

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

December, 2024

Roots for Equity

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Roots for Equity

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1 Hectare = 2.471 Acres

1 Acre = 4,840 Square Yards

1 Ton = 25 Mann = 1000 Kg

1 Mann = 40 Kg

Preface

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

With the publication in hand, it's obvious that *Haal Ahwal* is being launched once again. However, after a gap of three years, it comes with some changes. The first most apparent is that, this time it's being published in English. The range of topics 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

AAC: Awami Action Committee

ADB: Asian Development Bank

ADPC: Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre

AIS: Agricultural Innovation System

AIT: Agricultural Income Tax

AJK: Azad Jammu and Kashmir

AQI: Air Quality Index

BoP: Bank of Punjab

CAREC: Corridor Road Infrastructure

C-ART: Centre for Autism Rehabilitation and Training

CBOs: Community-Based Organizations

CCI: Council of Common Interests

CCoP: Cabinet Committee on Privatisation

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

CEMB: Centre of Excellence in Marine Biology

CNICs: National Identity Cards

CPI: Consumer Price Index

DPP: Department of Plant Protection

DRAP: Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

ECC: Economic Coordination Committee

ECNEC: Executive Committee of the National Economic Council

ETAM: Enhancing Technology-based Agriculture and Marketing

FADAAP: Food Agriculture and Drug Administration Authority of Pakistan

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FBR: Federal Board of Revenue

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

FESCO: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company

FFC: Fauji Fertiliser Company

FNG: Fill the Nutrient Gap'

FPI: Foreign Portfolio Investment

FSIP: Food Systems Integrated Programme

GBV: Gender-Based Violence

GEF: Global Environment Facility

GEPCO: Gujranwala Electric Power Company

GHA: Grand Health Alliance

GNI: Gross National Income

GSDP: Gross State Domestic Product

HBL MfB: HBL Microfinance Bank

HCSTSI: Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry

HZSL: HBL Zarai Services Ltd

ICA: International Cotton Association

IDA: International Development Association

IESCO: Islamabad Electric Supply Company

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IOC: International Olive Council

IPC: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification

ISPDP: Integrated Social Protection Development Programme

JKJAAC: Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee

KATI: Korangi Association of Trade and Industry

KPK: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KSA: Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

KTH: Khyber Teaching Hospital

KU: Karachi University

KWSSIP: Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project

LBDC: Lower Bari Doab Canal

LMICs: Low- and Middle-Income Countries

MNFS&R: Ministry of National Food Security and Research

MNFSR: Ministry of Food Security and Research

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MRP: Minimum Retail Price

MT: Metric Ton

NADRA: National Database and Registration Authority

NEML: National Essential Medicines List

NEQS: National Environmental Quality Standards

NLC: National Logistics Corporation

NP: National Party

NTC: National Tax Council

PAC: Pakistan Agricultural Coalition

Pak-EPA: Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency

PAQI: Pakistan Air Quality Initiative

PBC: Pakistan Business Council

PBIT: Punjab Board of Investment & Trade

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCAP: Punjab Clean Air Programme

PCCC: Pakistan Central Cotton Committee

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PDP: Pasban Democratic Party

PDWP: Provincial Development Working Party

PFVA: Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association

POGC: Poland Oil and Gas Company

PPG: Public and Publicly Guaranteed

PPP: Pakistan Peoples Party

PPP-SB: Pakistan Peoples Party-Shaheed Bhutto

PTSD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PYLI: Youth Leadership Initiative

SAF: Sustainable Aviation Fuel

SAI: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SCF: Sindh Community Foundation

SDPI: Sustainable Development Policy Institute

SFD: Saudi Fund for Development

SIDA: Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority

SIFC: Special Investment Facilitation Council

SLIC: State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan

STP: Sindh Taraqi-pasand Party

SUP: Sindh United Party

TDAP: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

TIKA: Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency

TIR: Transports Internationaux Routiers

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UBL: United Bank Ltd

UCs: Union Committees

UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNFCCC: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change

WASH: Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

WB: World Bank

WHO: World Health Organization's

WMO: World Meteorological Organisation

YPF: Young Parliamentarian Forum

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) came under heavy criticism from parliamentarians, particularly agriculturalists, for its failure to protect the agriculture sector from the IMF's stringent condition of 'no subsidy/ support price.'
- Pakistan's cotton production has dropped from 14 million bales to just 6 million bales, a decrease of over 200%.
- Former chief minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch has said that Sindh and Balochistan provinces will ultimately have to pay the price of the idea of corporate farming.
- Two agricultural projects aimed at facilitating local olive and mushroom growers were launched in Azad Jammu and Kashmir with assistance from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA).
- The corporate and financial sectors are investing to develop agriculture sector.
- Mr Kirmani said Punjab had set a target of cultivating wheat on 16.5 million acres.
- The Punjab government had announced a special incentive package worth billions of rupees, under which 1,000 tractors and 1,000 laser land levelers will be provided free of cost through a transparent balloting.
- The provincial minister further shared that more than Rs24 billion worth of DAP fertiliser had been purchased using the Kisan Card.
- The balloting process for 9,500 green tractors had been completed transparently, with a subsidy of Rs1 million per tractor.
- Women farmers in rural areas of Sindh and Punjab are driving a nutritional revolution by cultivating bio-fortified zinc-enriched wheat, improving household health and financial stability.
- Pakistan has lost 29.6% of its agricultural land to soil salinity and sodicity, according to the first major assessment of salt-affected soils in 50 years.
- Pakistan has an agricultural land area of 22m hectares, out of a total land area of 79.7m hectares, of which 6.67m hectares are affected by soil salinity & sodicity.
- The report warns that the soil salinisation rate may increase by up to 10pc annually due to climate change, malpractice in agricultural management and inevitable natural processes, and will pose a threat to food security for region.
- Nearly 1.4 billion hectares of land, just over 10pc of the total global land area, are already impacted by salinity, with an additional one billion hectares at risk due to the climate crisis and human mismanagement.

- Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said Sindh has been facing an average water shortfall of 11 per cent since the signing of the Water Accord over three decades ago and developing additional canals on the Indus River could threaten the province’s agricultural economy.
- The Met Office issued a drought warning for several parts of the country’s southern region, signalling the escalating water scarcity there.
- Minister for Water Resources Musadik Malik said that the cost of Diamer Bhasha Dam Project has increased from Rs479 billion to Rs1.05 trillion.
- Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah pointed out that canal disputes were under a review in the Council of Common Interests (CCI). “No work is currently being carried out on the canals”.
- The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has demanded that the federal government immediately announce reversal of its controversial decision to construct new canals from the Indus River.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan and Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC) launched an insurance partnership to strengthen the agriculture sector.
- HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB) and HBL Zarai Services Ltd (HZSL), announced a strategic partnership to empower farmers through improved access to financial and agricultural support services.
- The innovation in Pakistan’s agriculture sector has been hampered by a lack of policy support and a supply-driven approach, which stifles development of new technologies, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has found.
- Federal government has admitted that provincial governments have missed deadline to amend their agriculture income tax legislation by end October 2024.
- A high-level Cabinet Committee has observed that there are sufficient and stable stocks of fertiliser in the country. It was noted that sufficient stocks are available, and prices remain stable.
- ECC approved the release of Rs10 billion to the ministry for immediate settlement of outstanding dues related to imported urea subsidies.
- “After fertilizer, the prices of certified wheat seeds have also come down,” said Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif while expressing satisfaction over sharp decrease in the prices of certified seeds of Punjab Seed Corporation.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- The government expressed concern over below-normal rainfall, which could make it difficult to meet the Rabi crop output targets.
- Government has set a wheat production target of 27.92 million tonnes for Rabi 2024-25, to be harvested from an area of 9.26m hectares.

- Agricultural credit disbursement for July-November FY2025 reached Rs925.7 billion, an 8.5% increase compared to Rs853bn during same period last year.
- Cotton arrivals slowed down, the figure is 33pc less than the output achieved by the same period last season. At least 2.46m bales arrived at ginning units in Punjab and 2.73m bales in Sindh, depicting a fall of 34pc and 32pc, respectively, from the production for the same period of the previous year.
- Sugarcane was grown on 1.194 million hectares in country. The expected production is likely to decline by 3.5 per cent, with the yield estimated at 71.630 tonnes per hectare in 2024-25 compared to 74.255 tonnes in 2023-24.
- Sugarcane production is projected to be 85.500 million tonnes in 2024-25 against 87.638m tonnes in 2023-24, showing a decline of 2.4pc.
- PCGA reveal a sharp decline in cotton production, with total output as of December 15, 2024, recorded at 5,367,334 bales. This represents a staggering 33.11 percent drop compared to the 8,023,707 bales produced in 2023.
- Three major crops of Pakistan — wheat, rice and maize — have been picked for a new global programme that aims at strengthening efforts to transform global agri-food systems, from farm to table, so that they are sustainable, nature positive, resilient, inclusive and pollution-free.
- Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani claimed province has achieved nearly 99% of the wheat sowing target set for the current season.
- The Punjab govt has planned growing around 50 million olive trees on 10 million acres of land by year 2026. Pakistan has 80 million wild and 5 million planted olive trees currently.

TRADE

- Imports grew 3.90pc to \$22.34bn in July-November FY25 from \$21.50bn over the last year.
- The trade deficit in July-November FY25 decelerated by 7.39pc to \$8.65bn from \$9.34bn over the last year.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with the Middle East widened 10.87 per cent to \$4.781 billion in the first four months of 2024-25 from \$4.312bn owing to the rise in petroleum imports from the region.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries widened by 47.55 per cent to \$4.474 billion in the first five months of the current fiscal year from \$3.032bn in the corresponding period last year.
- President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Junaid Naqi has emphasised that trade between Iran and Pakistan could reach up to \$10 billion, a significant increase from the current bilateral trade volume of \$2.4 billion.
- Pakistan’s merchandise exports to North America witnessed nearly nine per cent growth in the first four months of the current fiscal year.

- In FY24, Pakistan’s exports to the region recorded a negative growth of 8.42pc to \$5.432 billion from \$5.93bn over the same period last year.
- Pakistan’s merchandise exports slowed in November and fell into the single digit due to a reduction in international demand.
- The country’s exports increased by 12.57 per cent during the first five months (July-November) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$13.691 billion compared to \$12.162bn during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24).
- To enhance the exports and ensure the quality of fruits, vegetables, livestock, food and pharmaceutical products from Pakistan, the government has decided to establish Food Agriculture and Drug Administration Authority of Pakistan.
- Directorate General Customs Valuation Karachi has revised customs values on the import of Cereal Foods in bulk packaging from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, USA, UK, Canada and other countries.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Syngenta Pakistan has partnered with the Sindh Government to launch a free herbicide initiative to enhance wheat cultivation and maximize yields.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- The repatriation of profits and dividends by foreign investors has soared by 112 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (FY25), driven by improving economic conditions and investor confidence.
- Foreign investors operating in Pakistan repatriated \$1.129 billion on account of profit and dividend in July-Nov of FY25 compared to \$ 523 million in the same period of last fiscal year (FY24), depicting an increase of \$597 million.
- The country borrowed \$2.667 billion from multiple financing sources during the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$4.285 billion borrowed during the same period of 2023-24.
- Amid growing need for financing to meet external debt repayment obligations, the government has arranged a \$300 million loan from United Bank Ltd.
- Saudi Arabia has agreed to extend the \$3 billion deposit held in the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for another year.
- With almost \$29 billion in loans, China has become Pakistan’s largest creditor. The nation, home to 240 million people, also ranks among the top three loan recipients from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) this year.
- The World Bank put Pakistan’s total external debt (including IMF) at \$130.85bn in 2023, accounting for 352 per cent of its total exports and 39pc of gross national income (GNI).
- Over 50 Chinese companies are set to invest \$1.4 billion in Sindh’s various sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, food, energy, and fertilizers.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have agreed to provision of climate funding as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has allocated Rs700 billion for Pakistan to deal with the challenge of climate change.

POLICY

- The Punjab cabinet has approved the Punjab Clean Air Programme (PCAP) with a World Bank’s proposed \$300 million financing on favourable terms to check severe air pollution as certain urban areas are consistently experiencing hazardous conditions.
- Pakistan has joined a coalition spearheaded by small island Pacific states to push for a new treaty focused on managing an equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and financing a global just transition away from the threat of coal, oil and gas production.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

- The federal government’s total debt stock decreased by Rs 456 billion in October 2024, The central government’s total debt, including both domestic and external components, dropped to Rs 69.114 trillion in October 2024 from Rs 69.570 trillion in September 2024.
- While climate shocks such as floods and droughts are increasingly threatening children’s access to food, latest estimates show more than 1.4 million babies were born into hunger in Pakistan in 2024.
- Global Head of Hunger and Nutrition at Save Children, Hannah Stephenson, says “over 18 million newborns this year — 35 children a minute — were born into a world where hunger is their reality from their first moments of life.
- The annual inflation dropped to a six-and-a-half-year low of 4.9 per cent in November, down from 7.2pc in October.
- 1.2m to 1.5m children were involved in begging on streets in the country.

ENVIRONMENT

- Medication errors, compounded by the lack of trained pharmacists, are causing over 500,000 deaths annually in Pakistan.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Historically, the Global North has been primarily responsible for creating the climate crisis in the world through industrialisation, which has contributed most of the carbon in the atmosphere whereas the Global South.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS RESOURCES

- Forest loss and degraded soils are reducing resilience to climate change and biodiversity loss, creating negative feedback loops and driving the world to a dangerous “precipice”.
- Farming is linked to 23 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, 80pc of deforestation and 70pc of fresh-water use.
- “The expansion of agricultural land may feed more people in the short term, but it can accelerate soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and thus food insecurity in the long term,” said Thiaw and Johan Rockstrom at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research.
- Beyond driving forest loss, industrialised agriculture uses huge quantities of chemicals in fertilisers and pesticides that create dead zones in waterways, harm biodiversity and increase emissions of planet-heating gases.
- A new scientific report has revealed that seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been negatively impacted by unsustainable land use as land degradation is undermining the Earth’s capacity to sustain humanity.
- China has approved the construction of what will be the world’s largest hydropower dam, kicking off an ambitious project on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau that could affect millions downstream in India and Bangladesh.

TRADE

- The UN trade and development agency UNCTAD said global exchanges of goods and services are expected to reach a record level of nearly \$33 trillion in 2024.
- The European Union and South America’s Mercosur bloc dragged a long-delayed free trade deal over the line.
- The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said the intra-trade among SAARC countries continues to remain in the low range of just 5% of the total trade of the region while this trade in NAFTA region is over 40 percent, 68 percent in EU and 27 percent in ASEAN, laying emphasis on exploring the vast untapped trade potential in SAARC region.
- Russian companies have begun using bitcoin and other digital currencies in international payments following legislative changes that allowed such use in order to counter Western sanctions.
- The United States announced new export restrictions targeting China’s ability to make advanced semiconductors.

INTERNATIONAL / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- The UN appealed for more than \$47 billion to deliver vital aid next year in a world ravaged by surging conflicts and the climate crisis, but warned many in need would not be reached.
- UN estimated that 305 million people globally will need some form of emergency assistance next year.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

- The International Monetary Fund said that it has reached a deal with Egyptian authorities allowing the country access to about \$1.2 billion.
- The world’s developing countries paid a record \$1.4 trillion to service their debts last year, as high lending rates pushed interest costs to a two-decade high.
- The World Bank in its latest report, “International Debt Report 2024, noted that the South Asia region saw the biggest yearly increase in interest payments on public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt in 2023, rising 62 per cent to \$12.5 billion.
- The World Bank announced that it had raised close to \$24 billion to provide loans and grants for some of the world’s poorest nations, which it can leverage to generate a record \$100 billion in total spending power.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- Famine has spread across war-torn Sudan and is projected to expand even further.
- The IPC said 638,000 people are now facing catastrophic levels of hunger, with a further 8.1 million on the brink of famine.
- The IPC said that 24.6 million people representing around half of Sudan’s population are projected to face “high levels of acute food insecurity”.

ENVIRONMENT

- Countries negotiating a global treaty to curb plastic pollution failed to reach agreement with over 100 nations wanting to cap production while a handful of oil-producers were prepared only to target plastic waste.
- At Baku, countries set a new global target for mobilising \$300 billion annually in climate finance, a deal deemed woefully insufficient by small island states and many developing countries.
- Microplastics have been found in air, fresh produce and even human breast milk. Chemicals of concern in plastics include more than 3,200 found.
- It is effectively certain that 2024 is going to be the warmest year on record, Copernicus scientist Julien Nicolas said that 2025 would start with global

temperatures “at near-record level” and this could persist for the next few months.

- In another grim milestone, 2024 will be the first calendar year 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than before the industrial revolution when humanity started burning large amounts of fossil fuels.
- In total, disasters caused \$310 billion in economic losses in 2024, Developing countries are particularly vulnerable and by 2035 will need \$1.3tr a year in outside assistance for their energy transitions and to cope with climate change.
- At UN climate talks in November, big historic polluters most responsible for global warming committed to raising at least \$300 billion annually by 2035, an amount decried as woefully inadequate.
- Malaria killed nearly some 597,000 people last year. World Health Organisation estimated that there were 263 million cases of malaria worldwide in 2023 — 11 million more than a year earlier.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- The year 2024 is set to be the warmest on record, capping a decade of unprecedented heat fuelled by human activities.
- Climate change intensified 26 of the 29 weather events studied by World Weather Attribution that killed at least 3700 people and displaced millions.
- Climate change added 41 days of dangerous heat in 2024, harming human health and ecosystems.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- In a year set to be declared the hottest on record, natural disasters caused \$310 billion in economic losses globally in 2024.
- Drought costs the world more than \$300 billion each year.
- Up to 40pc of the world’s land is degraded and droughts are becoming more frequent and severe, increasing by 29pc since 2000 due to climate change and unsustainable land management, the UN says. This threatens agriculture, water security, and the livelihoods of 1.8 billion people.
- Droughts “fuelled by human destruction of the environment” cost the world more than \$300 billion each year, Droughts are projected to affect 75pc of world’s population by 2050.

