, while the government is delaying the announcement of cotton intervention price.

- As it blamed the caretaker government for causing a “wheat crisis” in the province, the Punjab government announced a ‘vague’ policy that did not contain a date for the initiation of the procurement drive. The policy also came under fire from the opposition as it offered nothing new to the protesting farmers who had taken to the streets to demand the procurement of their grain at a support price of Rs3,900 per 40kg announced by the government.
- The government had also reduced the procurement target from over 4 million tonnes to a little over 2 million.
- “Those who imported wheat [close to harvesting season] are responsible for this crisis.
- The provincial government remained indecisive about the planned subsidy for the ‘small farmers’ from whom it may not purchase wheat.
- Prime Minister recent directive to Passco to increase wheat procurement target from 1.4m to 1.8m tonnes in view of pressing grain procurement issue would not be much beneficial to Sindh’s farmers.
- Sindh food department, until last week or so, had procured 355,000 tonnes of wheat at a support price of Rs4,000 per 40kg.
- Farmers keep running from pillar to post to get bardana but they could not get it. A Sindh food official, however, candidly admitted that wheat procurement operation was indeed a mess in Sindh.
- Prime Minister has formed an inquiry committee regarding import of wheat.
- Balochistan govt has approved release of Rs5bn for wheat procurement.
- There are 65 total wheat importers, 17 of which are flour mills that also import wheat. The plant protection agency is estimated to have issued approximately 1,000 permits to these importers.
- Announcing that the federal government will procure 1.8 million metric tonnes of wheat through the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation .
- Wheat worth 330bn rupees was imported in seven months from August 2023 to March 2024 and 1.3m metric tonnes of this commodity were found to be defective.
- Some 2.8m metric tonnes wheat worth Rs 250bn was imported in the tenure of former federal caretaker government whereas 700,000 or 0.7m metric tonnes wheat worth Rs 80 billion was imported by the present federal government.
- Sindh Chief Minister has announced that the provincial Food department has procured 600,000 tons wheat out of 900,000 tons and the remaining crop is being procured from the areas where growers missed out.
- The Punjab food department has decided to withdraw from its practice of wheat procurement. They further said that a new policy has been devised over the matter and it will become a law and with that the food department’s role in wheat procurement will come to an end.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over a meeting of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) discussed Green Pakistan Initiative projects to be launched on PPP mode to develop tourism sites, promote safari desert, and develop agricultural and livestock farms.
- The meeting discussed facilitating private parties (PPP mode) to establish shrimp farms/ hatcheries along the coastal highway of Sindh. The CM directed the Fisheries dept to submit business models for further action.
- The Balochistan Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the provincial government to take strict measures to stop illegal fishing and trawling in province’s waters.
- The Balochistan government has chalked out a plan to provide small loans on easy terms to graduates so that they could set up livestock farms or start a business in other sectors.

Trade

- Pakistan’s trade deficit narrowed down by 17.09 percent in the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 as it stood at \$19.514 billion compared to \$23.535 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.
- The government of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkiye agreed to increase the volume of trade to \$5 billion.
- Turkish investment in Pakistan especially in agricultural machinery and equipment and large-scale corporate farming.
- Trade ties between Pakistan and India have remained suspended since 2019 due to imposition of heavy duties by New Delhi on imports from Pakistan after the Pulwama attack.
- The Ambassador of Republic of Poland Maciej Pisarski has informed that the overall trade volume between Poland and Pakistan has reached to more than US\$920 million, of which Pakistan exported goods worth US\$800 million due to GSP Plus arrangement.
- Kuwait can bring investment in Pakistan in important trade sectors such as food security, livestock, telecom, information technology, agriculture, tourism, and petroleum.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with the Middle East has significantly improved, narrowing by 26% to \$10.67bn in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan’s exports to the Middle East rose 31.88pc to \$2.52bn between July-April 2023-24 compared to \$1.91bn in the corresponding period last year. At the same time, imports dipped 19.22pc to \$13.19bn in 10M FY24, compared to \$16.34 bn in the same period last year.

- Pakistan’s trade deficit with nine regional countries widened by 30.23 per cent to \$7.272 billion in 10MFY24 from \$5.584bn in the same period last year.
- In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan’s exports to the nine regional countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — rose 20.62pc to \$3.655bn in July-April from \$3.030bn in the corresponding period FY23 .
- The exports of merchandise rose year-on-year by 10.02 per cent in April after a slowdown in growth in the previous month.
- The trade deficit increased by 180.58pc year-on-year to \$2.37 billion in April, up from \$846 million in the same month last year.
- Pakistan’s exports to European countries declined 6.27 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal year.
- In absolute terms, Pakistan’s exports to the EU dipped to \$6.105bn in 9MFY24 from \$6.27bn in the corresponding months of last year.
- Agricultural exports surged to a record \$6.8 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year 2024, driven by a significant increase in rice and maize exports.
- Due to impact of climate change and low production, exporters have reduced this year’s mango export target to 100,000 tonnes from 125,000 tonnes LY.
- Mango production has declined for the third year in a row. Due to weather effects, mango production in Punjab is expected to be 35-40pc this year, while less than 20pc in Sindh. As a result, the total production is feared to be reduced by 600,000 tonnes.
- The export of meat and meat preparations reached an all-time high of 104,513 tonnes in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, fetching \$431 million at an average per-tonne price of \$4,121.
- Raw food exports experienced a significant growth of 23.19 per cent in April, reaching \$570.47 million from \$463.07m during the same month last year.
- The overall exports of raw food products witnessed a growth of 45.61pc to \$6.23bn in 10 months of the current fiscal year from \$4.27bn over the corresponding period last year.
- Unprecedented onion exports fetched \$210 million during July-April FY24 at the cost of inflation-hit consumers who paid record prices for the vegetable.
- Overall exports of vegetables stood at 1.044 million tonnes fetching \$371m in 10MFY24 versus 1.171m tonnes (\$262m) in the same period last fiscal year.
- The government has asked sugar millers to keep the sugar price at Rs140 per kilogram to obtain permission for exports.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed 28.18 per cent to \$9.521 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year from \$13.257bn during the corresponding period last year.

- Imports in the second half of the outgoing fiscal year increased significantly, reflecting the easing of restrictions by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on the International Monetary Fund's directions.
- The country's import bill surged to \$17.92bn in January-April compared to \$25.462bn in July-December FY24.
- Total imports were \$43.353bn in 10MFY24 against exports of \$25.669bn, resulting in a trade deficit of \$17.684bn.
- Directorate General of Customs Valuation Karachi has fixed new customs values on the import of "Skimmed Milk Powder and Instant Milk Powder" from New Zealand, Australia, Europe, Canada, USA, Turkey, and Iran.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- The federal government has decided to do away with subsidised gas to the fertiliser industry for urea as the impact of subsidy is not being passed on to the farmers, one of the key demands of IMF.
- On consideration of these aspects, the Cabinet reached the unanimous conclusion that gas to fertiliser plants should be supplied at full prices, rather than subsidised rates.
- Reversing an earlier decision of the federal cabinet, ECC of Cabinet ordered continuous supply of gas to Punjab-based two fertiliser plants at existing rate.
- Despite drop in transportation cost after cut in diesel and LPG rates and stability in exchange rates for the last seven months, a number of big companies selling packaged milk have announced price hikes.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Foreign Direct Investment surged 172% year-on-year in April, but the overall inflow increased by just 8pc in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan received only about \$11.3bn in foreign loans and grants in the first 10 months (July-April) of current fiscal year, far behind annual target of \$17.4bn.
- The country received about \$237 million in foreign loans in April compared to \$204m in March and \$318m in February.
- Repatriation of profit and dividend by foreign investors posted a notable growth of 250 percent during the first 10 months of this fiscal year (FY24).
- US Ambassador Donald Blome says his government is providing nearly \$85 million in funding to address the issue of malnutrition in Pakistan, including \$12m to treat severely malnourished children.
- During a recent visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as the latter agreed to expedite the first wave of a planned \$5 billion Saudi investment package for Pakistan.

- Ex-caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar had visited Saudi Arabia. In Sept 2023, he claimed that the Saudi government would invest up to \$25 billion in Pakistan over the “next two to five years” across various sectors.
- Prime Minister claimed to have shunned proverbial begging bowl as he secured pledges of \$10bn worth of investment in Pakistan from UAE top leadership.
- The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) apex committee assured a Chinese firm of providing facilitation for investment in the mining sector.
- It was said that China had invested over \$65 billion in energy and infrastructure projects in Pakistan.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced a \$180 million project to restore forests, drains and roads in the coastal areas of Sindh.
- Pakistan has received inflows of \$1.1 billion from IMF as final loan tranche of Board’s Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) programme.
- On completion of the SBA program, Pakistan is negotiating with funds for a long-term loan programme to achieve macroeconomic stability in the country.
- Pakistan’s external financing gap stands at \$9.1 billion over the next three years period, exposing Islamabad’s vulnerability and need for the next bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) from IMF.
- Pakistan and IMF kick-started negotiations on 24th ‘longer and larger’ bailout programme, starting with an anticipated upfront fiscal adjustment of more than Rs1.6 trillion (1.5pc of GDP) in the upcoming budget.
- Wall Street Bank Citi expects Pakistan to reach an agreement with IMF for a new four year of up to \$8 billion programme by end-July.
- IMF has said that it’s still too early to determine whether ongoing discussions with Pakistan will result in a new loan package.
- Pakistan’s renewable natural capital, valued at \$474bn - 13.65 of nation’s total wealth - is under imminent threat as it faces rapid depletion, says World Bank.

POLICY

- Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan had in February 2021 agreed to build a railway line across Afghanistan to connect Central Asia with Pakistani ports at an estimated cost of \$4.8bn.
- The Balochistan government has said there is no plan to hand over Gwadar port city to China.
- The government has decided to privatise all state-owned enterprises (SOEs), except strategic entities.

- The federal government plans to deregulate milk, beef and mutton prices by stopping monitoring them, leaving consumers at the mercy of the market players` demand and supply mechanism.
- Speakers at a conference have called for deregulation of various sectors of the economy, saying that regulations had resulted in hindering economic growth.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

- The SBP reported that the government borrowed Rs5.736 trillion during July-April FY24 while it paid Rs5.517trn as markup on borrowing during July-March FY24.
- The real GDP, driven by agriculture sector, grew by 1.7 percent in the first half of FY24 compared to 1.6 percent in the same period in FY23, and a contraction of 1.9 percent in the second half of FY23.
- Fiscal deficit increased to 2.3 percent of GDP in the first half of FY24 from 2.0 percent in the same period last year.
- The external debt was recorded at \$86.36bn and domestic debt was recorded at Rs39.7 trillion of the total public debt at the end of September 2023.
- The external debt was recorded at \$84.1 billion (38%) and domestic debt was recorded at Rs38.81 trillion (62%) of total public debt at the end of June 2023.
- Pakistan, which faces significant economic challenges, is expected to have “modest economic growth”, with its GDP projected to expand by 2 per cent in 2024, according to a major United Nations report.
- The provisional GDP growth is anticipated to be 2.38 per cent for FY24, surpassing the projections of International Monetary Fund’s 2pc, Asian Development Bank’s 1.9pc and World Bank’s 1.8pc. However, the State Bank of Pakistan has forecast a 2-3pc economic growth in FY24. The government has projected a GDP growth target of 3.50pc, but it is all set to miss it.
- The overall increase in the agriculture sector not only exceeded the target of 3.50pc but also remained higher than the 2.27pc growth of last year.
- The government has borrowed around 77 percent for financing of federal fiscal deficit through domestic sources.
- Expenditures of the federal government has increased by 58 per cent during the first half of the current government year to Rs6,710 billion.
- The country borrowed \$7.142 billion from multiple financing sources during the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 compared to \$8.123 billion borrowed during the same period of 2022-23.
- The federal government borrowing from scheduled banks for budgetary support rose significantly by 116 percent during this fiscal year due to slow foreign inflows and less than target revenue collection.
- Annual inflation slowed for fourth month to 17.3% in April, lowest level in nearly two years and significantly less than record 38pc reading in May 2023,

- The average CPI inflation during the 10 months (July to April) of the current fiscal year now stands at 25.97pc compared to 28.23pc a year ago.
- Food inflation for April stood at 11.3pc in urban areas and 9.5pc in rural areas, whereas non-food inflation was 25.6pc in urban areas and 20pc in rural areas.
- Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, slightly increased to 13.1pc in urban areas compared to 12.8pc last month. In rural areas, core inflation was recorded at 19.3pc, down from 20pc.
- Inflation is expected to hover between 13.5 to 14.5% in May and to ease further to 12.5 to 13.5pc by June.
- The poverty rate in Pakistan over the past five years has increased from 38.6 percent to 39.5 percent.

Environment

- Around 11.6% schoolchildren suffered from the respiratory illness in Pakistan.
- Pakistan Young Pharmacists Association (PYPA) alleged that the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drac) removed the mandatory control on medicine prices days before the general elections.
- A third-party validation report about the Federal Sehat Sahulat Programme (SSP) commonly known as Health Card has showed that though it is a cashless programme, 33pc of the patients paid from their pockets.
- Pakistan's pharmaceutical sector can increase its exports to \$3bn over next five years, provided it gets policy support and a favourable business environment.
- Health experts said that the third leading cause of death in Pakistan was the antimicrobial resistance due to which around 700,000 people lost their lives every year
- Antibiotic medicines worth Rs126 billion were consumed in 2023 alone in Pakistan.
- USAID brought together stakeholders from various sectors to develop a programme for reducing methane emissions in the dairy industry of Pakistan.
- The ambassador said that United States has been proud to partner with Pakistan since the 1960s, starting with the Green Revolution that significantly improved the lives of many Pakistanis.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- The ongoing heatwave continued to bake major cities of Sindh as maximum temperature surged to 51 degree Celsius mark. According to the Met Office, Mohenjo Daro was the hottest place in the country, where the maximum temperature was 51°C, followed by Jacobabad and Khairpur (50°C).

- Over 70 people were admitted with heatstroke complaints in different hospitals of Lahore as temperatures in seven cities of Sindh and Punjab remained over 50 degrees Celsius.
- The relentless heatwave is anticipated to unleash flash drought in the country's southern region in June with exacerbating effects on crops and animals.
- The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) warned that extreme heatwave conditions would persist across parts of Sindh and Punjab in June, with temperatures likely to remain above 48 degrees Celsius.
- The country received excessively above-average rainfall during April this year, making it the wettest April since 1961.
- Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded 174.9mm of rainfall last month, the highest in the last 59 years, which broke the 1965 record of 158.6mm of precipitation.
- Various districts of Punjab which is currently grappling with two simultaneous challenges — storm damage recovery and an impending intense heatwave.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- Wheat imports are expected to rise for key importing countries including Pakistan, says the World Bank.
- While global wheat production for 2023-24 is slightly up by 0.7 MMT to 787.4 MMT, it remains the second highest on record.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- The Canadian Food Inspection Agency has toughened import requirements on US breeding cattle over the H5N1 bird flu virus.

TRADE

- Turkiye will impose trade restrictions on Israel starting today on a range of products including cement and steel and iron construction materials in response to Israel's offensive on Gaza.
- India's Reliance Industries, operator of the world's biggest refining complex, has signed a one-year deal with Russia's Rosneft to buy at least 3 million barrels of oil a month in roubles.
- India has lifted restrictions on the export of onions, according to an official notification, a day after the government announced a 40% export duty.

- While lifting the ban, government also announced a minimum export price of \$550 per metric ton for exports.
- Soft wheat exports from the European Union since the start of the 2023/24 season in July had reached 27.8 million metric tons by May 26, down 4% compared with 29.0 million a year earlier.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- International donors led by the EU pledged five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) for Syrian refugees.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

- IMF staff and Bangladesh have reached an agreement to unlock close to \$1.2 billion in financing as the South Asian country grapples with declining foreign exchange reserves.
- The IMF expects Bangladesh’s economy to grow by an inflation-adjusted 5.4 percent in the 2024 financial year.
- The Fund forecasts that inflation will remain elevated at around 9.4 percent this year, before easing to around 7.2 percent next year.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- The United Nations food agency’s world price index rose for a second consecutive month in April as higher meat prices and small increases in vegetable oils and cereals outweighed declines in sugar and dairy products.
- The chief of the United Nations’ food programme has warned of a “full-blown famine” in northern Gaza and reiterated calls for a ceasefire in Israel’s aggression against Hamas.
- The World Health Organisation said that the availability of food in the Gaza Strip has very slightly improved, though the risk of famine continues in the besieged Palestinian territory, which is home to 2.4mn people.
- The World Bank published two new reports on Syria, which found that “27 percent of Syrians - about 5.7 million individuals - live in extreme poverty”.
- According to the United Nations, about 90 percent of Syrians live in poverty, while it was previously estimated that around 2 million lived in extreme poverty after more than a decade of war.
- World Bank estimating that “in 2022, the total value of remittances received by Syrian households reached about \$1.05 billion”. Syria’s estimated GDP stood at around \$6.2 billion in 2023. Syria’s “real GDP is projected to contract by 1.5 percent in 2024, extending the 1.2 percent decline in 2023”.

ENVIRONMENT

- A World Health Organisation official said the last hospital in Rafah could stop functioning and a substantial number of deaths could be expected if Israel launches a “full incursion” into the southern Gaza city.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Unicef warned this month that 243 million children across the Pacific and East Asia are at risk from heatwaves.
- The world witnessed the hottest April on record, adding to an 11-month streak in which every month set a (fresh) temperature record. Every single month since June of 2023, has ranked as the planet’s hottest on record.
- Including month of April, the world’s mean temperature was the highest on record for a period of 12-months (1.61 degrees Celsius above the average), in 1850-1900 pre-industrial period.
- Last year’s northern hemisphere summer was the hottest in 2,000 years. Scientists say 2023 was the hottest year globally since records began in 1850.
- The conservative estimate found that 2023 was at least 0.5 degrees Celsius hotter than the warmest northern hemisphere summer of that period in AD246.
- NGOs and persons affected by climate-induced disasters have filed a criminal complaint against French oil giant TotalEnergies and its top shareholders in Paris, seeking a trial for involuntary manslaughter and other consequences of climate change “chaos”.
- The world experienced an average of 26 more days of extreme heat over the last 12 months that would probably not have occurred without climate change.
- Wealthy countries met their target of providing \$100bn in annual climate aid to poorer countries for first time in 2022 though two years later than promised.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- As climate warms due to burning of fossil fuels, heatwaves are lasting longer and reaching greater peaks. In turn, government authorities and public health experts across world are increasingly grappling with whether to keep students learning in hot classrooms, or encourage them to stay home and keep cool.
- Heat could exacerbate inequalities, widening learning gaps between developing nations in the tropics and developed countries, and even between rich and poor districts in wealthy countries.
- Data from the state-run Forest Survey of India shows that as of 2021, 54.4% of forests in India experienced occasional fires, most of them due to man-made factors.

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

WWF launches initiative to revolutionise farming [1]

Free Zone Agri Industrial Park inaugurated in Gwadar [1]

1.1 # Farmers

Landlord tortures worker to death for quitting job [1]

MPAs seek compensation for rain-hit growers in Balochistan [1]

Food dept to instal vending machines for wheat farmers [2]

1.2 # Land

SC told: Rapid urbanisation devouring agriculture lands, fueling food insecurity [2]

Two brothers killed over land dispute in Swabi [3]

Maryam orders digitisation of Punjab land records [4]

Two brothers killed in clash over farmland [4]

Dispute over land claims woman`s life [4]

Govt urged to repeal `abusive` colonial-era land acquisition law [4]

State of women workers, peasants `precarious`: HWA [4]

Rural Sindh: `Women workers, peasants have been living in miserable conditions` [5]

Most flood-hit farm workers living under open sky to this day, say rights activists [6]

1.3 # Water

Rice Canal desilted to ensure full supplies to lands in three districts, CM told [6]

Water shortage [6]

Irsa increases Punjab, Sindh water shares [7]

Rs2.4bn `irregularities` in dams construction [7]

Sindh still faces water deficit despite all-time high levels in Mangla, Tarbela [7]

Badin villagers refuse to have children vaccinated if drain not repaired [7]

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

IT Minister launches ‘CropWise Grower’ App for farmers [8]

HBL and Agrilift join forces to accelerate digitisation of agri sector [8]

2.1 # Agricultural Loan and Finances

Agri minister meets CEO of ‘Bakhabar Kissan’ [8]

Banking sector proposals critical for SMEs, tech and agriculture, says Aurangzeb [8]

Farmers’ registration for Kisan Card from June 1 [9]

Farmers to be issued ‘Benazir Hari Cards’: CM [9]

2.2 # Agricultural Tax

ST on tractors, pesticides likely [9]

ST on inputs to hit productivity, warn farmers [10]

2.3 # Fertilizers

Fake fertilisers, pesticides scam Cases against 29 dealers as wheat crop on 2,173 acres ruined in Narowal [10]

Urea sales hit three-year low [10]

2.4 # Industrial Production of Agriculture

Adoption of digital information and communication technologies for sesame cultivation

UAF will cultivate soyabean on 100,000 acres of land [11]

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Kharif crop production prospects improve [11]

H1FY24 agri sector output rebounds [12]

3.1 # Cash Crop

Country faces the risk of decline in growth of cotton yield: FPCCI body demands Punjab govt start wheat procurement [12]

‘2.76m acres of land brought under cotton cultivation’ [12]

Cotton picking begins as prices plummet [13]

Cotton ginning season begins amid farmers concerns [13]

3.2 # Food Crop

Punjab comes up with 'vague policy' on wheat crisis [13]

FPCCI defends wheat imports [14]

PM's order to increase wheat procurement target may not benefit Sindh growers [14]

PM forms body to probe wheat import matter [15]

Balochistan allocates Rs5bn for wheat procurement [15]

Govt `reluctant` to dig deep into wheat scam [15]

The wheat import scam? [15]

PM vows to protect farmers [16]

Farmers plan fresh agitation against wheat debacle [16]

Wheat worth Rs330bn imported in 7 months [17]

New body to investigate import of 'substandard' wheat [17]

Wheat fiasco points towards govt 'negligence' [17]

ECC all set to approve enhancement of wheat target [18]

ECC approves 400,000 tonnes increase in wheat procurement target [18]

Wheat procurement from local farmers to save govt Rs12bn, claims Gandapur [18]

Sindh has procured 600,000 tons of wheat so far: CM [19]

Punjab decides to devise a new wheat policy [19]

Corruption by Passco officials in gunny bags distribution [19]

Averted massive corruption by not buying wheat: CM [19]

No ban on wheat movement, says Punjab [19]

Farmers reject suspension of four officers linked to wheat scam [19]

3.3 # Fruits

Fruit procurement in danger [20]

Sky-High FED: Pulping Punjab's Rural Economy [20]

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Sindh: SIFC decides to upgrade tourist sites on PPP mode basis [21]

4.1 # Fisheries

Action against illegal fishing, trawling demanded [21]

Brothers drown while fishing off Pasni [21]

4.2 # Livestock

Small loans to promote cattle farming planned [22]

4.3 # Poultry

Poultry cartelization case: CCP conducts hearing [22]

5 # Trade

Jul-Apr trade deficit shrinks 17.09pc to \$19.514bn YoY [22]

Pakistan, Turkiye agree to increase trade volumes to \$5bn [23]

Trade with India suspended due to heavy duties, says Dar [23]

Pakistan, Turkiye vow to hike trade to \$5bn [23]

Poland-Pakistan trade volume reaches \$920m: envoy [23]

Aleem rues low volume of trade with Kuwait [23]

Turkiye committed to boosting bilateral trade to \$5bn in 3 years: envoy [24]

Polish envoy for more trade with Pakistan [24]

Trade gap with Middle East narrows 26pc [24]

Major step taken to boost Pakistan-Iran bilateral trade [24]

Aleem holds meetings in Tajikistan to increase bilateral trade [25]

Trade gap with nine regional states widens 30pc [25]

5.1 # Exports

Exports rebound to \$2.35bn [25]

Exports to Europe fall despite GSP+ [26]

Agricultural exports surge to record \$6.8bn in July-April [26]

Textiles` export growth slows in April [26]

Falling output hurting mango exports [26]

PM orders tariff rationalisation for export industries [27]

Meat shipments fetch record \$431m [27]

Food exports see 23pc growth in April [27]

Record onion exports make consumers pay high prices [28]

Sugar exports hinge on Rs140/kg price cap for domestic market [28]

5.2 # Import

Low oil imports trim trade gap with ME [28]

Imports rise as curbs ease in second half [28]

‘Skimmed & Instant Milk Powder’ New customs values on import of milk products fixed [29]

Urea to be imported for uninterrupted supply, says minister [29]

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Millat Tractors celebrates historic export milestone [29]

6.1 # Fertilizer Companies

Urea makers link price cut with gas supply [29]

Govt decides to do away with subsidised gas for fertilizer industry [30]

ECC orders cheaper gas to two Punjab fertiliser units [30]

6.2 # Food Companies

No respite from price hike as companies raise packaged milk rates [30]

UVAS signs MoU with Nestle [30]

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Foreign investment rises 8pc to \$1.4bn [31]

\$11.3bn received in loans, grants [31]

Foreign investors: Jul-Apr profit repatriation up 250pc [32]

EU launches two flagship projects in Gilgit [32]

7.1 # Countries

`US giving \$85m to counter malnutrition` [32]

Pakistan aims high as Saudi investors arrive [32]

Blome inaugurates ‘Cleantech Investment Roadshow’ in Karachi [33]

PM returns from UAE with \$10bn pledge [33]

Mining sector: Chinese firm assured of investment facilitation [33]

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Wapda discusses financing opportunities with ADB for its projects [33]

ADB announces \$180m project for coastal areas of Sindh [34]

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Pakistan receives \$1.1bn from IMF [34]

IMF estimates Pakistan’s financing gap to be \$9.1bn over three years [34]

Talks begin with IMF on new bailout [35]

Citi sees new \$8bn loan deal by July [35]

Still too early to talk about new loan: IMF [35]

IMF mission says ‘significant progress’ made [35]

Bailout for Pakistan: Eyebrows raised over rare IMF move to present report to board before loan talks [35]

8.3 # World Bank

Govt urges World Bank to restructure \$230m CLICK project [35]

Govt, World Bank working on new CPF programme [36]

Pakistan’s ‘\$474bn’ renewable natural capital faces risk of depletion: World Bank [36]

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

CDWP approves 10 projects worth Rs115.458bn [36]

