
IDPS, DISASTER & FOOD SECURITY

IDPs & Disaster

Leh Approaches Flood Level as Rain Lashes Twin Cities: Punjab

Heavy showers morning set alarm bells ringing after the water in Nullah Leh touched the 21-foot mark and rainwater began gathering in low-lying areas. According to the Met office 70 millimeters of rain was recorded in Rawalpindi and the catchment area of the Leh in Islamabad, leading to a flood-like situation along the nullah. The water level in the Leh was over 21 feet at New Katarian Bridge and about 16 feet at Gawalmandi in the heart of Rawalpindi city. In different rain related incidents, three persons were injured after a wall collapsed on IJ Principal Road and six electricity poles on Peshawar Road fell over. Separately four recently-erected electricity poles fell over in Chur Harpal and two others were leaning sideways after the rain. A number of localities also saw electricity supply suspended due to power lines downed by falling trees.

The Express Tribune – September 04, 2012

Heavy Rain Kills Four in Peshawar: KPK

Four children were killed and three injured after heavy rain damaged public property in Peshawar city. Police said three children were killed and two others injured in Charkhel area after roof of their house caved in. They said one child died and another suffered critical injuries after boundary wall of the Army Flats in cantonment area collapsed. The rain flooded roads and streets, inundated low-lying residential areas, uprooted trees and damaged electric supply system exposing the government's much publicized contingency plan for monsoon season. Electric supply remained suspended in many parts of the city for long hours during and after rain. Deep puddles were seen at the main cantonment railway station. The rain badly affected cantonment areas and nearby localities with water and sewage entering Shafi Market shops and stockrooms and Sadder Bazaar shops causing huge losses to traders and retailers. Strong winds and heavy rain pulled down boundary walls of residential quarters and defence installations, including airport. Flooded roads caused severe traffic jam. Education institutions were also closed in many areas. Rain inundated houses in Gulberg, Nothia, University Town, Tehkal, Gulbahar, Faqirabad and other low-lying localities. Budhni Nullah again flooded which blocked main road between Peshawar and Charsadda. There was a traffic jam on the University Road, Bara Road, the Mall, Khyber Road and main CT Road, Charsadda Road and Rehman Baba Intersection because of rain water and fallen trees. Officials said Rs110 million was already released to the district governments for relief activities. City district government had been allocated Rs4 million. The emergency operation centre of the Provincial Disaster Management Authority couldn't ascertain level of the damages to public life and property.

Dawn – September 07, 2012

Four Die In Qila Saifullah Flood

Torrential rains played havoc in different parts of Baluchistan inundating several areas, while four members of a family, including a woman and girl, died in floods in district Qila Saifullah.

The News – September 09, 2012

47 Die as Rain Plays Havoc across the Country

Widespread rains across the country played havoc, killing 47 people in roof collapse incidents and electrocution throughout the country. Also, streams and nullahs in DG Khan and Rajanpur were in high flood. Streets of major cities, including Multan, Hyderabad and Lahore, were flooded with rainwater causing immense suffering to residents. Trains were delayed for hours due to rains, while the Night Coach service was cancelled, leaving passengers stranded at platforms. The power supply system was also disrupted in several cities for long hours. In Sindh, Ghotki, Obaro, Dharki, Mirpur Mathelo, Khanpur and Mehar were slashed by heavy rains for more than five hours, submerging roads and streets under knee-deep water. Low-lying areas in Hyderabad were also inundated while citizens spent a sleepless night as water gushed into their homes and power supply broke down.

Rain also lashed coastal areas of Karachi, Sukkur, Larkana, Khairpur, Tharparkar, Diplo, Badin and Jacobabad while there was a heavy rainfall in Zhob, Kalat, Sibi and Naseerabad in Balochistan. Six hours of continuous rain in Naseerabad and Jafferabad inundated the low-lying areas. Due to the heavy rain, the level of the Hub Dam that supplies drinking water to Karachi rose by eight feet. The present water level was reported at 318 feet as against the storage capacity of 340 feet. Wapda officials said the water level was rising gradually. In the Punjab, there were reports of heavy to light rain. The southern Punjab was particularly hit by heavy rain. Reports of rain were received from Multan, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Rajanpur, Vehari, Chichawatni, TT Singh, Faisalabad, Sargodha, Kamalia, Khanpur, Lahore, Lodhran, Chiniot, Chakwal, Rawalpindi, Attock and Jhelum. Four persons died in Multan due to roof collapse and electrocution, two each in Kamalia, Mian Channu and Lahore, one each in Lodhran and Faisalabad and TT Singh. Hill torrents in DG Khan and Rajanpur damaged several villages and crops over vast areas.