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

HCSTSI chief underscores need for reforms in agri sector [1]

MPs grill MNFS&R for failure to protect agri sector [1]

Dr Malik warns Balochistan, Sindh may pay price of corporate farming [2]

Seventh agriculture census starts in Attock [2]

SAU launches campaign to promote agricultural sustainability [2]

Agriculture projects worth Rs40m launched in Azad Kashmir with Turkish cooperation

Govt plans to revamp plant protection dept amid export challenges [3]

Greenhouse established at SAU with Turkish collaboration [3]

Report highlights renewed focus on agri sector [3]

1.1 # Farmers

‘Incentives to be given to farmers cultivating wheat on large areas’ [4]

PPP launches drive to ‘unite’ growers across Punjab [4]

Women farmers lead nutrition revolution with zinc-enriched wheat in Sindh, Punjab [4]

1.2 # Land

Pakistan loses 30pc farm land to salinity: FAO [5]

1.4 # Water

No irrigation projects unless new water sources become available: Sindh United Party

New canals on Indus River to endanger Sindh’s agri economy, warns CM [6]

Farmers’ conference rejects ‘anti-Sindh’ projects [6]

Akram Wah rehabilitation to improve water supply to T.M. Khan, Badin: Sida chief [6]

Drought warning for several parts of southern region issued [6]

Cost of Diamer Bhasha Dam increases to Rs1.05trn [7]

CM Murad says no work is currently being carried out on canals project [7]

PDP chief for improving irrigation system [7]

Centre asked to shelve new canals’ project [7]

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finances

Microinsurance for farmers launched [7]

Agri partnership [8]

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

Lack of policy support hampering agriculture innovation: FAO [8]

2.3 # Agricultural Taxes

Amendment to agri tax law: Provinces miss deadline [8]

Finance Minister dissatisfied with slow pace of agri tax legislation [9]

Agri tax changes [9]

Explicit and implicit taxation of agriculture [10]

Governor concerned over imposition of tax on agriculture sector [11]

2.4 # Fertilizer

Sufficient fertiliser stock available [11]

PRAL restructuring plan endorsed: ECC approves Rs10bn for urea subsidy dues [11]

2.5 # Seed

Wheat seeds prices down [11]

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Govt fears missing Rabi targets due to below-normal rainfall [12]

3.1 # Cash Crop

Cotton output so far 33pc less than the last season [12]

Sugar mills staff, farmers clash near Rahim Yar Khan over ‘deductions’ in cane weight

Minister takes action on low prices of sugarcane [13]

Disputes related to cotton cess: PCCC concerned over prolonged delays [13]

Growers’ body bemoans delay in notification of sugar cane support price [13]

PCGA data reveals sharp decline in cotton production [13]

3.2 # Food Crop

Pakistan’s food crops to be part of sustainability initiative [14]

‘Punjab meets wheat sowing target’ [14]

3.3 # Fruits

50m olive trees to be grown on 10m acres of land by 2026 [15]

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Fisheries

Leasing govt land Punjab cabinet approves terms & conditions [15]

4.2 # Livestock

Over 60 cattle die after grazing on ‘poisonous’ grass [15]

4.3 # Poultry

‘Capping of prices may cause closure of poultry farms’ [15]

5 # TRADE

Trade deficit [16]

Minister, US CG discuss trade between Punjab and US [16]

Trade gap widens with Mideast on rising energy imports [16]

TDAP focuses on strengthening agro and food exports to Malaysia [17]

Trade gap with nine regional states widens [17]

Transit of goods from China to UAE via Pakistan begins [18]

TDAP holds Swat Trade Show [18]

Pak-Iran trade can reach \$10bn mark: KATI [19]

5.1 # Export

Exports to North America rise 9pc [19]

Malaysia to revise tariffs on rice from Pakistan [20]

Govt urged to check dwindling citrus exports [20]

Exports jump 13pc in first five months [20]

Jul-Nov exports up 12.57pc to \$13.691bn YoY [21]

Customs/export value of fruits revised [21]

Textile exports jump to \$7.6bn [22]

Rice-driven food exports jump 20pc [22]

Rising crude oil imports boost exports [22]

Govt to establish ‘FADAAP’ to enhance exports [23]

5.2 # Import

Tea imports nosedive after minimum retail price [23]

Customs values on import of Cereal Foods in bulk packaging revised [23]

Meat, bone meal imported from Brazil: customs values revised [23]
Govt mulls bulk imports via Gwadar port [23]
Record import pushes cotton price, sale down in Punjab [24]

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

International Cotton Association declares 84 textile mills ‘defaulters’ [24]
Wheat programme: Syngenta partners with Sindh govt [24]
Non-essential medicines Deregulation helps boost pharma industry [24]
Fertilizer plants: Subsidised gas supply fuels circular debt [25]

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Balochistan introduces one-window operation to ease investment [25]
Sharjeel unveils Sindh govt’s plans for jobs, investments [25]
Chinese delegation meets CM Murad to explore investment opportunities in Sindh [25]
Foreign direct investment jumps by 31pc to \$1.1bn [26]
Foreign investors Jul-Nov profit repatriation soars 112pc to \$1.129bn YoY [26]
Jul-Nov FY25: Foreign borrowing, including \$1.03bn from IMF, falls YoY [26]
UBL arranges \$300m loan for Pakistan [28]

7.1 # United Nations

Unicef seeks \$141m in aid for Pakistan [28]

7.2 # Countries & Regions

S. Arabia rolls over \$3bn deposit for another year [28]
Japan announces \$3.1m grant to procure polio vaccines [28]
KP flood relief: Japan grants \$9.91m aid [29]
Polish co plans to double investments in Pakistan: envoy [29]

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

HCSTSI chief underscores need for reforms in agri sector

The President of Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry, Muhammad Saleem Memon, emphasised the urgent need for reforms in Pakistan's agricultural sector. He has written letters to both Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif and Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, urging formulation of a 25-year comprehensive agricultural policy. This proposed policy aims to address impacts of climate change and promote strategic crop planning to ensure sustainable agricultural development. President Saleem Memon highlighted critical role of agriculture in Pakistan's economy, contributing 20% to GDP and providing livelihoods for 40% of population.

However, he pointed out that the sector faces numerous challenges and ignoring these issues could lead to further economic losses. He identified water scarcity and climate change as the biggest threats to Pakistan's agriculture. Despite the existence of the Indus Basin system, over 40% of water is wasted due to inadequate infrastructure and inefficient practices. This, coupled with erratic rainfall patterns, declining soil fertility, and rising temperatures, has severely impacted agricultural productivity. He noted that Pakistani farmers face a significant lack of access to modern technology, such as drip and sprinkler irrigation systems, which are crucial for water conservation. Additionally, around 30-40% of fruits and vegetables go to waste annually due to the absence of value-added processing facilities. (*Business Recorder, December 2nd, 2024, Page 5*)

MPs grill MNFS&R for failure to protect agri sector

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) came under heavy criticism from parliamentarians, particularly agriculturalists, for its failure to protect the agriculture sector from the IMF's stringent condition of 'no subsidy/ support price.' This condition has led to a significant reduction in the sowing areas of wheat and cotton, which will result in increased imports. This was the central issue discussed in a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research. Officials from MNFS&R acknowledged that under the recent agreement with the IMF, government is prohibited from announcing support prices for agricultural commodities, including cotton. Committee members, including its Chairman, expressed concerns over the substantial reduction in the sowing areas of cotton and wheat, and questioned the Ministry's leadership in failing to persuade PM and Cabinet to increase sowing areas by offering better incentives. The FBR was not included in the consultations with stakeholders. The Committee Chairman pointed out that Pakistan's cotton production has dropped from 14m bales to just 6m bales, a decrease of over 200%. He compared this with global cotton production, which has risen from 8m bales to 37m bales, highlighting the dire situation. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2024, Page 12*)

Dr Malik warns Balochistan, Sindh may pay price of corporate farming

Former chief minister Balochistan Dr Abdul Malik Baloch has said that Sindh and Balochistan provinces will ultimately have to pay the price of the idea of corporate farming. Kachhi Canal, one of the six canals being built on the Indus River, was designed to carry 4,000 cusecs of water that was Balochistan's share as per 1991 Water Accord and denied to the province, he said. Dr Baloch, who is also central president of the National Party (NP), was speaking at a moot titled 'Sindh sukain, dharti phabain khilaf conference' (a conference against attempts to render Sindh barren and occupy its land) organised by his party's Sindh chapter at local press club. He said in answer to a question: "Balochistan gets 3,000 cusecs [from Sindh's barrages] and Kachhi Canal will take away 4,000 cusecs of flows [inclusive of Balochistan's share]".

He said that Balochistan's water distribution system existed in Sindh. Though Kacchi Canal had not been built yet but if Sindh was affected by its construction then Balochistan too would be affected, he said. If arable land was rendered barren to create a 'corporate' society then Sindh and Balochistan would ultimately have to pay its price. The issue should have been taken to Council of Common Interests (CCI) and the plan should not have gone ahead unless all provinces had agreed to it, he said. Unfortunately, he said, Sindh representatives [on CCI] were supported by establishment and they did not have courage to raise questions over such plans. Pakistan Peoples Party should defeat this anti-Sindh, anti-Balochistan and anti-people project as it had shot down Kalabagh Dam project in past. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 15*)

Seventh agriculture census starts in Attock

Like other parts of the country, the seventh agriculture census started in Attock district with an aim to develop the agriculture sector through modern lines. Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance and Planning Nosheen Israr formally inaugurated the digital agri census. She said the census would further strengthen agricultural economy of the country. She was of the view that accurate data on agriculture, livestock and agricultural implements in the district would be obtained through the census, enabling better planning for the development of the district. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 4*)

SAU launches campaign to promote agricultural sustainability

Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, launched a campaign in collaboration with Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) to promote agricultural sustainability for combating challenges of climate change. Under supervision of the SAU's public relations section, the campaign was part of a project titled "Transforming Indus Basin with Climate Resilient Agriculture and Water Management". A series of roadshows were held and a play was staged to raise awareness among farmers and agricultural communities. These activities were conducted across 11 union councils in the districts of Umerkot, Sanghar and Badin, engaging over 2,000 farmers and agricultural workers. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 15*)

Agriculture projects worth Rs40m launched in Azad Kashmir with Turkish cooperation

Two agricultural projects aimed at facilitating local olive and mushroom growers were launched in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) with assistance from the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). The projects – an olive facilitation centre equipped with an oil extraction unit and a mushroom cultivation promotion laboratory, set up at a cost of Rs 22 million and 18 million, respectively on the premises of the Agriculture Complex in Muzaffarabad. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 4*)

Govt plans to revamp plant protection dept amid export challenges

Facing difficulties in exporting agricultural produce and the rejection of consignments abroad, the government has decided to restructure Department of Plant Protection (DPP) to modernise its operations, enhance efficiency and align with international standards. The move aims to address long-standing issues within the DPP, including outdated management practices, inefficient risk assessment systems and challenges in complying with international sanitary and phytosanitary standards for export consignments. The restructuring will include governance reforms, improvements in the management model and outsourcing of its laboratories, a senior official from Ministry of Food Security and Research (MNFSR) confirmed. (*The News, December 22nd, 2024, Page 12*)

Greenhouse established at SAU with Turkish collaboration

A state-of-the-art greenhouse developed by Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency at Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, was inaugurated the other day. The greenhouse, for which the Turkish agency's head for East and South Asia, Pacific and Latin America, Dursun Ali Yasacan, and SAU VC Dr Fateh Marri jointly cut the ribbon, aimed to enhance crop production and provide protection against plant diseases.

Dr Marri highlighted Turkiye's significant cooperation in Pakistan's development efforts and informed that under an agreement between Pakistan's Higher Education Commission and Turkish embassy, about 5,000 students would pursue higher education in Turkiye in fields such as agriculture, technology and health. He said the newly-established greenhouse developed with the agency's assistance was equipped with advanced technology for seed development, plant protection and environment control tailored for seasonal requirements. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2024, Page 15*)

Report highlights renewed focus on agri sector

The corporate and financial sectors are investing to develop the agriculture sector. This view emerged at launch of 'The State of Pakistan's Agriculture 2024' report by Pakistan Business Council (PBC) and Pakistan Agricultural Coalition (PAC) in an event at National Foods Limited corporate head office. This report documents how corporate and financial players are bringing capital, technology, and expertise to the agriculture sector for growth and prosperity. Kazim Saeed, CEO of PAC, said the leading corporate player are working directly with farmers and these prospects merit replication and scaling up for growth of agriculture. (*Business Recorder, December 28th, 2024, Page 5*)

1.1 # Farmers

‘Incentives to be given to farmers cultivating wheat on large areas’

Punjab Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani said the Punjab government had announced special incentives for farmers cultivating wheat on large areas. Mr Kirmani said Punjab had set a target of cultivating wheat on 16.5 million acres. To encourage farmers, the Punjab government had announced a special incentive package worth billions of rupees, under which 1,000 tractors and 1,000 laser land levelers will be provided free of cost through a transparent balloting.

The minister said the Rawalpindi division was assigned a wheat cultivation target of 1.491 million acres, though the cultivation had already exceeded this target, covering over 1.503 million acres. The provincial minister further shared that more than Rs24 billion worth of DAP fertiliser had been purchased using the Kisan Card, which will contribute significantly to enhancing wheat production. Furthermore, he said the Punjab government had increased the number of Kisan Cards from 500,000 to 750,000.

The minister also announced that the balloting process for 9,500 green tractors had been completed transparently, with a subsidy of Rs1 million per tractor. Allotment letters have been issued to the farmers, who are required to deposit their share of the amount in the nearest Bank of Punjab branch by Dec 5. Tractors will be delivered on a first-come-first-served basis. Moreover, he said students from agricultural universities participated in the wheat cultivation campaign for two weeks, providing farmers with guidance on best practices. Under the Chief Minister Punjab Internship Programme, agricultural graduates are actively engaged in field activities across the province. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 4*)

PPP launches drive to ‘unite’ growers across Punjab

PPP has launched a drive to ‘unite’ growers across Punjab by holding conventions and expects to convert it into a movement for farmers’ rights by March. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 2*)

Women farmers lead nutrition revolution with zinc-enriched wheat in Sindh, Punjab

Women farmers in rural areas of Sindh and Punjab are driving a nutritional revolution by cultivating bio-fortified zinc-enriched wheat, improving household health and financial stability. After receiving training on its benefits, these women have incorporated the nutrient-rich crop into their diets, tackling zinc deficiencies and promoting overall well-being, experts say. Pakistan achieved a milestone with a bumper harvest of nearly 15 million metric tons of zinc-enriched wheat in the last cropping season, boosting food security and offering a path to healthier communities. Efforts to train and empower women farmers played a key role in this success. Over 4,730 small holder farmers, including 3,135 women (66% of the total), participated in training programmes across nine districts during the 2024-2025 cropping season, these programmes focused on modern farming techniques, seed procurement, crop

management, and the prevention of harvest losses, while also emphasizing nutrition education. For many women, this marked the first time they gained access to the knowledge and resources needed to enhance their yields and improve their families' well-being. (*Business Recorder, December 22nd, 2024, Page 8*)

1.2 # Land

Pakistan loses 30pc farm land to salinity: FAO

Pakistan has lost 29.6 per cent of its agricultural land to soil salinity and sodicity, according to the first major assessment of salt-affected soils in 50 years, released by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations. Pakistan has an agricultural land area of 22 million hectares, out of a total land area of 79.7m hectares, of which 6.67m hectares are affected by soil salinity and sodicity, the assessment reveals. The report says some salt-tolerant species are not halophytes, such as cotton, sugar beet, barley, and date palm and do not exhibit the same ability. There are almost 1,500 salt-tolerant species globally but one per cent are being utilised in Pakistan.

The most cultivated crop in saline and sodic conditions is rice, followed by wheat cotton and barley. These crops are irrigated by brackish waters, mainly in Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Pakistan. The assessment of the status of salt-affected soils given in the regional assessment was made for six Asian countries — Bangladesh, China, India, Malaysia, Pakistan and Thailand. As per the data provided by the experts from the respective countries, the extent of saline and sodic soils varied from 0.05m hectares in Malaysia to 36m hectares in China.

The report warns that the soil salinisation rate may increase by up to 10pc annually due to climate change, malpractice in agricultural management and inevitable natural processes, and will pose a threat to food security for the region. Unfortunately, in many of the countries, the official data pertaining to total salt-affected soils and the extent of their saline, sodic and saline sodic soils are unknown. The assessment shows that in Asian countries, the method commonly used for the determination of soil salinity and sodicity differs. According to the assessment, nearly 1.4 billion hectares of land, just over 10pc of the total global land area, are already impacted by salinity, with an additional one billion hectares at risk due to the climate crisis and human mismanagement. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 9*)

1.4 # Water

No irrigation projects unless new water sources become available: Sindh United Party

Voicing his opposition to the plan to build six new canals in Punjab, the president of Sindh United Party (SUP), Syed Zainul Abideen Shah, has said that no new major water project should be initiated unless additional water resources are developed. He said without new water resources, the proposed canals would only end up snatching water from existing users. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2024, Page 5*)

New canals on Indus River to endanger Sindh's agri economy, warns CM

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has said Sindh has been facing an average water shortfall of 11 per cent since the signing of Water Accord over three decades ago and developing additional canals on Indus River could threaten the province's agricultural economy. Mr Shah was talking to a delegation of YPF, which called on him here at CM House. Mr Shah pointed out that historical records indicated that in 1919, Sindh was cultivating four million acres of land using inundation of canals and according to the Sindh Crop Reporting Services' figures from 2023, province now irrigated 4.6m acres through 14 irrigation canals fed by three barrages in Sindh. From 1976 to 2024, he pointed out, there were only two years when Indus had surplus water; otherwise region had been experiencing a continuous shortage. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 15*)

Farmers' conference rejects 'anti-Sindh' projects

Speakers at a conference condemned federal government's plan to build six canals on Indus River and said that Sindhis had outright rejected the canals' project, amendments to Irsa Act and rising religious extremism. Leaders of nationalist parties, civil society, social workers and citizens said at the 'Hari Muzahimat Tehreek' conference held here that they would not accept anti-Sindh projects and announced that every individual living in Sindh should join the protest campaign to express their resentment. Local leaders of Sindh United Party, Lala Azhar Pathan and Masroor Shah, said that Sindh's land showered love on all people living here but today "we all should stand up to offer a stiff resistance to those hatching conspiracies against our land" and ensure its safety. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page 15*)

Akram Wah rehabilitation to improve water supply to T.M. Khan, Badin: Sida chief
Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (Sida) Chairman Kabool Kathian has said that remodeling and rehabilitation of Akram Wah (canal) of Kotri Barrage would serve the people of Tando Mohammad Khan and Badin districts in a better way. Presiding over a Sida Board meeting, he said that political parties would also be taken on board regarding that project of Akram Wah. He said that canal modernisation was a new concept in the irrigation sector, adding that once approved it would benefit farmers. Discussing the issues of Sida employees, he said they were working for the last three decades, but in absence of rules, they were not being promoted. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 15*)

Drought warning for several parts of southern region issued

Met Office issued a drought warning for several parts of country's southern region, signalling escalating water scarcity there. Warning comes in wake of significantly below-average rainfall over past three months from September to November 2024 and extended dry periods. Mild meteorological drought conditions have been observed over rain-fed areas of country and Sindh province. According to climatology and seasonal forecast of PMD, below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures are expected in coming months. This situation may worsen drought conditions in affected areas of Sindh & Punjab, significantly impacting agriculture & livestock. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2024, Page 2*)