Dar says country committed to IP pipeline project [36]

Pakistan, Uzbekistan vow early work on rail project [36]

CDWP clears three projects worth Rs126bn [37]

CDWP approves seven projects worth Rs23bn [37]

CDWP clears Rs567bn Karakoram road project [37]

9.2 # Neo – liberal Policies

No plan to hand over Gwadar to China, says Balochistan govt [37]

All state-owned enterprises to be privatized: PM [37]

Govt mulls price deregulation of red meat, milk [37]

Privatisation of SOEs: SIFC stresses need for meeting timelines [37]

Speakers for deregulation of various sectors for higher economic growth [38]

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Govt borrows record Rs5.7tr at high rates [38]

H1FY24: Driven by agri sector, real GDP grew 1.7pc: SBP [38]

H1: Fiscal deficit increases to 2.3pc of GDP [38]

Public debt soars to Rs39.7trn, NA told [38]

UN projects Pak economy to grow by 2pc in 2024 [39]

Vibrant agriculture accelerates Pakistan`s economic expansion [39]

77pc borrowing for financing fiscal deficit thru domestic sources: MoF [40]

Country borrows \$7.142bn during Jul-Apr [40]

Budgetary support: Govt borrowing rises 116pc [41]

10.1 # Food

Sindh set to launch food security programme [41]

Sindh govt introduces third-party system for issuing food licences [41]

10.2 # Inflation

Inflation decelerates to 17.3pc in April [41]

K-Electric seeks Rs3.84 per unit base tariff hike for seven years [42]

K-Electric seeks Rs10.69/unit hike in base tariff for 7 years [42]

Inflation to hover around 13.5-14.5pc in May: finance ministry [42]

10.3 # Poverty

Poverty levels have risen: study [42]

Boy beaten brutally for `stealing fruits` [42]

11 # Environment

11.1 # Health

Around 12pc schoolchildren suffer from asthma in Pakistan, moot told [42]

PYPA claims pharma scam eclipses wheat scandal [43]

19 brands of bottled water declared unsafe [43]

33pc health card holders paid from own pocket: report [43]

`Nearly half of population is hypertensive` [43]

Pakistan's pharma sector can increase exports to \$3bn in five years, but it 'needs policy, govt support' [43]

Dengue outbreak claims 14 lives in Turbat [44]

Staffers of outsourced hospitals without salary for one year [44]

Antimicrobial resistance claims 700,000 lives in Pakistan every year, moot told [44]

Preventive measures ordered as Congo fever case surfaces in Peshawar [44]

Over 15pc teenagers suffer from hypertension, say health experts [44]

World body concerned about poliovirus surge in Pakistan [44]

More positive polio samples in five months of 2024 than whole of previous year [45]

Panic grips measles-hit village [45]

11.2 # Pollution

USAID organises workshop on how to deal with challenge of methane emissions [45]

Ban on use of plastic bags by restaurants, bakeries from June 5 [45]

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

President urges global efforts to deal with climate change [45]

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to launch joint climate transparency report [46]

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Heatwave

Karachi, other cities in Sindh bake as heatwave sets in early [46]

Water `most dear` as heatwave sets in from today [46]

Jacobabad, Dadu sizzle at 49°C as heatwave continues [46]

Ministry warns of more heatwaves in June [46]

Temperature crosses 51°C in Sindh as heatwave continues [47]

Heatwave forces KP to slash school hours [47]

Dozens in hospital with heatstroke as country sizzles [47]

Mercury surges to 41.5°C in Karachi as heatwave continues [47]

Heat-related illnesses on the rise amid shortage of ORS [47]

Heatwave likely to unleash drought in June: Met Office [47]

More heatwave warnings issued for June as Sindh continues to sizzle [48]

13.2 # Rainfall

Above-average rains bring wettest April since 1961 [48]

KP records highest rainfall in 59 years [48]

Girl dies, six injured as rainstorm hits Lakki, Bannu [48]

Two children among three killed in windstorm [48]

Lightning kills six in Punjab districts [48]

Rainstorm destroys three houses in Shangla [48]

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earth Quake

Tremors jolt parts of city [49]

14.2 # Landslide

Heavy landslides block MNJ Road in Balakot [49]

15 # RESISTANCE

Farmers protest low wheat price [49]

Students protest outside US consulate against Israel [49]

Farmers block road to protest water shortage [49]

Protests continue in Balochistan against new check posts [50]

`Living wage, not minimum wage`, new slogan emerges on Labour Day [50]

Call to raise EOBI pension [50]

Processions, rallies staged across Sindh to mark International Labour Day [50]

Farmers warn of highway blockade over wheat price [50]

Journalists, rights activists highlight threats to press freedom [50]

Murder of young man sparks protest in Azizabad [50]

Farmers in canal`s tail-end area protest water shortage [51]

Schoolteachers protest `injustice` in promotions [51]

Dozens hurt as police break up lawyers` protest [51]

Lawyers go on nationwide strike against police today [51]

Farmers launch agitation against govt [51]

Protest as Gwadar attack victims` bodies arrive in Khanewal [52]

Muzaffarabad grinds to halt as police, protesters clash [52]

Growers protest water shortage [52]

Relatives of five hostages block Indus Highway [52]

AJK march resumes amid stalemate [53]

Govt warned of protests over wheat issue [53]

Govt subsidy fails as three killed in A JK violence [53]

Chaman protests to continue as talks with govt fail [53]

Traders go on strike against plan to impose taxes in Malakand [53]

Dacoits rob house, snatch boy in Panu Agil [54]

Transpersons protest `gender misreporting` by hospital [54]

Nationalists hold hunger strike in several districts on Sindh`s pressing issues [54]

Weeks-long protests bring Chaman to a standstill [54]

Journalists boycott assembly proceeding over locking of Quetta Press Club [55]

Filling stations observe strike against sale of smuggled petrol [55]

MQM-P holds angry protest against KE over prolonged loadshedding [55]

Journalists to observe black day today against Quetta incident [55]

Sindh`s music teachers stage protest [55]

Farmers rally countrywide to press govt on wheat purchase [56]

YDA demos outside hospitals for demands [56]

Highways blocked in support of Chaman protesters [56]

Transporters continue strike over `harassment` at checkpoints [56]

Aurat March rally demands immediate ceasefire in Gaza [57]

Protesters begin march against border closure [57]

Teachers oppose `outsourcing` of 13,000 public schools to NGOs [57]

Khar traders take to streets against colleague`s murder [58]

Federal employees rally for 200pc increase in pay, pension [58]

Khyber residents storm grid station [58]

Fourth day of growers` protest [58]

‘Black day’ observed against education policy [58]

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

WWF launches initiative to revolutionise farming

World Wildlife Fund (WWF) Pakistan, in collaboration with the Laudes Foundation, unveiled the ‘Regenerative Production Landscape Collaborative Pakistan’ initiative, aimed at revolutionising farming practices and business models to tackle challenges faced by smallholder farmers, with a special focus on women as well. Over a span of 5 years, the initiative seeks to elevate women’s income generation capabilities through sustainable practices. Additionally, it aims to combat environmental degradation.

The initiative, backed by textile and food brands, would initially focus on the Jhang and Sahiwal districts of Punjab, as well as the Barkhan and Lasbela districts of Balochistan. Anita Chester, Head of the Fashion Programme at Laudes Foundation, noted the initiative’s significant scale, spanning over a million hectares globally and benefiting hundreds of thousands of farmers, with specific plans to cover over 100,000 hectares and assist more than 50,000 farmers in Pakistan alone. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 4*)

Free Zone Agri Industrial Park inaugurated in Gwadar

Federal Minister for Marine Affairs Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh inaugurated Free Zone Agriculture Industrial Park in Gwadar. He said that many important projects for the people of Gwadar have been completed, adding that these projects include 100 MW of electricity from Iran, dams, desalination plants, roads and hospitals, a desalination plant has been installed in the free zone which will provide 1.2 million gallons of water to the citizens per day. All that remains is to connect the desalination plant water to the city, which will be done soon. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 1*)

1.1 # Farmers

Landlord tortures worker to death for quitting job

A landlord tortured his farm worker to death for quitting job at village Chak Bheela of district Pakpattan. Zahid, 45, a landless farm worker, was employed by Sarfaraz Manika alias Chappa for the last couple of years. Besides, he was not paid his dues for the last three months. Two days back, Zahid left the job as well as the Manika farmhouse. When Sarfaraz came to know about it, he called Zahid back last night. He allegedly constantly tortured Zahid the whole night that resulted in his death. Sarfaraz escaped from the scene. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2024, Page 2*)

MPAs seek compensation for rain-hit growers in Balochistan

Members of Balochistan Assembly demanded federal and provincial governments to compensate growers and farmers who have suffered huge financial losses due to recent rains. JUI-F lawmaker Asghar Ali Tareen said recent heavy rains, thunderstorms, snowfall and hailstorms destroyed standing crops, damaged fruit orchards, property and

infrastructure in Pishin, Chaman, Qila Abdullah and other northern Balochistan districts. He said that flash floods swept away hundreds of mud houses and growers lost their standing crops and fruit orchards. Opposition leader Mir Younis Aziz Zehri drew the attention of the house towards the landlords and farmers who have been staging a sit-in for the last four days. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2024, Page 5*)

Food dept to instal vending machines for wheat farmers

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa food department has said that FIRs would be registered against those trying to fraudulently sell Punjab wheat to it. The department also announced plans to establish a separate window for the convenience of local farmers. It said that vending machines would also be installed in Mardan, Dera Ismail Khan, Malakand, Swabi and Nowshera districts. The food department said that now only 100 metric tonnes of wheat would be purchased from a farmer instead of 500 metric tonnes as announced earlier. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 9*)

1.2 # Land

SC told: Rapid urbanisation devouring agriculture lands, fueling food insecurity

The Punjab government informed the apex court that mass urbanisation and the resulting reduction in agricultural land naturally impacts food security and increases food imports in several interconnected ways. A three-judge bench, headed by Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa, on March 20, expressing concern over flagrant violations of the law committed in the acquisition of agricultural land for a cooperative housing society in Rawalpindi, had framed 8 questions, directing Punjab government to file their replies.

Advocate General Punjab Khalid Ishaq submitted a detailed report on the conversion of agri-land to the housing schemes. The bench decided to deal with the issue of conversion of land from the main case of Revenue Employees Cooperative Housing Ltd (RECHS), separately. The report states, that historically, Pakistan was a leading South Asian exporter of wheat. This trend has reversed in recent years, and it is reported that Pakistan (government and private sector combined) imported wheat amounting to USD 1 billion during July-March for FY2024.

Loss of Farmland: The most direct impact of losing agricultural land is the reduction in the amount of land available for growing crops and raising livestock. This can lead to lower overall food production, which can be critical in regions where food supply is already precarious. In regions like Pakistan, specifically Punjab, where this agricultural land is highly fertile and productive, the impact on total agricultural output can be significant, potentially leading to a decrease in local food production.

Food Security: The reduction in local food production due to urbanisation obviously undermines food security, especially in areas where alternative sources of food are not readily accessible or affordable. As local production decreases, dependency on imported food can increase, which may not always be reliable (in terms of quality, quantity or

affordability), and would become more vulnerable to international market fluctuations, trade restrictions and geopolitical instabilities, especially in a region like Pakistan. Higher food prices tend to have a disproportionate effect on lower-income populations, exacerbating food insecurity and malnutrition. In addition, lack of food security is also linked to a shift in dietary trends towards more processed foods.

Increased food imports: As the local capacity to produce food diminishes due to the loss of agricultural land, regions may become more dependent on food imports to meet their population's needs. This shift can expose countries like Pakistan to global market volatility and changes in international trade policies. Higher reliance on food imports also typically leads to increased food prices, influenced by transportation costs, tariffs, and exchange rates. For a country that is already suffering from a debilitating trade deficit, increased reliance on food imports would only exacerbate the problem for Pakistan.

Environmental Impact: Ironically, while converting agricultural land often aims at urban development or industrial use, such changes can lead to environmental degradation (e.g., loss of biodiversity, increased pollution) which in turn can further affect local agricultural productivity of the surrounding agricultural land (e.g., through soil degradation, water scarcity). Additionally, the change in land use can alter local climates (the "urban heat island" effect), which might affect agricultural productivity in and around urban areas.

Impact on rural economy and agricultural practices: Urbanisation often draws labour away from rural areas and agriculture to cities, seeking better employment opportunities. This migration can lead to a shortage of agricultural labour, which might impact food production efficiency and sustainability. Moreover, the remaining farming areas might intensify their agricultural practices to maintain output, which can lead to overuse of chemicals inputs and water resources, further affecting long-term sustainability and quality of food production.

Regarding a question, who is legally empowered to grant approvals for converting land use and for such projects, The Punjab government report stated that a Special Cabinet Committee has recently been constituted by the chief minister Punjab to deliberate on the issues of conversion of agricultural land into residential/commercial use, which is holding regular meetings in order to devise the best policy for curbing such illegal and irregular development. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2024, Page 3*)

Two brothers killed over land dispute in Swabi

Two brothers were killed over a land dispute in a Topi village. Sultan Zeb registered an FIR with the police, stating his brothers were trying to stop some labourers from harvesting wheat crop on a disputed land when Sherinzada, Gulzada and Goharzada, who were also present there, opened fire at his brothers, injuring them critically. Later, they died in hospital. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024 Page 8*)

Maryam orders digitisation of Punjab land records

Punjab Chief Minister has directed essential steps to be undertaken for digitisation of land records in the province. She issued these directives while presiding over a special meeting related to the Board of Revenue reforms. A briefing was given on the Punjab Urban Land Systems Enhancement (PULSE). Maryam ordered the collaboration of relevant departments during land digitisation process. The participants were informed that the land record digitisation process is being undertaken with the cooperation of the World Bank under ‘Plus Project.’ (*The News, May 19th, 2024, Page 1*)

Two brothers killed in clash over farmland

Two brothers were killed and the third was wounded when rival groups of Napar clan fought over a piece of agricultural land in Bojanapar village near Shikarpur. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 15*)

Dispute over land claims woman`s life

A 40-year-old woman died in an attack by his husband`s rivals in the riverine area of Hyderabad district. The woman`s murder marked the latest conflagration in an ongoing dispute over a piece of land in the riverine area. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 15*)

Govt urged to repeal ‘abusive’ colonial-era land acquisition law

A report released by Human Rights Watch has urged parliament to reform the colonial-era Land Acquisition Act in line with international obligations, as the law, frequently used to forcibly evict low-income groups to enable development, exacerbates economic and social inequalities. The 48-page report, *I Escaped with Only My Life: Abusive Forced Evictions in Pakistan*, documents widespread and abusive forced evictions that disproportionately affect most economically and socially marginalised communities. The land acquisition law of 1894 provides the template for public land acquisition, allowing the Pakistani authorities to acquire land for vaguely defined “public purposes” which may include use by public-private partnerships and even private, for-profit companies. The evictions violate a range of human rights, including rights to adequate housing, highest attainable standard of health, education, social security, security of person, and freedom from cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment which blames “antiquated legal code” for this practice. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 3*)

State of women workers, peasants `precarious`: HWA

Condition of women workers and peasants in rural Sindh remains precarious despite existence on paper of various laws aimed at addressing their issues as there is a notable gap in the implementation of laws on women and gender inequality persists in Sindh`s agriculture sector, according to a report recently launched by Hari Welfare Association (HWA). The report titled *Assessing the Conditions of Women Workers and Peasants in Rural Sindh*, which was launched at a local hotel the other day, offers valuable insights into gender roles in agriculture, fisheries, and livestock and advocates a more inclusive and equitable agricultural sector in Sindh.

It highlights gap in the implementation of laws on women in rural occupations and said for instance, Benazir Women Support Programme under the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act (SWAWA) faced challenges due to its complex and unimplemented board structure. The Women Development Department had not adequately addressed the needs of rural women, it says. It notes that 98.7 per cent of women in rural Sindh lack land ownership and initiatives such as Sindh Benazir Income Support Programme exist but concerns about women's dependency instead of empowerment persist.

The report says rural women face a stark gender disparity in education, which hinders their empowerment and perpetuates a cycle of poverty, and lack adequate access to healthcare, resulting in high maternal mortality rates. Besides, social, cultural, religious, and economic barriers further compound their challenges. The report calls for comprehensive interventions to address the multifaceted challenges women workers and peasants face, and stresses the need for effective implementation of existing laws and initiatives aimed at empowering them. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 15*)

Rural Sindh: 'Women workers, peasants have been living in miserable conditions'

Women workers and peasants living in miserable conditions in rural Sindh, government should take concrete measures to protect women rights, said by women trade union leaders. Hari Welfare Association (HWA) and Women lead trade union leaders peasants women hold press conference at local press club Sanghar to highlight women worker issues. Speaker said that in the rural areas of Sindh, peasant and laborer women are living in extremely poor conditions.

Currently, the Sindh government has set a minimum wage of 32,000 rupees per month, but even today, Women workers and peasants work all day for a monthly wage ranging from 8,000 to 15,000 rupees. The government has not paid attention to this issue. We demand that the government ensure the fixed monthly wage of 32,000 rupees for women working in agriculture in Sindh. The social and economic conditions of peasant and laborer women in Sindh are extremely worrying, and their difficulties have further increased due to the devastation caused by the 2022 floods.

The homes of peasants and laborers collapsed during the recent rains, and their livestock have died in large numbers. The rehabilitation of destroyed homes is proceeding very slowly, and millions of peasants are still living under the open sky. There is no sustainable plan for the economic recovery of agricultural laborer and peasant women in Sindh, which is why rural women are still economically disadvantaged in this modern age. Furthermore, women registered in the Benazir Income Support Program are humiliated by being made to stand in queues at centers and banks. We demand that small business projects be initiated for peasant and laborer women so that they can become economically advanced.

The Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act was enacted in 2015 to prevent forced labor, but even after nine years, it has not been implemented. As a result, thousands of peasants

and laborers are freed each year from the private jails and forced labor of landlords and kiln owners. District vigilance committees established under this law have not been activated in any district, leading to an increase in forced labor. The situation of forced labor is rapidly worsening, with 11,135 peasants and laborers, including 3,705 women, freed from landlords and kiln owners between 2013 and 2022 under court orders.

The Sindh Agriculture Women Act 2019, passed by the Sindh government, should be implemented without delay. Peasants and peasant women should be given permanent worker status, providing them with social security, health, education, and insurance facilities. Government lands in Sindh should be allocated to landless peasants and peasant women, giving them packages for settlement, and the process of registering their unions under the given law should be made easy, transparent, and fair. (*Business Recorder, May 27th, 2024, Page 5*)

Most flood-hit farm workers living under open sky to this day, say rights activists

Women trade unionists have complained that millions of flood-hit peasants are still living under the open sky because of slow pace of reconstruction of their houses. Female workers and peasants were living in miserable conditions in rural Sindh and government was urged to take steps to protect their rights. They were speaking at a press conference in Matiari along with Hari Welfare Association (HWA) president Akram Khaskheli. They demanded the government ensure payment of Rs32,000 wage to women working in agriculture sector in Sindh.

Social and economic conditions of peasants and labourers in the province were worrisome and their difficulties had increased due to devastation caused by 2022 floods. They said that homes of peasants and labourers collapsed in rains and livestock perished. Reconstruction of houses was under way at slow pace and millions of peasants were still living under open sky. They said that women registered under Benazir Income Support Programme were humiliated at distribution centres and banks. They said the Sindh Bonded Labour Abolition Act was enacted in 2015 to prevent forced labour but even after nine years, it was not implemented. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 15*)

1.3 # Water

Rice Canal desilted to ensure full supplies to lands in three districts, CM told

Officials of the Sindh Barrage Improvement Project (SBIP) informed Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro at a briefing at the project site that desilting of Rice Canal had almost been completed. Rice Canal irrigates more than 481,000 acres across Larkana, Dadu and Qambar-Shahdada districts. It offtakes from upstream right side of Sukkur Barrage. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2024, Page 15*)

Water shortage

As the irrigation department implements a rotational water supply programme, thousands of acres of land in Muzaffargarh face reduced cotton yield due to water

shortages. The closure of numerous distributaries stemming from the Muzaffargarh Canal has left hundreds of farms uncultivated. Lower Kot Wahh operates on a seasonal flow basis and is not part of the rotational programme. Tail-end farmers are also experiencing difficulties as water fails to reach their lands. They appealed to Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to take action against irresponsible officials. Tail-end farmers, whose lands remain vacant due to water shortages, are considering cultivating spleen (tilli) crops. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 8*)

Irsa increases Punjab, Sindh water shares

The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) increased water shares for Punjab and Sindh after an extended rainy spell, particularly in the upper catchments of the Kabul River and storage constraints at Tarbela Dam. Sindh's water share was enhanced by almost 50%. Similarly, Punjab's share was increased by 34pc. On April 2, Irsa had estimated a water shortage for early kharif at 30pc. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2024, Page 12*)

Rs2.4bn `irregularities` in dams construction

A special audit report has revealed irregularities of Rs2.4bn and delays in construction of 100 dams in Balochistan. It added that work on 26 out of 100 dams was completed in 2021 instead of 2018. Delay ballooned construction costs by Rs261mn. Expenses of project implementation unit and supervision also went up by Rs133.6m. An additional payment of Rs112.6m was made to non-shareholders while contractors were charged Rs9.9m less than what they owed under income tax. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2024, Page 5*)

Sindh still faces water deficit despite all-time high levels in Mangla, Tarbela

The Indus River System Authority (Irsa) has been requested by Sindh to ensure stoppage of water withdrawals from Chashma-Jhelum (CJ) and Taunsa-Panjanad (TP) link canals to transfer water from Indus zone to Jhelum-Chenab (JC) zone as it is putting lower riparian Sindh at great disadvantage despite improved flows in Tarbela and Mangla dams. Simultaneously, Sindh irrigation department has pointed out discrepancy in flows recorded at Taunsa downstream and what is actually measured by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR). Sindh has raised its concern with Irsa for interprovincial water distribution after the latter decided on May 13 to ensure water distribution under para-2 of the Water Apportionment Accord 1991. The statistics available and information shared by irrigation sources reveal that Mangla dam had not attained a level in the early kharif period in the last 60 years which it has achieved this summer. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 15*)

Badin villagers refuse to have children vaccinated if drain not repaired

A group of villagers and farmers warned district administration that they would not have their children vaccinated against polio in upcoming campaign if irrigation department did not repair and remodel a link drain, which developed breaches during flood season every year and caused flooding in their area. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 15*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

IT Minister launches ‘CropWise Grower’ App for farmers

Federal Minister of State for IT and Telecommunications Shaza Fatima Khawaja said that agri-tech has an essential role in enhancing Pakistan’s agricultural productivity, promoting the economic well-being of farmers, and ensuring the country’s food security. The government’s top priorities are digitalization and agriculture. It is devising strategic initiatives and policy frameworks to facilitate all stakeholders, especially farmers, ‘benefit from emerging technological solutions. Minister spoke at launch of Syngenta Pakistan, a leading agriculture innovation and Technology Company’s ‘Cropwise Grower’ mobile application. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 2*)

HBL and Agrilift join forces to accelerate digitisation of agri sector

HBL, Pakistan’s leading financial institution, has entered into a strategic partnership with Agrilift, to accelerate the digitization efforts in the agriculture sector. This move reiterates HBL’s commitment to playing a leading role in developing the agricultural sector and promoting food security, under the guidance of Aga Khan Fund for Economic Development and in line with Pakistan’s strategic priorities. Agri lift, a pioneer in innovative agricultural solutions, is collaborating with HBL to deploy its advanced ‘Farm Monitoring’ solution, Agri lift Smart Risk. This state-of-the-art solution will provide HBL with invaluable insights into farming practices, crop yields, and potential risks. By leveraging Agri lift Smart Risk, HBL aims to enhance its credit limits for farmers, based on performance data. (*Business Recorder, May 9th, 2024, Page 7*)

2.1 # Agricultural Loan And Finances

Agri minister meets CEO of ‘Bakhabar Kissan’

Punjab Minister of Agriculture Ashiq Hussain Kirmani met CEO of “Bakhabar Kissan” Fintech company Khizer Khan at Agriculture House Lahore. Briefing the meeting, CEO “Bakhabar Kissan” Khizer Khan said that our financial and technology based company provides data on information of agriculture value chain to farmers. He maintained that the profile of farmers from all districts of Punjab, complete data of farms and crop land area are available in the company. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 3*)

Banking sector proposals critical for SMEs, tech and agriculture, says Aurangzeb

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Mohammad Aurangzeb has termed banking sector’s recommendations for three priority sectors — small and medium enterprises, digital and technology, agriculture — vital for promoting growth and sustainability. Key recommendations in agriculture sector included restructuring crop loan insurance schemes to integrate crop yield factors, revitalising agricultural cooperative banks, and upgrading provincial agricultural cooperative legislation to facilitate the creation of agricultural cooperative lending institutions. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 3*)

Farmers' registration for Kisan Card from June 1

Farmers' registration for Kisan Card will begin from June 1 as currently fertilisers and pesticide dealers are being registered for the scheme. This was stated by Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo while chairing a meeting on the Kisan Card. He said that transparency would be ensured in the Rs300 billion Kisan Card scheme under which an interest-free easy loan of Rs150,000 would be offered to each qualifying farmer. At least 0.5 million farmers holding one to 12.5 acres of land would be eligible for the scheme, and they would get fertilizers and seeds through their cards at fixed prices. Under this scheme, the farmer will be required to repay the loan within six months. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 2*)

Farmers to be issued 'Benazir Hari Cards': CM

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said that farmers would be issued Benazir Hari Cards benefiting from various government programmes to consolidate Hari's information for transparent and efficient implementation of interventions. The committee recommended the registration of farmers and engaging Sindh Bank and Commercial Banks through direct contracting. All agricultural landholders would be eligible regardless of their landholding size. Process can commence by issuing cards to over 150,000 verified farmers under Wheat Seed Cash Reimbursement Program. The farmers have valid documents such as Form –VII verified by the revenue department.