In the Punjab, the roofs of several houses collapsed injuring several persons. It was still raining in Faisalabad, Jhang, Multan, Lodhran and Burewala till the filing of this report. Two persons died as the roof of a house in Nishatabad collapsed. In Rahimyar Khan, a woman and her five children were injured when the roof of a house collapsed in Nawankot, while in Lodhran two children got injured. The power supply system was disrupted at Kandhkot and surrounding areas, as 12 grid stations tripped due to the torrential rains. In Lahore, a couple died when the roof of their dilapidated house collapsed in Gowalmandi. The deceased were identified as Latif and his wife Rehana, residents of Masjid Tajay Shah Wali Gali. Three people died and 13 sustained injuries in rain-related incidents in Toba Tek Singh. At Chak 184 GB, Rajana, the roof of a house of a farmer fell down. As a result, his wife Mumtaz Bibi and daughter Nasreen Akhtar died while his three sons got injured. They were admitted to the Kamalia THQ Hospital.

In Chak 54/2 GB, a nine-year-old boy, Shehzad, died when the roof of his house fell on him. His three relatives were injured. In Paira Colony, a roof of a house fell and an old woman was injured. In Rasoolpur, two boys were injured when the roof of their house collapsed. Dozens of houses fell in different villages of the district in which five people were injured. Two people, including a child, died and five others were injured due to heavy rain in Burewala. Muhammad Talha, 5, and his mother and brother Samiullah, 13, were standing near a wall when it collapsed at Chungi-5 on the Multan Road. As a result, Talha was killed while his brother was injured. Nadeem, 10, of Chak 187/EB, drowned in a pond of rainwater. Jameela, 40, Robina, 35, and Uzma, 22, were injured when the roof of their house collapsed in Kot Noor Muhammad. Two brothers, Saqib Ali and Muhammad Usman, were injured in Chak 431/EB in a roof collapse incident.

A woman and her daughter were injured in roof collapse incident in Green Market in Nankana Sahib. The roof of the house of Saleem fell down due to heavy rain. As a result, Saleem's wife Ayesha and her one-year-old daughter were injured. In the second incident, the wall of the house of Ghular fell down in Mohallah Bilal Ganj. No loss of life was reported. Heavy rain spell

since the last two days paralyzed life in Dera Ghazi Khan City and the adjoining areas while hill torrents from the Suleman Ranges swept away a portion of the Indus Highway linking Karachi with Peshawar through Dera Ghazi Khan. On the other hand, inter-provincial Dera-Quetta Road connecting most parts of Balochistan with the Punjab is also blocked after land sliding near Rakhi Gaaj since Sunday morning. The flash flood of Sorri hill torrent entered the historical village of Kala where flood-hit victims have evacuated most of the town and rescue workers also took part in the operation by shifting 400 persons in the evening through motor boats.

Two children died and their parents injured when the roof of a house collapsed near Muzaffarabad. Laal Sunhara Shah, a resident of Qasba Sultan Colony, was present in the house with his family when the roof collapsed due to heavy rain. As a result, his son Umer Hameed, 8, and daughter died on the spot while the couple sustained injuries. The injured were shifted to the DHQ Hospital. In Hyderabad, rainwater accumulated in Latifabad 2, 10, 11, 12, Pathan Colony, Qazi Abdul Qayyum Road, Hali Road, Makki Shah, Phelaili, Qasimabad, Cantonment area among other areas. At least 15 power feeders also tripped due to the rainfall while two women among five people were electrocuted.

Quetta and its vicinity received heavy rain. Heavy rains also crippled life in the remote mountainous region in the north of country. In Gilgit-Baltistan, heavy rains continued to fall during the last 72 hours. The NDMA chief said there has been no loss in the country due to the flooding and district authorities in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had contacted the provincial authorities for relief support. He said 800 tents had been provided in Balochistan and 50 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. District disaster management authorities are tackling the post-rain situation through their own resources. To counter any emergency situation in the AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan, a total of 5,000 tents have been issued to emergency relief cell.