Cost of Diامر Bhasha Dam increases to Rs1.05trn

Minister for Water Resources Musadik Malik said that the cost of Diامر Bhasha Dam Project has increased from Rs479 billion to Rs1.05 trillion due to external and internal factors. Minister told National Assembly that the reasons of exchange rate from rupees 105.3 to 278.3 per US dollar from 2018 to 2024 and approximately 23.34 percent (Rs133 billion) cost of PC-I of the project. He said that 14.95 percent (Rs85 billion) cost increased due to change the design of the project. He said that cost to increase due to additional security deployment (Rs17 billion) and procurement (Rs9 billion) of helicopter as an additional scope owed to ensure safe transport of foreign expatriates' staff working on the project. He said that 1.24 percent (Rs7 billion) due to additional of a new scope of Safe City Project owed to peculiar security situation. The minister said that the current physical progress is 16.41 percent and 13.26 percent financial on November 30, 2024. (*Business Recorder, December 17th, 2024, Page 3*)

CM Murad says no work is currently being carried out on canals project

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has dispelled the impression being created by certain forces that the federal government had already started work on digging six controversial canals. He was speaking to the media after inaugurating the Centre for Autism Rehabilitation and Training (C-ART) in the city. Mr Shah pointed out that canal disputes were under a review in the Council of Common Interests (CCI). "No work is currently being carried out on the canals". (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 15*)

PDP chief for improving irrigation system

Growing water shortage is a serious threat to our agricultural-based economy and improving our outdated irrigation system is a must for saving the national economy, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman. He said country is facing huge water shortages and it is now being counted amongst the water-deficient nations of the world. He said we have become a net importer of food. He said vast lands could not be cultivated due to shortage of water. He said in this grim scenario it is a must to construct more dams and water reservoirs. (*Business Recorder, December 23rd, 2024, Page 2*)

Centre asked to shelve new canals' project

The PPP has demanded that federal government immediately announce reversal of its controversial decision to construct new canals from Indus River. PPP's Sindh chapter president Nisar Ahmed Khuhro asked: "If there is no additional water, from where will water be brought to new canals?" He added that already Sindh was not being given its due share of water under 1991 Water Accord. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 13*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finances

Microinsurance for farmers launched

The State Life Insurance Corporation of Pakistan (SLIC) and Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC) launched an insurance partnership to strengthen the agriculture sector. The

organisations introduced a ground-breaking microinsurance programme to provide essential financial protection to farmers while nurturing sustainable agriculture growth.. This initiative is set to create a ripple effect across the agricultural sector. This innovative partnership leverages FFC’s direct-to-farmer distribution network “Sona Centres” and SLIC’s expertise in insurance solutions to deliver accessible and impactful financial coverage for farmers and their families. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 9*)

Agri partnership

HBL Microfinance Bank and HBL Zarai Services Ltd, pioneer agriculture-specialised extension services company in Pakistan, announced a strategic partnership to empower farmers through improved access to financial and agricultural support services. This collaboration underscores a shared vision of fostering sustainable agricultural development and enhancing rural livelihoods. HBL MfB, with its extensive expertise in providing tailored financial solutions to smallholder farmers, will establish a presence at HBL Zarai’s Deras, thus offering microfinance products designed to meet their agricultural needs. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 9*)

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

Lack of policy support hampering agriculture innovation: FAO

The innovation in Pakistan’s agriculture sector has been hampered by a lack of policy support and a supply-driven approach, which stifles development of new technologies, FAO has found. In its assessment of agricultural innovation system in Pakistan, the UN body examined how system works, the factors affecting capacity to develop, foster and scale up climate-smart innovations, and identified gaps and constraints to be addressed to strengthen AIS. Assessment was part of project, ‘Developing capacities in agricultural innovation systems: scaling up Tropical Agriculture Platform Framework’, funded by EU under ‘Development of Smart Innovation through Research in Agriculture’ initiative.

The report pointed out that farmers and agriculture departments lack the latest technologies for crop health analysis. This hampers farmers’ ability to take preventive measures to protect crops from pests. Farmers lack direct access to markets, as most agricultural produce is managed through middlemen, leaving the farmers at a disadvantage. Another issue pointed out was farmers’ lack of education about modern agriculture and outdated farming techniques, which resulted in low yields per cultivated acre and higher costs of agricultural produce. As a result, many farmers were switching to non-farming professions. The report also pointed out the issue of water security, which is challenged by the lack of sufficient storage capacity, such as dams, which limit the storage of rainwater and river water. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2024, Page 3*)

2.3 # Agricultural Taxes

Amendment to agri tax law: Provinces miss deadline

The federal government has admitted that the provincial governments have missed the deadline to amend their agriculture income tax legislation by end October 2024. The

officials of the Ministry of Finance gave a presentation before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance on quantitative performance criteria and structural benchmark of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. The committee was informed that each province was required to amend its agriculture income tax legislation and regime to fully align it with the federal personal income tax regime for small farmers and federal corporate income tax regime for commercial agriculture, so that taxation can commence from January 1, 2025. Timeline for legislation was end-October 2024, which was delayed by provinces. (*Business Recorder, December 3rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Finance Minister dissatisfied with slow pace of agri tax legislation

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb has expressed dissatisfaction with three provinces' delay in passing new agriculture income tax laws. This new legislation is one of the conditions agreed upon with the International Monetary Fund as part of the 37-month \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility. The finance minister reviewed several tax initiatives during the National Tax Council (NTC) meeting, which was held after an 18-month break. The minister also asked the finance ministry to host NTC meetings every three months to assess progress on different tax policies. According to an official source, the finance minister expressed dissatisfaction with the poor pace of passing agricultural income tax laws by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.

The meeting was informed that the KP government had approved the bill, but it had yet to be tabled before the assembly. However, no information was presented at the meeting regarding whether the Sindh or Balochistan cabinets had passed the agri-income tax bill. Given the poor pace, the finance minister has chosen to raise the issue with Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah. Punjab is the only province that has enacted the bill through the provincial assembly. The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has only consented to disclose information about taxpayers who have reported their agricultural incomes in their tax returns. However, the FBR is reluctant to disclose further information with provinces since present legislation protects taxpayers' confidentiality. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 9*)

Agri tax changes

It is quite surprising if not disconcerting to see the PPP government in Sindh dragging its feet on the changes to the provincial agriculture income tax law to meet one of the core conditions of the ongoing IMF programme: abolition of all AIT-related exemptions for fully harmonising provincial [AIT] regimes through legislative changes with the federal personal and corporate income tax regimes. Is the fear of big landlords who form the core of the party in the province keeping its leadership from amending the law? Or is it part of some strategy to bring pressure on the centre to force it to accept other provincial demands on the controversial canal projects Islamabad has approved despite the PPP's opposition? The reason remains unclear. At a meeting of the National Tax Council held recently to review implementation of the tax-related conditions agreed with the IMF, a representative of Sindh disclosed that the draft bill was ready. But he

refused to give a time frame for its passage from the assembly. `The matter should be taken [up] at the level of the political leadership,` he reportedly told the NTC. Under the agreement with the IMF, the provinces had agreed to amend their agriculture income tax regime before the end of October to ensure the application of new rates from Jan 1, 2025. That deadline has long passed, with only Punjab having amended its AIT for the purpose. Even the Punjab legislation is ambiguous since it gives the power to determine and notify the new tax rates to the provincial cabinet rather than making the rates part of the legislation, exposing the changes to potential legal challenges.

Balochistan and KP have also finalised the draft bills to change their AIT systems but these are yet to be tabled in their respective assemblies for approval. It is a well-known fact that the top PPP leadership is not in favour of increasing the AIT rates and President Zardari had equated this particular IMF condition with a bitter pill that they would have to swallow. The inherent abhorrence of the landed aristocracy for any kind of taxes aside, it is no longer tenable for any government to not tax all incomes equally regardless of their sources. Hence, Sindh must fulfill its commitment and get the changes in its AIT law passed as soon as possible. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 6*)

Explicit and implicit taxation of agriculture

Last month, the Punjab Assembly took the lead in amending its agricultural income tax law, increasing the maximum tax rate from 15% (in Punjab and Sindh) to align with federal income tax rates for individuals and businesses, which reach up to 45pc. Other provinces are still deliberating similar changes, all in response to strings attached to ongoing IMF programme. However, critics of AIT argue that historically, agriculturists have been consistently paying not only explicit taxes (direct and indirect) but also heavy implicit taxes — income loss to farmers due to government policies that favour urban consumers and the industrial sector. Such implicit taxation, which manifests in various forms, has largely been overlooked by those who vigorously advocate for imposing comparable AIT. Implicit taxation in Pakistan primarily stems from the government's longstanding policy of controlling prices of agricultural inputs as well as outputs — major crops like wheat, cotton, sugarcane, and rice (until 2009-10).

Recently, the Punjab Government enacted the Punjab Price Control of Essential Commodities Act 2024, which further broadened its authority over the pricing, movement, and distribution of almost all agricultural inputs and outputs. Using this act, in July 2024, the Punjab Government capped district-specific wheat prices between Rs2,800-3,050 per 40kg — well below farmers' production costs, import parity price, announced support price for 2024, and even prevailing market rates. The objective was to lower the price of 'roti' in urban centres. However, this single measure effectively transferred hundreds of billions of rupees from the agriculture sector to other segments of the economy — a classic example of implicit taxation. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page Business & Finance 1*)

Governor concerned over imposition of tax on agriculture sector

Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan has expressed his concern over the imposition of tax on the agriculture sector by the provincial government and expressed his resolve to play his part to resolve issues faced by the farmers' community. He was addressing the public during an open court in Attock in which a large number of complainants from across the district gathered for redressal of their grievances. Speaking on the occasion, Governor Saleem Haider Khan said the imposition of taxes on agricultural land by the Punjab government was a grave injustice. He said farmers were already struggling as they neither received the desired price for wheat nor was it purchased by the government. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 4*)

2.4 # Fertilizer

Sufficient fertiliser stock available

A high-level Cabinet Committee has observed that there are sufficient and stable stocks of fertiliser in the country. Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar chaired a high-level meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Fertiliser Pricing Stability. The meeting was held to review the market dynamics and ensure stability in fertiliser prices. During the session, the committee reviewed the availability and pricing of fertilisers in the market. It was noted that sufficient stocks are available, and prices remain stable. Additionally, committee examined the availability of gas for fertiliser industry and found it satisfactory. Dar directed uninterrupted gas supply to the fertiliser industry throughout the Rabi season and to ensure stable production and stocks of fertilisers. (*Business Recorder, December 14th, 2024, Page 1*)

PRAL restructuring plan endorsed: ECC approves Rs10bn for urea subsidy dues

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet took several decisions including approval of restructuring of plan for PRAL (Pakistan Revenue Automation Limited) and Rs10 billion to the Commerce Ministry for immediate settlement of outstanding dues related to imported urea subsidies. The ECC reviewed a summary submitted by the Ministry of Commerce regarding the sharing of subsidy on imported urea on a 50:50 basis. It approved the release of Rs10 billion to the ministry for immediate settlement of outstanding dues related to imported urea subsidies. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2024, Page 1*)

2.5 # Seed

Wheat seeds prices down

“After fertilizer, the prices of certified wheat seeds have also come down,” said Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif while expressing satisfaction over sharp decrease in the prices of certified seeds of Punjab Seed Corporation. She added, “The rate of certified seeds of Punjab Seed Corporation has come down to Rs4500 per bag instead of Rs6300. Certified seeds are available at special centres and registered dealers of Punjab Seed Corporation.” (*Business Recorder, December 1st, 2024, Page 5*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Govt fears missing Rabi targets due to below-normal rainfall

The government expressed concern over below-normal rainfall, which could make it difficult to meet the Rabi crop output targets. The Ministry of Finance, in its Monthly Economic Update and Outlook for December, acknowledged importance of supporting farmers to achieve agricultural output targets, which are critical for reaching the overall economic goals for FY25 and sustaining economic recovery. On the agriculture side, the government has set a wheat production target of 27.92 million tonnes for Rabi 2024-25, to be harvested from an area of 9.26m hectares. To achieve this, efforts are under way to ensure the timely availability of essential farm inputs, including agricultural credit, quality seeds, fertilisers, and mechanisation support.

Agricultural credit disbursement for July-November FY2025 reached Rs925.7 billion, an 8.5pc increase compared to Rs853bn during the same period last year. This positive trend is expected to continue, aligning with the ambitious agriculture credit target of Rs2.572 trillion for FY25. The increase in agricultural machinery sales, as well as higher urea and DAP offtake, further signals sectoral growth. The rise in DAP offtake is attributed to the Punjab government's initiative of providing interest-free loans to small farmers through the Kissan Card Programme for the purchase of agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2024, Page 9*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

Cotton output so far 33pc less than the last season

Cotton arrivals slowed down in last fortnight after remaining steady during the last three fortnights in local market, dampening hopes for crossing six million bales of production mark. As per data shared by Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association, at least 5.191m bales reached the ginning factories up till Nov 30, 2024 across the country. The figure is 33pc less than the output achieved by the same period last season. At least 2.46m bales arrived at ginning units in Punjab and 2.73m bales in Sindh, depicting a fall of 34pc and 32pc, respectively, from production for the same period of the previous year. According to report, textile mills have purchased 4.472m bales from ginning factories while 2,000 bales have been exported abroad, which is 33 and a record 86pc less than same period of previous year, respectively. There are still 0.677m bales available for sale with ginning factories across country. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 2*)

Sugar mills staff, farmers clash near Rahim Yar Khan over 'deductions' in cane weight

Twelve people, including farmers, were injured during a fight outside a sugar mills in Jetha Battha. Reports said the clash opposite the Hamza Sugar Mills started when mills staff allegedly started deductions from the cane weight. When farmers put up resistance against the illegal practice, the mills staff allegedly started beating some farmers who ran for safety. Mill guards chased the farmers and beat them with clubs. After getting support from other farmers, farmers also attacked guards with clubs. After a severe fight, some mill officers and farmers held talks. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 2*)

Minister takes action on low prices of sugarcane

Minister for Industries, Production and National Food Security Rana Tanveer has taken notice of farmers' complaints regarding the low prices of sugarcane offered by sugar mills and sought a report from provincial cane commissioners on sugar prices. A report on the sugarcane crop estimates for 2024-25, presented to board by Ministry of National Food Security and Research, shows that sugarcane was grown on 1.194 million hectares in country. The expected production is likely to decline by 3.5 per cent, with the yield estimated at 71.630 tonnes per hectare in 2024-25 compared to 74.255 tonnes in 2023-24. As a result, sugarcane production is projected to be 85.500 million tonnes in 2024-25 against 87.638m tonnes in 2023-24, showing a decline of 2.4pc. The estimated per capita consumption of sugar during the 2021-24 period stands at 25.7kg per annum, compared to 26.4kg per annum in 2022-23. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 9*)

Disputes related to cotton cess: PCCC concerned over prolonged delays

Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC)'s governing body expressed serious concern over prolonged delays in addressing disputes related to cotton cess, which remained unresolved for past eight years. Governing body proposed immediate steps to address the cess issue, ensure the recovery of outstanding dues, and restore the financial stability of PCCC. In addition to addressing the cess disputes, the meeting also reviewed proposals to restructure the PCCC, aiming to improve its governance and operational framework. The goal is to enhance cotton R&D efforts and provide better support for cotton growers across country. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2024, Page 12*)

Growers' body bemoans delay in notification of sugar cane support price

The Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) said that unnecessary delay by Sindh government in announcing sugar cane's indicative price for 2024-25 season, despite commencement of cane crushing, was causing enormous financial losses to cane farmers. The Ittehad leaders who met here with SAI president Nawab Zubair Talpur in the chair accused the Sindh government of showing carelessness in the issuing the notification. The meeting said that millers were taking advantage of the delay in the issuance of notification and causing enormous losses to farmers. The cane's crushing was under way for last one month but the official price notification had not been issued yet, the meeting regretted. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2024, Page 15*)

PCGA data reveals sharp decline in cotton production

The latest figures released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) reveal a sharp decline in cotton production, with total output as of December 15, 2024, recorded at 5,367,334 bales. This represents a staggering 33.11 percent drop compared to the 8,023,707 bales produced in 2023, a significant blow to Pakistan's already struggling cotton sector. The situation in Punjab, the country's primary cotton-growing region, is particularly concerning. Cotton production in Punjab fell from 3,956,880 bales in 2023 to 2,593,949 bales in 2024, marking a 34.44 percent decline. In Sindh, production declined from 4,066,827 bales to 2,773,385 bales, a 31.80 percent reduction.

While slightly less severe than Punjab, the figures highlight the challenges facing the province's agricultural sector. In Balochistan, production reached 156,400 bales. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2024, Page 12*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Pakistan's food crops to be part of sustainability initiative

Three major crops of Pakistan — wheat, rice and maize — have been picked for a new global programme that aims at strengthening efforts to transform global agri-food systems, from farm to table, so that they are sustainable, nature positive, resilient, inclusive and pollution-free. The Food Systems Integrated Programme, funded by the Global Environment Facility, was launched jointly by the UN's FAO and International Fund for Agricultural Development at 16th Conference of Parties of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in Riyadh. The move will channel \$282 million in GEF financing and an estimated \$1.8 billion of co-financing towards global environmental benefits for biodiversity, land, and climate change, along with socioeconomic benefits of improved food security, nutrition, and livelihoods. The programme will target agri-food systems of four sectors — maize, rice and wheat crops; cocoa, palm oil and soy commodities; aquaculture in livestock across 32 countries, including Pakistan. The project will support the design and launch of 32 country projects over the next 12 months. Participating countries and communities will develop policies, value chains, practices, and investment plans for key agrifood sectors. The programme will promote aquaculture as an alternative source of protein and income and integrated landscape management as an alternative to unsustainable land use in producing wheat and maize. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 12*)

'Punjab meets wheat sowing target'

Punjab Agriculture Minister Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani claimed the province has achieved nearly 99 per cent of the wheat sowing target set for the current season. The provincial government had set a target of cultivating wheat on 16.5 million acres, he said, adding that wheat had already been sown on 16.25m acres according to the data provided by the agriculture department. In a statement regarding wheat cultivation, the minister attributed this success to the farmer-friendly initiatives of Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz as under her leadership, several schemes such as Kissan Card and the Green Tractor Programmes were launched for the benefit of agriculturists.