Only one owner can register for jointly owned land, provided they produce a No Objection Affidavit from the other joint owners or heirs, as verified by NADRA and the concerned Mukhtiarkar. Farmers with multiple landholdings would be eligible for one Card with cumulative landholding. Agriculture Department to engage top-notch human resource technology firms to develop required Software, Apps and other digital infrastructure through the Sindh Water Agriculture Transformation Project (SWAT) by taking the World Bank on board. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 7*)

2. 2 # Agricultural Tax

ST on tractors, pesticides likely

The federal government is likely to impose sales tax on tractors as well as pesticides during the upcoming budget (2024 25). Under the Sixth Schedule of the Sales Tax Act, sales tax exemption is available on pesticides and their active ingredients registered by the Department of Plant Protection under the Agricultural Pesticides Ordinance, 1971. Sources said that FBR on the recommendation of IMF has prepared proposals withdrawing the tax exemptions for various sectors, including tractors as well as pesticides. Sources said that FBR has estimated to collect Rs30 billion taxes if the proposal is approved from Parliament. Sources added that the government's proposed plan will not only increase the prices of tractors but also the pesticides due to which the burden on farmers will increase manifold. (*Business Recorder, May 10th, 2024, Page 1*)

ST on inputs to hit productivity, warn farmers

The farming community is concerned about government plans to impose sales tax on agricultural inputs in the budget 2024-25. Farmers believe this measure would raise the cost of cultivation, which is already under inflationary pressure and would have far-reaching consequences for the struggling community. Taxing farm inputs may lead farmers to compromise on product quality, resulting in lower crop yields and potentially impacting crop quality, raising concerns about food security and nutrition.

Sindh Abadgar Board President Mahmood Nawaz Shah lamented that farmers face numerous challenges, including resource scarcity and climate change effects, which are beyond their control. He urged government to consider ground realities while formulating taxation policies. He noted that sales tax on farm inputs could also hit export prospects for key crops such as rice and maize. “We must remember that rice exports reached \$3-4bn, and maize crossed a record \$500m so far in exports during same period. At this critical juncture, agriculture industry requires robust government support to enhance exports rather than impeding them”. Pakistan needs a national-level debate on how to tax the agriculture sector, adding that there must be a mechanism that offers benefits to farmers just like different incentives are delivered to industrial sector. After corn crop losses last season, farmers have again been badly hit by ‘poor decision making’ as they faced a 25% loss on their wheat crop. “If we impose sales tax on farm inputs too, it will further burden small and mid-size farmers whose economy is already dependent on expensive loans and credits”. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 9*)

2.3 # Fertilizers

Fake fertilisers, pesticides scam Cases against 29 dealers as wheat crop on 2,173 acres ruined in Narowal

The district agriculture department has got registered FIRs against 29 fertiliser and pesticide dealers after samples of products manufactured by 46 companies proved fake after laboratory tests. The department took action against these dealers after wheat crop cultivated on 2,173 acres in the district was destroyed allegedly due to the use of fake fertilisers and pesticides, causing a total loss of over Rs300 million to the affected farmers, as per the department’s estimates. According to official data, of a total 458,000 acres of agricultural land in Narowal district, wheat crop was cultivated on 315,680 acres in 2024. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 2*)

Urea sales hit three-year low

Urea sales hit a three-year low, plunging 49 per cent month-on-month to 328,000 tonnes in April and 33pc year-on-year. Sherman Research said that, according to provisional data, DAP sales also declined 12pc to 92,000 tonnes month-on-month but posted a jump of 82pc year-on-year. The decline in fertiliser sales is due to the combined impact of a delay in the wheat harvesting season and the anticipation of a decline in the urea price, which is forcing dealers to be cautious about buying. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 9*)

2.4 # Industrial Production of Agriculture

Adoption of digital information and communication technologies for sesame cultivation

The cultivation of sesame in Pakistan has emerged as a promising solution to meet the country's growing demand for edible oil. Sesame is considered crucial due to its high potential for fulfilling future oil requirements due to its adaptability to various climates and its ability to produce good quality vegetable oil. However, despite its advantages, there are several challenges and opportunities associated with sesame cultivation in Pakistan. One significant challenge faced by sesame growers is the absence of digital infrastructure, information and communication technologies (ICTs) for their produce. Without access to digital inclusion and accessibility, farmers may struggle to sell their crops at fair prices, leading to exploitation by middlemen.

The absence of government procurement centers for sesame further complicates the market situation, leaving farmers at the mercy of intermediaries and resulting in unfair prices for their produce. Sesame growers are also susceptible to price fluctuations in the grain market, which can significantly impact their income. These uncertain prices may discourage farmers from investing in sesame cultivation. Implementing inter-cropping systems could enhance sesame productivity and profitability. Government has initiated policy measures to promote domestic sesame production. By providing support to sesame farmers, such as guaranteed sales at reasonable prices, policymakers can encourage increased cultivation and contribute to food security. Investing in research and development to develop high-yielding sesame cultivars must improve both quality and quantity of sesame production. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 7*)

UAF will cultivate soyabean on 100,000 acres of land

University of Agriculture, Faisalabad will cultivate soyabean on 100,000 acres of land to promote its production and achieve food self-sufficiency. Stating this, the Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani called for arranging a consultation session for all stakeholders to increase the area under soyabean cultivation in which academia, research, industry, poultry, dairy and farmers should be invited. As a result of this session, a plan of action should be drawn up to increase cultivation of soyabeans in consultation with all the stakeholders. (*Business Recorder, May 31st, 2024, Page 5*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Kharif crop production prospects improve

The extended and massive rainy spell in April, higher-than-usual temperatures and anticipated normal monsoon rainfall have improved kharif crop output prospects. Taking into consideration the “very promising water situation”, the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) decided “to curtail the shortages for the early kharif period till June 10, from the initial 30pc to 21pc for Punjab and Sindh”, said a statement issued by the water regulator. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 11*)

H1FY24 agri sector output rebounds

The output of agriculture sector rebounded, with 6.8 percent growth in the first half of FY24 compared to 1.8 percent in last year, the State of Pakistan's Economy Report for the first half of FY24 released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The growth was also broad-based, with major contribution coming from important crops and livestock. Among the important crops, production of cotton and rice increased considerably. Production of sugarcane slightly declined, with losing some area to cotton. Favourable weather conditions alongside greater input availability supported the overall better performance of the crops. However, concerns about fertilizer affordability due to high prices and its reported hoarding can be an issue. Nonetheless, current situation indicates optimistic outlook for wheat and other Rabi crops.

Agriculture Credit Disbursements: Keeping in view the rising input prices, the target for agriculture credit disbursements was increased by 23.7 percent to Rs2,250 billion in FY24. In line with that disbursements increased by 31.3 percent in the first half of FY24, achieving about 49.1 percent of the annual target. Most of the loans were disbursed for crop production, followed by livestock/dairy in non-farm sector and poultry. There was also significant increase in disbursements for purchase of tractors (farm sector - development). This is also reflected in tractor sales, which surged by 103.3 percent during the first half of FY24, pointing towards increased agricultural activity as well as mechanization in the sector.

SBP's financing schemes such as Prime Minister's kissan package, crop loan insurance scheme, livestock insurance scheme for borrowers, and use of electronic warehouse receipt facilitated farmers in meeting their financing needs. In addition, 'champion bank model' accelerated penetration in the underserved regions, through increasing awareness, formulating specialized lending programs, and addressing the challenges faced by local farmers. In order to enhance awareness regarding various agriculture credit schemes, Agriculture Finance Literacy Programme of SBP conducted a series of five workshops in the first half of FY24. (*Business Recorder, May 15th, 2024, Page 12*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

Country faces the risk of decline in growth of cotton yield: FPCCI body demands Punjab govt start wheat procurement

Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Standing Committee on Agriculture says the cotton crop in Punjab is likely to face less yield in view of ongoing wheat issues. In this regard, it is advisable that the provincial government of Punjab may start wheat procurement on a priority basis with the addition of temporarily godowns in every Tehsil. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 12*)

'2.76m acres of land brought under cotton cultivation'

Farmers in Punjab have so far brought 2.76 million acres of land under cotton cultivation in the province which is 50 percent of the target fixed in this season. It was

disclosed at a high-level meeting held at Agriculture House Lahore under the chairmanship of Secretary Agriculture, Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahoo. Secretary Agriculture has said that for achievement of 4 million acres of cotton cultivation target, all field formations have been assigned a special task and digital monitoring of their activities is being done. (*Business Recorder, May 12th, 2024, Page 3*)

Cotton picking begins as prices plummet

Cotton picking has started in most coastal towns of Sindh and a few areas of Punjab as some ginners have announced making their factories operational in the first week of June. Though picking during the last season had begun a few days earlier than this season, the volume of cotton arrivals in the market was much more than this May. Badin, Thatta, Mirpur Sakro, Tando Bago, Gharo, Chor Jamali, and Jhado are among the Sindh towns where cotton picking has started. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2024, Page 9*)

Cotton ginning season begins amid farmers concerns

New cotton ginning season has started in the country, though partially, as one ginning unit each has become operational in Sindh and Punjab, while more are to come on line in the next few days. Reports say partial picking of cotton has started in some coastal areas of Sindh and in southern Punjab and arrival of raw cotton in the market is gaining momentum with each passing day. The volume is quite lower than that of last year during the same days.

One ginning unit has become operational in Hyderabad and one in Burewala (Punjab) as the farmers are mostly worried and engaged about their recently harvested wheat crop ignoring cotton, while the government is delaying the announcement of cotton intervention price. Cotton picking is beginning to gain momentum in lower Sindh areas and it is being offered a rate between Rs9,500 and Rs10,700 per 40kg. Reports from the field say that higher temperatures are obstructing efforts to sow cotton, while in the name of the so-called financial crisis in the sector, textile mills have blocked payments worth billions of rupees. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 2*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Punjab comes up with ‘vague policy’ on wheat crisis

As it blamed the caretaker government for causing a “wheat crisis” in the province, the Punjab government announced a ‘vague’ policy that did not contain a date for the initiation of the procurement drive. The policy also came under fire from the opposition as it offered nothing new to the protesting farmers who had taken to the streets to demand the procurement of their grain at a support price of Rs3,900 per 40kg announced by the government. The government had also reduced the procurement target from over 4 million tonnes to a little over 2 million.

Food Minister Bilal Yasin said there was a “wheat crisis” in the province for which the caretaker government was responsible. “Those who imported wheat [close to the

harvesting season] are responsible for this crisis. However, despite this, the government will fully support the small farmers,” the minister said, without elaborating on the mode and timeframe for this support. The minister also promised a fact-finding probe into the import of the staple and said the report would be tabled in the house. He added the procurement drive would start when the grain would contain “10 per cent moisture” which was currently at 16pc due to a recent spell of rains.

Provincial government remained indecisive about the planned subsidy for the ‘small farmers’ from whom it may not purchase wheat. The cabinet, however, approved the Kissan card in its meeting and the subsidy proposal was merely reviewed. Under the proposal, the government intends to provide Rs400-600 per 40kg subsidy to the growers whose grain it will not buy even though they applied on the Kissan app for this purpose. During the meeting, CM Maryam Nawaz said: “All resources of Punjab are available for farmers. Middlemen and ‘Aarhi’ cannot be allowed to exploit farmers. My intention is to make roti cheaper for the people”. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 1*)

FPCCI defends wheat imports

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industries (FPCCI) urged the federal government to avoid harassing the private sector for timely importing wheat to bridge the demand-supply gap. The FPCCI reacted to the government’s claim that the interim setup permitted the private sector to import wheat without a rational justification. The FPCCI supported the private sector’s actions. The FPCCI stated that imported wheat costs roughly Rs65 per kg, as opposed to locally produced wheat, which costs Rs100 per kg. He noted that consumers saved Rs1.25 trillion, and inflation began to decline. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

PM’s order to increase wheat procurement target may not benefit Sindh growers

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif’s recent directive to Passco to increase wheat procurement target from 1.4m to 1.8m tonnes in view of pressing grain procurement issue would not be much beneficial to Sindh’s farmers. Sindh government had decided to procure 0.9m tonnes of wheat whose production estimates indicate that province’s yield is 4.2m to 4.3m tonnes this year. Sindh food department, until last week or so, had procured 355,000 tonnes of wheat at a support price of Rs4,000 per 40kg. Procurement target in Sindh remained on lower side in view of reports of available carryover stocks (imported) when compared with last year’s target of 1.4m tonnes. It was yet to be seen whether department would be able to achieve its procurement target as decided by Sindh cabinet.

Expensive fertiliser

Lahore-based Pakistan Kissan Ittehad had in a press release lately reminded government that in 2023, farmers had paid Rs300bn over and above MRP fixed by fertiliser industry to ‘market exploiters’ on account of black marketing of urea and government failed to implement its writ to ensure availability of urea on prescribed MRP.

Tyrannical nexus

Besides unfair distribution of bardana in Sindh, the decades-old nexus of traders, middlemen and food officials actually gobbles up the differential amount of support price and open market rate. Farmers keep running from pillar to post to get bardana but they could not get it. A Sindh food official, however, candidly admitted that wheat procurement operation was indeed a mess in Sindh. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 15*)

PM forms body to probe wheat import matter

PM Shehbaz Sharif has formed an inquiry committee regarding import of wheat under the chairmanship of secretary Cabinet Division. He said that there has been a bumper crop of wheat this year and directed to ensure that there is no delay in the procurement of wheat. He inquired about import of wheat last year from Ministry of National Food Security. He wanted to know that on what basis decision was taken for import of wheat despite good production of wheat last year. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Balochistan allocates Rs5bn for wheat procurement

The Balochistan government has approved the release of Rs5 billion for wheat procurement in the province and also decided to provide funds for purchasing bardana (gunny bags) for growers. The meeting was informed that the food department currently has 58,000 tonnes of wheat in stock, remaining from last year's distribution. According to the cabinet's decisions, 500,000 tonnes of wheat will be purchased from farmers this year. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 3*)

Govt `reluctant` to dig deep into wheat scam

As Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pledges to “protect the interests of farmers at all costs”, the federal government appears reluctant to thoroughly investigate the mega scam and take action against those at the helm at the time of the import. At present, a fact-finding committee — formed earlier this week to identify irregularities in the import — is led by Cabinet Secretary Kamran Ali Afzal. The committee is tasked with probing the matter and its report is likely to be furnished before the cabinet next week. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 1*)

The wheat import scam?

The so-called wheat import scam has taken a new turn, as the government-appointed investigating committee has begun interviewing officials to identify those responsible for authorising wheat imports over the anticipated shortages. The import of 3.612 million tonnes of wheat in FY24 may be a minor concern, but the main issue is to improve the reporting mechanisms for wheat production and consumption in provincial agriculture departments and the Federal Ministry of Food Security. Many analysts argued that the government was diverting people's attention away from the underlying issue by forming committees to investigate private-sector-led imports that received no government subsidies.

Wheat imports meet government permission, according to the first fact-finding committee. Still, the government removed the Ministry of Food Security secretary and the Plant Protection Department director general before the investigative committee report to show Punjab farmers that the federal government cares. The question is: why are farmers in Punjab protesting alone? Wheat imports are not confined to Punjab; private firms in Karachi also imported the wheat. There are two interpretations: Sindh harvesting was completed before March, and the provincial government fulfilled its commitment to purchase wheat from farmers at the agreed-upon price of Rs4,000 per 40kg. Then it begs whether the wheat issue is being addressed appropriately in Punjab.

The number one wheat importer is Trading Louis Dreyfus, a French commodities and grain company with an office in Karachi and an eight-day shipping time. This company bought 849,448 tonnes of wheat, accounting for 24pc of total wheat imports. United Resources Corporations is the second largest importer, accounting for 520,442 tonnes and 15pc of total private sector imports in FY24. There are 65 total wheat importers, 17 of which are flour mills that also import wheat. The plant protection agency is estimated to have issued approximately 1,000 permits to these importers.

In a summary to ECC on Sept 27, 2023, Ministry of Food Security requested 1 million tonnes of wheat as strategic supplies for 2023-24. The ministry was informed that the finance division backed private wheat imports rather than Pakistan Trading Corporation purchases. The summary predicted a 2.45 million-tonne wheat shortage in 2023-24. Even if these data are genuine, why was an excess of 1.162m tonnes of wheat imported in FY24, resulting in a loss of foreign exchange for government? As a result, more imports may not result in lower wheat prices further. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 9*)

PM vows to protect farmers

Announcing that the federal government will procure 1.8 million metric tonnes of wheat through the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco), Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif made it clear that no compromise will be made on the economic welfare of farmers. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 1*)

Farmers plan fresh agitation against wheat debacle

Farmers from across the country are planning fresh demonstrations against the alleged wheat import scandal, which has delayed grain procurement and caused financial losses to the growers. The Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) announced protests across the country from May 10, while another representative body of farmers, the Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee, has invited growers for a meeting on May 9 to chalk out a future strategy.

While addressing a press conference in Multan, PKI President Khalid Mahmood Khokhar claimed a mafia profited immensely from the wheat import. The farmers have reportedly lost Rs400 billion due to the import and are left with no option but to take to the streets. Mr Khokhar said farmers won't be able to cultivate cotton and rice if they can't sell wheat, and the current crisis would also impact future wheat output. The PKI

chief alleged that due to the import, wheat prices fell to Rs2,800-Rs3,000 per 40kg against government-mandated rate of Rs3,900, forcing the farmers to sell 50pc of their total produce. This has reportedly resulted in a loss of Rs380 billion to the farmers and Rs104 billion to government due to incidental charges. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2024, Page 3*)

Wheat worth Rs330bn imported in 7 months

Wheat worth 330 billion rupees was imported in seven months—from August 2023 to March 2024—and 1.3 million metric tonnes of this commodity were found to be defective— suggest the reportedly initial findings of the inquiry committee probing the wheat import scandal. Some 2.8 million metric tonnes wheat worth Rs 250 billion was imported in the tenure of the former federal caretaker government whereas 700,000 or 0.7 million metric tonnes wheat worth Rs 80 billion was imported by the present federal government, inquiry panel’s reported. (*Business Recorder, May 6th, 2024, Page 18*)

New body to investigate import of ‘substandard’ wheat

While confirming the import of insect-infected wheat by the caretaker government, federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer has formed another inquiry committee to investigate irregularities and negligence committed in the import. This is the second inquiry committee formed within a week on the issue, as the first one, constituted by Prime Minister, was headed by the Cabinet division secretary. (*Dawn, May 7th, 2024, Page 1*)

Wheat fiasco points towards govt ‘negligence’

The mismanagement associated with allowing wheat imports, which benefited the private sector and deprived local farmers of due price of their produce, goes to the federal government which did not stop private sector imports despite opposition by the provinces. Official documents reveal that on February 1, 2024, the ECC headed by caretaker Finance Minister, Shamshad Akhtar, was briefed by Ministry of National Food Security and Research that the Provincial Crop Reporting Services for the year 2022-23 reported wheat production of 28.18 MMT. Therefore, with the addition of carry-forward stocks of 1.63 MMT, the total availability of wheat was reported at the level of 32.27 MT, showing a shortfall of 2.40 MMT.

The Ministry of National Food Security & Research submitted a proposal for import of 1.00 MMT through the public sector to maintain PASSCOs strategic reserves. Private sector was encouraged and supported to import the remaining quantity of wheat to maintain the equilibrium in demand and supply of wheat in the country. The ECC on October 23, 2023 approved the proposal of Ministry of National Food Security and Research and allowed Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) to import 1.00 MMT of milling wheat for the year 2023-24 to maintain strategic reserves of PASSCO. Decision of the ECC was ratified by the Federal Cabinet on October 30, 2023.

Import of milling wheat by the private sector had improved the situation of demand and supply and minimized the gap shortfall of wheat in the country. Department of Plant

Protection (DPP) reported that up till December 27, 2023 around 27 vessels of the private sector had till then arrived in the country with imported milling stock of 1.270 MMT. It was also reported by the private sector that a further quantity of 1.00 MMT was also expected to arrive till the end of February, 2024.

The matter of import of wheat was discussed in the meeting of Wheat Board held on December 19, 2023 wherein the Provincial Food Departments demanded an immediate stop to wheat imports by the private sector because of the slow releases of the public sector. Ministry of NFS&R further stated that PASSCO and Provincial Food Departments had reported their public stocks at the level of 6.307 MMT. The stock comprised 1.594 MMT of wheat with PASSCO, 3.617 with Punjab, 0.817 MMT with Sindh, 0.189 MMT with KP and 0.089 MMT with Balochistan.

Provincial Crop Reporting Services had reported wheat crop sowing of over 22.63 million acres against the target of 22.22 million acres showing healthy progress of over 101 per cent. If the weather supplements the crop, it was expected that this year country would achieve its production target of 32 MMT. However, insiders claim that Punjab government reportedly kept wheat release rate higher than the private sector, due to which flour mills preferred to purchase Ukrainian wheat imported by the private sector. The ECC of the Cabinet headed by the caretaker Finance Minister considered the summary December 28, 2023 submitted by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research regarding “Demand and Supply of Wheat in the country” and approved it. (*Business Recorder, May 7th, 2024 Page 1*)

ECC all set to approve enhancement of wheat target

ECC of the Cabinet is all set to approve enhancement of wheat target by 0.40 MMT to 1.80 MMT from 1.40 MMT along with fresh Cash Credit Limit (CCL) amounting Rs41.50 billion to procure additional quantity. The Ministry of National Food Security and Research, in its proposal to be considered on Tuesday (today) has informed that the ECC of the Cabinet in its meeting held on April 5, 2024, allowed PASSCO to procure 1.40 MMT of local wheat from growers at the profitable support price of Rs3,900/40kg with the CCL of Rs169.00 billion. (*Business Recorder, May 7th, 2024, Page 1*)

ECC approves 400,000 tonnes increase in wheat procurement target

ECC of the cabinet approved 400,000 tonnes of additional wheat procurement by the Centre, allowed the import of 200,000 tonnes of urea, and sanctioned about Rs144 billion in supplementary grants. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 9*)

Wheat procurement from local farmers to save govt Rs12bn, claims Gandapur

KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Khan Gandapur said his government would save Rs12 billion by purchasing wheat from local farmers and the money would be utilised for construction and renovation of wheat warehouses. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 8*)

Sindh has procured 600,000 tons of wheat so far: CM

Sindh Chief Minister has announced that the provincial Food department has procured 600,000 tons wheat out of 900,000 tons and the remaining crop is being procured from the areas where growers missed out. Shah said that the Sindh Food dept had 400,000 tons of wheat in its godowns, and only 900,000 tons were required to meet the provincial requirement. He added that so far 600,000 tons of wheat has been procured and the remaining 300,000 tons would be procured from areas where complaints of judicious distribution of bardana were received. (*Business Recorder, May 9th, 2024, Page 7*)

Punjab decides to devise a new wheat policy

The Punjab food department has decided to withdraw from its practice of wheat procurement. They further said that a new policy has been devised over the matter and it will become a law and with that the food department's role in wheat procurement will come to an end. Sources said that in new policy the private sector will purchase wheat crop from farmers, directly. "The government will fix the wheat price in view of the international prices of the commodity". (*Business Recorder, May 12th, 2024, Page 1*)

Corruption by Passco officials in gunny bags distribution

Officials of Passco sold gunny bags to traders for Rs300 to Rs900 per bag instead of providing them to farmers in Bahawalnagar district. Farmers are agitating against officials, accusing them of corruption by selling gunny bags to grain traders, politicians and middlemen on commission. They also charged officials with getting higher labour rates and making illegal deductions of wheat per bag. Enraged farmers took over several Passco centres in district and stopped supply of bags. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2024, Page 2*)

Averted massive corruption by not buying wheat: CM

Denying any wheat crisis in Punjab, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz claimed that her government has plugged a channel of massive corruption reported in wheat procurement every year (by not purchasing wheat). (*Dawn, May 17th, 2024, Page 2*)

No ban on wheat movement, says Punjab

The Punjab Food Department has clarified that it has not banned the inter-province or inter-district movement of wheat, blaming a "misinterpretation" of a notification for the confusion regarding grain transportation. Punjab is currently facing a wheat abundance crisis this crop season due to the heavy import of grain by the caretaker setup close to the local harvesting time. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 1*)

Farmers reject suspension of four officers linked to wheat scam

Farmers have rejected suspension of four officers in wheat import scandal terming it an insufficient step taken to protect the real culprits. On the recommendation of an inquiry committee tasked with investigating the import of wheat close to local crop harvest time. PM has ordered suspension of four officers — former National Food Security secretary Muhammad Asif, former DG of Food Protection A.D. Abid, National Food Security Commissioner Dr Waseem and Director Suhail. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 3*)

3.3 # Fruits

Fruit procurement in danger

Already reeling under the impact of an ongoing wheat crisis, the farming community is set to suffer another blow in the form of reduced fruit purchases by juice and nectar extracting companies, apparently because of the imposition of higher taxes on the industry. Reports from the countryside suggest that juice makers have reduced their footprint in the local fruit markets by slashing their procurement and contract-farming targets. At its peak, the formal juice industry procured more than 100,000 tonnes of fruits from local farmers. The volumes have gone down considerably. Normally, fruit pulp-making units approach orchard owners and exporters a couple of months before fruit harvesting and sign an informal contract to lift fruit supplies that do not meet export standards. However, the trend has abruptly declined this year as orchard owners continue to pensively wait for industry representatives.

Due to the levy of 10pc Federal Excise Duty (FED) in the 2022-23 budget, industry sales plummeted to Rs43 billion, which would have increased to more than Rs70bn, considering the industry's growth trajectory in the previous years. In 2023-24 budget, government raised the FED to 20pc to meet revenue shortfalls. However, this has proved counterproductive, with no gains for national exchequer due to dipping sales and volumes. It has also opened field for mushroom growth of tax-evading undocumented sector due to cheap, low quality, and possibly unsafe products, while adversely affecting the rural economy of fruit farmers who are associated with this value chain.

According to industry representatives, the imposition of 20pc FED has shot their sales down by around 50-70pc, slashing their new procurement targets. After the imposition of the 20pc FED, industry volumes have crashed by 41pc, and fruit procurement has gone down by almost half. This has affected pulp processors as well as the local farmers. As a result of dipping sales, some companies have had to lay off workers, especially daily wage workers. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page Business & Finance 2*)

Sky-High FED: Pulping Punjab's Rural Economy

Developing agriculture value chains is the low-hanging fruit in Pakistan's economy – especially the Punjab economy. One silently growing area was in creating a value chain from fruit to pulp to juice making before the heavy taxation hit the formal sector. Around 80 percent of fruit procurement and manufacturing of pulp and juices takes place in Punjab, and lately, the industry has been on a decline due to increasing prices owing to inflation and increased taxation. The farmer is already stressed due to the absence of wheat support, and the lack of growth in other sectors is just adding pain.