The News – September 10, 2012

Two Children Die as Rain Causes Roof to Cave In: Baluchistan

Baluchistan continued to suffer the wrath of floods triggered by the late monsoon surge with two children killed and 10 people including women and children injured in two separate incidents of roof collapse in Sibi. Two children were killed and two others wounded when the roof of their house in the Landi Khosa area of Sibi caved in following torrential rains in the district. Eight people, including women and children were injured when the roof of their house collapsed in the Hamidabad area of Jaffarabad district. Over 30 bodies, including those of four security personnel, were reportedly recovered from different areas of Naseerabad and Jaffarabad districts, while over 300 people were still missing.

The Express Tribune – September 13, 2012

Sindh, Balochistan Hit Much Worse Than Punjab

While the recent monsoon rains wreaked widespread havoc in Punjab, the situation in Sindh and Balochistan paints an even more dismal picture. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)-arranged trip to the flood-affected areas for select journalists, government officials and UN representatives, took the group to two districts in Sindh and three districts in Baluchistan. The situation in western Sindh, provincial disaster management authority (PDMA) Director General (DG) Hashim Zaidi placed the number of people affected by the floods in the region at two million. The floods have pushed people from five districts of Sindh below the poverty line, Zaidi said. Zaidi focused his briefing on Kashmore and Jacobabad districts in particular. Talking about confirmed casualties in the two districts so far, he said 21 people were killed in Kashmore, while six were killed in Jacobabad. The number of injured people in both

districts stood at 46 and 39, respectively. A PDMA handout further revealed that another 21 people were killed and 74 were injured in Shikarpur.

Around 90% of all crops in the three districts have been destroyed. Meanwhile, in Jacobabad, 0.2 million houses have been completely or partially damaged by the floods. Around 30,000 families in Kashmore district's Tangwani tehsil are still stranded at the rooftops of their houses. In Balochistan, Jaffarabad and Nasirabad districts, the number of casualties remains unconfirmed, the briefing by Baluchistan home secretary Naseebullah Khan and PDMA DG Tahir Munir revealed that 98 per cent of the people in the two districts were affected by the floods. In addition, 100 per cent of all crops have been destroyed; In Jaffarabad alone, 0.15 million acres of agricultural land remains under water.

An aerial view of the districts revealed both urban and rural areas were inundated with water four to five feet deep. Interestingly, Jacobabad airbase also appeared to be inundated. Several F-16s were seen outside their hangars. All offices and schools remained closed in the districts. Many clung to main roads and highways, which seemed to be the only patches of dry land in various areas. Locals complained they had no food or drinking water. Jacobabad district health officer Dr Dara said the situation was likely to worsen in a few days due to possible outbreaks of waterborne diseases.

Unlike Punjab, there was no trace of organized relief effort by the government and NGOs in these districts. Only a handful of trucks carrying relief supplies were seen. The Pakistan Army is so far the only entity carrying out relief operations in the area. Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Kashmore president Fida Gilani said NDMA and the federal government had completely ignored flood victims in Sindh. The affected districts' governments have forwarded their demands to the government. In addition to seeking relief supplies to alleviate the situation, such as tents, medicines, drinking water and dewatering pumps, they have asked for Rs50million in reconstruction funds for each flood-stricken district. They further demanded that the government declare the districts calamity-hit areas. So far NDMA has announced 2,500 tents each for districts in Sindh and Balochistan.

The Express Tribune – September 14, 2012

600, 000 Marooned In Two Districts: Baluchistan

Balochistan Chief Secretary Babar Yaqoob Fateh Mohammad has said that floods triggered by torrential rains have marooned almost 600,000 people in Naseerabad and Jaffarabad districts. The floods have caused at least 22 deaths, destroyed crops on 24,866 acres and swept away about 4,000 houses. The worst affected districts are:

- Naseerabad
- Jaffarabad
- Sibi
- Jhal Magsi
- Kachi

Dera Allahyar, Dera Murad Jamali, Sohbatpur, Manjopur and Manjoshori are less than two to six feet of water. Thousands of families are in distress. He said the government had sought assistance from the Army and the Frontier Corps to step up the pace of relief work. The chief secretary called upon international organizations, the federal government and philanthropists to help the provincial administration in transportation of essential commodities to the flood-ravaged region. He said all resources were being used to stop the spread of water-borne diseases and to meet shortage of food and drinking water. Electricity supply to the main towns in Naseerabad and Jaffarabad districts had been restored and efforts were afoot to repair the damaged roads. Six army helicopters and 18 boats have been pressed in to move affected people to relief camps. He said the chief minister was coordinating the rescue operation by PDMA, the

provincial government, the Army and the FC. The Balochistan government has decided that every member of the provincial assembly will release Rs20 million out of the funds granted to him for the affected people.