He said Kissan Cards were provided to farmers owning up to 12.5 acres of land. He added that 1,000 laser-levellers of land would be distributed through a transparent balloting among the growers who had sown wheat on land between 12.5 and 25 acres. Similarly, 1,000 tractors would be given free of cost through transparent balloting to the farmers with over 25 acres of wheat cultivation land. During the cultivation, adequate availability of DAP and urea was being ensured and the inputs were being offered at lower prices. The price of Punjab Seed Corporation's wheat seed bags has been reduced from Rs6,300 to Rs4,500 per bag, he concluded. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2024, Page 9*)

3.3 # Fruits

50m olive trees to be grown on 10m acres of land by 2026

Punjab govt has planned growing around 50m olive trees on 10m acres of land by year 2026. Pakistan has 80m wild and 5m planted olive trees currently. This was stated by Olive Growing Project Director Azeem Tariq while talking to APP. He said that olive farming in Pakistan will not only help in meeting local needs for edible oil but will also have many secondary benefits. In addition to their food and nutritional benefits, olive trees and fruits are also important from religious perspective, and their waste is useful.

Highlighting a milestone, Tariq mentioned that in 2022, Pakistan became the 19th member of the International Olive Council (IOC) and exported virgin and extra virgin olive oil worth \$1.9 million. With an annual expenditure of approximately \$4.5 billion on edible oil imports, Pakistan has launched olive production initiatives in collaboration with Italy, Spain, and China. (*Business Recorder, December 30th, 2024, Page 11*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Fisheries

Leasing govt land Punjab cabinet approves terms & conditions

Punjab cabinet, met with Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif in the chair accorded approval of the initiative aimed at promotion of shrimp farming and aquaculture in Punjab, besides the approval of terms and conditions for leasing government land. CM directed relevant authorities to take vigorous steps for the promotion shrimp farming across Punjab besides its export. (*Business Recorder, December 20th, 2024, Page 12*)

4.2 # Livestock

Over 60 cattle die after grazing on ‘poisonous’ grass

More than 60 cattle heads, including goats and sheep, died after grazing a piece of pasture allegedly sprayed with pesticides and drinking from a watercourse contaminated with poison near Digri town. Sindh Minister of Home Ziaul Hasan Lanjar ordered an inquiry into the incident to ascertain reasons leading to the death of animals in unusually large numbers, said officials. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 15*)

4.3 # Poultry

‘Capping of prices may cause closure of poultry farms’

Pakistan Poultry Association (Northern Region) has issued a strong warning to Punjab government that the capping of chicken meat prices could force many poultry farms to shutdown due to significant financial losses. Malik Muhammad Sharif, Vice Chairman of PPA, accused government of causing substantial damage to farmers by imposing an upper price ceiling on chicken meat. He called for an immediate removal of this cap and advocated for a return to free market practices. Currently, it accounts for 40% of meat consumed in country and employs around 1.5m people. Other contributing factors include Islamic festivals, farm diseases, load shedding, & inflation. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2024, Page 4*)

5 # TRADE

Trade deficit

According to the PBS data, imports grew 3.90pc to \$22.34bn in July-November FY25 from \$21.50bn over the last year. The imports dipped 3.83pc in November to \$4.39bn from \$4.52bn in the same month last year. Month-on-month, imports declined 3.83pc. The IMF revised its import forecast downward by \$3.3bn from \$60.5bn to \$57.2bn for the FY25, converging with the government's projection of \$ 57.3bn. In FY24, imports fell by 0.84pc to \$54.73bn compared to \$55.19bn in FY23. The trade deficit in July-November FY25 decelerated by 7.39pc to \$8.65bn from \$9.34bn over the last year. In November, the deficit decreased by 18.60pc to \$1.58bn from \$1.95bn last year. The trade gap contracted to \$24.08bn in FY24 from \$27.47bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

Minister, US CG discuss trade between Punjab and US

Provincial Minister for Industries and Commerce Chaudhry Shafay Hussain met US Consul General H.E. Kristin K. Hawkins. The meeting held in the committee room of the Punjab Board of Investment & Trade (PBIT) discussed the issues with regard to promoting trade relations between Punjab and the United States. The Provincial Minister informed about the steps being taken to promote investment and quality technical education. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2024, Page 4*)

Trade gap widens with Mideast on rising energy imports

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East widened 10.87pc to \$4.781 billion in the first four months of 2024-25 from \$4.312bn owing to the rise in petroleum imports from the region. According to State Bank of Pakistan, the soaring trade deficit would concern policymakers mainly because of rising petroleum products from the region in the current fiscal year. Petroleum consumption has risen in the current fiscal year because petroleum crude imports saw an over 16 pc growth in the first four months of FY25. In FY24, the trade imbalance with the Middle East narrowed by 20.47pc to \$13.014bn from \$16.365bn over the preceding year, mainly due to lower petroleum imports amid falling consumption of petroleum products owing to unprecedented high prices. Pakistan's exports to the Middle East rose 12.64pc to \$1.082bn in July-October from \$705.27m over the same period last year.

In FY24, the exports to the region grew 35.23pc to \$3.155bn compared to \$2.33bn in the corresponding period last year. At the same time, Pakistan's imports from the Middle East also saw an increase of 11.18pc to \$5.863bn in July-October from \$5.273bn over the same period last year. In FY24, the imports declined 13.53pc to \$16.16bn compared to \$18.69bn in the same period the preceding year. The demand for Pakistani products surged in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia and Qatar during the period under review. Exports to Saudi Arabia rose 14.23pc to \$245.57m in July-October from \$214.98m over the last year. In FY24, exports to Saudi Arabia rose 40.98pc to \$710.335m from \$503.851m in FY23.

The imports from the kingdom saw an increase of 18.03pc to \$1.332bn against \$1.625bn in the same period last year. Exports to UAE increased 17.94pc to \$737.55m in July-October from \$625.35m over the last year. In FY24, exports to the UAE surged 41.15pc to \$2.082bn from \$1.475bn in FY23, primarily due to a significant rise in exports to Dubai. Exports to Bahrain declined by 19.44pc to \$19.18m in 4MFY25 from \$23.81m in the corresponding period last year. The imports from Bahrain increased 155.39pc to \$71.69m in 4MFY25 from \$28.07m over the previous year. The exports to Kuwait saw a decline of 9.65pc to \$37.53m in 4MFY25 from \$41.54m over the previous year. However, the imports increased by 41.67pc to \$634.32m from \$447.73m over the previous year. Pakistan's exports to Qatar saw a negative growth of 21.57pc to \$43.06m in the first four months of the current fiscal year against \$54.92m over the corresponding months of last year. The imports, however, recorded a growth of 14.43pc to \$1.173bn during months under review as against \$1.025bn over corresponding months of last year. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 9*)

TDAP focuses on strengthening agro and food exports to Malaysia

The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), under Ministry of Commerce, hosted a high-level meeting with a nine-member Malaysian delegation led by Dato Syed Abu Hassan, as part of efforts to enhance bilateral trade in agro and food products. The meeting focused on strengthening trade ties, particularly in export of rice, meat, fruits, vegetables, and fisheries. (*Business Recorder, December 17th, 2024, Page 4*)

Trade gap with nine regional states widens

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries widened by 47.55 per cent to \$4.474 billion in the first five months of the current fiscal year from \$3.032bn in the corresponding period last year. Trade analysts attributed the widening gap to higher imports from China and India. During the months under review, China's imports increased the most, while Pakistan's exports to the same country decreased. In contrast to last year, exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka increased unusually. This growth has largely offset the decline in exports to China. The soaring deficit may cause policymakers big problems. In FY24, the trade deficit with these countries was \$9.506bn, up 49pc from \$6.382bn in the preceding year.

Exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka saw an upward trend in the July-November of FY25. Still, exports to other countries, especially China, continued to decline during the period, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. The value of Pakistan's exports to nine countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan, and the Maldives — rose 5.99pc to \$1.962bn in July-November FY25 from \$1.851bn over the previous year. Contrary to this, imports surged 31.8pc to \$6.436bn in 5MFY25 from \$4.883bn over the same period in the previous fiscal year. Further details show that imports from China grew by 32.40pc to \$6.276bn in 5MFY25 from \$4.740bn over the last year. In FY24, imports from China stood at \$13.506bn — up by 39.78pc from \$9.662bn over the previous year. The bulk

of imports in the region are sourced from China, followed partially by India. Pakistan's exports to China dipped 13.9pc to \$1.053bn in 5MFY25 from \$1.223bn over the same months in the preceding fiscal year.

Imports from India increased 6.19pc to \$94.78m in 5MFY25 from \$88.91m over the last year. In FY24, imports from India rose 8.866pc to \$206.89m — up from \$190.04m in the same period last year. Meanwhile, exports to India remained at \$0.375m in 5MFY25 against \$0.069m over the last year. Exports to India stood at \$3.669m in FY24 against \$0.329m in the same period the previous year. Exports to Afghanistan increased 73.37pc to \$406.67m in 5MFY25 from \$234.56m last year. Imports stood at \$8.53m against \$3.18m in 5MFY24. No data is available as most trade with Iran is conducted via informal channels. However, Pakistan has opted for barter trade amid the thriving smuggling of Iranian petroleum products and LPG via a porous border of Balochistan.

Exports to Bangladesh increased by 29.76pc to \$313.99m in 5MFY25 from \$241.96m. Imports grew 18pc to \$30.75m in 5MFY from \$26.06m over the last year. The increase resulted after the toppling of the Hasina government in Dhaka. Exports to Sri Lanka surged 25.3pc to \$183.89m in 5MFY25 from \$146.75m over the last year. This surge in exports to Sri Lanka occurred following the recovery of economic activity after the recession. Shipments to Nepal fell 34pc to \$0.96m from \$0.054m over the last year. Exports to Maldives rose 5.74pc to \$4.0m in 5MFY25 from \$3.83m over the last year. No trade was observed between Pakistan and Bhutan during the first five months of the current fiscal year. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2024, Page 9*)

Transit of goods from China to UAE via Pakistan begins

The transportation of goods, originating from China onwards to Dubai via Pakistan, started. The National Logistics Corporation (NLC) has launched the Multimodal Transports Internationaux Routiers (TIR) service linking China to the UAE via the Khunjerab Pass. The TIR, a global transit system, allows for sealed cargo to be shipped from a country of origin to the destination in sealed load compartments, which do not require manual inspection by customs authorities during transit. The first shipment arrived from Kashgar, China, to Sost via the Khunjerab Pass. The cargo has been sent to Gawadar from where it will be shipped to UAE. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2024, Page 3*)

TDAP holds Swat Trade Show

The Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) has organised Swat Trade Show 2024, from December -28- 29, 2024, at Nakreezay Event Complex, Mingora, Swat. It inaugurated by Muhammad Zubair Motiwala, Chief Executive of TDAP and Sheryar Taj, Secretary TDAP along with Muhammad Naseer, Senior Director General and Noman Basheer, Director General Peshawar also attended the inaugural session. (*Business Recorder, December 29th, 2024, Page 2*)

Pak-Iran trade can reach \$10bn mark: KATI

President of the Korangi Association of Trade and Industry (KATI), Junaid Naqi has emphasised that trade between Iran and Pakistan could reach up to \$10 billion, a significant increase from the current bilateral trade volume of \$2.4 billion. Naqi pointed out that Pakistan's share in the existing trade volume is one-third less than anticipated. He highlighted the impressive performance of Iran's trade, which has surpassed \$100 billion despite global sanctions underscoring potential for further collaboration between two neighbouring countries. (*Business Recorder, December 31st, 2024, Page 7*)

5.1 # Export

Exports to North America rise 9pc

Pakistan's merchandise exports to North America witnessed nearly nine per cent growth in the first four months of the current fiscal year compared to the previous year, mainly due to a surge in exports to the United States. According to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, the increase in exports to the region is mainly attributed to the rise in textile and clothing exports to the US. In FY24, Pakistan's exports to the region recorded a negative growth of 8.42pc to \$5.432 billion from \$5.93bn over the same period last year. Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$5.17bn in FY23, down 23.28pc from \$6.74bn in the previous fiscal year. The revival of exports to the region was recorded in the current fiscal year mainly due to a rise in exports of textiles and clothing following a slowdown in exports from Bangladesh and Vietnam.

In North America, Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$2.037bn in 4MFY25 from 1.862bn over the corresponding months of last year, indicating a growth of 9.39pc. According to PBS data, Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$5.17bn in FY23, which fell by 23.28pc from \$6.74bn over the previous fiscal year. Pakistan's exports to Canada recorded a paltry growth of 2.90pc to \$131.79m in 4MFY25 from \$128.07m over the corresponding months of last year. In FY24, Pakistan exports to Canada stood at \$389.164m against \$426.575m over the previous year, indicating a decline of 8.77pc.

The imports from North America stood at \$819.274m in 4MFY25 from \$639.609m over the previous year, showing an increase of 28pc. Maximum imports are from the USA. In the same region, Pakistan's export to Latin America stood at \$19.037m in 4MFY25 against \$14.953m over the previous year, indicating a marginal increase of 27pc. In FY24, the export value to the region stood at \$77.822m against \$53.087m over the previous year, showing an increase of 46.59pc. The imports from Latin America stood at \$1.241m in 4MFY25 against \$6.278m over the last year, showing a decline of 80pc.

Pakistan's exports to Central America stood at \$60.525m in 4MFY25 from \$60.581m over the previous year, a decline of 0.092pc. In Central America, Pakistan's main export destination is Mexico, which saw a paltry growth of 7.38pc to \$46.443m in 4MFY25 from \$43.250m over the corresponding months of last year. The imports from Central America stood at \$20.882m in 4MFY25 against \$22.848m over the same months last

year, showing a decline of 8.60pc. According to SBP data, Pakistan exports to South America—Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, etc. stood at \$111.714m in 4MFY25 from \$111.353m over corresponding months of last year, showing a paltry growth of 0.32pc.

In South America, Pakistan's exports to Argentina stood at \$14.376m in 4MFY25 from \$19.861m over the last year, a decline of 27.62pc. However, Pakistan's exports to Brazil declined by 0.77pc to \$44.727m this year from \$45.075m over the last year. Pakistan's exports to Uruguay stood at \$2.271m in 4MFY25 against \$2.636m over the last year, showing a decline of 13.84pc. According to SBP, the US remained Pakistan's biggest export destination in the region. The imports from South America stood at \$296.663m during 4MFY25 against \$158.786m over the previous year, showing an increase of 86.83pc. South America is the second biggest import destination in the continent after North America. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 9*)

Malaysia to revise tariffs on rice from Pakistan

Malaysia has agreed to revise its tariffs on Pakistani rice, aligning them with tariffs applied to rice imports from other sources. Prime Minister's Office said that PM Shehbaz expressed satisfaction over the amicable resolution of several trade-related issues identified during the Malaysian premier's recent visit. However, the statement did not specify which trade issues had been resolved. During his visit to Pakistan in October, PM Ibrahim had expressed interest in importing 100,000 tonnes of rice from Pakistan, besides meat. At that time, the Pakistani side highlighted that higher tariffs were rendering Pakistani rice uncompetitive, particularly compared to rice imported from India. In October, the price for 5 per cent broken white rice from India ranged from \$444-448 per tonne, while similar rice from Pakistan was priced at \$463-467 per tonne. Malaysian officials had also pointed out during discussions that Pakistani exporters were demanding higher prices for their rice, adding to the competitiveness challenge. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 12*)

Govt urged to check dwindling citrus exports

Pakistan set a moderate kinno export target of 250,000 tonnes for the current fiscal year, a significant fall of 50,000 tonnes over last year. According to Patron-in-Chief, All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters Association (PFVA), Waheed Ahmed, the production and quality of the fruit are being affected to an alarming extent due to climatic effects. During the last five years, the citrus exports halved to 250,000 tonnes due to smog and fog. Kinno season is also delayed due to prolonged heat and late arrival of cold weather while, on the other hand, production is expected to be less by 35pc than last year. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

Exports jump 13pc in first five months

Pakistan's merchandise exports slowed in November and fell into the single digit due to a reduction in international demand, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The growth momentum picked pace in July owing to improved

orders from the international community and stability in the exchange rate. The exports grew 11.83 per cent in July, followed by 16pc in August, 13.52pc in September, 10.64pc in October and 8.98pc in November. The exports reached \$2.80bn in November against \$2.57bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, exports dipped 5.97pc. In the first five months, export proceeds stood at \$13.69bn in July-November FY25 against \$12.16bn over the corresponding months of last year, showing an increase of 12.57pc. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

Jul-Nov exports up 12.57pc to \$13.69bn YoY

The country's exports increased by 12.57 per cent during the first five months (July-November) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$13.691 billion compared to \$12.162 billion during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24). The trade data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) showed that trade deficit narrowed by 7.39 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$8.651 billion compared to \$9.341 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. The country's imports increased by 3.90 per cent and stood at \$22.342 billion during the first five months of the current fiscal year compared to \$21.503 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. Pakistan's trade deficit in November 2024 narrowed by 18.60 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to \$1.589 billion as compared to a deficit of \$1.952 billion recorded in the same month last year, according to data released by the PBS.

Exports registered 8.98 per cent growth and stood at \$2.804 billion in November when compared to \$2.573 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. Imports registered 2.92 per cent decline and stood at \$4.393 billion in November when compared to \$4.525 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. On monthly basis, trade deficit widened by 0.19 per cent and stood at \$1.589 billion in November compared to a deficit of \$1.586 billion recorded in October 2024. Exports in November declined by 5.97 per cent to \$2.804 billion compared to \$2.982 billion in October 2024. Imports decreased by 3.83 per cent in November 2024 and stood at \$4.393 billion compared to \$4.568 billion in October 2024. (*Business Recorder, December 3rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Customs/export value of fruits revised

The Directorate General of Customs Valuation Karachi has revised the customs/export value of seasonal fruits (Kino, etc) from December 1, 2024 to May 15, 2025 to generate maximum revenue from exports of fruits during current winter season. In this regard, the directorate has issued a new valuation ruling (4 of 2024). The Export (freight on board) FOB Value of Mandarins (including tangerines and satsumas) and Kino are fixed at US\$410 per metric ton (MT). In case exports to Afghanistan, the export value has been fixed at \$310 per metric ton. According to the ruling, the customs export value for Kino would be applied as the Minimum Export Price. In the exercise of powers conferred under Section 25A read with Section 25 (15) of the Customs Act 1969, the Customs/Export value of Kino has been determined for the period December 1, 2024 to May 15 2025. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2024, Page 16*)

Textile exports jump to \$7.6bn

The textile and clothing exports increased 10.51 per cent in the first five months of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed. After contracting 3.09pc in the first month of 2024-25 in July, the textile exports maintained a bullish trend with robust growth of 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11pc in October, and 10.81pc in November, respectively. Many experts believe it would take a lot of struggle for the sector to compete with regional rivals due to the implementation of harsh taxation measures in the current fiscal year. Disruption in supply from Bangladesh has also boosted demand for Pakistani garments. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

Rice-driven food exports jump 20pc

Pakistan's raw food exports increased by 19.58 per cent to \$3.15 billion during July-November FY25 from \$2.64bn mainly owing to increased rice exports. Raw food exports have risen for the past 16 consecutive months despite unprecedented food inflation in the country's history. As a result, consumers nationwide are paying higher prices for food items because of supply and demand gaps. Rice has played a significant role in boosting overall food exports. In the first five months of FY25, rice exports surged by 35.40pc year-on-year to \$1.52 billion. Notably, the quantity of basmati rice shipments rose by 34.64pc and its value by 51.34pc. Exports of non-basmati rice increased 35.67pc in value and 35.92pc in quantity in 5MFY25.