The fruit pulping and juicing industry has been developing fast in the past few years, as new manufacturers have entered the formal market seeing the growing demand. However, taxation has suppressed the demand, and today the capacity utilization of the industry is around 30 percent. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2024, Page 2*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Sindh: SIFC decides to upgrade tourist sites on PPP mode basis

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presiding over a meeting of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) discussed Green Pakistan Initiative projects to be launched on PPP mode to develop tourism sites, promote safari desert, and develop agricultural and livestock farms. The meeting discussed the development of Keenjher Lake, Haleji Lake, Hawks Bay and Gorakh Hill Resorts and converting them into world-class tourist sites in Public-public-private partnership.

The meeting discussed facilitating private parties (PPP mode) to establish shrimp farms/hatcheries along the coastal highway of Sindh. The CM directed the Fisheries dept to submit business models for further action. The meeting also discussed outsourcing the provincial government’s cattle farms at Rohri, Umerkot and Naukot. The private parties would invest in and improve cattle breeds for milk and meat as private partners of the provincial government. (*Business Recorder, May 22nd, 2024, Page 4*)

4.1 # Fisheries

Action against illegal fishing, trawling demanded

The Balochistan Assembly adopted a resolution demanding the provincial government to take strict measures to stop illegal fishing and trawling in province’s waters. The resolution also called for initiating action against officials of the fisheries department and other individuals involved in this illegal business. The resolution was moved by Maulana Hidayatur Rehman of Haq Do Tehreek (HDT) during the session.

Mr Rehman said as a fisherman, he was aware of the impact of illegal trawling and fishing in Balochistan waters. Fishermen have been deprived of at least 15 different species of fish due to the use of banned nets and other equipment installed in the large trawlers. He also mentioned that illegal trawling not only depletes Balochistan’s waters of different kinds of fish but also causes a loss of over Rs70 billion annually.

Provincial Minister for Planning and Development, Mir Zahoor Ahmed Buledi, while supporting the resolution, said the provincial government was developing a fisheries policy. Under this policy, trackers would be installed on every boat entering the sea for fishing. He disclosed that the government was also making efforts to amend the fisheries act, which would not only benefit fishermen but also increase the GDP. “The government is giving fisheries the status of an industry, and people affiliated with it will be declared labourers,” Mr Buledi said.-(*Dawn, January 12th, 2024, Page 5*)

Brothers drown while fishing off Pasni

Two brothers drowned in the Arabian Sea while fishing off the coast of Pasni in Gwadar district. Their bodies were later recovered by local fishermen. Local fishermen have alleged that the fisheries department was timely informed, but their delayed response resulted in the loss of two lives. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 5*)

4.2 # Livestock

Small loans to promote cattle farming planned

The Balochistan government has chalked out a plan to provide small loans on easy terms to graduates so that they could set up livestock farms or start a business in other sectors. Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti said at a meeting of the Livestock and Dairy Development Department that an amount of Rs 2 billion would be allocated for the flagship programme. It will be implemented in collaboration with the Akhuwat Foundation. It was also decided in the meeting to launch mobile units in 36 districts of the province for the vaccination of livestock. The finance department was asked to release funds for the drive. Chief Minister Bugti expressed his anger over the occupation of hundreds of acres of land owned by the Livestock Department and ordered the officials concerned to retrieve the lands. "If anyone occupies government lands in future, the government will take strict action against them and the deputy commissioner concerned," Mr Bugti said. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 5*)

4.3 # Poultry

Poultry cartelization case: CCP conducts hearing

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) conducted a hearing in the poultry cartelization case, wherein the Pakistan Poultry Association (PPA) presented its defence against allegations of price fixing. This hearing was fixed after show cause notices were issued to PPA and eight other entities for cartelization. The CCP's investigation revealed prima facie collusion and price fixing of day-old broiler chicks by a suspected cartel of eight hatcheries from 2019 to June 2021. These entities include Hitech Group, Islamabad Group of Companies, Olympia Group, Jadeed Group, Supreme Farms (Season's Foods), Big Bird Group, and Sabirs' Group. Enquiry was initiated following a surge in prices and complaints from broiler farmers through Pakistan Citizens Portal, alleging cartelization in sector. (*Business Recorder, May 21st, 2024, Page 2*)

5 # Trade

Jul-Apr trade deficit shrinks 17.09pc to \$19.514bn YoY

Pakistan's trade deficit narrowed down by 17.09 percent in the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 as it stood at \$19.514 billion compared to \$23.535 billion during the same period of last fiscal year, says the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The monthly data released by the Bureau noted that the trade deficit widened by 180.58 per cent on a year-on-year basis and stood at \$2.374 billion in April 2024 compared to \$846 million during the same month of 2023.

The country's exports increased by 9.10% (\$2.109bn) to \$25.280bn during July-April 2023-24 compared to \$23.171bn in corresponding period of the last fiscal year. Imports declined by 4.09% to \$44.794bn during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year as compared with \$46.706bn in the same period of last fiscal year. The imports increased by 58.43% on a YoY basis and remained \$4.723bn in April 2024 compared to \$2.981bn

in April 2023. The exports increased by 10.02% on a YoY basis and remained \$2.349bn in April 2024 compared to \$2.135bn in April 2023. On a MoM basis, the trade deficit widened by 3.16% to \$2.374bn in April 2024, as compared to \$2.301bn in March 2024. Exports recorded 8.67% decline to \$2.349bn in April 2024 when compared with \$2.572bn in March 2024. Import decreased by 3.08% to \$ 4.723bn in April 2024 when compared with \$4.873bn in March 2024. (*Business Recorder, May 3rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Pakistan, Turkiye agree to increase trade volumes to \$5bn

The government of Pakistan and the Republic of Turkiye agreed to increase the volume of trade to \$5 billion. Additionally, plans for the establishment of a branch of a Turkish Bank in Pakistan were also discussed in order to further solidify economic ties between the two nations. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs, Ahad Khan Cheema apprised the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in Pakistan, aimed at attracting investments from friendly countries, and highlighted the potential for Turkish investment in Pakistan especially in agricultural machinery and equipment and large-scale corporate farming. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2024, Page 3*)

Trade with India suspended due to heavy duties, says Dar

Trade ties between Pakistan and India have remained suspended since 2019 due to imposition of heavy duties by New Delhi on imports from Pakistan after the Pulwama attack, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar told the National Assembly. “India decided to impose 200 per cent duty on imports from Pakistan, suspended the Kashmir bus service and trade across the Line of Control”. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2024, Page 12*)

Pakistan, Turkiye vow to hike trade to \$5bn

Pakistan and Turkiye set their sights on enhancing annual bilateral trade to \$5 billion, besides intensifying their defense collaboration as the two countries prepared for their upcoming high-level bilateral summit. Annual bilateral trade volume was currently just \$1bn. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 3*)

Poland-Pakistan trade volume reaches \$920m: envoy

Ambassador of Republic of Poland Maciej Pisarski has informed that the overall trade volume between Poland and Pakistan has reached to more than US\$920m, of which Pakistan exported goods worth US\$800 million due to GSP Plus arrangement which gives duty free access of Pakistani goods to Polish Market whereas Poland’s exports to Pakistan stood at US\$128m last year. (*Business Recorder, May 23rd, 2024, Page 2*)

Aleem rues low volume of trade with Kuwait

Federal Minister of Investment Board, Privatisation and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan has said that the low volume of trade between Kuwait and Pakistan is unfortunate and it is necessary to promote bilateral investment. Federal Minister, while presiding over the meeting of the 5th Pak-Kuwait Joint Ministerial Commission, said that it is going to be held in Kuwait after six years by Pakistan, in which, the establishment of Special Economic Zones in Pakistan will be widely discussed. He said

that there will be practical developments on investment and trade issues for which all ministries should attend these meetings in Kuwait with full preparation at the end of this month. He said that Kuwait can bring investment in Pakistan in important trade sectors such as food security, livestock, telecom, information technology, agriculture, tourism, and petroleum. (*Business Recorder, May 24th, 2024, Page 3*)

Turkiye committed to boosting bilateral trade to \$5bn in 3 years: envoy

Turkish Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Mehmet Pacaci said that Turkiye was committed with Pakistan to raise the bilateral trade volume to \$5 billion in three years, a target set by the two countries. (*Business Recorder, May 24th, Page 4*)

Polish envoy for more trade with Pakistan

Ambassador of Poland Maciej Pisarski has emphasized the need to further expand trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Poland. “The total trade volume between the two countries is close to one billion dollars that needs to be doubled, at least. And thanks to the GSP Plus status that enabled Pakistan to export goods worth \$800m, while Poland’s exports to Pakistan last year were \$128m,” Mr Pisarski said while speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry. “Poland is one of Pakistan’s major trading partners and is currently the eighth largest export market for Pakistani products in Europe. The bilateral trade volume, which was approximately \$423m in 2022-23 should be increased to \$2bn”. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 2*)

Trade gap with Middle East narrows 26pc

Pakistan’s trade deficit with the Middle East has significantly improved, narrowing by 26 per cent to \$10.67 billion in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to decreasing petroleum imports from the region. The trade imbalance with the region has decreased since the beginning of the current fiscal year, primarily because of reduced consumption of petroleum products, as prices have continued to rise during the months under review. In absolute terms, Pakistan’s exports to the Middle East rose 31.88pc to \$2.52bn between July-April 2023-24 compared to \$1.91bn in the corresponding period last year. At the same time, imports dipped 19.22pc to \$13.19bn in 10M FY24, compared to \$16.34 bn in the same period last year, according to data compiled by SBP. Pakistan witnessed a 7.24pc decline in imports totalling \$17.49bn in FY23, down from \$18.85bn in the preceding year. In FY23, exports to ME shrank 12.62pc to \$2.33bn from \$2.67bn in preceding year. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 9*)

Major step taken to boost Pakistan-Iran bilateral trade

Pakistan and Iran have decided to open Taftan and Gabd borders 24/7 — a major step forward to promote bilateral trade and local businesses between the two neighbouring countries. The idea to open these border crossings 24/7 was discussed during the visit by late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi to Pakistan in April this year in which the two sides pledged to enhance volume of bilateral trade to \$10 billion in the next five years. (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 8*)

Aleem holds meetings in Tajikistan to increase bilateral trade

Federal Minister of Investment Board, Privatisation and Communications Abdul Aleem Khan, during his visit to Tajikistan held detail meetings with Transport Minister Azim Ibrahim and Minister for Economic Development and Trade Zavqizoda Zavqi Amin to increase bilateral trade between the two countries. Aleem Khan agreed to the proposals for starting a pilot project at the ports of Gwadar and Karachi and increasing the “organic export”. (*Business Recorder, May 29th, 2024, Page 2*)

Trade gap with nine regional states widens 30pc

Pakistan’s trade deficit with nine regional countries widened by 30.23 per cent to \$7.272 billion in 10MFY24 from \$5.584bn in the same period last year. An increase in imports mainly from China and India caused the trade deficit during July-April 2023-24. According to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, exports to regional countries, mainly China, grew over the review period, but shipments to other regional countries remained negative. In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan’s exports to the nine regional countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — rose 20.62pc to \$3.655bn in July-April from \$3.030bn in corresponding period FY23 . Contrary to this, imports increased by 26.85pc to \$10.927bn in 10MFY24 from \$8.614bn in the same period last year. This shows a slight increase in trade deficit with maximum countries in FY24. Pakistan’s bulk of regional exports, over 60pc, go to China while rest go to remaining eight countries. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 9*)

5.1 # Exports

Exports rebound to \$2.35bn

The exports of merchandise rose year-on-year by 10.02 per cent in April after a slowdown in growth in the previous month, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Export proceeds increased by double-digits since December before slowing in March. However, the exports shrank 9pc month-on-month. In absolute terms, exports reached \$2.35 billion in April from \$2.14 billion in the corresponding month last year. They reached \$25.28bn during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year from \$23.17bn over the corresponding period last year, indicating an increase of 9.10pc.

The trade deficit increased by 180.58pc year-on-year to \$2.37 billion in April, up from \$846 million in the same month last year. This was due to a rebound in import growth, while exports remained stagnant at roughly \$2.3bn. However, the trade gap narrowed by 17.09pc to \$19.52bn in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year compared to \$23.54bn in the same period last year. The IMF’s first review of the \$3bn Stand-by Arrangement projects Pakistan’s export proceeds over the next five years to be much less than the commerce ministry’s ambitious target of \$100bn by the end of FY28. The fund anticipates Pakistan’s exports will gradually increase from \$30.84bn in FY24 to \$32.35bn in FY25, \$34.68bn in FY26, \$37.25bn in FY27 and \$39.46bn in FY28. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

Exports to Europe fall despite GSP+

Pakistan's exports to European countries declined 6.27 per cent in the first nine months of the current fiscal year. Exports to the European Union states have begun to dip in the current fiscal year despite a GSP+ status that allows most Pakistani goods a duty-free entrance into European markets. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the EU dipped to \$6.105bn in 9MFY24 from \$6.27bn in the corresponding months of last year. According to figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, the decline was mainly due to reduced demand for Pakistani goods in western, southern, and northern Europe. In FY23, exports to the EU dropped 4.41pc to \$8.188bn from \$8.566bn in the preceding fiscal year. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2024, Page 9*)

Agricultural exports surge to record \$6.8bn in July-April

Agricultural exports surged to a record \$6.8 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year 2024, driven by a significant increase in rice and maize exports. Official data showed a substantial increase in exports compared to previous fiscal years, with Pakistan earning \$6.822 billion from July 2023 to April 2024, compared to \$5.852 billion in 2022-23, \$6.368 billion in 2021-22, and \$4.948 billion in 2020-21. The country's agricultural sector has seen a substantial increase in exports, with rice and maize exports reaching \$3.7 billion.

Sesame seeds have also emerged as a rapidly growing export commodity, with exports reaching \$458.7 million. The export of meat and edible meat offal, worth \$429.16 million, highlights the untapped potential of Pakistan's halal meat industry. The surge in agricultural exports has also led to an increase in Pakistan's overall exports, which reached \$25.28 billion in the first 10 months of the fiscal year 2024, a gain of over 9 percent from the same period last year. (*The News, May 12th, 2024, Page 17*)

Textiles` export growth slows in April

Textile and clothing exports experienced slower growth for the second month in April, reversing the previous month's double-digit increase. Exports inched up 0.37 per cent to \$1.24 billion in April, compared to \$1.23 billion in same month last year, according to data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2024, Page 9*)

Falling output hurting mango exports

Due to the impact of climate change and low production, exporters have reduced this year's mango export target to 100,000 tonnes from 125,000 tonnes last year. Mango production has declined for the third year in a row. Pakistan produces 1.8 million tonnes of the fruit, with the lion's share of 70pc coming from Punjab, followed by Sindh with 29pc and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa with 1pc. Due to weather effects, mango production in Punjab is expected to be 35-40pc this year, while less than 20pc in Sindh. As a result, the total production is feared to be reduced by 600,000 tonnes. This estimate was made at the start of production and will likely increase further as the season progresses.

The export of mangoes will commence on May 20. In addition to the traditional markets, the focus will be on the value-added markets of China, America, Turkey, and Japan. Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asian states will also play an important role in achieving the export target of mangoes. All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed said mango exports this year would fetch \$90 million. The export target for 2023 was 125,000 tonnes, but shipments remained at 100,000 tonnes. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2024, Page 9*)

PM orders tariff rationalisation for export industries

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities concerned to immediately take steps for tariff rationalisation of export sector industries and ensure that electricity and gas were supplied to these industries at affordable rates. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 3*)

Meat shipments fetch record \$431m

The export of meat and meat preparations reached an all-time high of 104,513 tonnes in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year, fetching \$431 million at an average per-tonne price of \$4,121. Before this, meat exports had achieved a record of 100,194 tonnes (\$427m) during FY23, breaking the previous all-time high of 95,648 tonnes (\$331mn) during FY21. Dealers continued to link higher domestic meat prices to surging exports, followed by animal smuggling to Afghanistan. Exploring new markets by the exporters has paid off in the last two to three years. Meat exports have remained in the range of 56,000-85,000 tonnes for the last 12-14 years. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

Food exports see 23pc growth in April

Raw food exports experienced a significant growth of 23.19 per cent in April, reaching \$570.47 million from \$463.07m during the same month last year. As a result, consumers across the country are paying higher prices for food items. Raw food exports have climbed for the ninth consecutive month this fiscal year, despite the highest food inflation in the country's history, according to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The commerce ministry lifted the ban on onion exports after Eidul Fitr, even though the onion price was still higher in the domestic market. There are other food items as well, exports of which also saw an increase mainly because of the devaluation of the Pak rupee.

The overall exports of raw food products witnessed a growth of 45.61pc to \$6.23bn in 10 months of the current fiscal year from \$4.27bn over the corresponding period last year. According to PBS, country's rice exports rose by 80.13pc to \$3.28bn on a year-on-year basis in July-April FY24 led by basmati rice, which had been falling since last year. India's decision to impose a ban on rice exports to protect the interest of domestic consumers has emerged as a key driver behind the surge in basmati rice exports from Pakistan. Fruit exports saw a growth of 17.85pc to \$274.23m in 10MFY24 against \$232.70m over corresponding months last year. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

Record onion exports make consumers pay high prices

Unprecedented onion exports fetched \$210 million during July-April FY24 at the cost of inflation-hit consumers who paid record prices for the vegetable. Pakistani consumers paid Rs300-350 per kg for onion following the Indian export ban from Dec 8, 2023 to April this year. New Delhi lifted the ban in the first week of May, bringing down the national average price to Rs70-150 per kg. Overall exports of vegetables stood at 1.044 million tonnes fetching \$371m in 10MFY24 versus 1.171m tonnes (\$262m) in the same period last fiscal year. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 11*)

Sugar exports hinge on Rs140/kg price cap for domestic market

The government has asked sugar millers to keep the sugar price at Rs140 per kilogram to obtain permission for exports, following lobbying by representatives in parliament and the Economic Advisory Council (EAC), officials said. The move comes as millers claim Rs40 billion in growers' payments are due, with 40 sugar mills facing default if exports are not allowed. However, officials said the claim appears incorrect, as Rs484 billion in payments has already been made by millers out of Rs497 billion from the last crushing season. (*The News, May 26th, 2024, Page 17*)

5.2 # Import

Low oil imports trim trade gap with ME

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed 28.18 per cent to \$9.521 billion in the first nine months of the current fiscal year from \$13.257bn during the corresponding period last year, mainly due to reduced imports of petroleum products from the region. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 9*)

Imports rise as curbs ease in second half

Imports in the second half of the outgoing fiscal year increased significantly, reflecting the easing of restrictions by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on the International Monetary Fund's directions. The country's import bill surged to \$17.92bn in January-April compared to \$25.462bn in July-December FY24. The IMF had demanded easing import curbs before reaching a Staff-Level Agreement to release the final tranche of \$1.1bn under the \$3bn Stand-By Arrangement.

Bankers said imports rose, but restrictions are still in place to bring down the trade deficit and get control over the current account deficit. The average monthly imports rose by \$244m to \$4.481bn in January-April from \$4.237bn in the first half. According to the SBP data, total imports were \$43.353bn in 10MFY24 against exports of \$25.669bn, resulting in a trade deficit of \$17.684bn. During the current fiscal year, exports did not do a miracle to increase dollar inflows, while imports slightly decreased to \$45.7bn. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 11*)

‘Skimmed & Instant Milk Powder’ New customs values on import of milk products fixed
Directorate General of Customs Valuation Karachi has fixed new customs values on the import of “Skimmed Milk Powder and Instant Milk Powder” from New Zealand, Australia, Europe, Canada, USA, Turkey, and Iran. The directorate has issued a new valuation ruling (1880 of 2024) to implement new customs values. The new customs value would be applicable on the import of Skimmed Milk Powder (in Retail Packing up to 5Kg per pack); Skimmed Milk Powder (in Bulk Packing); Instant Milk Powder with vegetable fat (in Retail Packing up to 5kg per pack and Instant Milk Powder with vegetable fat (in bulk packing). (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

Urea to be imported for uninterrupted supply, says minister

Federal Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain said the government is taking steps to ensure uninterrupted supply of fertilisers to farmers and for this purpose it will import about 200,000 tonnes of urea. Stringent monitoring will be done of dealers and distributors involved in black marketing and a uniform rate of urea across the country will be ensured, said the minister while presiding over a meeting. The meeting reviewed measures taken to ensure fertiliser supply chain and uniform prices across the country. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 3*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Millat Tractors celebrates historic export milestone

Another marvellous milestone was accomplished by Millat Tractors Ltd by exporting 2,500 tractor units from Pakistan around the globe as in May 2024. MTL has made history by being the first Pakistani tractor manufacturing company to have exported tractors, engines and components worth \$17 million during 2023-24. This marks an unprecedented growth and a phenomenal rise of 51 percent compared to its last year exports. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 7*)

6.1 # Fertilizer Companies

Urea makers link price cut with gas supply

Fertiliser manufacturers have linked the reduction in urea prices with the supply of gas from the Mari gas field. The unanimous decision of Fertiliser Manufacturers of Pakistan Advisory Council was conveyed by Fauji Fertiliser Company Managing Director and CEO Jhanagir Paracha to federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain during a meeting. Mr Paracha also presented FMPAC’s proposal to minister, demanding that the government ensure uninterrupted gas supply to the fertiliser industry for the next 10 years from Mari gas field. However, minister informed delegation that the proposal submitted by FMPAC will be taken up with ECC of the cabinet as it was a relevant forum to make a decision in this regard. The minister expressed concern over high urea and fertiliser nutrient prices in country, government was committed to taking every step to facilitate farmers during kharif season. (*Dawn, May 16th, 2024, Page 9*)

Govt decides to do away with subsidised gas for fertilizer industry

The federal government has decided to do away with subsidised gas to the fertiliser industry for urea as the impact of subsidy is not being passed on to the farmers, one of the key demands of IMF. During the ensuing discussion, Cabinet deliberated on both decisions of the ECC in the context of direct provision of subsidies to the farmers. Ministry of Industries & Production explained that benefits of subsidised gas to fertiliser plants had not trickled down to farmers, which was evident from the absence of any corresponding decrease in price of urea.

It was suggested that distortion in pricing of gas for fertiliser sector should be removed. On consideration of these aspects, Cabinet reached unanimous conclusion that gas to fertiliser plants should be supplied at full prices, rather than subsidised rates. After detailed deliberations on fertiliser requirement for Kharif 2024, Cabinet ratified the decision with direction that the fertiliser plants shall be charged full price of gas supplied to them, whereas subsidy shall be provided directly to farmers, where required. (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

ECC orders cheaper gas to two Punjab fertiliser units

Reversing an earlier decision of the federal cabinet, ECC of Cabinet ordered continuous supply of gas to Punjab-based two fertiliser plants at existing rate of Rs1,597 per million British thermal unit (mmBtu) until Sept 30 and shift more than Rs15bn of its financial impact to other consumers. The summary for the ECC suggested the ECC had previously allowed operations of two SNGPL-based plants (Fatima and Agritech) for January to March period. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 9*)

6.2 # Food Companies

No respite from price hike as companies raise packaged milk rates

Despite drop in transportation cost after cut in diesel and LPG rates and stability in exchange rates for last seven months, a number of big companies selling packaged milk have announced price hikes. For example, Fauji Foods Limited has jacked up the price of one litre pack of Nurpur brand to Rs300 from Rs280 effective from May 15, 2024 followed by a jump in 1.5 litre pack to Rs425 from Rs395. Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan Limited has informed the market dealers about an increase in one litre pack rate to Rs295 from Rs280 effective from June 1, 2024. It is seen that big milk companies always increase prices within a few days of interval, without citing any reason in their price notifications distributed to market retailers. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 13*)

UVAS signs MoU with Nestle

The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore signed a MoU with Nestle Pakistan Limited (NPL) for research collaboration in product innovation, reproductive biotechnology to improve dairy farms economics, livestock health & dairy animal breeding etc. (*Business Recorder, May 31, 2024, Page 13*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Foreign investment rises 8pc to \$1.4bn

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) surged 172 per cent year-on-year in April, but the overall inflow increased by just 8pc in the first 10 months of the current fiscal year. The inflow in April was \$358.8m compared to \$132m in April FY23, a jump of 172pc. However, it was 39pc higher than March's \$258m, according to data from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The FDI rose 8.1pc to \$1.458 billion during July-April FY24 compared to \$1.349bn in the same period last fiscal year, but it is still not significant since the inflow is too small for an economy with 240 million people.

The biggest investor was China, as the FDI from the country during July-April FY24 was the highest, with \$439.3m compared to \$604m in the same period last year. An investment of \$177m came from China alone in April. Another important inflow was from Hong Kong, where FDI increased to \$297.9m compared to \$206m in the same period last year. Inflows from the UK and the USA were \$219m and \$216m, respectively, both of which noted increases compared to last year.

The biggest attraction for foreign investors during July-April FY24 was the power sector. The FDI in the power sector during this period was \$637.5m, up from \$776.2 m last year. Hydel Power attracted \$460m this year compared to \$338m last year. The finance and business sector inflow decreased to \$169m compared to \$243m in the same period last year. However, the FDI for oil and gas exploration increased to \$192.5m compared to \$114m of the last year. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

\$11.3bn received in loans, grants

Pakistan received only about \$11.3 billion in foreign loans and grants in the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year, far behind the annual target of \$17.4bn. This is amid major slippages in raising international financial support, although it has met the revised target. According to official data released by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the country received about \$237 million in foreign loans in April compared to \$204m in March and \$318m in February. It said the government could materialise about \$7.142bn in foreign economic assistance (FEA) in the first 10 months of outgoing FY24, almost 41 per cent of the annual budget target, amid limited borrowing avenues.