Dawn – September 16, 2012

Threat of Waterborne Diseases Looms Over Balochistan

Authorities warned of an outbreak of waterborne diseases in the flood-hit areas of Baluchistan. This will add to the miseries of tens of thousands of people who have been uprooted from their homes and have no access to basic provisions. Over 22,000 people are suffering from various pandemics like malaria, cholera and hepatitis in the province, Minister for Science and Technology Mir Chengez Khan Jamali told. We appeal to the United Nations and the World Health Organization (WHO) to help the flood victims as the provincial health department is unable to cope with the situation. Balochistan's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Director General Tahir Munir concurred the fear of waterborne diseases was a pressing concern, but said the authority's first priority was to provide food to those accommodated in makeshift shelters. Over 100,000 people have taken shelter near Sarkar House in Dera Murad Jamali.

The PDMA confirmed the deaths of 18 people, adding that around 15 sustained serious injuries, but unofficial figures suggest more than 110 people have died in the destruction caused by the recent flood. Of the fatalities, six occurred in Kachi district, four in Killa Saifullah, three in Lasbela, three in Khuzdar and two in Dera Bugti. The figures released by the NDMA, however, differ from the ones published by its provincial counterpart. According to the NDMA, 15 people have died, while 12 have sustained injuries. It added 1,827 shops, houses, and other buildings had been completely destroyed while 2,464 sustained partial damages. Around 18,000 acres of farmland has been swamped, whereas 4,444 cattle also died in the province. Over 30,000 families have taken shelter along a stretch of the National Highway in Naseerabad. A statement issued by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority said as many as 4,600 blankets and 4,300 tents had been distributed in the province so far.

The Express Tribune – September 16, 2012

Flood Damages 450, 000 Cotton Bales in Punjab: Punjab

Floods caused by hill torrents this month swept across 300,000 cotton acres in DG Khan, Rajanpur and Rojhan areas, and could bring provincial production down by 450,000 bales. The initial assessments by farmer bodies and local official agencies, financial loss to farmers could cross Rs15 billion, if they lose around 450,000 bales at a ratio of 1.5 bales an acre – 100,000 bale costs around Rs3.2 billion at the current price factor. These are just the initial estimates as water is still standing in some areas, making it difficult to measure the extent of damage for officials, but farmers insist that these figures represent the acreage already wiped out by the hill torrents. If one includes rain damages in adjacent districts, the final loss would turn out to be much higher. They must declare the area calamity hit and come up with a compensation package because it would be hard for farmers to absorb that kind of loss. The cost of production per cotton acre has crossed Rs40, 000. Farmers have come under high debt. There may not be much of a difference of production in national context but individual farmers are certainly ruined, and must be compensated.

Dawn – September 18, 2012

Crisis Management

125, 152 is the number of food packs that were distributed by the NDMA to people affected by floods in the country.

The Express Tribune – September 19, 2012

Monsoon Ravages: Baluchistan

277, 000 or more people have been affected by floods caused by flood torrents in the Rajanpur district of Baluchistan.

The Express Tribune – September 23, 2012

Prime Minister Unveils Rs2.6 Billion Package for Baluchistan

Prime Minister Raja Pervaiz Ashraf announced a special relief package of Rs2.6 billion for three flood-ravaged districts of Baluchistan while reminding relief workers of both the urgency of air dropping aid and respecting the dignity of the flood victims. Some Rs2 billion is earmarked for rebuilding damaged infrastructure in Naseerabad, Jaffarabad and Jhal Magsi and another Rs. 600 million will be used for relief materials, including food and medicines, in those districts. He also ordered provision of 20,000 tents instead of 10,000 earlier demanded by the provincial government. He said the federal government would provide all necessary funds for the acquisition of tents. Premier Ashraf also announced a compensation of Rs. 400, 000 each for the families of those who lost their lives in the deluge and directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) to coordinate and send a list of the deceased for payments. The prime minister announced a similar amount for the families of 15 people, who lost their lives in southern Punjab. He assured that medicines needed for the flood-affected people would be provided by the federal government. He directed the National Highway Authority (NHA) and Wapda to focus on improving the infrastructure in the devastated areas. The prime minister also distributed relief goods among the displaced people and assured that the government would ensure assistance reaches all flood victims.