Due to a sustained surge in export figures over the past two years, the average price of basmati rice has surged to Rs400 per kg from Rs150, restricting buying from domestic consumers. According to the PBS data, in the first five months, sugar exports reached 353,530 tonnes, compared to 33,101 tonnes in the same months last year, showing an increase of 968pc. Millers have mainly exported sugar to Afghanistan. Meat exports increased by 2.80pc in 5MFY25 compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The opening of new markets, participation of new companies in meat exports and approvals for additional slaughterhouses have contributed to this growth. Exports of vegetables, especially onions, have recorded growth of 24.88pc in July-Nov FY25 from a year ago. The export of fruits increased by 3.47pc during the months under review. The export of fish and fish products record a paltry growth of 0.21pc during the months under review. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2024, Page 9*)

Rising crude oil imports boost exports

Crude oil imports increased by 17.81 per cent in the first five months of FY25, which prompted local refineries to produce more petroleum products than anticipated and boost exports. Preliminary estimates suggest that the increase in local production of petroleum products and their exports in the past few months will likely boost economic growth in the current fiscal year. Data compiled by PBS showed that petroleum crude imports increased by 5.44pc in value and 17.81pc in quantity in the July-November FY25 from a year ago. In quantity, the crude import reached 3.974 million tonnes from 3.373m tonnes in the same period last year. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 9*)

Govt to establish 'FADAAP' to enhance exports

To enhance the exports and ensure the quality of fruits, vegetables, livestock, food and pharmaceutical products from Pakistan, the government has decided to establish Food Agriculture and Drug Administration Authority of Pakistan (FADAAP). To take the move forward, the second meeting of the stakeholders was held at the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) under the chairmanship of Dr Mukhtar Bharath, Prime Minister's Coordinator on National Health Services and Regulations. (*Business Recorder, December 27th, 2024, Page 2*)

5.2 # Import

Tea imports nosedive after minimum retail price

Due to the government's decision to impose a flat minimum retail price (MRP) of Rs1,200 per kg, the legal imports of black tea plunged 24 per cent year-on-year to \$38 million in November. Pakistan Tea Association chairman Muhammad Altaf asked FBR to take notice of the decline in official imports of tea during November, thus causing Rs1.79bn revenue loss in a single month as a quarter of tea imports have been diverted to illegal channels. After being imported into Pakistan in raw form, the tea is blended, mixed and processed before reaching consumers. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 9*)

Customs values on import of Cereal Foods in bulk packaging revised

Directorate General Customs Valuation Karachi has revised customs values on the import of Cereal Foods in bulk packaging from Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, USA, UK, Canada and other countries. According to a valuation ruling (1923 of 2024) issued by the directorate, Directorate General of Customs Valuation, Karachi received representation to include the values of Cereal Foods in bulk packaging. Therefore, in pursuance of analysis of import data, current market trends, the difference in market prices and customs values, an exercise for the determination of customs values of subject goods was initiated under Section 25 and 25A of the Customs Act 1969. (*Business Recorder, December 15th, 2024, Page 8*)

Meat, bone meal imported from Brazil: customs values revised

Directorate General Customs Valuation Karachi has revised customs values on the import of meat & bone meal (feed grade) from Brazil. In this regard, the directorate has issued a new valuation ruling (1924 of 2024). (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2024, Page 1*)

Govt mulls bulk imports via Gwadar port

The government is exploring the feasibility and strategy for routing 60 per cent of public sector imports, including wheat, fertiliser and sugar, through Gwadar Port. The proposal was discussed threadbare in a federal cabinet committee meeting chaired by Commerce Minister Jam Kamal. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

Record import pushes cotton price, sale down in Punjab

Local cotton growers and ginneries are expressing deep concern over the sharp decline in domestic cotton prices and sales, despite a significant drop in overall cotton production. This alarming situation is being attributed to record-high cotton imports from foreign markets. According to the Pakistan Cotton Ginneries Association (PCGA), up to Dec 15, the total ginned cotton in the country amounted to 5.36 million bales, reflecting a 33 per cent decrease compared to the same period last year. Punjab and Sindh, the two major cotton-producing provinces, witnessed sharper production decline of 34pc and 32pc, respectively. The report further reveals that textile mills have purchased only 4.7m bales during this period, marking a 34pc decrease year-on-year. Similarly, exports have plummeted by a staggering 84pc to 46,300 bales. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 2*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

International Cotton Association declares 84 textile mills 'defaulters'

The International Cotton Association (ICA) has placed at least 84 Pakistani textile mills on the defaulter's list and prohibited them from trading in the world cotton markets. The ICA website revealed that 84 Pakistani textile companies could not honour their cotton purchase agreements, and association members were asked not to enter into any deal with them. Most of these units are in Karachi and Lahore, and a few are from Faisalabad, Multan, Hyderabad and Kasur. Sources say some of these mills have closed or partially closed their operations. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 9*)

Wheat programme: Syngenta partners with Sindh govt

Syngenta Pakistan has partnered with the Sindh Government to launch a free herbicide initiative to enhance wheat cultivation and maximize yields. Syngenta Pakistan with support of Government of Sindh has launched a groundbreaking initiative to support wheat farmers in province with free-of-cost distribution of their leading herbicide product to 15,000 growers. This programme promises to enhance wheat cultivation and maximize yields across 45,000 acres of farmland. Syngenta Pakistan under its committed to support growers and to promote food security of Pakistan has partnered with the Government of Sindh to empower wheat growers during upcoming season for higher productivity and profitability. (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2024, Page 5*)

Non-essential medicines Deregulation helps boost pharma industry

The deregulation of non-essential medicines in early 2024 has brought significant positive changes to Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry, enabling companies to set prices for drugs not listed on the National Essential Medicines List (NEML). The policy aims to create a market-driven approach while addressing longstanding challenges in the sector. This shift has provided much-needed flexibility to pharmaceutical firms, allowing them to adjust prices to reflect market conditions. By aligning prices with inflation and currency fluctuations, companies have managed to stabilize production of medicines that were previously at risk of becoming unavailable due to pricing constraints. (*Business Recorder, December 27th, 2024, Page 2*)

Fertilizer plants: Subsidised gas supply fuels circular debt

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has been apprised that providing gas to fertilizer plants at subsidized rates has resulted in accumulation of circular debt. The issue of supply of gas to local fertilizer industry has also recently been discussed threadbare at a meeting of federal cabinet, when a report of a Cabinet Committee to ensure stability of urea prices in the market was tabled before the Federal Cabinet. (*Business Recorder, December 30th, 2024, Page 1*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Balochistan introduces one-window operation to ease investment

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti has announced the launch of a one-window operation to streamline investment processes and eliminate bureaucratic hurdles for the province's business community. Speaking at the Balochistan Business and Investment Conference at the Karachi Federation Chamber, CM Bugti reaffirmed his government's commitment to creating a business-friendly environment and assured investors of full support. In response to business community demands, the CM announced allocation of 10,000 acres for investment projects. He also disclosed establishment of the Balochistan Bank that said would soon be made operational. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 5*)

Sharjeel unveils Sindh govt's plans for jobs, investments

Senior Minister Sharjeel Anam Memon announced that the provincial government is working to create new employment opportunities, with global investors expressing interest in the agriculture, health, transport, and energy sectors. Addressing a press conference, he revealed plans to establish a 'health city' in the region, which would feature research laboratories and facilities for manufacturing medical equipment. "Investors have pledged to invest \$1 billion in the medical sector alone, including purchasing land in the Dhabeji Economic Zone and setting up industries," he said. The project is expected to create 50,000 jobs for local residents.

Mr Memon highlighted that foreign investors are also keen to invest in the agricultural sector. Acknowledging the high costs of fertilisers, seeds, and tube wells, he stated, "We aim to increase our agricultural productivity to match that of other nations." Significant interest has also been shown in the energy and transport sectors. "Meetings with investors are ongoing, and another meeting is scheduled for tomorrow," he said. He added that the Karachi Circular Railway remains a top priority for the provincial government. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 14*)

Chinese delegation meets CM Murad to explore investment opportunities in Sindh

A 15-member Chinese business delegation called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah to explore investment opportunities in the province's various sectors. The meeting highlighted the potential for collaboration in agriculture, renewable energy, livestock, and industrial production. The delegation, representing industries including medical technology, biochar, livestock, photovoltaic energy, and manufacturing,

expressed strong interest in forming partnerships with Sindh government. The visiting Chinese delegation discussed potential investments in several areas, including collaboration in medical technology and pharmaceuticals, advancements in biochar for sustainable agriculture, opportunities in livestock farming and export, and renewable energy projects focused on solar and wind power. The meeting concluded with the decision to form joint working groups for targeted projects. Chief Minister Shah assured the delegation of full support from provincial government, emphasising the importance of enhancing bilateral trade and investment. The discussions ended with optimism about future collaborations that promise economic prosperity for both Sindh and Chinese businesses. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 15*)

Foreign direct investment jumps by 31pc to \$1.1bn

Foreign direct investment (FDI) surged by over 31 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year. The State Bank's latest data showed that the country received \$1.123 billion FDI during July-Nov FY25 against an inflow of \$856m in the same period last year, an increase of 31.3pc or \$267 million. The country received \$219m FDI in November alone. The increase looks robust, but the inflow size is still disappointing, particularly in the wake of the government's laud effort to bring sizable foreign investment. The country-wise investment shows China remained the largest investor as inflows totalled \$469m in 5MFY25 against \$293m last year. The inflow from Hong Kong was \$115.7m compared to \$80.3m. Other important inflows were \$113m from UK and \$66m from Switzerland. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 9*)

Foreign investors Jul-Nov profit repatriation soars 112pc to \$1.129bn YoY

The repatriation of profits and dividends by foreign investors has soared by 112 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (FY25), driven by improving economic conditions and investor confidence. According to SBP foreign investors operating in Pakistan repatriated \$1.129 billion on account of profit and dividend in July-Nov of FY25 compared to \$ 523 million in the same period of last fiscal year (FY24), depicting an increase of \$597 million. A detailed analysis shows that a large amount of the repatriated funds was as return on FDI. Foreign investors sent \$1.074 billion abroad as FDI returns during July-Nov of FY25, marking a significant increase of 118 percent, or \$582 million, compared to \$492 million in the corresponding period of FY24. Meanwhile, returns on Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI) totaled \$54 million, up from \$41 million last year. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2024, Page 1*)

Jul-Nov FY25: Foreign borrowing, including \$1.03bn from IMF, falls YoY

The country borrowed \$2.667 billion from multiple financing sources during the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$4.285 billion borrowed during the same period of 2023-24, revealed the Economic Affairs Division (EAD)'s data. The \$2.667 billion does not include the first tranche of \$1.03 billion, received from IMF. If the IMF inflows is added, total inflows would reach \$3.697 billion during the first five months of the current fiscal year.

The data revealed that government has budgeted time deposits of \$9 billion including \$5 billion Kingdom of Saudi Arabia(KSA) time deposit and \$4 billion SAFE China deposit for the current fiscal year, however, no money was received in the first five months (July-November) under this head. There is also no mention of assistance from UAE. In the first week of December 2024, Saudi Arabia extended a \$3 billion deposit placed with Pakistan for another year, however, the EAD data covering the first five months, does not reflect it.

The government had budgeted \$19.393bn from multiple financing sources for the fiscal year 2024-25 including \$19.216bn loans and \$176.29m grants. However, this does not include any amount from IMF. The data further showed that the government had budgeted \$3.779bn from the foreign commercial banks for the fiscal year 2024-25. The country received \$200m under this head in September, but there is no mention from which foreign commercial bank the country received the loans. The country did not borrow from commercial banks in November, as per EAD data. The government has also budgeted \$1 billion from the issuance of bonds; however, as the country did not issue the bonds, hence no amount was received during the first five months of 2024-25.

The country received \$944.20 million in November from different sources mainly due to \$594.78 million received from ADB. The country received \$734.90m under the head of the “Naya Pakistan Certificate” during the first five months of current fiscal year 2024-25 including \$192.75 million in November. The country received \$1.464billion from multilaterals and \$268.80 million from bilateral during July-November 2024. The non-project aid was \$1.597billion including \$743.47 million for budgetary support and project aid was \$1.070 billion during the first five months of current fiscal year.

ADB disbursed \$767.83 million during the period under review compared to the budgeted \$1.651 billion for the fiscal year 2024-25. The IDA disbursed \$304.78 million in July-November against the budgeted \$1.525 billion for the fiscal year 2024-25 and IBRD \$110.28 million against the budgeted \$550.22 million. The IsDB (Short-term) disbursed \$119.25 million during the first five months of the current fiscal year against \$550.22 million for the fiscal year 2024-25 and AIIB disbursed \$34.25 million, while IFAD disbursed \$26.12 million against the budgeted \$40.45 million for the fiscal year 2024-25.

China disbursed \$98.21 million during July-November. The government has budgeted \$134.18 million from China for the fiscal year 2024-25. Saudi Arabia disbursed \$8.67 million in the first five months of fiscal year 2024-25 against the budgeted \$76.02 million for the entire fiscal year. The USA disbursed \$38.25 million in the first five months of the current fiscal year against the budgeted \$20.88 million for the fiscal year 2024-25. (*Business Recorder, December 24th, 2024, Page 1*)

UBL arranges \$300m loan for Pakistan

Amid the growing need for financing to meet external debt repayment obligations, the government has arranged a \$300 million loan from United Bank Ltd (UBL). UBL had arranged and financed a \$300m short-term loan for the government of Pakistan through its UAE and Bahrain branches. While the government is trying to arrange more financing for its debt servicing during the current fiscal year, it struggles to roll over the debt from China and other countries. UBL has one of the largest international presences among Pakistani banks, with international assets exceeding \$2.4 billion. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 9*)

7.1 # United Nations

Unicef seeks \$141m in aid for Pakistan

Unicef launched an appeal for \$140.9 million to provide life-saving humanitarian assistance to vulnerable populations in Pakistan including Afghan refugees. This includes \$41.6m for the nutrition emergency; \$59.8m for potential humanitarian responses; \$34.5m for refugee and host community support; and \$5m for disaster risk reduction, preparedness and resilience-building.

Pakistan also grapples with severe food insecurity and persistently high global acute malnutrition rates. About 16pc population is food insecure and lacks access to essential services, including health care and nutrition, further exacerbating nutritional challenges. Children, in particular, are extremely vulnerable to the effects of malnutrition, which can result in stunted growth, developmental issues and a weakened immune system. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 12*)

7.2 # Countries & Regions

S. Arabia rolls over \$3bn deposit for another year

Saudi Arabia has agreed to extend the \$3 billion deposit held in the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) for another year, providing critical support to Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves. The SBP announced that the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), on behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has rolled over the deposit, which was set to mature on Dec 5, 2024 (yesterday). The deposit will now remain with Pakistan for another year. The extension comes as a relief for the country's economic managers, who face a daunting \$26bn debt servicing obligation in the current fiscal year. Officials had recently acknowledged that some friendly nations were reluctant to roll over \$14bn in loans. However, the government is actively negotiating similar agreements with China and the UAE to secure further financial stability. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 9*)

Japan announces \$3.1m grant to procure polio vaccines

The Japanese government has announced a new \$3.1 million grant to procure essential oral polio vaccines as part of its continued support for polio eradication efforts in Pakistan. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 3*)

KP flood relief: Japan grants \$9.91m aid

Pakistan and Japan signed \$ 9.91 million grant-in-aid project aimed at improving the maternal and child health equipment in the flood-affected and surrounding areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (*Business Recorder, December 18th, Page 10*)

Polish co plans to double investments in Pakistan: envoy

Poland's Ambassador Maciej Pisarski said Poland Oil and Gas Company (POGC) had invested over \$450 million in Pakistan, signaling to double its investments in next few years. (*Business Recorder, December 21st, 2024, Page 2*)

7.3 # China

China becomes Pakistan's largest creditor with \$29bn loans

With almost \$29 billion in loans, China has become Pakistan's largest creditor. The nation, home to 240 million people, also ranks among the top three loan recipients from the IMF this year, according to a World Bank report. The World Bank's International Debt Report that Pakistan's high debt-to-export and debt-to-revenue ratios indicate a weakening fiscal position. The World Bank put Pakistan's total external debt (including IMF) at \$130.85bn in 2023, accounting for 352% of its total exports and 39pc of gross national income. Pakistan's total external debt servicing amounted to 43pc of total exports and 5pc of GNI. According to report, China had the single largest share of debt to Pakistan with 22pc share (about \$28.786bn), followed by World Bank's 18pc share (\$23.55bn) and Asian Development Bank's 15pc share (\$19.63bn). Saudi Arabia stood out as second largest bilateral lender to Pakistan with 7pc of total debt or about \$9.16bn.

Of the total external debt stock, about 45pc debt (\$58.88bn) belonged to the bilateral lenders and 46pc (about \$60.2bn) to multilaterals, while remaining 9pc debt belonged to private lenders led by bondholders with 8pc chunk. The report noted that of the total \$130.85bn, long-term external debt stocks stood at \$110.44bn, \$11.53bn IMF credit and allocations and \$8.878bn in short-term external debt. Total disbursements to Pakistan amounted to \$12.945bn in 2023, while total repayments touched \$14bn, including interest payments of \$4.33bn. According to the report, developing countries spent a record \$1.4 trillion to service their foreign debt as their interest costs climbed to a 20-year high in 2023. Interest payments surged by nearly a third to \$406bn, squeezing the budgets of many countries in critical areas such as health, education, and environment. Financial strain was fiercest for poorest and most vulnerable countries — those eligible to borrow from World Bank's International Development Association. These countries paid a record \$96.2bn to service their debt in 2023. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 9*)

Ahsan, GM China Energy International discuss 21 mega projects

Federal Minister Ahsan Iqbal held a meeting with general manager of China Energy International Group, in which, they discussed that the group has delivered 21 mega projects in Pakistan with a cumulative value of more than \$12 billion. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2024, Page 3*)

16-member Chinese team visits KATI: \$1m investment aimed at establishing ‘medical city’ in Karachi announced

In a significant boost to Pakistan-China economic cooperation, Meng Xiaowei, the leader of a 16-member Chinese trade delegation, announced a \$1 million investment to establish a medical city in Karachi. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2024, Page 4*)

Over 50 Chinese cos to invest \$1.4bn in Sindh projects

Over 50 Chinese companies are set to invest \$1.4 billion in Sindh’s various sectors, including healthcare, agriculture, food, energy, and fertilizers. During the press briefing, it was revealed that over 50 Chinese companies keen to invest in Sindh, with delegations from 12 companies already present in the initial phase. The Sindh government has assured foolproof security for all Chinese investors, creating a secure environment for economic collaboration.