This is in the wake of poor credit ratings and adverse conditions in the global financial markets despite support of IMF. This FEA is in addition to \$3bn released by the IMF under Stand-By Arrangement and \$1bn by UAE, which is separately accounted for by SBP. Thus, total foreign inflows, including the IMF and UAE, amounted to \$11.24bn in 10 months. This generally works out to be almost 65pc of the full-year targeted inflows. Thus its target is now tentatively revised to around \$11bn instead of \$17.62bn set in the 2023-24 budget for FEA. They are now predicting current account deficit to be around \$2bn instead of \$6bn budget estimate. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 9*)

Foreign investors: Jul-Apr profit repatriation up 250pc

Repatriation of profit and dividend by foreign investors posted a notable growth of 250 percent during the first 10 months of this fiscal year (FY24). According to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), foreign investors repatriated some \$887 million on account of profit and dividend during July-April of FY24 compared to \$253.4 million in the same period of last fiscal year (FY23). (*Business Recorder, May 28, 2024, Page 1*)

EU launches two flagship projects in Gilgit

The European Union has launched two flagship programmes for skills development and clean energy in Gilgit-Baltistan to boost economic development and tackle challenges posed by climate change in the region. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 5*)

7.1 # Countries

`US giving \$85m to counter malnutrition`

US Ambassador Donald Blome says his government is providing nearly \$85 million in funding to address the issue of malnutrition in Pakistan, including \$12m to treat severely malnourished children. He stated this during a visit to the offices of two American companies to learn more about the ongoing US-Pakistan collaborations in the IT and health sectors. The ambassador highlighted USI interest in strengthening trade and investment relations with Pakistan and discussed the positive impacts of initiatives under the US-Pakistan `Green Alliance` framework. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 2*)

Pakistan aims high as Saudi investors arrive

A key Saudi delegation comprising dozens of investors has arrived in Islamabad on a three-day visit to explore investment opportunities, as Pakistan aims to court foreign investors to boost its exports in collaboration with Saudi companies. According to the Commerce Minister Jam Kamal, the purpose of the visit is to enhance trade ties between investors from both countries and identify trade and investment opportunities across various sectors of national economy. He said the ministry picked several Pakistani companies for business-to-business (B2B) meetings with the Saudi investors and disclosed that “leading” Pakistani companies would collaborate with at least 30 Saudi companies across different sectors.

The B2B meetings will target sectors, such as agriculture, mining, human resource, energy, chemicals, and maritime. Moreover, discussions will also cover investment prospects in other sectors, including IT, religious tourism, telecom, aviation, construction, water and power generation. During a recent visit, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif held a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as the latter agreed to expedite the first wave of a planned \$5 billion Saudi investment package for Pakistan. Before Shehbaz Sharif, ex-caretaker prime minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar had visited Saudi Arabia. In Sept 2023, he claimed that the Saudi government would invest up to \$25 billion in Pakistan over the “next two to five years” across various sectors. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2024, Page 1*)

Blome inaugurates ‘Cleantech Investment Roadshow’ in Karachi

The US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome inaugurated the second Investment Roadshow, supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Fourteen innovative companies in the clean technology sector showcased their work at the roadshow, promoting private sector investment in sustainable and viable clean energy solutions. Organized by USAID-funded Pakistan Private Sector Energy (PPSE) Project, the event sought to catalyze investment in commercially viable clean energy projects and help businesses access critical financing. Since its inception, PPSE has mobilized over \$30 million for projects focused on clean energy, e-mobility, and energy efficiency. (*Business Recorder, May 23rd, 2024, Page 7*)

PM returns from UAE with \$10bn pledge

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claimed to have shunned the proverbial begging bowl as he secured pledges of \$10 billion worth of investment in Pakistan from the the United Arab Emirates` top leadership. Earlier, an official press release issued by the Prime Minister`s Office (PMO) stated that the UAE leader assured his country`s support and committed to the investment in multiple sectors. (*Dawn, May 24th, 2024, Page 1*)

Mining sector: Chinese firm assured of investment facilitation

Special Investment Facilitation Council apex committee assured a Chinese firm of providing facilitation for investment in mining sector. Committee expressed interest in increasing investment in mining and minerals sector during a briefing on Pakistan`s mining sector. It was said that China had invested over \$65bn in energy & infrastructure projects in Pakistan. Meeting focused on prioritized sectors, including mining, minerals, IT, and agriculture, & engaged in discussions with delegations from Saudi Arabia, UAE, Japan, Azerbaijan, Qatar, & other countries. (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Wapda discusses financing opportunities with ADB for its projects

Chairman Wapda Engr Lt Gen Sajjad Ghani (r) discussed financing opportunities in Wapda projects with Asian Development Bank (ADB) Alternate Executive Directors. The delegation was also informed about the progress on ADB-funded Wapda projects namely Naulong Dam Multi-purpose Project, Kurram Tangi Dam Stage-II and Patan Hydropower Project. Wapda`s development portfolio consisting of under-construction and ready-for-construction projects including Mohmand Dam, Diamer Basha Dam and Keyal Khwar were also presented to the ADB delegation for consideration of financial assistance. The Chairman suggested that ADB may upscale its engagements with Wapda from medium to large and then to strategic projects. Appreciating institutional strength of Wapda, the delegation showed interest in exploring ways and means to enhance financing of upcoming Wapda projects. (*Business Recorder, May 24th, Page 4*)

ADB announces \$180m project for coastal areas of Sindh

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has announced a \$180 million project to restore forests, drains and roads in the coastal areas of Sindh. According to a statement released by the Sindh ministry of irrigation and food, the project aims at protecting the coastal areas, providing employment opportunities for the local population and ensuring sustainable economic development. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 15*)

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Pakistan receives \$1.1bn from IMF

Pakistan has received inflows of \$1.1 billion from IMF as final loan tranche of Board's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) programme. IMF's executive board, in its meeting held on April 29, completed second and final review of Pakistan's economic reform program supported by IMF's SBA & allowed for an immediate disbursement of SDR 828m (around \$1.1bn) for Pakistan under programme. However, it is estimated that with arrival of these inflows, the reserves held by SBP would surge to \$9bn mark, if no major external debt servicing occurred.

This is the third and last disbursement under the SBA. First tranche of \$1.2 billion was arrived on July 13, 2023. Second tranche of some \$700 million was received in January this year following the successful completion of the first review and the third and last tranche of SBA amounted to \$1.1 billion released on April 29, 2024, bringing total disbursements under the arrangement to about \$3 billion (Special Drawing Rights/SDR 2.250 billion). On completion of the SBA program, Pakistan is negotiating with funds for a long-term loan programme to achieve macroeconomic stability in the country. (*Business Recorder, May, 1st, 2024, Page 1*)

IMF estimates Pakistan's financing gap to be \$9.1bn over three years

Pakistan's external financing gap stands at \$9.1 billion over the next three years period, exposing Islamabad's vulnerability and need for the next bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility from IMF. The IMF's latest report on Pakistan showed that Pakistan's external financing gap stands at \$9.091bn over the next three years from 2024-25, 2025-26, and 2026-27. In four years from 2024-25 to 2027-28, total external financing gap without IMF support has been estimated at \$10.188bn.

Pakistan and the IMF have already kick-started parleys in Islamabad for clinching a fresh deal under EFF with a possible size of \$6 to \$8bn along with augmentation through climate finance. The IMF has assessed that Pakistan's external financing needs stood at \$21.044bn, \$23.111bn, and \$22.716bn over the next three-year period from 2024-25 to 2026-27. The Fund estimated financing gap stands at \$4.335bn in the fiscal year 2024-25, \$3.571bn in the financial year 2025-26, and \$2.185bn in 2026-27. If Pakistan prefers to clinch a deal of four years, the IMF assessed the financing gap in the fiscal year 2027-28 would be estimated at \$1.097bn. (*The News, May 12th, 2024, Page 1*)

Talks begin with IMF on new bailout

Pakistan and IMF kick-started negotiations on 24th 'longer and larger' bailout programme, starting with an anticipated upfront fiscal adjustment of more than Rs1.6 trillion (1.5pc of GDP) in the upcoming budget. Fiscal adjustment of at least 1.5pc of GDP or about Rs1.6tr would have to be made in coming budget through a combination of additional revenue measures coupled with expenditure rationalisation and privatisation. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2024, Page 9*)

Citi sees new \$8bn loan deal by July

Wall Street Bank Citi expects Pakistan to reach an agreement with IMF for a new four year of up to \$8 billion programme by end-July, and recommends going long on the country's 2027 international bond. 'First, a larger and longer EFF (Extended Fund Facility) could be finalised by July possibly a \$7-8bn 4-year programme and secondly and a possible inflow of Saudi investments. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2024, Page 9*)

Still too early to talk about new loan: IMF

IMF has said that it's still too early to determine whether ongoing discussions with Pakistan will result in a new loan package. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 1*)

IMF mission says 'significant progress' made

IMF said it made "significant progress toward reaching a staff level agreement" with Pakistan on a comprehensive economic policy and reform programme for the next bailout under Extended Fund Facility. In its 'end-of-mission' statement, IMF also made it clear that the two sides "will continue policy discussions virtually over the coming days aiming to finalise discussions, including financial support needed to underpin the authorities' reform efforts from IMF and Pakistan's bilateral and multilateral partners". Statement came following conclusion of 11-day talks May 13 to 23 between two sides over \$7-8bn 24th bailout under a 36-39 months EFF. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

Bailout for Pakistan: Eyebrows raised over rare IMF move to present report to board before loan talks

For the first time in the country's history, the IMF has preferred to make it public that the mission would prepare a report for presenting before its Executive Board for making a final decision based on preliminary findings on Pakistan's request for striking a fresh bailout package. In the past, it was never done by the IMF in case of Pakistan; the assessment of the mission was shared with the management and Board of the Fund in a confidential manner but it was never made public. (*The News, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

8.3 # World Bank

Govt urges World Bank to restructure \$230m CLICK project

The government has requested the World Bank for restructuring of "Competitive and Livable City of Karachi (CLICK)" project worth \$230 million, after facing slow start due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, monsoon rains and flooding, as well as

the amendment to the local government law. The closing date of the loan is June 30, 2024. Project Development Objective is to improve urban management, service delivery and business environment in Karachi and provide immediate and effective response to an Eligible Crisis or Emergency. (*Business Recorder, May 2nd, 2024, Page 1*)

Govt, World Bank working on new CPF programme

World Bank (WB) and Government of Pakistan (GoP) are reportedly working on a new Country Partnership Framework (CPF), which would only accommodate the emerging development priorities of Pakistan. CPF will reflect the indicative financing volume that would be made available by the World Bank Group to achieve the set priorities during the CPF period. (*Business Recorder, May 23rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Pakistan's '\$474bn' renewable natural capital faces risk of depletion: World Bank

Pakistan's renewable natural capital, valued at \$474bn - 13.6% of nation's total wealth - is under imminent threat as it faces rapid depletion, says WB. Bank in a working paper, "Targeting national restoration actions for ecosystem services" stated that country grapples with critical environmental issues driven by a rising population, urbanisation, and fossil fuel use, including overused natural resources, increasing air and water contamination, dwindling energy reserves, and deforestation. (*Business Recorder, May 31st, 2024, Page 11*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

CDWP approves 10 projects worth Rs115.458bn

CDWP approved as many as 10 development projects with a total cost of Rs115.458bn, out of these, eight projects at cost of Rs17.297bn were approved by the CDWP forum, while it recommended two projects valued Rs98.161bn to ECNEC for its final approval. A project related to agriculture and food sector presented in the meeting namely, "Sindh Livestock and Aquaculture Development Project (World Bank Assisted)" at cost of Rs38.36bn was recommended to ECNEC for final approval. Project aims to enhance the competitiveness, inclusivity, climate resilience, and sustainability of the livestock and aquaculture sectors in Sindh. (*Business Recorder, May 4th, 2024, Page 1*)

Dar says country committed to IP pipeline project

Reaffirming government's commitment to pursue the Iran-Pakistan (IP) Gas Pipeline Project "irrespective of what United States or any other country says", Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar said that "Pakistan will not allow any country to use its veto" as far as country's economic interest is concerned. (*Business Recorder, May 8th, 2024, Page 1*)

Pakistan, Uzbekistan vow early work on rail project

Pakistan & Uzbekistan underscored their commitment to swift completion of planned railway link that will traverse Afghanistan, connecting two countries and promising to enhance regional connectivity & trade opportunities. Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan had in February 2021 agreed to build a railway line across Afghanistan

to connect Central Asia with Pakistani ports at an estimated cost of \$4.8bn. Railway project, spanning 760kms, is scheduled for completion by end of 2027, with capability to transport up to 15m tonnes of goods annually by 2030. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 3*)

CDWP clears three projects worth Rs126bn

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) recommended three projects worth Rs126 billion to Ecnec for approval. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 11*)

CDWP approves seven projects worth Rs23bn

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) approved seven development projects worth Rs23 billion and recommended four projects to Ecnec for consideration. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 11*)

CDWP clears Rs567bn Karakoram road project

Pakistan cleared construction of about 241 km of the high-altitude Karakoram Highway at an estimated cost of Rs567.5bn (approximately \$2bn) to be funded through a 'Chinese soft loan'. This was one of the Rs609.45bn worth of two infrastructure projects the CDWP recommended to Ecnec for formal approval. The KKH is part of the multi-billion dollar CPEC. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 9*)

9.2 # Neo – liberal Policies

No plan to hand over Gwadar to China, says Balochistan govt

The Balochistan government has said there is no plan to hand over Gwadar port city to China and refuted all such reports doing the rounds on social media in this regard and termed them negative propaganda. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 5*)

All state-owned enterprises to be privatized: PM

The government has decided to privatise all state-owned enterprises (SOEs), except strategic entities. "The government would privatise all state-owned enterprises, excluding the strategic ones, regardless of their profitability or financial losses," it was revealed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif while presiding over a high-level meeting. The meeting reviewed matters related to the Ministry of Privatisation and Privatisation Commission. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2024, Page 11*)

Govt mulls price deregulation of red meat, milk

The federal government plans to deregulate milk, beef and mutton prices by stopping monitoring them, leaving consumers at the mercy of the market players` demand and supply mechanism. However, consumers` associations and meat processors will be consulted soon for their views on the proposal. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 11*)

Privatisation of SOEs: SIFC stresses need for meeting timelines

The Apex Committee of SIFC has emphasised the timely accomplishment of privatisation of various state-owned enterprises (SOEs) milestones in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

Speakers for deregulation of various sectors for higher economic growth

Speakers at a conference have called for deregulation of various sectors of the economy, saying that regulations had resulted in hindering economic growth. Debating on economic challenges faced by the country on the final day of the conference titled “EconFest” organized by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). (*Business Recorder, May 27th, 2024, Page 11*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITIONS

Govt borrows record Rs5.7tr at high rates

The government borrowed a record amount from banks at record high prices, which ate up 76% of tax revenue during the first nine months of current fiscal year. The SBP reported that the government borrowed Rs5.736 trillion during July-April FY24 while it paid Rs5.517trn as markup on borrowing during July-March FY24. In FY23 and FY22, the total borrowings for commodity operations were Rs352bn and Rs229.6bn respectively. The prices of wheat crashed in Sindh and Punjab because government did not borrow any money for procurement of commodity. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 9*)

H1FY24: Driven by agri sector, real GDP grew 1.7pc: SBP

Pakistan’s macroeconomic conditions improved during the first half of fiscal year 2024, the State of Pakistan’s economy report for the first half of FY24 released. The report said the real GDP, driven by agriculture sector, grew by 1.7 percent in the first half of FY24 compared to 1.6 percent in the same period in FY23, and a contraction of 1.9 percent in the second half of FY23. The report contains the analysis prepared on data outturns for the July-December FY24. Real economic activities moderately recovered against the contraction last year, while Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with IMF helped reduce stress on external account. (*Business Recorder, May 15th, 2024, Page 1*)

H1: Fiscal deficit increases to 2.3pc of GDP

Fiscal deficit increased to 2.3 percent of GDP in the first half of FY24 from 2.0 percent in the same period last year. The increase in deficit, notwithstanding a considerable growth in revenue, was driven by a relatively larger increase in expenditure (in terms of GDP) on account of surge in mark-up payments, the State of Pakistan’s Economy Report for the first half of FY24 released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said. Nonetheless, primary balance posted a larger surplus of 1.7 percent of GDP in the first half of FY24 compared to 1.1pc in same period of FY23. The provinces cumulatively contributed 0.3pc of GDP to consolidated surplus during the first half of FY24, higher than 0.1pc in same period last year. (*Business Recorder, May 15th, 2024, Page 7*)

Public debt soars to Rs39.7trn, NA told

The external debt was recorded at \$86.36billion and domestic debt was recorded at Rs39.7 trillion of the total public debt at the end of September 2023, according to the Debt Policy Statement January-2024 presented in the National Assembly. According to the Debt Policy Statement, around 58 percent of financing of federal fiscal deficit was

carried out through domestic sources and 42 percent from external sources. The external debt was recorded at \$84.1 billion (38 percent) and domestic debt was recorded at Rs38.81 trillion (62 percent) of the total public debt at the end of June 2023. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2024, Page 1*)

UN projects Pak economy to grow by 2pc in 2024

Pakistan, which faces significant economic challenges, is expected to have “modest economic growth”, with its GDP projected to expand by 2 per cent in 2024, according to a major United Nations report. Noting that Pakistan had entered into a Stand-by Arrangement with IMF worth \$3 billion, the mid-year World Economic Situation and Prospects report said that the programme was expected to help stabilize the economy, increase the country’s foreign exchange reserves, and facilitate fiscal adjustment while also protecting crucial social spending. (*Business Recorder, May 18th, 2024, Page 8*)

Vibrant agriculture accelerates Pakistan’s economic expansion

Pakistan’s economy will grow at a higher rate in the outgoing fiscal year, beating international lenders’ predictions. However, due to a downturn in the manufacturing and service sectors, it failed to meet budgetary projections. The provisional GDP growth is anticipated to be 2.38 per cent for FY24, surpassing the projections of International Monetary Fund’s 2pc, Asian Development Bank’s 1.9pc and World Bank’s 1.8pc. However, the State Bank of Pakistan has forecast a 2-3pc economic growth in FY24. The government has projected a GDP growth target of 3.50pc, but it is all set to miss it.

According to provisional NAC figures, the economy grew steadily at 2.09pc during the third quarter of FY24. Agriculture, industry, and services all grew at 3.94pc, 3.84pc, and 0.83pc. During the third quarter, all agricultural constituents contributed favourably, including key crops (2.89pc due to wheat), other crops (1.14pc), cotton ginning (61.75pc), and livestock (4.20pc). Agriculture emerged as the primary engine of growth in FY24. The overall increase in the agriculture sector not only exceeded the target of 3.50pc but also remained higher than the 2.27pc growth of last year.

Further analysis shows that agriculture’s healthy growth is mostly owing to double-digit growth in important crops — 16.82pc in FY24, driven by bumper wheat crops of 11.64pc. Wheat production is expected to reach 31.44 million tonnes in FY24, up from 28.16m tonnes the previous year. Cotton production will increase by 108.22pc, from 4.91 to 10.22m bales, while rice yield will increase by 34.78pc, from 7.32 to 9.87m tonnes. Two important crops, sugarcane and maize, are expected to fall shortly in FY24. Sugarcane yield would fall 0.39pc from 87.98m tonnes to 87.64m tonnes in FY24, while maize yield will fall by 10.35pc to 9.85m tonnes from 10.99m tonnes. Furthermore, the provisional increase in other crops is 0.90pc, cotton ginning & miscellaneous component 47.23pc, livestock 3.89pc, and forestry 3.05pc. The industrial sector grew by 1.21pc in FY24, falling short of target of 3.40pc. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 9*)

77pc borrowing for financing fiscal deficit thru domestic sources: MoF

The government has borrowed around 77 percent for financing of federal fiscal deficit through domestic sources, according to the Finance Ministry. The mid-year review report of fiscal year 2023-24 of Finance Ministry said that the report gives a mid-year comparison of the budgeted and actual revenues, expenditures and financing undertaken in the first half of the fiscal year 2023-24. In the first half of the outgoing fiscal year, interest expense stood at around Rs4.2 trillion, of which 88 per cent was interest on domestic debt. Expenditures of the federal government has increased by 58 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year to Rs6,710 billion as against Rs4,247.7 billion for the same period of last fiscal year primarily on account of rising mark-up payments. (*Business Recorder, May 23rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Country borrows \$7.142bn during Jul-Apr

The country borrowed \$7.142 billion from multiple financing sources during the first 10 months (July-April) of the current fiscal year 2023-24 compared to \$8.123 billion borrowed during the same period of 2022-23, revealed the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) data. The data further shows that the country received \$237.24 million in April 2024 compared to \$358.61 million in April 2023. The government has budgeted \$ 2.4 billion from IMF for the current fiscal year 2023-24 and received \$3 billion under the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA); however, the EAD data does not reflect it. Further, there is no mention of the \$1 billion disbursed by the UAE. If the IMF and the UAE inflows are added, the total inflows would reach \$11.142 billion during the first 10 months of the current fiscal year. The \$7.142 billion included \$2 billion received from Saudi Arabia under the head of time deposit during July 2023.

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 received \$2.866 billion from multilaterals and \$877.76 million from bilateral during July-April 2023-24. The non-project aid was \$4.842 billion including \$3.697 billion for budgetary support and project aid was \$2.300 billion.

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 67.39 million in July-April against the government budget of \$18.54 million for the current fiscal year. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) disbursed \$708.30 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$2.086 billion for the fiscal year 2023-24. Saudi Arabia disbursed \$595.18 million against the budgeted \$600 million under the head of oil facility during July-April 2023-24. Saudi Arabia disbursed another \$62.03 million in the current fiscal year so far. The USA disbursed \$37.02 million in the first 10 months against the budgeted \$21.60 million for the fiscal year. Korea disbursed \$26.61 million and France \$41.66 million during the current fiscal year. The IDA disbursed \$1.353 million in July-April against the budgeted \$1.489 billion for the current fiscal year and IBRD \$171.67 million against

the budgeted \$840.36 million. The IsDB (short-term) disbursed \$200 million in July-April against the budgeted \$500 million for the current fiscal year and AIIB disbursed \$309.95 million, while IFAD disbursed \$26.29 million against the budgeted \$42.68 million for the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

Budgetary support: Govt borrowing rises 116pc

The federal government borrowing from scheduled banks for budgetary support rose significantly by 116 percent during this fiscal year due to slow foreign inflows and less than target revenue collection. According to SBP, the federal government's borrowing for budgetary support has increased by 116 percent or Rs 3.649 trillion during 1st July 2023 to 17th May 2024. Overall, the federal government raised Rs 6.796 trillion from the scheduled banks for budgetary support during the period under review compared to Rs 3.146 trillion in the same period of last fiscal year (FY23). During the period under review, the federal government made a repayment of Rs 479 billion to State Bank against borrowing of Rs 173.5 billion. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 1*)

10.1 # Food

Sindh set to launch food security programme

Sindh government has decided to launch a food security programme for marginalised population and Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Support Programme in the province. CM Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over maiden meeting of Sindh Social Protection Board, approved feasibility studies for two programmes aimed to minimise vulnerability to hunger in marginalised population and to provide social protection to women working in agriculture sector. Mother and Child Support Programme has been launched with support of World Bank for \$ 28.15mn. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 14*)

Sindh govt introduces third-party system for issuing food licences

In a bid to facilitate the business community, Sindh government has introduced a third-party system for issuing food licenses. (*Business Recorder, May 28th, 2024, Page 2*)

10.2 # Inflation

Inflation decelerates to 17.3pc in April

Annual inflation slowed for the fourth month to 17.3pc in April, lowest level in nearly two years and significantly less than the record 38pc reading in May 2023, official data showed. The country has been beset by inflation above 20pc since May 2022 as it navigated reforms as part of an IMF bailout programme. The average CPI inflation during the 10 months (July to April) of the current fiscal year now stands at 25.97pc compared to 28.23pc a year ago. Food inflation for April stood at 11.3pc in urban areas and 9.5pc in rural areas, whereas non-food inflation was 25.6pc in urban areas and 20pc in rural areas. Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, slightly increased to 13.1pc in urban areas compared to 12.8pc last month. In rural areas, core inflation was recorded at 19.3pc, down from 20pc. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

K-Electric seeks Rs3.84 per unit base tariff hike for seven years

Based on the Rs392 billion investment plan it approved a few days back, Nepra is now working on increasing the base electricity tariff for K-Electric by up to Rs3.84 per unit, indexed with exchange rate and inflation, for the next seven years (July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2030). (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 9*)

K-Electric seeks Rs10.69/unit hike in base tariff for 7 years

K-Electric has sought 76% (Rs10.69 per unit) increase in its base tariff to Rs44.69 per unit under Multi-Year Tariff mechanism for seven years - FY 2023-24 to 2029-30 – from existing base tariff of Rs34 per unit. Nepra has issued a notice inviting stakeholders to express their opinions within seven days. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

Inflation to hover around 13.5-14.5pc in May: finance ministry

Inflation is expected to hover between 13.5 to 14.5% in May and to ease further to 12.5 to 13.5pc by June. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 1*)

10.3 # Poverty

Poverty levels have risen: study

The poverty rate in Pakistan over the past five years has increased from 38.6% to 39.5%, revealed a study conducted by Pakistan Institute of Development Economics released. National poverty rate has reached 39.5% while in Balochistan it is 70%, in KPK 48%, in Sindh at 45% and in Punjab poverty rate stands at 30%. The report revealed that rural areas have recorded higher poverty rates than urban areas across country, as poverty rate in rural areas was recorded at 51%, whereas, in urban areas 17%. Except for Sindh, multidimensional poverty has decreased in provinces as in Balochistan headcount ratio has dropped from 72.4% in 2014-15 to 70.5% in 2019-20, in KP from 49.1% to 48.8 per cent while in Punjab the share of multidimensional poor decreased from 31 per cent to 30.4 per cent. In Sindh, however, the headcount ratio increased from 43.1 per cent in 2014-15 to 45.2 per cent in 2019-20. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2024, Page 8*)

Boy beaten brutally for `stealing fruits`

A teenage boy was brutally beaten and stripped from the waist down by unidentified persons in new vegetable and fruit market on charge of stealing fruits and vegetables. Sources said that the boy who was tied to an electricity pole and beaten brutally while someone pulled off his shalwar. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 17*)

11 # Environment

11.1 # Health

Around 12pc schoolchildren suffer from asthma in Pakistan, moot told

Sharing concerns over rising number of asthma cases in country and the need continuing medical education for customising treatment regimens to individual needs, speakers shared, around 11.6pc schoolchildren suffered from respiratory illness in Pakistan, organised by Jinnah Sindh Medical University. (*Dawn, May 05th, 2024, Page 14*)

PYPA claims pharma scam eclipses wheat scandal

In a letter sent to Prime Minister, Pakistan Young Pharmacists Association has drawn a comparison between decontrolling medicine prices and the wheat scandal and said the former was greater in magnitude. Association alleged that Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan removed the mandatory control on medicine prices days before the general elections. PYPA also claimed that the increase in medicine prices would make it almost impossible for government to provide free medicines in public sector hospitals. It is worth mentioning that under Maximum Retail Price, companies in Pakistan can sell medicines lower than MRP but cannot exceed it. Caretaker government removed MRP claiming that it will reduce the prices of medicines. (*Dawn, May 7th, 2024, Page 4*)

