

### Key highlights

- The Cabinet members of Pakistan's new Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif had taken their oaths. Acting President of Pakistan, Sadiq Sanjrani administered the oath to the 34 ministers in Islamabad. The new cabinet, made up of allied political parties, was sworn in on 19 April – more than a week after the parliament elected Shahbaz Sharif to replace Imran Khan, who was removed in a no-confidence vote on April 11.
- According to official data, water crisis has become increasingly visible in recent months as extremely low flows in near all major rivers and minimal storage at main reservoirs have triggered drought alert in the country. This could potentially affect the ongoing cultivation of Kharif crop in Punjab.
- Nine children died and 20 others were severely injured after a fire spread through a village in Dadu district, Sindh. It reduced 50 houses to rubble and caused 160 livestock to perish. The Sindh Government has called for an inquiry into the incident and announced compensation to the villagers who had lost their homes and livestock due to the fire.

### Returns to North Waziristan district

PDMA reported that 93 villages in North Waziristan district of erstwhile FATA, have been cleared and around 15,000 displaced families would return in a phased manner. After Eid, starting from the beginning of second week, 8,500 from Peshawar, D I Khan and Bannu and other districts in KP are expected to return by end of May. The families would fill voluntary return forms at the arrival/embarkation point being established in Bannu. The government is taking lead role in coordinating the response and providing assistance with the support of local partners. An allowance of PKR, 25,000 and an additional PKR 10,000 for transportation would be provided along with a tent and NFI kit to returning families. In the villages of return, the government would initiate a damage survey to compensate according to the extent of damaged incurred to their houses.

**The returns to Tirah Valley**, Khyber Agency are currently on hold in Ramadan. So far 7,493 families (50%) have returned, and the government is providing them one-off cash grant of PKR 20,000 from the Ehsaas social security programme. Each family has been given a tent. WASH, health needs have been reported by the local partners. The BHU and district hospital lacked facilities and medicines.

Further partner organizations collaborating with PDMA informed that survey of the area was required to assess the needs and damages to houses prior to start of rehabilitation process.

### Fire breaks out at village in Sindh

Nine children died and 20 others were severely injured after a fire spread through a village in Dadu district, Sindh. It reduced 50 houses to rubble and caused 160 livestock to perish. According to reports, the tragic incident took place at night (2100 hrs) after a fire reportedly broke out in the kitchen of a hut. The heat caused the fire to spread further

The Sindh Government announced compensation to the villagers who had lost their homes and livestock due to the fire.



### Pak-Afghan cross border

#### Reduces cross-border movement at Torkham

After implementation of the newly introduced Individual Voluntary Arrangement System (Ivas) at Torkham, cross-border movement of Afghan nationals has considerably reduced since the start of April. Government officials reported that 2,500 to 3,000 Afghans travelled between Pakistan and Afghanistan on proper visas on daily basis after imposition of ban on Afghan national card (Tazkira). Normally more than 12,000 Afghans travelled via Torkham border on a daily basis prior to introduction of Ivas.

Reportedly, there was no effective mechanism of the verification of Tazkira in the previous system and Afghans were allowed to use it for multiple cross-border movement.

### Natural disaster preparedness

#### WFP hands over emergency storage facilities

WFP handed over newly constructed Emergency Storage Facilities, prefabricated temperature-controlled storage units, and IT Equipment to the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan and District Disaster Management Authorities (DDMAs) of Chaman and Chagai districts.

The contribution was part of the WFP's efforts to support and strengthen the Government of Balochistan for effective emergency preparedness and disaster risk reduction in Balochistan.



WFP has also recently deployed the Emergency Preparedness Capacity Index (EPCI) - a corporate tool that helps identify the needed capacities for effective response. The exercise was conducted by WFP for PDMA Balochistan and six selected districts, aiming to enhance the preparedness capability of DDMA's and PDMA Balochistan.

Chris Kaye, Country Director, WFP Pakistan, said that WFP was pleased to provide the support and the additional capacity that would help the Government of Balochistan better manage and coordinate responses to disasters in the region. He mentioned that capacity to store and manage critical relief items at local levels could save lives as well as reduce the impact on communities caused by sudden-onset disasters.

PRCS launched training sessions to respond to weather-related emergencies. Taking into consideration unpredictable extreme weather events, especially severe heatwaves, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Sindh, in collaboration with Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) had started a series of training sessions on heat-related emergencies for the relevant Sindh government departments and civil society representatives.

#### Weather alert

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued an alert for a new spell of rains in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and asked district administrations of the province to adopt measures to prevent fatal incidents.

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan declared an emergency in Chaman, Killa Adullah, Pishin, Mastung and Quetta following heavy rain and dust storms last week.