Major investment included: Food Sector: In addition to healthcare investments, Idrees Gigi stated that Chinese companies are keen to explore opportunities in Pakistan’s food export sector. They aim to export commodities like beef, mutton, and seafood to China. He noted that China imports food items worth \$105 billion annually from countries like Brazil and Argentina. With Pakistan’s involvement, the food import volume could reach \$5 billion in the next two to three years. Fertilizer Production in Thar: A Chinese company plans to utilize advanced coal-powered technology to establish a fertilizer production facility on 200 acres of land in Thar. Agricultural and Livestock Development: Chinese companies will invest in fertilizers, seeds, and modern agricultural techniques to enhance productivity in Sindh’s agricultural sector. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2024, Page 12*)

Chinese firm to fund Pakistani startups

Gobi Partners, a leading pan-Asian venture capital firm, has officially announced the \$50m Techxila Fund II alongside the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Bank of Punjab (BoP). This strategic partnership aims to foster entrepreneurship and strengthen economic cooperation in Pakistan. The announcement has been made during the Pakistan Investment Conference in Shanghai, part of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz’s visit to China. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2024, Page 2*)

Pacts signed for key transport, energy projects in Sindh

The Chinese and Pakistani diplomats signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs) for five projects in transport, health, energy and agriculture, with support from the Sindh government. The agreements include local assembly of electric cars, manufacturing of solar panels, production of slow-release fertilisers, algae farming, and the establishment of a medical city in the Dhabeji Special Economic Zone. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2024, Page 14*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank

ADB to give \$86.2m for aviation fuel facility

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed an agreement to provide \$86.2 million in financing to a waste-based aviation fuel-producing plant in Sheikhpura. In a statement, the ADB said it signed with SAFCO Venture Holding Ltd “a landmark \$86.2m financial package to finance the construction and operation of a sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) facility in Sheikhpura — the first private sector-led SAF initiative in Asia and the Pacific. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 9*)

ADB upgrades growth projection for Pakistan

Notwithstanding its fears over the economic fallout of Trump’s policies in the Asian region, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) improved Pakistan’s growth forecast to 3 per cent for the current fiscal year against its September estimate of 2.8pc following IMF support and the nascent economic recovery. Meanwhile, the ADB has approved \$530 million in two additional loans to Pakistan to support its social protection programme and the ailing power sector. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 9*)

Climate funding: ADB commits Rs700bn, IFIs follow suit

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs was told that International Financial Institutions (IFIs) have agreed to provision of climate funding as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has allocated Rs700 billion for Pakistan to deal with the challenge of climate change. Additional Secretary Ministry of Climate Change Aisha Humera Chaudhry informed the NA panel that an ambitious \$300 billion annual Climate Fund Target has been set by 2035 in the recently concluded COP29 conference at Baku. Additionally, she revealed that a Rs500 million climate resilience project, supported by USAID and the private sector, has been rolled out, with WWF tasked with implementation. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2024, Page 1*)

\$300m ADB loan secured to strengthen social protection

The government has signed a \$330 million loan agreement with ADB to support the Integrated Social Protection Development Programme (ISPDP). The agreement aims to scale up poverty reduction and human development initiatives while strengthening climate change responsiveness. The Ministry of Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety provides an opportunity to streamline social protection scheme across the government’s different programmes. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 1*)

Punjab seeks \$210m ADB loan to fortify climate resilience

The Punjab government is seeking a loan of \$210 million from ADB for developing resilient environments and advancing municipal services in the province. The project will have the impact of improved urban environment and living conditions, natural ecosystems protected, climate change impacts mitigated, and gender equality fostered, says a project document released by the ADB. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 12*)

ADB urges steps for sustainable agri growth

A recent study by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has pointed out several policy measures necessary to promote sustainable agricultural development and improve farm performance in Pakistan. The study, ‘Adoption of Farm Mechanisation for Clean Air’, says policies such as the Enhancing Technology-based Agriculture and Marketing (ETAM) developed with ADB technical assistance — which promotes mechanisation, improved cultivation practices and marketing linkages — need to be scaled up and incorporated in the mainstream.

These measures contribute significantly to achieving the country’s agricultural development goals by boosting productivity, reducing post-harvest losses, and increasing farmers’ income. The targeted support mechanisms such as subsidies, credit facilities and capacity-building programmes could be designed to address the specific constraints and needs of smallholder farmers. The effect of participation in the ETAM programme is stronger on larger farms than on smallholding farms. The reduction in harvest losses is three times higher on larger farms than on smallholding farms. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2024, Page 9*)

8.2 # World Bank (WB)

WB okays \$240m for improving Karachi`s water, sewerage services

The World Bank (WB) has approved \$240 million financing for the second Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project (KWSSIP-2) to provide safely-managed water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services in Karachi. According to World Health Organisation, the safely managed drinking water is an improved water source that is accessible on premises, available when needed and free from faecal and priority chemical contamination. The project will provide water to nearly 16 million people and sanitation services to nearly 7.5 million people in Karachi by 2030. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2024, Page 13*)

World Bank, govt join hands to woo investment in Discos

The World Bank is currently working with the government to invite private sector participation in the distribution sector, starting with the best-performing power distribution companies (Discos). The success of this initial initiative could pave the way for the private sector participation in under-performing Discos. However, Discos’ poor financial health remains a significant barrier. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 9*)

2022 Sindh floods: WB approves extra \$450m financing for housing project

The World Bank approved \$450 million in additional financing for the Sindh Flood Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project to support resilient housing reconstruction for people in Sindh affected by the 2022 floods. The new support will build on the original \$500 million project, approved in December 2022, which has supported owner-driven and multi-hazard resilient reconstruction of over 410,000 core housing units. (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2024, Page 6*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

Uplift schemes worth Rs4.8bn okayed for city's UCs: Wahab

Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab announced that development schemes worth Rs4.8 billion have been approved for the city's union committees (UCs), with each UC to receive Rs20 million. (*The News, December 8th, 2024, Page 13*)

PDWP approves six schemes worth Rs15bn

The Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP – Punjab) has approved six development schemes with an estimated cost of Rs15.378 billion. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2024, Page 2*)

CDWP clears 15 projects worth Rs423bn - Pakistan

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has cleared 15 development projects worth Rs423 billion, including foreign financing of Rs78bn (about \$280 million). (*Dawn, December 16th, 2024, Page 3*)

PDWP approves 18 uplift schemes worth Rs4.9bn

The provincial development working party (PDWP – Sindh) has approved 18 schemes worth Rs 4.9 billion. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2024, Page 13*)

ECNEC clears seven schemes worth over Rs217bn

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) has approved seven development projects for Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), costing over Rs217 billion. The ECNEC approved the increase in scope of irrigation component of Sindh Emergency Flood Rehabilitation Project. It has cleared the revision of scope for Corridor Road Infrastructure (CAREC) project falling in Sindh and KP provinces. The meeting also approved the revised scope of Karachi Water Supply and Sewerage Improvement Project to be completed at the cost of Rs25.4 billion. (*Business Recorder, December 31st, 2024, Page 12*)

9.2 # Environmental Policy

Cabinet okays WB-funded clean air programme for Punjab

The Punjab cabinet has approved the Punjab Clean Air Programme (PCAP) with a World Bank's proposed \$300 million financing on favourable terms to check severe air pollution as certain urban areas are consistently experiencing hazardous conditions. Designating the P&D Board as coordination and monitoring agency for the PCAP, the cabinet allowed the board to approach the World Bank through the ministry of economic affairs for obtaining the concessional financing of \$300m for the programme. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2024, Page 2*)

Pakistan signs up for bloc advocating new fossil fuel treaty

Pakistan has joined a coalition spearheaded by small island Pacific states to push for a new treaty focused on managing an equitable phase-out of fossil fuels and financing a global just transition away from the threat of coal, oil and gas production, according to a statement issued by the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative. Pakistan is also the first South Asian state to engage with this group to “understand the contours of the proposal for a Fossil Fuel Treaty, aimed at fairly winding down fossil fuel production”.

This 16-strong group has members across four continents, including Vanuatu, Tuvalu, Tonga, Fiji, the Solomon Islands, Niue, Antigua and Barbuda, Timor-Leste, Palau, Colombia, Samoa, Nauru, the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, Pakistan, and the Bahamas. According to the statement posted on its official website, the Fossil Fuel Treaty proposal advocates for a transition rooted in equity and justice, with wealthy nations responsible for the highest emissions transitioning first and fastest while offering finance and technical support for developing and climate-vulnerable countries to transition away from fossil fuels. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2024, Page 3*)

9.3 # Neo – Liberal Policy

Govt eyes speedy outsourcing of major airports

The government is seeking expedited outsourcing of Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports and implementation of other G2G-based projects worth Rs29 billion with friendly countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Azerbaijan to show the tangible output of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC). The minister directed the SIFC secretary to prepare a focused agenda to review the timelines of Rs29bn worth of projects signed with Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, and Azerbaijan. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 9*)

Grand Health Alliance accuses Balochistan CM of ‘selling’ public hospitals

The Grand Health Alliance (GHA) accused Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti of selling a government hospital in Dera Bugti in a deal worth Rs850 million and announced that its leaders would appear before the Balochistan High Court to present their grievances. He also pointed out that while people were being recruited on a contractual basis in the health department, hundreds of doctors and nurses remained unemployed. He added that health department employees had been protesting for over a month, but negotiations had failed because the government was not serious about them. He urged the public to protect their hospitals from the government.

Dr Shah mentioned that the Balochistan High Court had summoned them, but they had not received any official notice, and they only learned about it through newspapers. “I will personally appear in court, and I urge doctors from all districts to come to Quetta and present their issues to the Balochistan High Court,” he said. In response to a question, he confirmed that the Grand Health Alliance’s protest was ongoing in a democratic manner and that it would continue. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2024, Page 5*)

3 Discos being readied for privatisation

The Financial Advisor is tasked to structure the transaction of three power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) as per the status of completed assignments and PC will seek approval from Cabinet Committee on Privatisation (CCoP) before taking the transaction to the market. Three DISCOs; i.e., Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Gujranwala Electric Power Company (GEPCO) and Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) will be privatised by end of current year. (*Business Recorder, December 31st, 2024, Page 1*)

Privatisation of loss-making SOEs: Gilani supports proposal

Chairman Senate Syed Yousuf Raza supported LCCI's proposals to restructure or privatize loss-making state-owned enterprises, such as Pakistan Post Office, Pakistan Steel Mills and PIA etc., which have consistently drained the national exchequer. (*Business Recorder, December 31st, 2024, Page 3*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Oct govt debt stock drops Rs456bn to Rs69.114trn MoM

The federal government's total debt stock decreased by Rs 456 billion in October 2024, largely attributed to the record profit transfer from the State SBP and continued debt servicing. According to the SBP's latest data released, the central government's total debt, including both domestic and external components, dropped to Rs 69.114 trillion in October 2024 from Rs 69.570 trillion in September 2024. Previously, the federal government's total debt surpassed the Rs 70 trillion mark in August, the reduction began after the SBP transferred an unprecedented profit of over Rs 3 trillion to the government. Borrowings from domestic resources decreased by Rs 305 billion, falling to Rs 47.231 trillion in October 2024 down from Rs 47.536 trillion in September 2024.

The external debt stock in rupee terms dropped by Rs 150 billion during October, standing at Rs 21.884 trillion at the end of the month compared to Rs 22.034 trillion in September 2024. The marginal movement in the exchange rate had a negligible impact on the external debt calculation, with the Weighted Average Customer Exchange Rate for the US dollar at Rs 277.7488 in September and Rs 277.8517 in October. However, the central government debt Year-to-Date basis is witnessed increasing trend. Despite the monthly decline, the cumulative debt for the federal government has risen by Rs 200 billion since June 2024, increasing from Rs 68.914 trillion to Rs 69.114 trillion in October 2024. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2024, Page 1*)

Q1 Punjab govt debt jumps 0.1pc

In the first quarter of the current fiscal year, Punjab's total government debt saw a slight surge of 0.1 percent (Rs 1.7 billion) compared to the end of June 2024. This increase is mainly on account of forex loss of around Rs 8 billion and decrease in net debt position amounting to Rs 6.3 billion. As per a report released by the Punjab Finance Ministry for the period between July 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025, at the end of the first quarter,

the debt stock of the Punjab government stood at Rs 1,679 billion, out of which Rs 1,677 billion is from external lenders and Rs 1.6 billion is from domestic sources.

These loans collectively are 2.49 percent of Punjab's Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP). Moreover, Punjab's GSDP saw a significant increase from Rs 57,476 to Rs 67,289 billion in the said period, a surge of Rs 9,813 billion. The report observed that Punjab's total debt stock surged from Rs 1,677.1 to Rs 1,678.8 during the first quarter of FY 2024-25. However, the domestic loans showed a decline from Rs 1.7 billion (reported in June 2024) to Rs 1.6 billion. In contrast, external loans witnessed a gain from Rs 1,675.4 billion (reported in June 2024) to Rs 1,678.8 billion. (*Business Recorder, December 8th, 2024, Page 1*)

KP debt rises 30pc to Rs680bn in one year

The debt stock of KP has surged by more than 28pc in a single year to almost Rs680 billion, resulting in deterioration of its risk indicators and seriously hampering its development potential. "The outstanding debt portfolio as of June 30, 2024 increased to Rs679.547bn, representing a 28.04pc (about Rs149bn) increase from the outstanding amount of Rs530.723bn as of June 30, 2023", conceded the KP's finance department in its latest debt statistics bulletin. It attributed the deterioration to two key factors, including the 14.31pc increase in net receipts (disbursements less principal repayments) or Rs75.968bn and the increase in foreign currency exchange rates, which had a weighted average impact of 13.73pc. Informed sources said the international lenders had indicated trouble for KP government. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2024, Page 9*)

10.1 # Food

Senate panel concerned about lack of oversight in food industry

The Senate Standing Committee on Science and Technology expressed serious concerns at the alarming lack of oversight in the food industry, particularly concerning dangerous products being sold to the public. The parliamentary panel met under the chairmanship of Kamil Ali Agha, which discussed pressing issues, including public health concerns, the digitalisation of government services, and the governance of scientific institutions. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2024, Page 2*)

Daily energy-only diet costs Rs18 in Balochistan, Rs32 in Sindh: World Food Programme

An analysis by the United Nations World Food Programme has estimated that the daily cost of an energy-only diet ranged from Rs18 per capita in rural Balochistan to Rs32 per capita in urban Sindh. The 'Fill the Nutrient Gap' (FNG) analysis released said nationally only 5 per cent of the population was unable to afford the costs of meeting energy needs. The analysis on Pakistan is part of case studies carried out in 13 countries. The FNG is a methodology that estimates the cost and affordability of nutritious diets and combines this with secondary data on local food systems and environments. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2024, Page 3*)

5 more modern mobile food testing labs launched in KP

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government launched five more state-of-the-art mobile food testing laboratories to provide safe and healthy food items to the people of the province. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 8*)

Difference in market, official rate of flour, other food items exposes govt failure in Karachi

The commissioner of Karachi has reduced the prices of various varieties of flour but retailers, instead of implementing the new rates, are charging more from consumers. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 13*)

10.2 # Food Scarcity

1.4m babies born into hunger in Pakistan in 2024

While climate shocks such as floods and droughts are increasingly threatening children's access to food, latest estimates show more than 1.4 million babies were born into hunger in Pakistan in 2024. Pakistan, one of the world's most climate vulnerable countries, saw the second highest number of babies born into hunger among countries with over 20 per cent under-nourishment, according to the analysis of Save the Children, an international non-governmental organisation, released.

At least 18.2 million children were born into hunger in 2024, or about 35 children a minute, with conflict and climate crises combining to drive at least 800,000 more children into hunger over the year, the analysis shows. According to the analysis, more than 21.5m children were born into hunger in 2001. In 2018, the number dropped to about 14.5m but then jumped up to 15.3m in 2019. In 2024, there were an estimated 18.2m undernourished births at a minimum.

According to UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) data, the number of children born into hunger rose by around 5 per cent in 2024 compared to a year earlier and 19pc more than the 15.3m recorded in 2019 when progress on tackling childhood hunger began to stall. In addition, there was a warning in early November of a strong likelihood that famine was imminent or already underway in the northern Gaza Strip and 345,000 people across Palestinian enclave could face catastrophic hunger in the coming months.

Occupied Palestinian territory is not included in annual FAO data on undernourishment, but the warning came from the leading global authority on hunger, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Global Head of Hunger and Nutrition at Save the Children, Hannah Stephenson, says "over 18 million newborns this year — 35 children a minute — were born into a world where hunger is their reality from their first moments of life. Hunger knows no boundaries. It erodes childhoods, drains children's energy and risks robbing them of their futures. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 3*)

10.3 # Inflation

Inflation hits 78-month low at 4.9pc in November

The annual inflation dropped to a six-and-a-half-year low of 4.9 per cent in November, down from 7.2pc in October, mainly due to a decrease in the prices of perishable food products. The headline inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), had slowed to 9.6pc in August, the first single-digit reading in more than three years, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The inflation has fallen since August, reaching its lowest point in November. The sharp deceleration in inflation is partly attributed to a high-base effect from last year, when annual inflation stood at 29.2pc in November 2023.

The CPI inflation crossed 10pc in November 2021 and remained in double digits for 33 consecutive months until July. In between, it peaked at 38pc in May 2023, driven by unprecedented food and energy prices. In the first five months of the current fiscal year (July-November), inflation averaged 7.88pc compared to 28.62pc during the same period last year. Analysts attributed the decline to lower global commodity prices, stable exchange rates and better agricultural outputs.