19 brands of bottled water declared unsafe

The Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources declared 19 brands of bottled and mineral water unsafe for human consumption due to microbiological or chemical contamination. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 4*)

33pc health card holders paid from own pocket: report

A third-party validation report about the Federal Sehat Sahulat Programme (SSP) commonly known as Health Card has showed that though it is a cashless programme, 33pc of the patients paid from their pockets. This indicated the need for more effective enforcement of the programme policies to ensure that all services are fully covered under the benefit package. Although there were a few cases, complaints concerning cash demands in the empanelled health facilities needed to be urgently investigated. While majority of respondents had knowledge about the diseases and services covered in the benefit package, a significant population - 38.7pc - did not have sufficient knowledge. These were the crux of the report. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2024, Page 2*)

‘Nearly half of population is hypertensive’

Underscoring the need for getting physically active in life, and reducing intake of salt and junk food, experts at a presser held shared that the prevalence of hypertension stands at a staggering 44 per cent in Pakistan and the majority of those patients remained undiagnosed, putting them at high risk of heart disease, stroke, kidney failure and other serious health complications. (*Dawn, May 17th, 2024, Page 14*)

Pakistan’s pharma sector can increase exports to \$3bn in five years, but it ‘needs policy, govt support’

Pakistan’s pharmaceutical sector can increase its exports to \$3 billion over the next five years, provided it gets policy support and a favourable business environment, according to a top official. India’s pharmaceutical exports are set to reach \$28 billion in fiscal 2023-24, according to the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council (Pharmexcil), while Pakistan has only registered its personal best of \$713 million during 2022-23. However, milestone will only be achieved if the government addresses the significant challenges facing the sector today. (*Business Recorder, May 17th, 2024, Page 7*)

Dengue outbreak claims 14 lives in Turbat

At least 14 patients suffering from the dengue virus have lost their lives in Turbat, while over 5,000 have been diagnosed with the disease in Kech district of Makran division during the current year. During the current year, 24,552 people came for screening, and out of them, 5,329 were found positive for dengue. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 5*)

Staffers of outsourced hospitals without salary for one year

The employees of the outsourced hospitals in Kurram, Bajaur, South Waziristan and tribal Mohmand districts have been waiting for their salaries from the past one year. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 9*)

Antimicrobial resistance claims 700,000 lives in Pakistan every year, moot told

Health experts said that the third leading cause of death in Pakistan was the antimicrobial resistance due to which around 700,000 people lost their lives every year in the country. They said that Pakistan was the third largest consumer of antibiotics in the world after China and India. Antibiotic medicines worth Rs126 billion were consumed in 2023 alone in Pakistan. They urged people not to purchase and use antibiotics without the advice of qualified physicians. Antimicrobial resistance is now the third leading cause of death after cardiovascular disease and maternal and neonatal disorders in Pakistan. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 13*)

Preventive measures ordered as Congo fever case surfaces in Peshawar

Health department has asked all divisional commissioners to ensure protective measures at animal markets ahead of Eidul Azha to prevent Crimean-Congo Haemorrhagic Fever (CCHF) as a case of the disease has been confirmed by Public Health Reference Laboratory of Khyber Medical University. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 8*)

Over 15pc teenagers suffer from hypertension, say health experts

More than 15 per cent of the country's teenagers aged between 16 and 19 are suffering from high blood pressure owing to sedentary lifestyle, obesity, high salt intake, tobacco consumption, gaming addiction and physical inactivity, said health experts at a recent programme. The event was organised in connection with the launch of the Discovering Hypertension Project, an initiative of PharmEvo in collaboration with five leading medical societies to screen one million people for hypertension by June 30, 2025, across Pakistan at 500 sites in the country. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 16*)

World body concerned about poliovirus surge in Pakistan

The Technical Advisory Group (TAG) for polio eradication has shown concerns about the deteriorating situation of the disease in Pakistan. Data shared at a TAG meeting held in Qatar showed that Pakistan's situation was worse than the war-ridden Afghanistan. According to a document, outside the core reservoir districts, 44 got infected since the last TAG meeting held in June 2023 in comparison with eight infected between previous two TAGs — with almost six times jump. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 4*)

More positive polio samples in five months of 2024 than whole of previous year

The government's polio eradication efforts are apparently failing to achieve the desired results as more environmental samples have tested positive for the virus in the first five months of 2024 than in the entire preceding year. The current year's tally of environmental samples tested positive for poliovirus has reached 148 from 39 districts after eight more revealed the presence of the crippling disease. In 2023, there were 126 positive detections from 28 districts. Three cases of poliovirus have also been reported this year. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 3*)

Panic grips measles-hit village

Panic spread at Kamyana village of Pattoki tehsil as measles death toll rose to seven while over a dozen more children with suspected measles were hospitalised. Measles has broken out in several villages of Kasur and Nankana districts. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 2*)

11.2 # Pollution

USAID organises workshop on how to deal with challenge of methane emissions

USAID brought together stakeholders from various sectors to develop a programme for reducing methane emissions in the dairy industry of Pakistan. The USAID organised a workshop aimed at curbing methane emissions from Pakistan's dairy industry. The workshop was part of USAID's efforts to boost climate investment in developing countries such as Pakistan and bring together stakeholders from various sectors to develop a programme for reducing methane emissions in the dairy industry. This programme will be submitted for funding from the "Green Climate Fund," supporting Pakistan's efforts to meet its climate goals. With the growing impacts of climate change, it is urgent to tackle one of its main causes — methane emissions from the dairy sector. The ambassador said that United States has been proud to partner with Pakistan since the 1960s, starting with the Green Revolution that significantly improved the lives of many Pakistanis. (*Business Recorder, May 8th, 2024, Page 7*)

Ban on use of plastic bags by restaurants, bakeries from June 5

On the directives of the Punjab government, the district administration will implement the ban on the use of plastic bags, disposable plates, containers and cups used by restaurants and bakeries from June 5. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 4*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

President urges global efforts to deal with climate change

President Asif Ali Zardari underlined the need for global efforts to address the challenge of climate change by adopting environment-friendly technology, promoting afforestation, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Talking to Mukhtar Babayev, Azerbaijan's minister of ecology and natural resources and COP29 president-designate, President Zardari highlighted that global warming and climate change were affecting the glaciers and causing water scarcity. He said that tackling these challenges required global support to mitigate their adverse impacts. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2024, Page 3*)

Pakistan, Azerbaijan to launch joint climate transparency report

Prime Minister's Coordinator for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Romina Khurshid Alam said Azerbaijan and Pakistan would work together to boost climate action and launch joint climate change adaptation initiatives for building resilience of lives and livelihoods of people and vulnerable ecosystems. Two sides also announced to launch joint climate transparency report at upcoming 29th Session of global climate summit, also called COP-29, to be held in Baku this year for synergised and concerted response to global warming challenge. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 4*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Heatwave

Karachi, other cities in Sindh bake as heatwave sets in early

As Karachi sizzles at 40.2 degree Celsius, a heatwave sets in several cities of province. The hottest city in Sindh was Shaheed Benazirabad where maximum temperature was 48.5°C. While the Met Office had forecast that daytime temperatures were “likely to remain 4 to 6 degrees centigrade above normal” in Sindh and Punjab from May 21, the maximum temperature recorded in at least 12 cities of province— Karachi, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Shaheed Benazirabad, Dadu, Jacobabad, Sakrand, Padidan, Chhor, Mithi, Thatta and Tandojam — already surged to three to four degrees Celsius above their monthly average temperature. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2024, Page 13*)

Water `most dear` as heatwave sets in from today

With temperatures already in the high 40s, the availability of water is bound to be main issue facing some of Sindh's most vulnerable areas once the heatwave predicted to start from today sets in. Prolonged loadshedding has already made life hell for those in urban areas, with frequent and unannounced power cuts leading to shortage of water in areas served by Sukkur and Hyderabad power utilities. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 3*)

Jacobabad, Dadu sizzle at 49°C as heatwave continues

Twelve cities in Sindh saw the mercury soaring to 46 degrees Celsius and above on the second day of the week-long heatwave. According to the Met Office, Jacobabad, Dadu and Mohenjo Daro were the hottest places not only in Sindh but in the country where maximum temperature surged to 49°C. The maximum temperature recorded in Rohri, Sukkur, Khairpur, Larkana, Padidan and Shaheed Benazirabad was 48°C; Mithi (47°C); Chorr (46.5°C); Sakrand and Hyderabad (45.5°C); Mirpurkhas and Tandojam (44°C); Badin (43°C) and Thatta (38.5°C). (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 15*)

Ministry warns of more heatwaves in June

As almost 26 districts of the country swelter in oppressive heat that has gripped country since May 21, climate change ministry said first wave will last until May 30, followed by two more separate heatwaves in June, blaming unsustainable environmental practices and deforestation for extreme weather conditions. (*Dawn, May 24th, 2024, Page 1*)

Temperature crosses 51°C in Sindh as heatwave continues

The ongoing heatwave continued to bake major cities of Sindh as maximum temperature surged to 51 degree Celsius mark. According to the Met Office, Mohenjo Daro was the hottest place in the country, where the maximum temperature was 51°C, followed by Jacobabad and Khairpur (50°C). The maximum temperature in Larkana and Dadu was 49°C, Rohri and Sukkur (48.5°C), Padidan (48°C), Shaheed Benazirabad (47°C), Mithi (46.5°C), Sakrand and Chhor (46°C), Tando Jam and Hyderabad sizzled at 44.5°C. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 13*)

Heatwave forces KP to slash school hours

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa elementary and secondary education department has reduced school hours in the province's summer zone due to a heat wave. The change in timings will be applicable to both government and private schools, according to a notification from the department. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 8*)

Dozens in hospital with heatstroke as country sizzles

Over 70 people were admitted with heatstroke complaints in different hospitals of Lahore as temperatures in seven cities of Sindh and Punjab remained over 50 degrees Celsius. The sweltering heatwave will persist as the Meteorological Department has forecast hot weather for Sindh and south Punjab today. Some areas are expected to receive rains with strong winds. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 3*)

Mercury surges to 41.5°C in Karachi as heatwave continues

Residents of Karachi braved the hottest day of the current season when the temperature increased to 41.5 degree Celsius. Met Office warned that the harsh weather conditions would prevail in the metropolis for the next three days. It said that the current weather trend showed a significance rise in the monthly average temperature, which was 5.7°C higher than average temperature of 35.8°C in May. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 13*)

Heat-related illnesses on the rise amid shortage of ORS

Amid an acute shortage of oral rehydration salts (ORS) not only in Karachi but across country, cases of heat-related illnesses are on rise due to harsh weather conditions that prevail in metropolis for more than a week. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 13*)

Heatwave likely to unleash drought in June: Met Office

The relentless heatwave is anticipated to unleash flash drought in the country's southern region in June with exacerbating effects on crops and animals, the Met Office said. In an advisory, it warned that the expected flash drought may strike the agriculture, livestock sectors, water resources and ecosystems with a significant impact next month. The intense weather conditions may also lead to the crop failures and wildfires, it said and advised the stakeholders to take preemptive steps for the disaster-prone districts. The disaster-prone districts, it specified as Tharparkar, Cholistan, and Thal - all located in the country's southern region - including south Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. (*Business Recorder, May 31, 2024, Page 7*)

More heatwave warnings issued for June as Sindh continues to sizzle

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) warned that extreme heatwave conditions would persist across parts of Sindh and Punjab in June, with temperatures likely to remain above 48 degrees Celsius. (*Dawn, May 31st, 2024, Page 12*)

13.2 # Rainfall

Above-average rains bring wettest April since 1961

The country received excessively above-average rainfall during April this year, making it the wettest April since 1961, according to Pakistan’s monthly climate summary released by meteorological department. Summary contains detailed information from 25 climate stations of country. Data shows that April 2024 set 17 new weather records, including heaviest one-day rainfall, wettest month, & coldest day temperature. National area-weighted rainfall for April 2024 was excessively above average, exceeding it by 164% and marking a record as wettest April since 1961 (previous record being 55.8mm in 1983). Record-breaking rainfalls were also observed in some regions. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 3*)

KP records highest rainfall in 59 years

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recorded 174.9mm of rainfall last month, the highest in the last 59 years, which broke the 1965 record of 158.6mm of precipitation. The meteorological department’s monthly “climate summary” for April 2024 showed that the rainfall KP received last month was excessively above average as the province recorded “wettest” April ever since 1964. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 8*)

Girl dies, six injured as rainstorm hits Lakki, Bannu

A rainstorm wreaked havoc in Lakki Marwat and Bannu districts, leaving a girl dead and six others, including children, injured. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 8*)

Two children among three killed in windstorm

At least three people, including two children, died while five other people were injured as a powerful storm ripped through the Rawalpindi district. The storm caused the collapse of roofs besides uprooting several trees, and electricity poles in Rawalpindi and Gujjar Khan. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 4*)

Lightning kills six in Punjab districts

At least six people died and five others were injured due to lightning strikes caused by windstorms and rain in various districts of Punjab which is currently grappling with two simultaneous challenges — storm damage recovery and an impending intense heatwave. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

Rainstorm destroys three houses in Shangla

At least three houses collapsed after heavy showers coupled with strong winds and thunderstorm lashed parts of the district. Heavy rain coupled with strong winds lashed the parts of the district which turned the weather pleasant but affected houses in Katkor area of Chakesar tehsil. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 8*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earth Quake

Tremors jolt parts of city

Tremors of a minor earthquake were felt in parts of Karachi, including Malir district, Gadap town, Kathore and adjoining areas. The recorded intensity of the earthquake was 2.3 magnitude. No loss of life or property was reported. This is the second time in eight days that a minor earthquake has been reported in and around Malir district. The intensity of the April 24 earthquake was of 3.2 magnitude and it was located at a depth of 12km. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 13*)

14.2 # Landslide

Heavy landslides block MNJ Road in Balakot

Heavy landslides blocked the Mansehra-Naran-Jalkhad Road to vehicular traffic leaving hundreds of motorists and passengers stranded in Ghanool area of Balakot. Another stranded passenger said the National Highway Authority and Kaghan Development Authority couldn't initiate work to remove landslides from the road, which also links KP with Gilgit-Baltistan. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 9*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Farmers protest low wheat price

Punjab government must enforce and implement wheat support price at Rs3,900 in open market, amidst reports of certain entities purchasing wheat at significantly lower prices ranging from Rs2,800 to Rs3,000. Protesters also demanded immediate release of those who were detained by police in various cities of Punjab. Protesters gathered separately at Ghani Chowk, Chichawatni, and Pakpattan Chowk, Sahiwal, for pressing of their demands. Despite distribution of gunny bags to farmers, government has yet to outline a procurement target and start buying wheat. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 2*)

Students protest outside US consulate against Israel

Hundreds of students from different universities held a protest demonstration outside the US consulate against Israeli aggression in Palestine. Male and female students were wearing keffiyehs (a Palestinian national symbol) to express unwavering solidarity with Palestinians and condemn the ongoing genocide perpetrated by the state of Israel with the support of the US. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 2*)

Farmers block road to protest water shortage

Scores of farmers blocked the Sindhri-Sanghar road in protest against acute shortage of irrigation water in Jamrao Canal. The protesters' leaders Jalil Jinjhi, Jumman Shah and Jalal Marri alleged that irrigation officials allowed water theft after receiving heavy bribe and thus created artificial water shortage, which was affecting agriculture of small farmers. Their standing crops of cotton, chili, onion, sugar cane and other vegetables were withering without water. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 15*)

Protests continue in Balochistan against new check posts

Highways in Balochistan remained blocked for 10th day as transporters went on with their strike against a government decision to set up more check posts on major roads to provide safety to passengers. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 3*)

'Living wage, not minimum wage', new slogan emerges on Labour Day

The 138th anniversary of the martyrs of Chicago brought out the red banners and all hard-working people, including men, women, children and transgender people, from across the city to show their numbers and air their grievances. They called out the government and IMF policies for their 'anti-worker policies' and demanded a living wage instead of a minimum wage. This year they were also holding up Palestinian flags in solidarity with the people of Gaza. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 13*)

Call to raise EOBI pension

The EOBI Pensioners Welfare Association (EPWA) held a demonstration outside the Karachi Press Club and demanded that the government raise EOBI pension of private employees up to the minimum wage. The protesters said that the working class was facing a tremendous financial crisis and it was not possible to survive on the current EOBI pension of Rs10,000 per month. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 14*)

Processions, rallies staged across Sindh to mark International Labour Day

Members of trade unions, labour organisations, civil society and their supporters took out processions and staged rallies to mark International Labour Day across the province. The leaders demanded in unison the government formulate a pro-labour policy and make substantial raise in the wages of labourers. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 15*)

Farmers warn of highway blockade over wheat price

Kissan Etihad Pakistan (KEP) Chairman Khalid Hussain Bath has condemned the arrest of growers and the baton charge against women, children and elderly in Punjab and demanded the immediate release of all those arrested by the provincial government. He expressed serious concerns over the delay in the purchase of wheat by the Punjab government and demanded procurement without further delay at the rate of Rs3,900 per 40kg fixed by the government itself. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 5*)

Journalists, rights activists highlight threats to press freedom

On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, Journalists and human rights activists gathered at a seminar condemned recent killing of president of the Khuzdar Press Club and demanded justice and protection for journalists. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 13*)

Murder of young man sparks protest in Azizabad

A young man was shot dead in Azizabad, police said. The victim's family and his relatives staged a sit-in and blocked the main road in the Yaseenabad area in protest over the killing by what they called drug mafia. (*Dawn, May 6th, 2024, Page 13*)

Farmers in canal's tail-end area protest water shortage

Farmers whose lands were located at the tail-end of Manharo minor (water channel) staged a sit-in to block Moro-Bandhi road outside local press club near Bandhi in protest against what they described as 'artificial' shortage of irrigation water. They accused officials of irrigation department of deliberately causing the water crisis by selling their share of the water to influential landlords of the area. (*Dawn, May 7th, 2024, Page 15*)

Schoolteachers protest 'injustice' in promotions

A large number of primary teachers staged a demonstration under banner of All Sindh Primary Teachers Association to protest injustice in promotions and lack of furniture in flood-hit schools outside press club, Larkana. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 15*)

Dozens hurt as police break up lawyers' protest

As scores of lawyers converged on The Mall to lodge their protest against the decision to shift civil courts from Aiwan-i-Adl on Lower Mall to Model Town, the police used teargas, baton-charge, and water cannons to disperse them, prompting violent clashes outside the Lahore High Court (LHC). Dozens of people on both sides suffered injuries during the confrontation while several lawyers, including women, were taken into custody. The police contingent clad in anti-riot gear was on standby when the procession organised by the Lahore Bar Association reached the GPO Chowk on The Mall. The lawyers had planned to enter the high court to lodge their protest against the LHC chief justice' decision to 'unilaterally' shift the courts from Lower Mall to Model Town. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 1*)

Lawyers go on nationwide strike against police today

Declaring a black day, the Pakistan Bar Council and the Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) issued a full-day nationwide strike call for all courts, including the Supreme Court, high courts, and subordinate judiciary on Thursday (today). The strike call has been issued to show solidarity with the legal fraternity after what they called disturbing events of Punjab police brutality against lawyers who were peacefully protesting the "unlawful divisions" of the civil courts in Lahore. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 3*)

Farmers launch agitation against govt

The Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) launched agitation by staging a protest demonstration in Multan against the Punjab government for its failure to procure wheat from farmers, leaving them in the lurch. Hundreds of farmers carrying placards and banners gathered outside the Multan Press Club, where they burnt wheat as a symbol of their dire straits, holding the flawed wheat procurement policy of the provincial government responsible for the situation. The farmers, protesting under the slogan of 'zaraat bachao, mulk bachao (Save agriculture, save country)' also blocked the nearby roads for traffic for several hours, raising slogans against the government. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2024, Page 2*)

Protest as Gwadar attack victims` bodies arrive in Khanewal

Scores of protesters, including relatives of the seven persons who were assassinated in Gwadar, blocked Lahore-Multan National Highway for traffic over absence of officials, when bodies of the deceased persons were brought at Shamkot Interchange on M-4 motorway. On being assured of provision of the murder FIRs and autopsy reports of the deceased persons, the protesters cleared the highway, opening it for the traffic.

DEMO: Pakistan Seraiki Party and other nationalists parties demonstrated at Kutchery Chowk, Multan, against killing of Khanewal labourers at Gwadar. Seraiki nationalists Zahoor Dhareja, Malik Allah Nawaz Waince, Multan Bar Association former president Riazul Hassan Gilani and others raised slogans against provincial governments of Balochistan and Punjab. They also criticised President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, holding them responsible for deprivations of the people of south Punjab. They demanded creation of a Seraiki province and “restoration” of South Punjab Secretariat, along with quota for Seraiki people in govt services, rejecting recent creation of posts of 10 special secretaries for south Punjab. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2024, Page 2*)

Muzaffarabad grinds to halt as police, protesters clash

A crippling shutter down and wheel jam strike was observed in almost all parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on the call of a people’s action committee, during which state capital Muzaffarabad witnessed violent confrontation between police and some demonstrators in different neighbourhoods. The strike call was given by the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee, after several of its important leaders and activists were arrested by police in overnight raids in Muzaffarabad and Mirpur divisions. The action committee has been seeking provision of electricity as per hydropower generation cost in AJK, subsidised wheat flour and an end to “luxuries” of the elite class. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2024, Page 4*)

Growers protest water shortage

Scores of growers blocked main Naukot-Mirpurkhas road and staged a demonstration in protest against acute shortage of water in channels managed by Naukot subdivision of the irrigation department. The protesters burnt tyres on the road and raised hurdles to halt flow of traffic while raising slogans and demanding supply of water to their channels as per their gauge. They told media persons that Naukot subdivision’s SDO and other officials were selling off water to influential landlords after receiving heavy bribes, leaving little water in the canal which failed to reach tail-end and thus deprived growers of their share. The standing crops of cotton, chili, sugar cane and vegetables were withering due to water shortage. (*Dawn, May 11th, 2024, Page 15*)

Relatives of five hostages block Indus Highway

Family members and relatives of five employees of a microfinance bank, who had been kidnapped in Dari Sundani village about a month ago, blocked a section of the Indus Highway in Kashmore in protest. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 15*)

AJK march resumes amid stalemate

As President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed to address the 'genuine demands' of protesters in Azad Kashmir, a possible agreement between the Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee and the AJK government remained elusive, with the protest movement resuming its march on Muzaffarabad. A day after clashes between the protesters and the police claimed the life of a policeman, the situation remained relatively calm in the region. The business centres remained shut with public transport suspended in Muzaffarabad and Poonch divisions. In Mirpur, there was a partial strike. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 1*)

Govt warned of protests over wheat issue

The Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML) warned of nationwide protests if the demands of wheat growers are not met, condemning the mistreatment of the farming community. PMML leader, while addressing a protest demonstration outside the press club, said that farmers were being economically murdered by not ensuring the sale of wheat at the officially fixed rate of Rs3,900 per 40kg. Farmers joined the protest in large numbers as the participants raised slogans against the official 'anti-farmer' policies and sought an end to the ill-treatment of the agriculturists. The protesters were carrying placards inscribed with different slogans, criticising the anti-farmer policies of the government. He emphasised that the abuse of the farming community would not be tolerated and threatened country-wide protests if the demand of the wheat growers was not accepted. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 3*)

Govt subsidy fails as three killed in A JK violence

A government decision to dole out a Rs23 billion subsidy to placate violent protests in Azad Jammu Kashmir failed to pacify the region after three people were shot dead and six sustained injuries due to firing and teargas shelling by the paramilitary Rangers in Muzaffarabad. Shortly before violence, PM Shehbaz Sharif and AJK PM Anwarul Haq after a meeting approved release of Rs23bn for AJK on account of power and wheat subsidies. The subsidised rate for 40kg flour will be Rs2,000, down from Rs3,100. Electricity tariff was reduced to Rs3, Rs5 and Rs6 per unit for up to 100, 300, and more than 300 units, respectively. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2024, Page 1*)

Chaman protests to continue as talks with govt fail

Traders and politicians from Chaman protesting against new visa regime on Afghan border have vowed to continue demonstrations after talks with government broke down. Reports from border district indicate the arrival of heavy contingents of police while the internet service was also suspended in entire district. (*Dawn, May 14th, 2024, Page 3*)

Traders go on strike against plan to impose taxes in Malakand

All the markets and bazaars were shuttered and private educational institutions mostly remained closed in protest against the government's plan to impose taxes in the Malakand division from July 1. The protest call was given by Malakand Division

Traders' Federation. A complete shutter down strike was observed in Swat, Shangla, Buner, Malakand, Lower and Upper Dir, Lower and Upper Chitral and Bajaur. In Lower Dir, rallies and walks were held in Chakdara, Talash, Timergara, Khall, Munda, Samarbagh, Lal Qila and Mayar. Traffic on the roads also remained thin. Dir Qaumi Pasoon, a citizens' body, also arranged a protest rally in Timergara against imposition of taxes in Malakand division. Its members demanded of the government to immediately reverse decision and announce special package for residents as region had been affected by militancy, earthquakes and floods. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2024, Page 8*)

Dacoits rob house, snatch boy in Panu Agil

A gang of burglars broke into a house in Panu Aqil, held inmates hostage at gunpoint, robbed them of all valuable belongings and also snatched a seven-year-old boy while escaping away with the loot. Netizens heaped criticism on police for failing to provide security to citizens and maintain peace across the district. A large number of rights activists, members of civil society and religious and political parties staged a sit-in before City police station in Panu Aqil and demanded immediate recovery of the child. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2024, Page 17*)

Transpersons protest `gender misreporting` by hospital

A group of transgender people protested outside the health secretariat, alleging that the Okara District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital misreported the gender of a male community member, Husnain Ali, due to his refusal to bribe the hospital staff. They were denied access to the health secretary, despite their hours-long wait outside the secretariat for many hours. (*Dawn, May 18th, 2024, Page 2*)

Nationalists hold hunger strike in several districts on Sindh`s pressing issues

Activists of the component parties of Jeay Sindh Rahbar Committee began 24-hour hunger strikes outside press clubs in several Sindh towns in protest against lawlessness, dacoits' rule, settlement of outsiders and economic exploitation of the province. In Hyderabad, the committee's convener Jeay Sindh and others told journalists that Sindh faced hunger, lawlessness, kidnapping and settlement of outsiders. In Mirpurkhas, scores of workers and office-bearers of nationalist parties observed token hunger strike outside local press club in protest against Punjab's gross excesses against Sindhi people.