#### Water scarcity: drought alert launched

According to official data, water crisis has become increasingly visible in recent months as extremely low flows in near all major rivers and minimal storage at main reservoirs have triggered drought alert in the country. The shortage of water could surge to 45 percent from Indus River System Authority's (IRSA) earlier prediction of 28 percent.

According to official data, water storage at Tarbela Dam, built on River Indus, has been recorded at lowest level in the last ten years. The average storage of the dam is recorded in the last ten years is at 0.512 million acre feet (MAF) while these days the reservoir is dry.

Similar is the case with Mangla Dam on Jhelum River, the largest water storage site in the country. Only 0.130 MAF water has been left in the reservoir against average storage of 1.105 MAF, recorded on April 18 in the last 10 years (2012-2021).

Owing to cumulative effect of lowest ever river flows in high-demand early Kharif sowing season, the combined inflows in all four major rivers including Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, and Kabul stood at mere 73,800 cusecs on April 18, 2022 while over 140,200 cusecs average inflows were registered in the last ten years.

As per breakdown of river inflows, a rounded 10,000 cusecs of water were recorded in Kabul River at Nowshera against average 37,700 cusecs.

Similarly, inflow at Chenab River at Marala was just 9,100 cusecs compared to an average of 24,100 recorded during the last ten years. Consequently, barrages in Sindh province, where water is direly needed for irrigation, have been facing scarcity. As per official data, Guddu Barrage in upper Sindh received only 35,400 cusecs of water, against the average 48,300 the province used to get. For Sukkur Barrage, only 26,600 cusecs of inflows were recorded on April 18 against last ten year's average of 44,000.

Kotri Barrage being situated at the tail-end of the massive Indus Basin System got only 5,300 cusecs on April 18 against average 18,100.

The authorities in Punjab province have alerted the Agriculture Department and its own formations of the expected extreme shortage of water for cultivation of Kharif crop.

Given the gravity of the situation, Punjab has cut water to Upper Province canals by 45 percent to accommodate it in some of the non-perennial watercourses and sustaining some flows in South Punjab for cultivation of the currently ongoing cotton crop.

### Mainstreaming climate action in Pakistan

Earth Day, celebrated globally on April 22, was a commitment to protect our planet from the impacts of climate change and to re-align our priorities for sustainable climate action. Pakistan is in the list of top ten countries most vulnerable to climate change as per the Global Climate Risk Index 2020. More so, this vulnerability is not restricted to mere numbers—as the recent heatwave, the recurrence of smog every year in the country’s major metropolitans and the catastrophic dust-storm in Sindh last year under the influence of cyclonic storm Tauktae are a few recent instances of climate change effects.

The theme for this Earth Day, “invest in our planet” is a call for smart action and for Pakistan, it translates into taking an inclusive approach at the grass roots level. The rural masses make up over 60 percent of the total population of Pakistan, and are more at risk of displacement, food insecurity and even loss of lives.



The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF), with a network of over 130 partner organisations (POs) in 147 districts in Pakistan, has a history of leading climate action initiatives in the rural communities. The Balochistan Water Strategy piloted in 2020 by PPAF lays out smart water management practices and a shift toward drought and heat resistant crops, especially for small farmers in the poorest districts of the province. PPAF has also set up the Balochistan Climate Cluster, a coordination and policy advisory group, for the continuation of dialogue and innovation towards climate-friendly interventions in the rural districts of the province. To build disaster risk resilience in the rural communities and to support infrastructure like flood-resistance walls, PPAF is co-financing the “Building Resilience to Disasters and Climate Change (BRDCC)” programme in eight rural (and the most vulnerable) districts of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, KP and even GB. The programme outcomes indicate that an investment in community level behavioural change goes a long way in saving lives and livelihoods.

PPAF is also implementing the KfW funded Hydropower and Renewable Energy (HRE) in six poorest districts in KP to install micro and mini solar power plants to improve living standards in the community while protecting the climate. To encourage small farmers to improve their livelihoods sustainably, PPAF is also funding initiatives like tunnel farming in Swabi and Torghar districts. PPAF presents a model which could be replicated to reach a wider rural community. The way-forward to “invest in our planet” this Earth Day for Pakistan would be to engage with, do better and do more in the resilient rural districts and Union Councils in Pakistan.

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**Coordination and events:**

**19 April** - Meeting of Member States for Validation of Draft United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF 2023-27)



HCT meeting on 21 April discussed the potential food security situation from the Russia-Ukraine conflict, RAPID process and returns situation, and the request from NHN to have a separate engagement with the HC and OCHA on humanitarian / socio-economic conditions in Balochistan, particularly in Baloch areas (remained underfunded for years).

**Next week:**

**27 April** – Members States Briefing on Country Programme documents

**28 April** – Ad hoc inter-sectoral meeting on RAPID process, planning scenario

- Steering Committee (jointly with EAD) on Country programme documents