The IMF's forecast for CPI inflation was 12.7pc for FY25, now revised as 9.5pc, showing a downward revision of 3.2pc. In November, urban and rural inflation was 5.2pc and 4.3pc year-on-year. Food, core inflation Food inflation for November stood at 1.7pc in urban areas and -0.2pc in rural areas, whereas non-food inflation was 7.8pc in urban areas and 9.1pc in rural areas. Food inflation was 9.4pc in October 2021. Since then, food inflation has progressively increased, with the greatest level reported in May 2023 at 48.1pc. Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was recorded at 8.9pc in urban areas and 10.9pc in rural areas. In the past 12 months, core inflation in urban areas was recorded at 18.4pc in July 2023, before gradually declining to 8.9pc in November. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 9*)

10.4 # Poverty

Around 1.5m children begging in country's streets, HR day rally told

A rally was held here under the aegis of the Society for the Protection of Rights of the Child (Spare) in collaboration with the district administration to commemorate the Human Rights Day. Speaking at the rally, an official of the district administration, Abdul Khalig Baloch, said that a ban had already been imposed on child begging, adding that provincial social welfare department had been directed to pick up the children found begging and shift them to a rehabilitation centre. He highlighted the importance of giving children a second chance in life to help them become productive citizens. He said there was no precise data of such children but estimates suggested that 1.2m to 1.5m children were involved in begging on streets in the country. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2024, Page 15*)

Governor seeks bureaucrats, politicians` help to banish poverty

Balochistan Governor Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has urged the political leadership and bureaucracy to play their role in eradicating poverty in Balochistan and fulfilling the people's expectations. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 5*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

'Deforestation causing rise in temperatures'

Participants of a climate action programme held described deforestation the leading cause of rising temperatures in Matiari district, where degradation of riverine area forests significantly impacted biodiversity, human health, livelihoods and agriculture. They emphasised the need for collective action to revive forests and address climate change challenges. The programme was organised by the Sindh Community Foundation (SCF) to highlight climate change-related activities being undertaken by the Pakistan Youth Leadership Initiative (PYLI) with the support from British Council at H.T. Sorley Hall, Bhitshah. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 15*)

Haphazard dumping of solid waste causing environmental hazards in Sahiwal

For the past two decades, the metropolitan corporation has been dumping the city's solid waste near Jhal Road overhead bridge on the banks of Lower Bari Doab Canal. Sahiwal lacks a dedicated solid waste dumping site and Jhal Road area was selected randomly without any legal procedures. Reports indicate that a total of 192 kanals and 105 kanals of land on both banks of LBDC, canal bed as well as Lahore-Khanewal railway track are used to dump 140 tonne solid waste daily. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2024, Page 8*)

Massive fire destroys forestland along Kokhrapar border with India

A devastating fire engulfed the Kokhrapar, Somoon Somoon and other areas on the India-Pakistan border in an arid region of Sindh's Umerkot district, reducing over 20 square kilometers of forestland to ashes. The inferno, which started at approximately 8am, raged until 6pm, leaving behind destruction, despair, and significant loss of wildlife, livestock, livelihoods and fodder, plants, trees and bushes. Trees, many over a century old, were completely destroyed, along with habitat of countless birds, including partridges and peacocks, and other wildlife. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 3*)

11.1 # Atmosphere

Firm told to fill up 11 mining shafts to avoid any environmental hazard

The constitutional bench of the Sindh High Court has ordered a private firm to fill-up 11 mining shafts in Lakhra Coal field and ensure that the same will no more be an environmental hazard to public. Three-member bench ruled that such exercise must be completed within three months. A private firm, engaged in coal mining activities, had petitioned the SHC last year and submitted that another private company was illegally utilising/mining the area which formed part of lease granted to the petitioner. The constitutional bench in its order said that as per the reports, the private respondent was illegally carrying out mining activities. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 14*)

11.2 # Biodiversity

BAFL to give Rs8.5m for blind dolphins' protection

Bank Alfalah has announced funding of Rs. 8.5 million to protect the endangered Indus River blind dolphins, demonstrating its commitment to preserving Pakistan's unique wildlife heritage. After pledging to plant 100,000 trees to combat the impact of climate change, Bank Alfalah has partnered with WWF-Pakistan for another initiative, committing Rs 8.5 million to safeguard the endangered Indus River blind dolphins. The partnership will engage local communities by establishing five Community-based organizations (CBOs), train 35 fishers, establish 10 nature clubs, and empower 700 students to become conservation champions, ensuring a brighter future for this unique species. The Indus River dolphin, locally known as "Bhulan," faces an alarming decline and is listed as Endangered on the International Union for Conservation of Nature Red List. Its population has declined to a mere 20% of its historical range due to a confluence of threats such as habitat loss, entanglement in fishing nets, and pollution. (*Business Recorder, December 27th, 2024, Page 4*)

11.3 # Health

462 new HIV cases reported in Balochistan

Balochistan has reported 462 new cases of HIV/AIDS, raising the total number of registered HIV patients in the province to 2,823, an alarming situation, according to Dr Zulfiqar Baloch, the coordinator of the Balochistan AIDS Control Programme. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 3*)

'Medication errors claim over 500,000 lives annually'

Medication errors, compounded by the lack of trained pharmacists, are causing over 500,000 deaths annually in Pakistan, according to healthcare experts at a Medication Safety Conference. With only 5% of pharmacies employing qualified pharmacists and half of the country's hospitals operating without them, the situation poses a severe public health crisis. Chief Executive Officer of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP), Asim Rauf, admitted that like other nations, Pakistan struggles with medication errors involving adverse drug effects, incorrect dosages, and improper administration.

"Doctors are not trained to identify medication errors, but pharmacists are equipped to prevent harm. We are working to ensure that pharmacies have qualified pharmacists, as WHO emphasizes that medication errors are preventable," he stated. Rauf urged healthcare professionals to report adverse drug reactions to DRAP as part of pharmacovigilance measures. He added that unexplained deaths following drug administration should be thoroughly investigated. (*Business Recorder, December 8th, 2024, Page 5*)

KP reports over 1,000 new HIV cases in 2024

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province is grappling with an alarming rise in HIV infections, as new data from the provincial Health Department revealed that KP had reported 1,147

new cases this year. Among these, 250 infections were recorded in Peshawar, underscoring the city's vulnerability to the virus. According to the Health Department, the province's registered HIV patient count had surged to 8,356. Of these, 6,105 are men, 2,080 are women, and 171 are transgendered individuals. The virus has claimed 1,486 lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, with Peshawar reporting the highest number of fatalities. (*The News, December 15th, 2024, Page 12*)

Pakistan reports eighth case of mpox in 2024

Pakistan reported the year's eighth case of mpox in a passenger who arrived from Saudi Arabia. The 30-year-old labourer, who landed at the Islamabad Airport showed fever and other symptoms of the virus. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2024, Page 12*)

Foreign-funded initiative launched to support TB patients with depression

The Khyber Medical University Peshawar and Keele University UK have jointly launched a programme to offer psychiatric and psychological support to TB patients with depression in Pakistan and Afghanistan to ensure their adherence to the prescribed treatment plans. The initiative, Cognitive Therapy for Depression in Tuberculosis Treatment (Control), will implement strategies to deal with depression found among around 40 per cent TB patients in the region, who don't take their full six-month course and end up with MDR-TB, which is five times more dangerous than simple TB, according to Saeed Farooq, the programme head and a professor at Keele University, UK. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 8*)

KTH to have free kidney, liver and bone marrow transplant centres

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has decided to establish kidney, liver and bone marrow transplant centres at Khyber Teaching Hospital, Peshawar. Provincial cabinet in its last meeting, held on December 27, approved a seed money of Rs500m to establish the 300-bed facility at KTH. The centres will offer kidney, liver and bone marrow transplant services to patients free of cost. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 9*)

Polio tally climbs to 68 on cusp of new year

The country reported yet another case of wild poliovirus (WPV1), bringing the total number of cases this year to 68. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health confirmed that the case was detected in Dera Ismail Khan. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 1*)

With 149 outbreaks in Sindh, deadly measles makes a comeback

Measles — a highly contagious but vaccine-preventable viral infection — is rearing its ugly head again after affecting thousands of children and killing at least 150 children this year in the province, it has emerged. However, the health department data confirmed the deaths of 132 children this year with more than 13,000 suspected and 6,670 confirmed cases. Surprisingly, it shows only three deaths in Karachi. The year saw 149 outbreaks across the province with 18 outbreaks reported in Karachi alone. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 13*)

11.4 # Pollution

Dust pollution takes heavy toll on people as respiratory illness cases surge in Karachi

With the onset of winter, a sharp increase in respiratory illnesses has been witnessed in the metropolis in recent weeks as experts believe that the number of patients is significantly higher this year than the previous years. They attributed the situation to poor air quality, especially due to heavy dust pollution, currently affecting almost all city roads amid massive loss of green cover. The experts also linked it to growing poverty levels due to an unprecedented hike in prices of essential food and medicine, increasing people's vulnerability to disease and disability manifold. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 13*)

Pakistan among five countries with worst air quality: study

Pakistan ranks among the top five countries with the worst air quality, with cities like Islamabad and Peshawar experiencing significant public health risks due to air pollution. The country's average Air Quality Index (AQI) in 2023 was 160, with PM2.5 levels 14.7 times higher than the World Health Organization's (WHO) recommended limits. It was revealed in a recent study by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) titled 'Air Pollution's Deadly Impact on Health in Pakistan: A Deep Dive into PM2.5 Levels in Peshawar and Islamabad'. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2024, Page 4*)

Islamabad's residents breathe hazardous air: Pak-EPA

Over the past two months, Islamabad's air quality index has oscillated between red (unhealthy) and purple (very unhealthy), according to data shared by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA). Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Labs/National Environmental Quality Standards (NEQS) Director Dr Zaigham Abbas attributed this to large-scale construction projects and increasing vehicular emissions, resulting in hazardous air quality for the residents. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 4*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

'Poor nations bear the brunt of climate crisis created by rich ones'

Historically, the Global North has been primarily responsible for creating the climate crisis in the world through industrialisation, which has contributed most of the carbon in the atmosphere whereas the Global South, which had no role in causing the problem, suffers most from its effects, with limited resources hindering its ability to address the issue. This was said by Professor Emeritus Dr Partha Sen of the Delhi School of Economics at a lecture where he also urged the world, particularly the rich countries of the Global North, to take immediate action as time is ticking away.

The lecture, 'Climate Change in a Historical Setting and Countries of the Global South: Where are the Equity Considerations?' was organised by the Irtiqa Institute of Social Sciences under 'The 23rd Hamza Alavi Distinguished Lecture' series at Szabist. "Time is ticking away. The world must address the problem. Those who created the problem

cannot be allowed to go scot-free. The historical responsibility for creating the climate problem rests with the rich countries, the so-called Global North, a fact recognised in the climate change discussions. It is their dirty industrialisation that resulted in the overwhelming share of the carbon in the atmosphere,” Dr Sen said.

The Global South or the poorer countries, then, had no role to play in creating the climate problem, but had to cope with the effects of climate change. Their ability to tackle this is limited by the low levels of incomes, and the need to finance economic development, Dr Sen pointed out, adding that the Kyoto Protocol, under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), recognised the so-called common but differentiated responsibilities of the Global North and the Global South. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 13*)

Women get short end of climate change stick

The disaster has amplified pre-existing gender inequalities, leaving thousands of women with a disproportionate burden of survival. At the same time, they are also a heightened risk of gender-based violence (GBV), exacerbated by displacement and resource scarcity. Displacement, global food insecurity and socio-economic instability — in many cases fueled by climate change — exacerbate acts of violence against women, particularly in conflict and poverty-stricken contexts, making them among the most pressing issues of our time.

According to UN data, women comprise 80 per cent of those displaced by climate change and are 14 times more likely to die in a climate-induced disaster as compared to men. A 2023 study covering India, Pakistan, and Nepal, tracked nearly 195,000 girls and women aged 15-49 and found that a 1°C rise in average annual temperature correlated with more than a 6pc increase in incidents of physical and sexual violence.

A study showed that between 20pc to 50pc of people who experience extreme weather events can develop immediate symptoms like anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), sleep disruption, and suicidal thoughts. Around 10pc to 20pc may experience PTSD in the years following the disaster. Experts pointed out that anxiety, depression, and stress due to the loss of income and displacement not only affect the mental health of women and girls but also affect the mental health of men which, in turn, leads to an increase in GBV. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2024, Page 12*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

‘Wildfire in Thar killed 180 animals’

A wildfire that broke out on Dec 18 in Khokhrapar union council and parts of Achhro Thar killed 180 animals, burnt down crops, fodder and more than 50,000 trees on 20 acres. The fire that reportedly started near Indian border destroyed guar crop and trees of ber, kunbhat, kandi, rohira, and phogg. Thousands of birds, such as peacocks, partridges, doves, crows, and sparrows, were also killed in the blaze.

The affected communities, primarily reliant on livestock and arid farming, now faced serious challenge of rebuilding their lives. With grazing grounds and fodder destroyed, surviving livestock too was at risk of starvation. The villagers demanded immediate compensation for their losses, and sustainable solutions to prevent such incidents in future. The fire spread to adjacent areas in Achhro Thar, Sanghar district, causing devastation across vast expanses of land. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2024, Page 15*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Quake jolts Chaman, surrounding areas

A 5.1 magnitude earthquake struck the border district of Chaman and surrounding areas, causing panic among residents and forcing many to abandon their homes. According to officials, the tremor hit in the morning, compelling residents to leave their homes and seek shelter under the open sky in freezing temperatures. According to the Earthquake Monitoring Centre, the earthquake registered a magnitude of 5.1 on the Richter scale, and its depth was recorded at 20 kilometres, with epicentre located in southeastern Afghanistan. The earthquake was also felt in Qila Abdullah, Pishin, Toba Achakzai, Spin Buldak and some regions of Afghanistan. While no casualties or major financial damage were reported, officials said cracks had appeared in mud houses in Chaman and other areas. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2024, Page 3*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters block highway near Kalat over ‘abductions’

Several demonstrators, including women and children, blocked the Karachi-Quetta Highway (N-25) near Kalat, protesting the alleged abduction of Syed Agha Hussain Shah and his son, Syed Akhtar Shah. The protest caused severe traffic disruption, leaving hundreds of vehicles and thousands of passengers stranded for hours. Residents of the Esakaloo area in Kalat district began their protest early in the morning, demanding the immediate release of Syed Agha Hussain Shah, a respected elder, his son and other missing persons. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 5*)

Protests on Thal-Kohat Road banned

A jirga decided to ban protests on the Thal-Kohat Road. The decision was taken during a joint meeting of the local jirga and Kohat peace committee held in Hangu to take stock of the volatile situation in Kurram district. The jirga decided that the police would take strict action against the violators of the ban. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 8*)

Relatives protest killing of loved ones in ‘staged encounter’

Relatives of the two men, who had been killed in an alleged encounter in Orangi Town a couple of days ago, staged a protest outside the office of the West-SSP against the killings. The relatives were claiming that the youth were innocent and the encounter was ‘staged’. Their protest triggered a traffic chaos in adjoining areas. The police claimed that two “robbers” had entered the house of Mubarak Shah and started looting valuables, including Rs1.5 million. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2024, Page 14*)

Six canals project decried at big rally in Mirpurkhas

A big rally was taken out from Gymkhana Club to the local press club by leaders, activists and supporters of various nationalist parties against federal government's plan to dig six new canals to be fed through the Indus. Office-bearers and members of growers' bodies, legal fraternity, business and traders' organisations and civil society organisations also took part in rally. Participants held a sit-in outside press club during the protest, which was led by Sindh United Party (SUP) and Sindh Abadgar Board. Carrying banners and placards inscribed with slogans against "all anti-Sindh" projects, the participants marched through the main Hyderabad-Mirpurkhas road raising slogans against these projects, mainly the six canal plan. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 15*)

Mastung highway blocked as women protest gas loadshedding

A large number of women in Mastung staged a protest in sub-zero temperatures, blocking the Quetta-Karachi Highway to demand the restoration of gas pressure and end to loadshedding in the town and surrounding areas. Accompanied by their children, the demonstrators gathered outside deputy commissioner's house, placing barricades and boulders on highway, which brought traffic to a standstill. The protesters criticised district administration and Sui Southern Gas Company for their indifference, accusing officials of failing to address their concerns. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 5*)

Protesters threaten to blockade AJK today as talks stall

The Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee (JKJAAC), a coalition of civil society activists advocating for rights in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), announced that it would stage long marches towards the territory's entry points after talks with the government failed to yield results. A ministerial team engaged in initial negotiations with the JKJAAC's core committee in Muzaffarabad following a near-total wheel-jam and shutter-down strike across the region. However, no significant progress was made, following which the civil society coalition called on the public to continue observing a strike. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 12*)

Traders demand end to all 'illegal' taxes

An 'All-Pakistan Tajir Convention' held in Tando Allahyar announced that traders would force the government through a series of protest demonstrations and sit-ins to take back all 'illegal' taxes imposed on trade and business. The Central Organisation of Traders of Pakistan president Kashif Chaudhry said at the convention organised by Anjuman Tajiran-i-Tando Allahyar that the illegal taxes had resulted in multiplying problems and impediments for trade. He said that the conditions had come to such a pass that traders were forced to launch a massive protest campaign against government excesses. He said that representatives of traders from all the provinces and Azad Kashmir were in attendance at the gathering, which was aimed at uniting traders of the country at one platform so that they could launch an effective and result-oriented protest campaign. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 15*)

Mass protests force AJK govt to withdraw controversial law

After several days of protests that brought territory to a standstill, Azad Jammu and Kashmir government withdrew a controversial presidential ordinance & accepted several demands of Jammu Kashmir Joint Awami Action Committee coalition. Demonstrations, which gained momentum, saw thousands of people braving harsh weather to converge at several entry points, including Brarkot, Kohala, and Holar. After deliberations, protest leaders had announced plans to march towards Legislative Assembly in Muzaffarabad's Chattar neighbourhood. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page 1*)

STP stages big rally in Karachi against canals project

A big rally organised by the Sindh Taraqi-pasand Party (STP) gave a call for a strike on Dec 18 against the federal government's plan to build additional canals on the Indus River. STP chief Dr Qadir Magsi made the announcement while addressing a rally at Ghaghar Phatak. A large number of STP workers and supporters, including women and children, took out a procession from Ghaghar Phatak to the Karachi Press Club. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page 13*)

Eight held under ATA after SHO hit by a stone during protest

Police used force to bring to an end a nine hours long blockade of the Hyderabad-Sheikh Bhirkio road after some of the protesters started pelting stones, slightly injuring SHO of the Pabban police station. The protesters were demanding release of three youths who, might have been arrested by police of some other area, the injured police officer said. SHO Liaquat Sarki, along with his team, was busy persuading the protesters to end the blockade but some people attacked them with stones. The police baton-charged the protesters and later rounded up eight suspects. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page 15*)

Students, teachers protest closure of Angoor Adda border

Students and teachers staged a demonstration in the Angoor Adda Bazaar against the closure of the Pak-Afghan border point. A large number of students and teachers from various government and private schools and madressahs attended the protest. Maulana Tasbihullah Wazir, who led the protesters, demanded that the local people should be exempted from visa and passport condition, and should be allowed to move freely across border using their national identity cards & e-pass. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 8*)