In Nawabshah, the protesters observed a hunger strike outside local press club and said that a conspiracy was being hatched to change demography of Sindh. They said that dacoits' rule had been imposed on Sindh. The province's share in water was being stolen by Punjab and leading Sindh's farmland to destruction. They demanded immediate recovery of Priya Kumari and all other abductees, removal of encroachments from lands in the name of housing projects etc. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2024, Page 15*)

Weeks-long protests bring Chaman to a standstill

Life in the border town of Chaman has been at a virtual standstill for almost two weeks due to protests against new border crossing regulations and action of security forces.

Public and private banks and offices of passport, deputy commissioner, and Customs have been closed since earlier this month when protesters clashed with security forces. Protesters, including traders, political leaders & daily wage workers, have also blocked Quetta-Chaman national highway, connecting Pakistan with Afghanistan. Hundreds of trucks and other vehicles loaded with goods of Afghan transit trade and other items have been stranded on both sides of border waiting for reopening of highway in Chaman. Since May 4, all trade activities have been suspended in Chaman, and no export and import between Pakistan and Afghanistan through Chaman border has taken place due to strike and protest of all parties traders alliance. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 5*)

Journalists boycott assembly proceeding over locking of Quetta Press Club

Journalists covering the assembly session boycotted proceedings to protest against lockdown of Quetta Press Club (QPC) and the entry of police into the premises to stop a seminar of the Baloch Yakjahti Committee (BYC). The decision to boycott was made in a joint meeting of the executive committees of QPC and the Balochistan Union of Journalists (BUJ). A large number of journalists, led by BUJ president Khalil Ahmed and QPC president Abdul Khaliq Rind, walked out of the press gallery soon after the assembly session started and gathered in front of the hall. They were carrying placards and banners inscribed with their demands and chanted slogans against the police and local administration for locking down the press club. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 5*)

Filling stations observe strike against sale of smuggled petrol

Owners of filling stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa observed a one-day strike against the federal government's "failure" to ban the sale of smuggled Iranian petroleum products at illegal makeshift petrol pumps. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 8*)

MQM-P holds angry protest against KE over prolonged loadshedding

Workers of the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan and residents of Martin Quarters, Clayton Quarters, PIB Colony, etc, staged a demonstration outside an office of the K-Electric on Tipu Sultan Road, lit bonfires and blocked the main road for vehicular traffic in protest over prolonged loadshedding and inflated power bills. The KE staffs were also forced to lock all entrance and exit points from inside as the angry protesters tried to barge into the office. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 13*)

Journalists to observe black day today against Quetta incident

Different factions of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) and Karachi Union of Journalists (KUJ) as well as the Karachi Press Club (KPC) condemned the district administration's action of locking the Quetta Press Club and announced that the journalist community will observe a black day today. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 13*)

Sindh`s music teachers stage protest

One of the steps taken by the Sindh government in its previous tenure which were widely acknowledged was its decision to impart music training to school students in the province. For the purpose, last year, the then education minister Syed Sardar Shah had

announced to hire more than 300 music teachers after the candidates went through a recruitment process at IBA. But ever since, the government seems to have been silent on the matter. All Sindh Sangeetkar Association (ASSA) held a protest at the Karachi Press Club (KPC) — and other cities of the province — against, what it called, the teachers “not getting joining letters”. The protesters carried musical instruments with them as well to perform on the occasion. (*Dawn, May 21st, 2024, Page 14*)

Farmers rally countrywide to press govt on wheat purchase

On the call of Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee, farmers held protest demonstrations in 30 different districts of the country demanding start of the purchase of wheat from growers and arrest of the people involved in the wheat scandal. In Punjab, the protests were held in Lahore, Multan, Bahawalpur, Vehari, Jhang, Pakpattan, Chiniot, Kasur, Khanewal, Bahawalnagar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Burewala, Chishtian and Jampur. In Sindh, the farmers took to streets in Karachi, Shikarpur, Nawabshah, Qamber Shahdaddkot, Newshehru Feroze, Mirpurkhas, Dadu, Sanghar and Shahpur Chakar. Protests were also held in Quetta and Jhal Magsi in Balochistan, and in Peshawar and Mardan in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 1*)

YDA demos outside hospitals for demands

The young doctors lodged a strong protest outside the major government teaching hospitals in the city to press the health authorities to accept their various demands. The protest was held under the banner of the Young Doctors Association (YDA), Punjab. They blocked the main roads outside the Services, Mayo, Sir Ganga Ram and the Lahore General Hospital. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 2*)

Highways blocked in support of Chaman protesters

Balochistan remained cut off from the rest of the country as all national highways were blocked in support of traders and daily wagers who have been protesting in Chaman for seven months against the border closure and imposition of one-document regime for movement between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The call to block highways was given Tehreek-i-Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan, a six-party opposition alliance, in support of the participants of Chaman sit-in which has been continuing since October last year, demanding withdrawal of condition of border crossing between the two neighbouring countries through passport and visa. Protestors’ main demand is withdrawal of the new regulation and resumption of the old system which allowed travel on Pakistani National Identity Card and Afghan ID card, called Teskera. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 5*)

Transporters continue strike over ‘harassment’ at checkpoints

Transporters continued their strike in Makran, protesting alleged harassment at check posts on the highway, which has stranded large numbers of pilgrims and other people at the Pakistan-Iran border. Transporters from Gwadar, Turbat and Panjgur districts have been on strike for the past four days, protesting harassment at checkpoints on the Coastal and RCD highways. (*Dawn, May 26th, 2024, Page 3*)

Aurat March rally demands immediate ceasefire in Gaza

The Aurat March organisers held a protest rally outside the American consulate to express solidarity with the besieged Palestinians. The rally, which started from the Sea View Park, was blocked by containers placed on the road leading to the consulate, with a heavy deployment of a police contingent. The organisers demanded an immediate and permanent ceasefire, and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the occupied West Bank. They demanded an end to the Israeli apartheid system, and an end to settler violence. They also demand completely ending US funding towards Israel's war machinery, and US support to genocide.

They also demanded the return of Palestinians to their homes, free flow of immediate aid, and a comprehensive rehabilitation plan to be led by Palestine, including the rebuilding of hospitals, universities, schools and housing for Palestinians. They demanded the Pakistani state to reconsider its allyship with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and to suspend all diplomatic relations with the US until the two countries in question play their part in freeing Palestine. They also demanded "demilitarisation of hostels and educational institutions in Pakistan", along with an end to the ban on student unions and to "all forms of state violence routinely directed at student protesters". They also demanded "an end to Baloch genocide, to enforced disappearances countrywide and to usurpation of indigenous people's land." (*The News, May 26th, 2024, Page 13*)

Protesters begin march against border closure

Hundreds of people protesting against the closure of a crossing point between Pakistan and Iran in Mashkel area of Rakhshan division in Balochistan, started a long march towards the provincial capital. The protesters, including traders, had been staging a sit-in for the last one month in the border town Mashkel demanding the opening of Pak-Iran Maza Sar border crossing used by local people for buying food items and other essential commodities. Its closure has created shortage of food items and other items of daily use. Besides, locals said the border trade was their livelihood which has also been impacted. Hundreds of protestors, after ending the month-long sit-in, started the long march and reached Yakmach area of Chagai district where locals welcomed them. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 5*)

Teachers oppose `outsourcing` of 13,000 public schools to NGOs

The Punjab Teachers Joint Action Committee has voiced strong opposition to the provincial government's decision to hand over government schools to the Punjab Education Foundation and Punjab Education Initiatives Management Authority in name of reorganisation. The committee leaders termed government's move tantamount to outsourcing education system. The committee pointed out that the previous government and the caretaker government did not recruit a single teacher in the last six years, leaving 120,000 teacher posts vacant. They criticised the decision to hand over schools to the PEF, especially when a couple of teachers could manage to maintain the number of children in primary schools up to 100 despite the shortage of staff.

Earlier, the Maryam Nawaz-led provincial government announced plans to hand over 13,000 non-performing public schools to non-government organisations (NGOs) in the name of bringing reforms. The CM also sought a final plan of action for providing tetra-pack flavoured milk up to class 5 in schools and expressed her concern over ghost enrollment of students in the schools. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 8*)

Khar traders take to streets against colleague's murder

Traders of Khar Bazaar demonstrated against murder of a shopkeeper, and demanded the early arrest of his killers. Social and political activists also attended the protest held at main Chowk. Protesters, who blocked road for about an hour, chanted slogans against the police for failing to ensure security of traders. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 9*)

Federal employees rally for 200pc increase in pay, pension

Government employees held a rally demanding a 200 per cent increase in salaries and pension considering the price hike and inflation. Among the protesters were employees of Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (Pims), the ministry of education and other ministries. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 4*)

Khyber residents storm grid station

Residents of Landi Kotal laid a siege to the local grid station as the authorities refused to provide them with the promised six hours of electric supply. Holding black flags and chanting slogans against Tribal Areas Electric Supply Company, the enraged protesters, about 100 in number, barged into the grid station and suspended power supply to the entire tehsil along with Torkham border. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 8*)

Fourth day of growers' protest

A large number of growers continued sit-in on the premises of director Nara Canal Area Water Board's offices for the fourth consecutive day in protest against 'artificial' shortage of irrigation water in tail end areas. The protesters' leaders claimed that irrigation officials deliberately deprived them of their share in water by selling water to influential landlords after receiving heavy bribes. Unfortunately, no officer was ready to talk to them even after they had held big protests. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 15*)

'Black day' observed against education policy

On the call of the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Associations (FAPUASA Pakistan), teachers and non-teaching staff in universities across the country observed Black Day and strongly protested against the education policy of the government. On Black Day, thousands of university teachers from all provinces across the country wore black armbands to protest against the anti-education measures taken by the government. (*Business Recorder, May 31st, 2024, Page 5*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

Back

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUT

Scientists win World Food Prize for work on Global Seed Vault [59]

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Key states, including Pakistan: Wheat imports expected to rise: World Bank [59]

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Bird flu concerns: Canada toughens import terms for US breeding cattle [59]

5 # TRADE

Turkiye halts trade with Israel [60]

India's Reliance to buy Russian oil in roubles [60]

5.1 # Export

India lifts ban on onion exports, sets floor price [60]

EU 2023/24 soft wheat exports reach 27.8m tons [60]

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Nestle India shareholders vote against rise in royalty to Swiss parent [61]

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Donors vow \$5.4bn for Syrian refugees [61]

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

BD gets draft approval for IMF payout of almost \$1.2bn [61]

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

10.1 # Food

World food prices up in April for second month: FAO [62]

EU told to tackle food cost differences across the bloc [62]

10.2 # Food Scarcity

WFP chief fears `full-blown famine` in Gaza`s north [62]

10.3 # Poverty

More than one in four Syrians `extremely poor`: World Bank [62]

11 # ENVIRONMENT

11.1 # Health

Israeli incursion could halt Rafah`s last functioning hospital, says WHO [63]

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Oppressive heat scorches Asia, prompts grim warning from scientists [63]

World`s record-breaking temperature streak extends through April [64]

Summer 2023 was hottest in 2,000 years, study says [64]

Pakistani among 11 seeking French oil giant`s climate trial [65]

26 extra days of extreme heat in a year due to climate change: report [65]

12.1 # Climate Financing

Rich nations met \$100bn climate finance goal two years late: OECD [65]

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Cyclone

Tornado reduces town in Iowa to rubble, kills many [65]

Nearly a million flee for shelter as Cyclone Remal hits Bangladesh [65]

Sixteen killed after cyclone batters Bangladesh and India [66]

Climate change blamed for BD`s `longest` cyclone [66]

12 Indians killed in quarry collapse after cyclone rains [66]

13.2 # Flood

Landslides and massive flooding kill 56 in Brazil [66]

Landslides, floods claim 15 lives in Indonesia [66]

Floods in Brazil kill 55, force 70,000 from homes [66]

Afghanistan flash floods kill over 300: WFP [67]

Indonesia floods, landslides kill 34, 16 missing [67]

Flash floods claim 50 lives in western Afghanistan [67]

Houston grapples with heat, power cuts after major storms [67]

Parts of northern Europe clean up after floods [67]

Fresh floods kill 66 in northern Afghanistan [67]

13.3 # Heatwave

Learning gaps widen as extreme heat shuts schools for millions [67]

13.4 # Rainfall

Heavy rains shutter Saudi schools, flood roads [68]

Schools, offices shut as heavy rain returns to UAE [68]

Four hikers drown after heavy rains in Iraq [68]

13.5 # Storms

Storms kill 21 across four states in US [68]

13.6 # Wildfires

Forest fires raze parts of India amid heat, dry weather [68]

Canada wildfire prompts thousands to evacuate [69]

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Landslides

Hundreds feared dead after landslide in PNG [69]

Papua New Guinea landslide death toll surpasses 2,000, UN told [69]

14.2 # Volcanic Eruption

Indonesia volcano erupts, thousands evacuated over tsunami threat [69]

Volcano eruption shuts more airports, ash reaches Malaysia [69]

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters barricade Columbia building [70]

Turkish police arrest over 200 after clash with May Day protesters [70]

Pro-Palestine students clash with police at US campuses [70]

KU teachers back protests on US campuses for Gaza [70]

300 anti-Israel protesters held in New York [70]

Thousands protest over salaries, Gaza at France May Day marches [71]

Pro-Palestinian students set up camp at varsity in Canada [71]

Students in Ireland and Switzerland join Gaza protest wave [71]

Pro-Palestine protests spread in Europe, several arrested [72]

Police, demonstrators clash at Amsterdam`s Gaza demo [72]

EU staff members protest Israel`s bombing on Gaza [72]

Argentine workers launch general strike against Milei`s reforms [72]

Protests call for Israel`s ejection from Eurovision contest [72]

Several dead in protests in Afghanistan [73]

Thousands rally in Tbilisi against `foreign influence` bill [73]

News Makers: Puerto De La Cruz [73]

News Makers: Berlin [73]

News Makers: Billom, France [73]

Dutch contestant expelled as Eurovision braces for protests [73]

Georgians protest anti-NGO bill as ruling party vows to adopt [73]

Tunisian lawyers protest, launch strike after pundit arrested [74]

Pro-Palestinian protesters occupy university buildings [74]

Peru protesters slam new insurance law [74]

News Makers: Taipei [74]

Oxford University students arrested at pro-Palestinian sit-in [74]

News Makers: Paris [74]

News Makers: Paris [75]

Academic workers on strike in support of Palestinians [75]

Clashes erupt at Israeli embassy protest in Mexico [75]

Samsung Electronics workers' union announces first strike [75]

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUT

Scientists win World Food Prize for work on Global Seed Vault

Scientists Geoffrey Hawtin and Cary Fowler, who received the prestigious World Food Prize for “their work to preserve the world’s heritage of seeds”, are on a mission. Their vocation is to safeguard as many seeds as possible so that one day the world can benefit from their genetic characteristics. Their work is all in the name of protecting global food security. Hawtin and Fowler helped set up a world reserve of seeds dug into a glacier on the Norwegian archipelago Svalbard in the Arctic — where 1.25 million samples are now stored for preservation in the cold. (*Business Recorder, May 10th, 2024, Page 12*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Key states, including Pakistan: Wheat imports expected to rise: World Bank

Wheat imports are expected to rise for key importing countries including Pakistan, says the World Bank. The bank in its latest, “Food Security Update”, stated that Pakistan’s imports have accelerated, partly due to the government’s decision to allow duty-free imports through the private sector. While global wheat production for 2023-24 is slightly up by 0.7 MMT to 787.4 MMT, it remains the second highest on record. The increase is primarily driven by higher production in the European Union (EU), Moldova, and Pakistan, offsetting a smaller crop in Tunisia.

Notably, EU production sees a boost of 0.5MMT, while Pakistan’s production is revised higher based on government statistics. Conversely, Tunisia’s production is lowered by 0.4MMT due to updated government statistics indicating reduced yield and harvested area. Wheat imports are expected to rise for key importing countries including Algeria, Pakistan, EU, and Indonesia, outweighing reductions in Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Algeria’s imports are forecasted to reach a record 9.0MMT, largely due to robust Durum imports from Mexico. The nature of food security challenges is specific to countries in region. In Philippines, US Department of Agriculture forecasts a 14% increase in rice imports for 2024, reaching 4.1m tonnes, because of an estimated decrease in local production, of 12.3m tons. In 2023, 82% of Philippines’ rice imports came from Vietnam, with rest from India, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Thailand. (*Business Recorder, May 1st, 2024, Page 8*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Bird flu concerns: Canada toughens import terms for US breeding cattle

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has toughened import requirements on US breeding cattle over the H5N1 bird flu virus, the agency said in a statement. The

first confirmed case of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in a dairy herd on March 25 and the second human case in two years on April 1 have heightened concerns in the US about the spread of the virus to animals and people. The CFIA has enhanced import requirements on dairy cattle from the US from April 29, the statement said. Import measures for cattle from the US will now include negative HPAI test results for lactating dairy cattle, testing of milk at the retail level to look for viral fragments of HPAI, and voluntary testing of cows that are not presenting with clinical signs of the virus, the CFIA said. Since 2022, bird flu in the United States has infected over 90 million chickens, more than 9,000 wild birds and 34 dairy herds, as well as one person in Texas who came in close contact with infected cattle and another person after exposure to poultry. (*The News, May 5th, 2024, Page 12*)

5 # TRADE

Turkiye halts trade with Israel

Turkiye will impose trade restrictions on Israel starting today on a range of products including cement and steel and iron construction materials in response to Israel's offensive on Gaza, the trade ministry said in a statement. "This decision will remain in place until Israel declares a ceasefire immediately and allows adequate and uninterrupted flow of humanitarian aid into Gaza," the ministry announced on social media. (*Business Recorder, May 4th, 2024, Page 1*)

India's Reliance to buy Russian oil in roubles

India's Reliance Industries, operator of the world's biggest refining complex, has signed a one-year deal with Russia's Rosneft to buy at least 3 million barrels of oil a month in roubles, four sources aware of the matter told Reuters. The shift to rouble payments follows Russian President Vladimir Putin's push for Moscow and its trading partners to find alternatives to the Western financial system to facilitate trade despite US and European sanctions. (*Business Recorder, May 29th, 2024, Page 12*)

5.1 # Export

India lifts ban on onion exports, sets floor price

India has lifted restrictions on the export of onions, according to an official notification, a day after the government announced a 40% export duty. The export ban was imposed by world's biggest exporter of the vegetable last December and then extended in March. While lifting the ban, government also announced a minimum export price of \$550 per metric ton for exports. India's onion production in the rabi season in 2024 is estimated to be 19.1m tons, which is a "comfortable" level to allow overseas sales given local monthly consumption is about 1.7m tons. (*Business Recorder, May 5th, 2024, Page 1*)

EU 2023/24 soft wheat exports reach 27.8m tons

Soft wheat exports from the European Union since the start of the 2023/24 season in July had reached 27.8 million metric tons by May 26, down 4% compared with 29.0

million a year earlier, data published by the European Commission showed. EU barley exports totalled 5.3 million tons, down 14% against 6.2 million tons in corresponding period of 2022/23, while EU maize imports were at 16.7 million tons, down 33% from 24.9 million tons a year earlier. (*Business Recorder, May 29th, 2024, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Nestle India shareholders vote against rise in royalty to Swiss parent

Shareholders in Nestle India have rejected a company proposal to increase royalty payments to its Swiss parent Nestle. The motion called for the royalty paid to its parent to climb to 5.25% of net sales, net of taxes, compared to the current level of 4.5%. The increase was proposed at a rate of 0.15% per annum. About 70.8% of public shareholders voted against the increase. (*Business Recorder, May 19th, 2024, Page 8*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Donors vow \$5.4bn for Syrian refugees

International donors led by the EU pledged five billion euros (\$5.4 billion) for Syrian refugees, as Brussels insisted they should not be “pushed back” to their war-torn homeland. An annual gathering hosted by the EU and chaired by its foreign policy chief Josep Borrell saw the European Union commit 2.12 billion euros for 2024 and 2025. That figure included 560 million euros already promised this year for Syrians displaced inside the country and in Lebanon, Jordan and Iraq, and the same amount for 2025. The bloc also pledged one billion euros for Syrian refugees in neighbouring Turkey. (*Business Recorder, May 29th, 2024, Page 5*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

BD gets draft approval for IMF payout of almost \$1.2bn

IMF staff and Bangladesh have reached an agreement to unlock close to \$1.2 billion in financing as the South Asian country grapples with declining foreign exchange reserves, the Washington-based institution said. Following two weeks of talks in the capital, Dhaka, the International Monetary Fund said a “staff-level agreement” had been reached to pay out the latest portion of three ongoing programs – subject to board approval. “The authorities have made significant progress on structural reforms under the IMF-supported program, including the implementation of a formula-based fuel price adjustment mechanism for petroleum products,” the IMF said in a statement.

The IMF expects Bangladesh’s economy to grow by an inflation-adjusted 5.4 percent in the 2024 financial year – down slightly from six percent last year – before rebounding in 2025. The Fund forecasts that inflation will remain elevated at around 9.4 percent this year, before easing to around 7.2 percent next year, “on the back of the continued tighter policy mix and projected lower global food and commodity prices.” (*Business Recorder, May 9th, 2024, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

10.1 # Food

World food prices up in April for second month: FAO

The United Nations food agency's world price index rose for a second consecutive month in April as higher meat prices and small increases in vegetable oils and cereals outweighed declines in sugar and dairy products. FAO price index, which tracks the most globally traded food commodities, averaged 119.1 points in April, up from a revised 118.8 points for March. The FAO's April reading was nonetheless 7.4pc below the level a year earlier. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 9*)

EU told to tackle food cost differences across the bloc

Eight EU states urged Brussels to clamp down on multinational giants unfairly limiting the sale of products within the bloc, forcing European consumers to pay more. Their call comes a day after the European Commission slapped a 337.5-million-euro (\$366-million) antitrust fine on Mondelez, the US confectioner behind major brands including Toblerone and Oreo, for restricting cross-border sales of chocolate. It is up to the commission, the EU's competition watchdog, to decide whether to pursue the matter. The constraints cost EU consumers more than 14 billion euros a year, pointing to an estimate from a 2020 commission study. (*Business Recorder, May 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

10.2 # Food Scarcity

WFP chief fears `full-blown famine` in Gaza`s north

The chief of the United Nations' food programme has warned of a "full-blown famine" in northern Gaza and reiterated calls for a ceasefire in Israel's aggression against Hamas. The World Food Programme is one of the many humanitarian groups trying to get aid into Gaza. The World Health Organisation said that the availability of food in the Gaza Strip has very slightly improved, though the risk of famine continues in the besieged Palestinian territory, which is home to 2.4mn people. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 11*)

10.3 # Poverty

More than one in four Syrians `extremely poor`: World Bank

More than a quarter of Syrians live in extreme poverty, the World Bank said, 13 years into a devastating civil war that has battered the economy and impoverished millions. The World Bank published two new reports on Syria, which found that "27 percent of Syrians - about 5.7 million individuals - live in extreme poverty". "Extreme poverty, while virtually non-existent before the conflict, affected more than one in four Syrians in 2022" and might have further deteriorated after a deadly earthquake last year. The quake killed about 6,000 people in the country. According to the United Nations, about 90 percent of Syrians live in poverty, while it was previously estimated that around 2

million lived in extreme poverty after more than a decade of war. The report cited neighbour Lebanon's economic meltdown in late 2019, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine, as having eroded the welfare of Syrian households in recent years. The civil war in Syria has also ravaged the economy, infrastructure and industry, while Western sanctions have added to the country's woes.

A lack of opportunities and dwindling aid has pushed many Syrians to rely on money sent from relatives abroad to survive, with the World Bank estimating that "in 2022, the total value of remittances received by Syrian households reached about \$1.05 billion". Syria's estimated GDP stood at around \$6.2 billion in 2023. Syria's "real GDP is projected to contract by 1.5 percent in 2024, extending the 1.2 percent decline in 2023". (*Business Recorder, May 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

11.1 # Health

Israeli incursion could halt Rafah's last functioning hospital, says WHO

A World Health Organisation official said the last hospital in Rafah could stop functioning and a substantial number of deaths could be expected if Israel launches a "full incursion" into the southern Gaza city. "If the incursion would continue, we would lose the last hospital in Rafah," Richard Peeperkorn, the WHO representative for Gaza and the West Bank, said on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, as Israeli tanks were reported to have advanced into the centre of Rafah. He said that in the case of a "full incursion", a contingency plan involving treating patients in a string of ill-equipped field hospitals "will not prevent what we expect: substantial additional mortality and morbidity". (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 11*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Oppressive heat scorches Asia, prompts grim warning from scientists

Large swaths of Asia are sweltering through a heatwave that has topped temperature records from Myanmar to the Philippines and forced millions of children to stay home from school. Here are some questions and answers about the extreme heat, which scientists warn will become more frequent and intense because of human-induced climate change. The heat has hit much of South and Southeast Asia, with record temperatures in Myanmar's Chauk and the Philippine capital Manila in recent days. Thai authorities have issued warnings about "severe conditions", while authorities in Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, India and Bangladesh all forecast temperatures above 40 degrees Celsius. Philippines and Bangladesh both suspended in-person classes, while India is reviewing whether heat has affected turnout in national elections. Even northern Japan has been affected: temperatures in Japan's Sapporo this month passed 25C (77F) at the earliest point of any year on record.

Extreme heat disproportionately affects children, the elderly and those living in poverty. Children, older people and those with pre-existing conditions or disabilities can overheat more quickly. Those living in poverty also often lack cooling solutions at home or are forced to work in conditions without adequate heat protection. The UN children's agency Unicef warned this month that 243m children across Pacific and East Asia are at risk from heatwaves. Authorities in several countries asked citizens to stay at home. Hospitals in Nepal were put on standby, while Cambodian officials asked public schools to keep doors and windows open for ventilation. Measures went further in Bangladesh and the Philippines, with schools closed for days. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 10*)

World's record-breaking temperature streak extends through April

The world witnessed the hottest April on record, adding to an 11-month streak in which every month set a (fresh) temperature record, the European Union's climate change monitoring service stated. Every single month since June of 2023, has ranked as the planet's hottest on record, as compared to the corresponding month in previous years, Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) said in its monthly bulletin. Including month of April, the world's mean temperature was the highest on record for a period of 12-months (1.61 degrees Celsius above the average), in 1850-1900 pre-industrial period.