The Express Tribune – September 24, 2012

Floods Kill 371, Affect 4.47million

Monsoon floods in Pakistan have killed 371 people and affected nearly 4.5 million, the government's disaster relief agency said. Pakistan has suffered devastating floods in the past two years, including the worst in its history in 2010, when catastrophic inundations across the country killed almost 1,800 people and affected 21 million. As in 2010 and 2011, most of those hit by the latest floods are in Sindh province, where the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said 2.8 million were affected, with nearly 890,000 in Punjab and 700,000 in Baluchistan. Nearly 290,000 people around the country have been forced to seek shelter in relief camps, NDMA said in figures published on its website. The floods began in early September, with nearly 80 killed in flash floods, mostly in the northwest and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. An NDMA spokesman said the government was not yet appealing for foreign assistance. "The government's point of view is that the situation will be handled from own resources," Ahmad Kamal told AFP. More than a million acres (400,000 hectares) of crops have been destroyed by the floods across the country, NDMA said, and nearly 8,000 cattle have been killed.

UN children's agency UNICEF, quoting a separate flood assessment, said at least 2.8 million people had been affected, including 1.4 million children, of who more than 390,000 are under five. UNICEF said it was providing 183,000 people a day with drinking water but warned it urgently needed more funds. "Children from very poor families are among the worst affected by the severe flooding and they need our immediate help," said UNICEF Pakistan Deputy Representative Karen Allen. "UNICEF urgently needs \$15.4 million to scale up its water, sanitation and hygiene response to reach around 400,000 people over the next three to six months." UNICEF said that according to its assessment, more than half of those affected by the floods were concentrated in just five districts, two each in Sindh and Baluchistan and one in Punjab. It said 360,000 people had been left without shelter and three quarters of children in the five worst-affected districts were unable to go to school, either because the buildings have been destroyed or because they are being used as temporary shelters. The UN agency voiced particular concern about children forced from their homes, saying loss of access to safe water supplies left them vulnerable to diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, measles, polio and pneumonia.

Pakistan Today – September 29, 2012

IDP Finalizes \$227m Support for Polio Eradication

A high-level mission of the Saudi Arabia-based Islamic Development Bank (IDB) concluded its deliberations with Pakistani counterparts on provision of support worth \$227 million for the Polio Eradication Initiative in the next three years. The support comes at a critical juncture when Pakistan is facing serious resource constraints in sustaining the polio drive. Pakistan requires US \$306 million to sustain the anti-polio campaigns till 2015, with a major chunk of the funding going to supply of vaccine and logistics for the conduct of polio rounds, said a spokesman for the Prime Minister's Polio Monitoring Cell. Each national round reaches over 34 million children across Pakistan. The six-day visit of the mission, led by IDB's director for human resource development Dr. Daouda Malle, met top officials of the Economic Affairs Division (EAD), Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination, PM's Polio Monitoring Cell and provincial representatives. The team also had discussions with key international partner agencies including WHO, UNICEF, and JICA. The six-member mission was informed that the PC-1 document for the Emergency Action Plan for Polio Eradication is in the final stages of being prepared, with a substantial financial commitment of the federal and provincial governments to match partner support. The mission demanded that the PC-1 be finalized by end-October to enable them to process their financial support. The IDB's Board is to meet on November 14, 2012 to accord final approval to the agreement. The support will be provided in three tranches on a yearly basis.

The News – September 30, 2012

Food Insecurity

Vegetables Rates Increase On Short Supply

Vegetable prices have jumped in the wholesale and retail markets of the city in the wake of short supply from interior Sindh and Punjab caused by devastation of crops by the previous fortnight heavy monsoon rains. Already prices of vegetables were on the higher side on account of frequent upward revision in prices of petroleum related products by the government and recent thunderous and prolonged spell of monsoon rains further aggravated their rates to the agony and financial miseries of a large number of consumers of the port city. Price of okra, one of the most demanding vegetable of every kitchen, has surged in the post-rain period as previously it was available in the retail markets at Rs 60 to Rs 65 per kg as compared to current price of Rs 75 to Rs 80 per kg. The wholesales rates of the vegetable have also surged to the level of Rs 65 per kg as compared with old rates of Rs 50 to Rs 55 per kg, indicating a sharp increase which is beyond the purchasing power of an overwhelming number of buyers.