Some of extremes which include months of record breaking sea surface temperatures, have led scientists to investigate whether human activity has now triggered a tipping point in the climate system. Greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels is the central component of climate change. In recent months, natural El Nino phenomenon, which warms surface waters in eastern Pacific Ocean, has also contributed to a rise in temperatures. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 12*)

Summer 2023 was hottest in 2,000 years, study says

Last year's northern hemisphere summer was the hottest in 2,000 years. Scientists say 2023 was the hottest year globally since records began in 1850, but the study in the journal Nature indicates human-caused climate change pushed northern summer highs well beyond anything seen in two millennia. The conservative estimate found that 2023 was at least 0.5 degrees Celsius hotter than the warmest northern hemisphere summer of that period in AD246. Otherwise, it was 1.19 degrees warmer. By contrast the coolest summer of that 2,000-year period was nearly four degrees below 2023 summer temperatures in the northern hemisphere due to a major volcanic eruption.

Scientists say volcanic activity could bring about cooler conditions in future as they did in the past, but that ultimately humanity's release of greenhouse gases would keep trapping heat in the atmosphere. In 1992, an eruption the previous year helped soften the impact of the El Nino weather system, which warms the Pacific Ocean and can bring hotter global conditions. After the effect subsided, temperatures soared in 1998, which the study noted was one of the warmest summers after 2023 and 2016 respectively — both also El Nino years. (*Dawn, May 15th, 2024, Page 12*)

Pakistani among 11 seeking French oil giant's climate trial

NGOs and persons affected by climate-induced disasters have filed a criminal complaint against French oil giant TotalEnergies and its top shareholders in Paris, seeking a trial for involuntary manslaughter and other consequences of climate change “chaos”. In total, 11 plaintiffs have filed the case, including three NGOs and eight “victims or survivors of climate-related disasters” in Australia, Belgium, France, Greece, Pakistan, the Philippines and Zimbabwe. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 12*)

26 extra days of extreme heat in a year due to climate change: report

The world experienced an average of 26 more days of extreme heat over the last 12 months that would probably not have occurred without climate change, a report said. Heat is the leading cause of climate-related death and the report further points to the role of global warming in increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather around the world. For this study, scientists used the years 1991 to 2020 to determine what temperatures counted as within the top 10 per cent for each country over that period. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 12*)

12.1 # Climate Financing

Rich nations met \$100bn climate finance goal two years late: OECD

Wealthy countries met their target of providing \$100 billion in annual climate aid to poorer countries for the first time in 2022 though two years later than promised, the OECD said. The failure to raise the money on time has eroded trust in climate negotiations and the OECD report comes as nations race to set a more ambitious goal by November. In 2009, developed nations promised to raise \$100 billion a year by 2020 to help low-income countries invest in clean energy and cope with the worsening impacts of climate change. More than a decade later this target was finally met for the first time in 2022 with \$115.9 bn raised. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 1*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Cyclone

Tornado reduces town in Iowa to rubble, kills many

A powerful tornado ripped through a small Iowa town (of Greenfield), killing multiple people and leaving at least a dozen injured. (*Dawn, May 23rd, 2024, Page 12*)

Nearly a million flee for shelter as Cyclone Remal hits Bangladesh

An intense cyclone smashed into low-lying coast of Bangladesh, with nearly a million people fleeing inland for concrete storm shelters away from howling gales and crashing waves. Authorities have raised danger signal to its highest level, as forecasters predicted gusts of up to 130km an hour, with heavy rain and winds also lashing neighbouring India. At least 800,000 Bangladeshis fled their coastal villages, while more than 50,000 people in India also moved inland from the vast Sundarbans mangrove forest, where the Ganges, Brahmaputra and Meghna rivers meet sea. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 12*)

Sixteen killed after cyclone batters Bangladesh and India

Millions of individuals in low-lying areas across Bangladesh and India ‘surveyed tangled wreckage’, left behind by a powerful cyclone. The climate-related event killed at least 16 people, destroyed thousands of homes, smashed seawalls and flooded cities. This was only a day after ‘Cyclone Remal’ made landfall, with fierce gales and crashing waves. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 12*)

Climate change blamed for BD’s ‘longest’ cyclone

Bangladeshi weather experts said that a deadly cyclone that carved a swath of destruction was one of the quickest-forming and longest-lasting they’d experienced, blaming climate change for the shift. Cyclone Remal, which made landfall in low-lying Bangladesh and neighbouring India with fierce gales and crashing waves, left at least 38 people dead, destroyed thousands of homes, smashed seawalls and flooded cities across the two countries. (*Dawn, May 29th, 2024, Page 10*)

12 Indians killed in quarry collapse after cyclone rains

Torrential rains in the wake of a powerful cyclone caused the collapse of a quarry in India’s Mizoram state killing 12 people. In Mizoram, several highways and key roads were disrupted by landslides. (*Business Recorder, May 29th, 2024, Page 5*)

13.2 # Flood

Landslides and massive flooding kill 56 in Brazil

The death toll from floods and mudslides triggered by torrential storms in southern Brazil has climbed to 56 people, with 74 injured and another 67 missing, the country’s civil defence agency said. Fast-rising water levels in the state of Rio Grande do Sul were straining dams and threatening the metropolis of Porto Alegre, in southern Brazil. At least 300 municipalities have suffered storm damage in Rio Grande do Sul, displacing more than 24,600. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 10*)

Landslides, floods claim 15 lives in Indonesia

At least 15 people have died after landslides and flooding in central Indonesia swept away dozens of houses and damaged roads, country’s disaster agency said. Indonesia is prone to landslides during the rainy season, with the problem aggravated in some places by deforestation, with prolonged torrential rain causing flooding in some areas of the archipelago nation. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 11*)

Floods in Brazil kill 55, force 70,000 from homes

Raging floods and mudslides have killed at least 55 people in southern Brazil and forced nearly 70,000 to flee their homes, the country’s civil defense agency said. At least 74 people were injured and another 67 missing from the catastrophic flooding, civil defense said. In addition to the 69,200 residents forced from their homes, civil defense also said more than a million people lacked access to potable water amid the flooding, describing damage as incalculable. (*Business Recorder, May 6th, 2024, Page 9*)

Afghanistan flash floods kill over 300: WFP

More than 300 people were killed in flash floods that ripped through multiple Afghan provinces, the World Food Programme said, as authorities declared a state of emergency and rushed to rescue the injured. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 12*)

Indonesia floods, landslides kill 34, 16 missing

At least 34 people were killed and 16 more were missing in western Indonesia after flash floods and cold lava flow from one of the archipelago's most active volcanos damaged homes, roads and mosques, officials said. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 10*)

Flash floods claim 50 lives in western Afghanistan

Flash flooding has killed at least 50 people in western Afghanistan, provincial police said, with some residents reaching safety on higher ground mere minutes before the water hit. The floods also destroyed about 2,000 houses, and damaged thousands more homes and businesses. (*Dawn, May 19th, 2024, Page 12*)

Houston grapples with heat, power cuts after major storms

Thousands of people in the Houston area faced sweltering heat without power following severe storms that claimed at least seven lives, according to local media and the National Weather Service. (*The News, May 19th, 2024, Page 10*)

Parts of northern Europe clean up after floods

German emergency workers started a major clean-up after heavy rains triggered massive flooding, while parts of Belgium, the Netherlands and France were also affected. The southwestern German state of Saarland was the worst-hit region after a long downpour flooded buildings, left streets deep underwater and sparked evacuations, with boats carrying stranded residents to safety. Officials said it was the worst flooding in the area for nearly 30 years. (*The News, May 19th, 2024, Page 10*)

Fresh floods kill 66 in northern Afghanistan

Fresh floods killed 66 people in Faryab province in northern Afghanistan, in the latest deadly flooding to hit the country. Hundreds of people died in separate flash floods this month that have also swamped farmland in a country where 80 per cent of the population depends on agriculture to survive. (*Dawn, May 20th, 2024, Page 11*)

13.3 # Heatwave

Learning gaps widen as extreme heat shuts schools for millions

As the climate warms due to the burning of fossil fuels, heatwaves are lasting longer and reaching greater peaks. In turn, government authorities and public health experts across the world are increasingly grappling with whether to keep students learning in hot classrooms, or encourage them to stay home and keep cool. Either decision has consequences. About 17pc of the world's school-aged children are already out of school, according to United Nations data, but the proportion is much larger in developing countries with nearly a third of sub-Saharan Africa's children out of school

compared to just 3pc in North America. Heat could exacerbate inequalities, widening learning gaps between developing nations in the tropics and developed countries, and even between rich and poor districts in wealthy countries. But sending children to overheated schools could make them ill. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 12*)

13.4 # Rainfall

Heavy rains shutter Saudi schools, flood roads

Saudi Arabian authorities shuttered schools in several regions as flash floods inundated roads, the latest instance of heavy rains disrupting life in the desert Gulf. Such problems are an annual occurrence in Jeddah, the port city on the Red Sea coast, where residents have long decried poor infrastructure. Floods killed 123 people in the city in 2009 and 10 more two years later. This week’s heavy rainfall in Saudi Arabia follows the intense rains that lashed the region in mid-April, killing 21 people in Oman and four in the United Arab Emirates, which received the heaviest rainfall since records began 75 years ago. Global warming caused by fossil fuel emissions “most likely” exacerbated those rains. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 11*)

Schools, offices shut as heavy rain returns to UAE

Schools and many offices were closed across UAE as heavy rains returned to the desert country just two weeks after record downpours that experts linked to climate change. A lightning storm with high winds swept across the oil-rich monarchy overnight, with more than 50 millimetres of rain falling. (*Dawn, May 3rd, 2024, Page 11*)

Four hikers drown after heavy rains in Iraq

Floods caused by torrential rainstorms killed four hikers in the Sulaimaniyah region of northern Iraq. Four members of a hiking team drowned because of heavy rains and flooding in Awaspī village, in Qaradah district. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 10*)

13.5 # Storms

Storms kill 21 across four states in US

Tornado-spawning thunderstorms that swept the US southern plains and Ozarks have killed at least 21 people across four states and wrecked hundreds of buildings, with forecasters warning of more severe weather. The death toll over the Memorial Day weekend includes at least eight fatalities in Arkansas, seven in Texas, four in Kentucky and two in Oklahoma, according to authorities. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 10*)

13.6 # Wildfires

Forest fires raze parts of India amid heat, dry weather

Frequent fires are razing forests in India’s Uttarakhand state in the north and Odisha in the east amid high temperatures and long dry spells, and the blazes have been worsened by people burning the forest to collect a flower used to brew alcohol. Data from the state-run Forest Survey of India shows that as of 2021, 54.4% of forests in India

experienced occasional fires, most of them due to man-made factors. After a brief respite during the previous season from November to April, forest fires have picked up again this year, with 653 incidents in Uttarakhand alone. During the current season, 10,163 fire points in Uttarakhand have been detected using the government's imaging radiometer. (*Business Recorder, May 1st, 2024, Page 9*)

Canada wildfire prompts thousands to evacuate

Season's first major wildfire continued to burn across Western Canada as firefighters tamed the fast-spreading blaze while authorities evacuated a town in British Columbia and advised residents of an oil hub in Alberta to prepare to leave. Wildfire was extreme and out of control, located 16km southwest of Fort McMurray and spread across 1,992 hectares (4922.34 acres) of land. (*Dawn, May 13th, 2024, Page 10*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Landslides

Hundreds feared dead after landslide in PNG

Hundreds are feared dead after a massive landslide levelled dozens of homes and buried families alive in a remote village in northern Papua New Guinea (PNG). More than 50 homes, many with people asleep inside, were buried when the landslide hit Kaokalam village. (*Dawn, May 25th, 2024, Page 10*)

Papua New Guinea landslide death toll surpasses 2,000, UN told

Papua New Guinea's massive landslide three days ago buried more than 2,000 people, the government said, as treacherous terrain impeded aid and lowered hopes of finding survivors. The National Disaster Centre gave the new number in a letter to the UN, which had put possible deaths at more than 670. (*Dawn, May 28th, 2024, Page 12*)

14.2 # Volcanic Eruption

Indonesia volcano erupts, thousands evacuated over tsunami threat

Indonesia's remote Mount Ruang volcano erupted several times issuing highest level of alert and ordering thousands of people to evacuate due to the threat of a tsunami from debris sliding into the sea. The country's volcanology agency had warned threat from the volcano was not over after it erupted more than half a dozen times this month, sparking evacuation of more than 6,000 people. The volcano sent a tower of ash more than 5km into the sky, as well as a fiery column of lava. The national disaster agency BNPB estimated 11,000 to 12,000 people had to be relocated from near Ruang's crater. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 10*)

Volcano eruption shuts more airports, ash reaches Malaysia

Eruptions at a remote Indonesian volcano forced more than half a dozen airports to close with ash spreading as far as Malaysia while authorities rushed to evacuate thousands due to tsunami fears. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 11*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters barricade Columbia building

Demonstrators at Columbia University barricaded themselves inside a campus building, escalating a standoff with officials, but the White House chided them for using “the wrong approach”. Demonstrators vowed to remain at the hall until their demands are met, including that Columbia divest all financial holdings linked to Israel, after administrators began suspending protesting students for failing to comply with an order to disperse. Protests have swept through US higher education institutions, with many erecting tent encampments on campus grounds after around 100 protesters were first arrested at Columbia on April 18. (*Dawn, May 1st, 2024, Page 12*)

Turkish police arrest over 200 after clash with May Day protesters

Turkish police fired tear gas and rubber bullets and detained more than 200 protesters after authorities banned May 1 rallies at Istanbul’s historic Taksim Square. More than 40,000 police were deployed across Istanbul, blocking even small side streets with metal barriers in an attempt to prevent protesters gathering. Police clashed with demonstrators near city hall in the Sarachane district, firing tear gas and rubber bullets to stop protesters breaching barricades. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 10*)

Pro-Palestine students clash with police at US campuses

An incident raised fears that the pro-Palestinian protests across US campuses could take an ugly turn. The incident happened at City College, New York, where a group of police officers re-raised the American flag after protesters replaced it with a Palestinian flag at the Harlem Heights campus. Videos circulated by mainstream and social media showed members of New York Police Department standing atop the base of the flagpole after ripping the Palestinian flag from rope and tossing it to the ground. Palestinian flag had been flying at college since last week when protesters set up an encampment on campus, but this was the first incident of flag-swapping. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 12*)

KU teachers back protests on US campuses for Gaza

In a show of solidarity, over 200 faculty members of Karachi University (KU) have sent a letter to professors of American universities and supported the ongoing students’ protests on campuses across the United States against the Israeli atrocities in Gaza. The letter is addressed to more than 40 universities including Columbia University New York, New York University, the University of Texas, Yale University, the University of South California, George Washington University, Indiana University and Arizona University. (*Dawn, May 2nd, 2024, Page 13*)

300 anti-Israel protesters held in New York

Supporters of Israel attacked a pro-Palestinian protest camp at the University of California in Los Angeles, hours after New York City police arrested some 300 protestors, as days of mounting tensions on some US college campuses boiled over. On the other side of the country, New York police arrested pro-Palestinian demonstrators

occupying an academic building at Columbia University and removed a two-week-old protest encampment that had inspired similar protests at campuses across the country and abroad. Students have rallied or set up tent encampments at dozens of schools across the US in recent days, expressing opposition to Israel's war in Gaza and demanding schools divest from companies that support Israel's government. Many of the schools have called in police to quell the protests. (*Business Recorder, May 2nd, 2024, Page 1*)

Thousands protest over salaries, Gaza at France May Day marches

Thousands marched at May Day protests across France, making demands ranging from better salaries to a ceasefire in Gaza, with minor skirmishes in some cities. Turnout was much lower than last year when a large part of the country was up in arms over a deeply unpopular pensions reform that President Emmanuel Macron's government had forced through parliament without a vote. This year the demonstrations come after almost seven months of war in the besieged Palestinian territory of Gaza, with mediators pushing to get a truce between Israel and Palestinian militant group Hamas. At May Day protests across the country — including in Paris, Marseille, Toulouse, Lyon and Nantes — marchers sometimes held up Palestinian flags as well as their union banners. (*Business Recorder, May 2nd, 2024, Page 5*)

Pro-Palestinian students set up camp at varsity in Canada

Pro-Palestine protesters breached a fenced area and set up an encampment at the University of Toronto. They vowed to stay there until the university divests from companies with military links to Israel and cuts ties with certain Israeli universities. The protesters moved in and set up a few dozen tents on the lawn at the university's King's College Circle. Meanwhile, police vehicles arrived at the scene but no clashes have been reported, as of yet.

Student leaders say protesters decided to start the encampment after their occupation of the university president's office did not yield any substantive results. They argue that if the university has divested from South African apartheid, and from fossil fuels, then why does it refrain from doing the same in the case of Palestine. The university issued a statement, saying protest is allowed so long as no law and/or rules are violated in the process. (*Dawn, May 4th, 2024, Page 11*)

Students in Ireland and Switzerland join Gaza protest wave

Students at Trinity College Dublin and Lausanne University in Switzerland have staged occupations to protest against Israel's war in Gaza, joining a wave of demonstrations sweeping US campuses. In Dublin, students built an encampment that forced university to restrict campus access and close Book of Kells exhibition, one of Ireland's top tourist attractions. Camp was set up after students' union said it had been fined 214,000 euros (\$230,000) by university for losses caused by protests in recent months, not exclusively over Gaza. Protesters were demanding that Trinity cut academic ties with Israel and divest from companies with ties to Israel. (*Dawn, May 5th, 2024, Page 12*)

Pro-Palestine protests spread in Europe, several arrested

Student protests demanding that universities sever ties with Israel in view of their assault on Gaza, have slowly yet surely spread across Europe. Police ‘broke up’ demonstrations in the Netherlands, Germany and France. Students at certain elite European universities felt inspired by the ongoing demonstrations at US campuses’. They have occupied university halls and/or facilities and demanded an end to partnerships with Israeli institutions. (*Dawn, May 8th, 2024, Page 11*)

Police, demonstrators clash at Amsterdam’s Gaza demo

Dutch riot police clashed with pro-Palestinian demonstrators after moving in to ‘clear barricades’ at Amsterdam’s main university. Images from local television outlets showed dozens of police officers (wearing riot gear) ‘exchanging’ baton blows with a group of protesters, when officers started clearing out an area in front of the Binnengasthuis building, within Amsterdam’s city centre. French police detained 86 individuals following an operation to remove students staging a pro-Palestinian occupation at the Sorbonne University in Paris, according to prosecutors. Those arrested in the police operation were being held for a variety of public order offences. Police used force in order to ‘clear’ an encampment of pro-Palestinian protesters at George Washington University in the US capital. In similar fashion to the events that unfolded in Paris, dozens were arrested in the latest clash with students demonstrating over the Israeli onslaught on the Gaza Strip. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 13*)

EU staff members protest Israel’s bombing on Gaza

More than 100 staff members of European Union institutions gathered in Brussels in a protest against Israel’s war in Gaza. Protesters laid three rolled-up white sheets with red stains on them on the square outside the European Commission’s head office in the Belgian capital. On the three ‘bodies’ the words International Law, EU Treaties and Genocide Convention were written, in a protest of the way Israel has responded to the Gazans. (*Dawn, May 9th, 2024, Page 13*)

Argentine workers launch general strike against Milei’s reforms

Argentine unions launched a huge general strike against painful austerity measures and planned reforms by new libertarian President Javier Milei, whose cost-cutting drive has stabilised local markets but hammered real economy. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2024, Page 10*)

Protests call for Israel’s ejection from Eurovision contest

Climate activist, Greta Thunberg and thousands of demonstrators, marched through the streets of Malmo in Sweden. An international journalist observed the protest, against Israel’s participation in Eurovision. This year’s Eurovision song contest in the southern city of Malmo. The grand finale is scheduled, but the war in Gaza is ‘looming’ over the festivities. Since New Year, numerous petitions have demanded Israel’s exclusion from the 68th edition of annual music competition. At the end of March, contestants from nine countries called for a ‘lasting ceasefire’. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2024, Page 11*)

Several dead in protests in Afghanistan

Several people were killed when a demonstration broke out in eastern Afghanistan after Taliban authorities ordered houses cleared to make way for a building construction. The Taliban authorities had ordered residents to vacate the land on the road between provincial capital Jalalabad and the border with Pakistan to make way for a new customs building. The demonstration and clashes had blocked the key road from Jalalabad to Torkham. (*Dawn, May 10th, 2024, Page 11*)

Thousands rally in Tbilisi against `foreign influence` bill

Thousands of protesters marched through central Tbilisi at a rally against a controversial “foreign influence” bill backed by the Georgian government and likened to Russian laws silencing dissent. Massive rallies have gripped the Black Sea Caucasus country for almost a month after the ruling Georgian Dream party reintroduced the bill. Demonstrators converged on Tbilisi’s central Europe Square in the latest of a series of anti-government protests against the draft legislation. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Puerto De La Cruz

Activists hold placards outside the gates of a zoo on the Spanish Canary island of Tenerife during a demonstration. The rally was part of a worldwide initiative under the slogan, "Empty the Tanks", demanding that orcas, dolphins and all cetaceans held captive in parks be released back to the wild. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Berlin

A participant displays a placard reading, "Hands off our water", during a march by environmental activists protesting against plans by US electric carmaker Tesla to cut down trees to expand its factory. The site is near a protected forest and there are concerns about water use. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Billom, France

Demonstrators march during a rally called by Extinction Rebellion and two other environment groups to protest the construction of new water reservoirs for irrigation in central France. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 10*)

Dutch contestant expelled as Eurovision braces for protests

Dutch contestant Joost Klein was expelled from Eurovision Song Contest final after a complaint by a member of production crew, adding to the headaches for host Sweden as it also grapples with anti-Israel protests. (*Dawn, May 12th, 2024, Page 11*)

Georgians protest anti-NGO bill as ruling party vows to adopt

Hundreds of young Georgians crowded outside parliament ahead of a third straight night of protests against a “foreign influence” bill that has split the Caucasus country and triggered international condemnation. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2024, Page 5*)

Tunisian lawyers protest, launch strike after pundit arrested

Tunisian lawyers protested and launched a nationwide strike over the arrest of a lawyer and political commentator in a weekend police raid. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2024, Page 11*)

Pro-Palestinian protesters occupy university buildings

Pro-Palestinian protesters occupied university buildings in the Dutch cities of Amsterdam, Groningen and Eindhoven, condemning Israel's war in Gaza, the Dutch protest group behind the action said in a statement. A spokesperson for the University of Amsterdam (UvA) confirmed the occupation and said it advised people who are not affiliated with the protest to leave the building. The Eindhoven University of Technology confirmed that there were "dozens of students peacefully protesting outside next to ten to 15 tents". The University of Groningen did not immediately reply to a request for comment. Students in the Netherlands have been protesting against Israel's war in Gaza and Dutch riot police had previously clashed with protesters at the University of Amsterdam. (*Business Recorder, May 14th, 2024, Page 12*)

Peru protesters slam new insurance law

Hundreds of protesters in Peru's capital marched to demand the scrapping of a new law that describes transgender people, among others, as having a mental illness so they can access health benefits. Around 500 demonstrators peacefully walked the streets of downtown Lima, hoisting banners with slogans that read "No more stigmas" and "My identity is not a disease." (*The News, May 19th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Taipei

Protesters use umbrellas to shield from rain as a coalition of civic groups and small political parties hold an all-day rally to protest against plans by main opposition Kuomintang and Taiwan Peoples Party to introduce bills proposing more oversight by lawmakers over government's functioning. (*Dawn, May 22nd, 2024, Page 10*)

Oxford University students arrested at pro-Palestinian sit-in

British police arrested about a dozen Oxford University students and scuffled with some during a pro-Palestinian sit-in at the university premises, protesters said. Oxford Action for Palestine group said university authorities called in police after students began their protest at administration offices, as has been happening on campuses in Britain, the US and elsewhere during the conflict in Gaza. Thames Valley police said they were aware of the incident and would give information later. (*Dawn, May 24th, 2024, Page 11*)

News Makers: Paris

Demonstrators gather at a rally to protest against a national and international use of Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), as a precautionary principle, in Oullins. PFAS are a family of around 4,000 chemical compounds often referred to as "forever chemicals" because of their long lifespans in bodies and the environment. They resist grease, oil, water and heat. (*Dawn, May 27th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Paris

An activist of environmental group Food Retaliation throws a bucket of orange paint against the doorway of French ministry of agriculture to protest against food wastage. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 10*)

Academic workers on strike in support of Palestinians

Discord stemming from last month's 'mob attack' on pro-Palestinian student activists encamped at the University of California, Los Angeles, 'flared again'. This came as 'academic workers' staged a strike on campus, protesting UCLA's response to the violence. Unionised academic researchers, graduate teaching assistants and post-doctoral scholars at UCLA walked out off their jobs over what they regard as 'unfair labour practices', in the university's handling of pro-Palestinian demonstrations in recent weeks, organisers' stated. They were joined by fellow academic workers at two other University of California campuses', UC Davis and UC Santa Cruz, where the protest strike began on the 20 of May. The strikers are demanding amnesty for graduate students and other academic workers, who were arrested and/or faced with disciplinary charges, for their involvement in the protests. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 11*)

Clashes erupt at Israeli embassy protest in Mexico

Clashes broke out between police and protesters outside the Israeli embassy in Mexico, rallying against the country's military offensive in the southern Gazan city of Rafah, journalists said. Some protesters covered their faces and threw stones at riot police who blocked their path to the diplomatic complex in the city's Lomas de Chapultepec neighborhood. Around 200 people joined the "Urgent action for Rafah" demonstration, about 30 of whom started to break down barriers preventing them from reaching the Israeli mission. Police officers deployed tear gas and threw back the stones hurled at them by protesters. The demonstration was called in response to an Israeli strike which ignited an inferno in a displacement camp outside Rafah, killing 45 people according to Palestinian officials. (*Dawn, May 30th, 2024, Page 11*)

Samsung Electronics workers' union announces first strike

A major union representing tens of thousands of people at South Korean tech giant Samsung Electronics said that workers will go on strike for the first time, potentially threatening key global semiconductor supply chains. A spokesperson said union members, around 20 percent of the company workforce, would use annual leave to strike for one day on June 7, leaving the door open for a potential general strike down the road. (*Business Recorder, May 30th, 2024, Page 5*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

Roots for Equity

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

Phone: +9221 34813320, Fax. +9221 34813321

Email: roots.equity@gmail.com

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

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

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

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