Rates of bitter gourd have also gone up sharply to the level of Rs 50 in the wholesale markets as against old price of Rs 40 per kg, while at retail level it is currently available at Rs 60 to Rs 65 per kg, which is higher as compared to previous price of Rs 50 to Rs 55 per kg. Rates of gourd, regarded as one of the demanding vegetable of almost every kitchen, has also surged to the level of Rs 20 to Rs 25 per kg as compared to previous rates of Rs 10 to Rs 15 per kg while the retail prices have gone up to the level of Rs 40 to Rs 45 per kg, which is higher as compared to old rates of Rs 30 to Rs 35 per kg. Increase in Tomato rates has also spelled sharp problems for its consumers as it is currently available in the retail markets at Rs 40 to Rs 50 per kg as compared to previous price of Rs 30 to Rs 35 per kg. There is almost 20 to 25 percent reduction in daily supply of vegetables to Karachi, which has resulted in their higher rates causing financial hardship to consumers.

Daily Times – September 16, 2012

Food Imports Decrease By Over 9% in Two Months: A Report by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

Food imports into the country witnessed decrease of 9.02 percent during the first two months of the current fiscal year as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The food imports into the country were recorded at \$818.011 million during July-August (2012-13) against the imports of \$899.062 million recorded during July-August (2011-12), according to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics released here.

- The major products that contributed in negative growth included tea, imports of which decreased by 24.72 percent during the period under review. Tea imports into the country were recorded at \$42.541 million in July-August (2012-13) against the imports of \$56.512 million during July-August (2011-12).
- Imports of spices decreased by 8.71 percent by falling from \$14.863 million to \$13.568 million whereas the imports of palm oil decreased by 12.22 percent by going down from \$466.360 million to \$409.360 million
- Imports of sugar were recorded at \$1.334 million during the period under review against the imports of \$6.160 million last year, showing negative growth of 78.34 percent
- The food items that witnessed positive growth included milk, cream and milk food for infants, imports of which increased from \$28.602 million last year to \$34.545 million during current year, showing growth of 20.78 percent

- The imports of dry fruits and nuts increased by 6.48 percent by growing from \$15.767 million to \$16.788 million whereas the imports of soyabean oil increased from \$24.343 million to \$29.755 million, showing increase of 22.23 percent
- The imports of pulses (leguminous vegetables) increased from \$83.823 million to \$93.293 million, showing increase of 11.30 percent
- The imports of all other food items decreased by 12.73 percent by going down from \$202.632 million in July-August (2011-12) to \$176.827 million in July-August (2012-13
- During the month of August 2012-13 the food imports into the country witnessed decrease of 12.71 percent and 11.50 percent when compared to the imports of August 2011 and July 2012 respectively
- Food imports in August 2012 stood at \$384.064 million against the imports of \$439.965 million and \$433.947 million in August 2011 and July 2012
- It is pertinent to mention here that overall imports into the country during the period under review witnessed decrease of 1.99 percent. The imports into the country were recorded at \$7.346 billion in 2012-13 against the imports of \$7.495 billion

The News – September 21, 2012

Heavy Rains Raise Prospects for Rice Crop

Until recently, farmers feared that the 6.1 million tons production target for rice, Pakistan's second-largest export product, would be missed by a considerable margin this year. Much to their relief, the recent and heavy rains have resulted in improved availability of water – an important input for the crop. Paddy farmers are now hopeful of recouping some of their losses and of crossing the 5.5 million tons mark in the current year. The estimates are provisional, as the crop has still around a month to reach maturity. Some growers express greater optimism: they feel that production may even cross six million tons, as dams and rivers have filled up with water after heavy precipitation, precluding any water shortage in the period. In the wake of widespread water shortages, farmers have been forced to adopt alternative methods such as tube wells to water their crops. This had raised their cost of production considerably. Many farmers had been unable to adopt such measures, as the electricity crisis and high diesel prices had rendered most tube wells unviable.

Pakistan can potentially produce 10 million tons of rice annually, but the government's uneven policies and bureaucratic intervention have restricted it to half that figure," said Agri Forum Pakistan Chairman Muhammad Ibrahim Mughal. In 2008-09, Pakistan's rice production touched seven million tons, but production has been declining since. Our aim should be at least 7.5 million tons annually. One million acres of untilled land from the abandoned cotton crop could have been utilized by rice growers, but this didn't happen. Only 0.2 million acres of out the million are being used to cultivate the rice crop: farmers are reluctant due to the water shortage. The rains have turned out to be a big blessing for rice growers; otherwise, production would have dipped to a dangerous level, hurting exports and Pakistan's balance of payments.

The Express Tribune – September 25, 2012