Protesters block National Highway for hours over murder of teenage vendor

The killing of a teenage vendor at a weekly bazaar in Gulshan-i-Hadeed triggered hours-long blockade of main National Highway as heirs of the victim along with workers of political and nationalist parties blocked the key artery for vehicular traffic, demanding arrest of the killer. The protest was finally over at around 9pm after the police registered an FIR on complaint of victim's brother. The incident angered area residents and heirs of the victim who while carrying coffin of deceased blocked highway near Steel Town, and demanded immediate arrest of suspect. The sit-in was also joined by workers and leaders of different political and ethnic parties. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 14*)

Anti-Canal Action Committee takes out procession in Nawabshah

Activists of different political parties and growers' organisations took out a procession under banner of Anti-Canal Action Committee, an alliance against six canals project on Indus River, held a demonstration outside local press club to protest against government plans to go ahead with controversial project. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 15*)

City Council opposition stages protest demonstration

Opposition party representatives in City Council staged a protest demonstration against ruling PPP outside council premises, focusing on alleged discrimination in allocation of funds to Union Councils. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2024, Page 4*)

Protest held in Murree against `anti-people` development plan

Political parties and traders joined hands to express their opposition to the Murree Development Plan announced by the Punjab government, which they feared would cost the locals their jobs and livelihoods. Despite the imposition of Section 144 in Murree, a large number of people attended the demonstration, due to which all roads to Murree remained blocked for three to four hours. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 4*)

18-km march held against canal project

Scores of workers of the Sindh United Party, other nationalist parties and social organisations took out a march from Old Mirpur to Mirpurkhas to protest against federal government's project of building six new canals on Indus River. The protesters, carrying banners and placards and raising slogans, marched 18 kilometres on foot before arriving at local press club. The leaders demanded federal government cancel the controversial canals project in the larger interest of Sindhi people. They condemned the federal government for rendering Sindh barren and devastating its agricultural lands. Many anti-Sindh projects were launched by the government in past as well but masses rejected them outright through massive protests throughout the province and forced the government to take back the disputed projects. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 15*)

Protests in GB over arrest of political workers

Protest demonstrations were held in various districts of Gilgit-Baltistan against the arrest of political workers in the region. The protesters, who took to the streets in response to a call of the GB Awami Action Committee (AAC), chanted slogans against the arrests and alleged harassment of political leaders and demanded an immediate end to the alleged victimisation of political workers. The main protest was organised in Garibagh Gilgit which was attended by a large number of people. Smaller demonstrations were held in Skardu, Ghizer, Hunza, Nagar, Ghanche, and Diamer areas. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2024, Page 3*)

No let-up in protest marches, rallies in Sindh against Centre's canal project

Activists of Awami Porhiyat Tehreek and PPP-SB staged marches, farmers took out a procession while AT & JI leaders held pressers to join chorus of protests against construction of six new canals on Indus River. Tehreek's President G.N. Khoso

and other leaders, who led the protest, said in their speeches in Wahi Pandhi town where the march culminated that the six canals project was a deep conspiracy against Sindh and its people. They held Pakistan Peoples Party co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari responsible for the project and warned that over 50m Sindhis would not allow any attempt to deprive them of their water resources.

JI sees the project as grave threat to Sindh

Kashif Saeed Sheikh, emir of Jamaat-i-Islami's Sindh chapter, said at a press conference at National Press Club in Mehar that six canals project was a grave threat to the future of Sindh. He stressed that the Indus River was lifeline of Sindh's agriculture and warned that if the people of Sindh did not rise for their rights, the province's history, civilisation and agriculture would be destroyed. He held President Asif Ali Zardari responsible for the approval of several projects which were detrimental to Sindh's interests, including the Greater Thar Canal, and six canals on the Indus.

Farmers take to streets in Mirpurkhas

A large number of farmers and landowners took out a procession from railway station roundabout to local press club in protest against "conspiracy" to deprive Sindh of its just share in water through the construction of six new canals on the Indus.

AT condemns canals project

Awami Tehreek president Advocate Vasand Thari, flanked by key party leaders, told a press conference at Sukkur press club that their sister organisation, Sindhiyani Tehreek, was staging "Save Sindh Peaceful March" on Dec 22 in Sukkur to mobilise people to protect their rights, resources and dignity.

PPP-SB stages sit-in

Activists of Pakistan Peoples Party-Shaheed Bhutto (PPP-SB) took out a procession and staged a sit-in at Jacobabad press club to record protest against the construction of canals on the Indus. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2024, Page 15*)

Sulaimankhel tribe protests blocking of CNICs

Members of the Sulaimankhel tribe staged a protest demonstration against the National Database and Registration Authority for blocking their computerised national identity cards. Protest was organised by Naujawan Tehreek Sulaimankhel in response to Nadra's decision to suspend CNICs of the tribesmen. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2024, Page 8*)

Protest over water, power outages causes gridlock in Karachi's Nazimabad

Fed up with power and water shortage, residents blocked both tracks of one of the major roads in Nazimabad, which triggered a traffic mess in several localities. A large number of motorists and commuters remained stuck in the traffic jam on the road that connected Nazimabad with SITE area. There were reports that street criminals took advantage of the traffic mess and deprived a number of motorists and commuters of their cash, cell phones and other valuables. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2024, Page 13*)

Closure of Angoor Adda border protested

Wazir tribesmen demonstrated at Angoor Adda along the Pak-Afghan border in Lower South Waziristan district to demand reopening of the crossing point. The protesters also demanded exemption from the one-document regime, which has rendered people jobless and halted trade activities over the past 14 months. A large number of people from different walks of life participated in protest. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 8*)

Many Sindh towns shut in response to STP call for strike against six-canal project

Many Sindh towns, excepting Karachi and Hyderabad city, remained shut completely and some partially in response to call for strike issued by the Sindh STP in protest against construction of six canals on the Indus River. The party urged the government to roll back the controversial plan and save Sindh, otherwise, the protest would be widened. A complete strike was observed in Qasimabad and Hyderabad (rural) talukas where all bazaars remained closed while business remained as usual in rest of city. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2024, Page 15*)

KU teachers protest ‘illegal’ sacking of colleague

A large number of teachers at Karachi University (KU) observed a black day demanding restoration of services of their colleague Dr Munawwar Rasheed. Dr Rasheed, an associate professor at KU’s Centre of Excellence in Marine Biology (CEMB), has recently been unceremoniously removed from the service after remaining deprived of his salary for 20 months. He had been associated with KU since 2012. The day saw teachers wearing black armbands and placing banners in favour of their colleague across the campus. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2024, Page 14*)

Kurram educational institutions shut to protest road closure

All educational institutions were closed in the restive Kurram district in protest against the prolonged closure of roads. Shops, restaurants and tandoors also remain closed in the volatile region, causing shortage of food items and other necessities of life. The owners of educational institutions decided to close the schools till the roads were reopened to traffic. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2024, Page 8*)

Shangla residents block key road to protest terrorist attacks

Residents of Shangla blocked the major Bisham-Swat Road in Alpuri here against the recent deadly terrorist attacks against police and civilians. They later took out a “peace rally” on the call of the district bar association and Shangla Action Committee. The protesters were addressed by leaders of various political parties, who demanded early yet effective elimination of terrorists from the district for sustainable peace. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2024, Page 8*)

Rally in Wana seeks release of former MNA

Wazir tribesmen and Pashtun Tahaffuz Movement activists organised a rally in Wana to demand immediate release of former MNA Ali Wazir. The participants drawn from all walks of life, including tribal elders, political leaders and Ulema, chanted slogans,

demanding release of former lawmaker. They also carried placards and banners calling for an end to Ali Wazir's "illegal imprisonment". (*Dawn, December 21st, 2024, Page 8*)

Protests over water outages play havoc with city traffic

Multiple protests over a dozen points in Karachi caused traffic jams throughout the city, especially East and South districts. While the Jamaat-i-Islami organised demonstrations against water shortages on as many as 15 major arteries across the metropolis, residents in other areas took to streets over prolonged power cuts and gas loadshedding. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 13*)

Kurram residents stage sit-in against road closure

Residents of Kurram district launched a sit-in protest in a bid to demand the reopening of closed roads and the provision of food and medicines to the stranded population. The protest, held outside the Parachinar Press Club, was addressed by local tribal elders. They stated that the closure of main highway and Afghan border for the past two and a half months had left the population of Parachinar in dire straits, with many on verge of starvation. Labourers also joined the sit-in, bringing their pushcarts to highlight their plight. The protesters warned that if the roads were not immediately reopened and made safe, a major humanitarian crisis could unfold. (*The News, December 22nd, 2024, Page 3*)

Gwadar sit-in enters 7th day

Daily life in Gwadar has been significantly affected by a sit-in organized by workers and supporters of the All Parties Alliance at Marine Drive in the port city. The week-long demonstration is aimed at pressing for their demands, including the reopening of the border with Iran to facilitate trade in Iranian oil and other goods. The border has remained closed for several months due to government restrictions. The protest leaders have claimed that border trade is the primary source of livelihood for the local population, many of whom have been rendered jobless since the border closure. (*The News, December 22nd, 2024, Page 9*)

SUP holds hunger strike camp against canals on Indus River

The Sindh United Party (SUP) held a hunger strike camp outside the Hyderabad Press Club to protest against the proposed plan of constructing six canals on the River Indus. (*The News, December 22nd, 2024, Page 13*)

AT rally in Sukkur demands shelving of all federal projects undermining Sindh's interests

A big rally was organised by Awami Tehreek along with its women wing, Sindhyani Tahreek, against federal government's plan to draw six canals from the Indus River, amend Irsa Act, corporate farming and tribal system. The AT leaders also castigated the federal and Sindh governments for selling away Sindh's resources, lands and water to corporate sector under the guise of "development". They said the proposed amendments to the Irsa Act were aimed at facilitating diversion of Sindh's vital resources, including the Indus water. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2024, Page 15*)

Protest erupts over alleged police encounter in Lakki Marwat

The killing of a 22-year-old man in an alleged police encounter sparked a protest by local residents in the Manjiwala area. The protesters, including the relatives of the deceased, brought the body to Manjiwala Chowk and blocked the Peshawar-Karachi highway, disrupting vehicular traffic. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2024, Page 8*)

Protests held in Larkana, Sukkur over unbridled crime

A large number of people staged a sit-in on Shaikh Zayed Colony Road in protest against growing incidents of robberies and police failure to rein in street crime in the district. The protesters' leaders criticised lethargic attitude of police in clamping down on rising crime wave and recovering looted money, snatched motorcycles and mobile sets. People were increasingly feeling insecure. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2024, Page 15*)

Minister pacifies Tharis protesting against Thar Coal management

Sindh Energy Minister pacified residents of different villages of Thar who had been holding a sit-in in Islamkot for several days over alleged unfair attitude of the Thar Coal management towards them. Speaking to representatives of protesters, minister held out the assurance that their issues would be addressed soon. After listening their demands, he agreed that the private companies operating in the Tharparkar region should prefer locals in employment in all projects. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2024, Page 15*)

Angry tribesmen protest fresh killings in Kurram

Tribesmen held a protest along with the bodies of two passengers, who were killed in the Bagan area of Lower Kurram two days ago. It may be mentioned that a sit-in against the lawlessness and closure of roads in Kurram district is already under way and entered its fifth day. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

Farmers threaten march on capital if demands not met

The Kissan Ittehad has warned of a protest march on Islamabad if the wheat support price is not increased and the Punjab government does not reduce input costs. However, the farmer leaders failed to acknowledge that the government was not announcing minimum rates of sugarcane and wheat in wake of an agreement with IMF to end all subsidies and promote a free market economy. Kissan Ittehad Central Chairman said that Punjab government had given a free hand to flour mills to exploit farmers who were causing billions of rupees loss to agriculture economy. Flanked with Central President Mian Umair Masood, he said that the support price for wheat should be increased to Rs5,000 and for sugarcane to Rs400 per 40 kg. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2024, Page 9*)

Kashmiri activists demand implementation of UNSC resolution

Less than two weeks ahead of the 75th anniversary of a United Nations Security Council resolution on Jammu and Kashmir, an organisation of Kashmiri activists launched the 'Right to Self-Determination Campaign' from Neelum Valley as part of its consistent efforts to remind the international community, and the world body in particular, of their unfulfilled promises to the Kashmiri people. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2024, Page 4*)

Kurram sit-in against closure of roads enters 6th day

A sit-in against the closure of roads in Kurram district entered its sixth day as a government-sponsored jirga continued to hold talks with elders from both the sides to restore peace to the region. The Kurram tribesmen organised the sit-in in Parachinar amid a worsening shortage of daily-use items and medicines in the restive district. The protesters placed bodies of the two passengers, who were killed in Bagan area of lower Kurram, some three days ago, demanding immediate action against the killers. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2024, Page 8*)

MWM sit-in over Parachinar killings continues at Karachi's Numaish

A sit-in organised by Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen at the Numaish traffic intersection in protest over the killings in Parachinar continued for the second day. The MWM had given a country-wide call of protests to express solidarity with the people of Parachinar who were also staging a sit-in for the past six days. Both tracks of the main M.A. Jinnah Road, at Numaish, were closed as a camp was set up there to accommodate a large number of protesters including women and children. The sit-in saw the participation of leaders from various political and religious parties, as well as social figures. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2024, Page 13*)

LG members stage sit-in in Peshawar against 'denial' of uplift funds, powers

Hundreds of local government representatives, under the banner of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Local Council Association, staged a protest sit-in against the "denial" of development funds and empowerment of the local government system in the province. Members of the tehsil councils and village and neighbourhood councils, mostly from opposition parties, gathered at the Jinnah Park. They later marched on the GT Road and reached the Khyber Road, where they staged a sit-in outside the provincial assembly's building for more than an hour before dispersing peacefully. (*Dawn, December 27th, 2024, Page 8*)

Protests held in Rawalpindi to condemn dire situation in Parachinar

On the call of Tehreek-i-Nifaz-i-Fiqh-i-Jafariya (TNFJ) head Allama Agha Syed Hussain Maqdisi, the 'Day of Martyrs and the Oppressed' was observed to condemn the deteriorating and extremely dire situation in Parachinar. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2024, Page 4*)

Protests by MWM enter fourth day as roadblocks compound Karachi's traffic woes

As multiple sit-ins organised on the call of the Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) in protest over the killings in Parachinar continued in the metropolis for the fourth consecutive day, the blockade of several important thoroughfares led to a citywide traffic mess in all seven districts and caused hardship to people. Similar sit-ins were also staged in different cities of the province, including Hyderabad and Sukkur, where a large number of MWM workers and supporters, including women and children, were present despite cold weather. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2024, Page 13*)

No headway in talks with Gwadar protesters

A sit-in, being held in Gwadar by an All Parties Alliance for the past two weeks, as talks with the local administration remained inconclusive. The protesters said the sit-in would continue till the acceptance of their demands. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 5*)

Forest Department officials protest ACE action

Forest Department officials and employees staged a protest against a case registered by the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE), calling it baseless and fabricated. Protesters claimed the case, linked to a 2016 application filed by Zafar Iqbal, of 115 TDA, was part of a vendetta. They alleged that Zafar, associated with the timber mafia, had dozens of cases registered against him across different police stations. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 8*)

Gas, power outages protested in Charsadda, Swabi

Jamaat-i-Islami workers demonstrated at the Farooq-i-Azam Chowk in Charsadda against excessive power and gas outages in the district. The protesters were chanting slogans against Peshawar Electric Supply Company, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines and the district administration. They announced that in case the unscheduled power and gas outages didn't end within a week, they would stage a sit-in outside the offices of deputy commissioner, Pesco executive engineer and SNGPL for an indefinite period. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2024, Page 9*)

Shutter-down strike observed in Kashmore over lawlessness

A complete shutter-down strike is being observed in district Kashmore over poor law and order situation and recovery of kidnapped persons. The Hindu community of the area called this shutter-down strike. All main business centres and bazars, including Shahi Bazar, Muslim Bazar, Alamdar Chowk, Ladies Market, and small markets, remained close. The Hindu community stated that district Kashmore has already become a hub of kidnapping for ransom and dacoity and killings. They said that dacoits kidnapped, murdered, and snatched goods from innocent citizens in day light and managed to escape successfully. They demanded Sindh chief minister and IGP Sindh to take stern action against these dacoits and provide safety to citizens. (*Business Recorder, December 30th, 2024, Page 5*)

Traffic woes continue in Karachi as MWM protests enter second week

While the city police chief claimed that the blocked roads in the metropolis would be cleared, the protest sit-ins organised by the Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) at over a dozen locations continued for the seventh consecutive day, with no sign of ending by late night. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 13*)

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS RESOURCES

Unsustainable farming, forest loss driving Earth to ‘precipice’: UN

Unsustainable farming and deforestation are threatening the planet’s capacity to sustain human societies, the UN warned, on the eve of international talks on land degradation and desertification. Forest loss and degraded soils are reducing resilience to climate change and biodiversity loss, creating negative feedback loops and driving the world to a dangerous “precipice”, scientists said in a report jointly released with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). It comes as nearly 200 nations are expected to gather in Saudi Arabia for the UN desertification summit tasked with expanding restoration efforts to restore 1.5 billion hectares of degraded land this decade. The meeting is expected to be the largest conference on land to date and comes in the wake of a clutch of tough-fought UN negotiations on climate, biodiversity and plastics.

The new report highlights the heavy burden agriculture places on the planet and calls for a course correction. Farming is linked to 23 percent of greenhouse gas emissions, 80pc of deforestation and 70pc of fresh-water use. “The expansion of agricultural land may feed more people in the short term, but it can accelerate soil degradation, biodiversity loss, and thus food insecurity in the long term,” said Thiaw and Johan Rockstrom at the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research in the foreword. Beyond driving forest loss, industrialised agriculture uses huge quantities of chemicals in fertilisers and pesticides that create dead zones in waterways, harm biodiversity and increase emissions of planet-heating gases. Poor water management also depletes freshwater resources. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2024, Page 11*)

Land degradation undermining Earth’s capacity to sustain humanity: report

A new scientific report has revealed that seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been negatively impacted by unsustainable land use as land degradation is undermining the Earth’s capacity to sustain humanity. The report, “Stepping back from the precipice: Transforming land management to stay within planetary boundaries” released, draws on roughly 350 sources to examine land degradation and opportunities to act from a planetary boundaries perspective. Deforestation, urbanisation and unsustainable farming, however, are causing global land degradation at an unprecedented scale, threatening not only different Earth system components but human survival itself.

Moreover, the deterioration of forests and soils undermines the Earth’s capacity to cope with the climate and biodiversity crises, which in turn accelerate land degradation in a vicious, downward cycle of impacts. Conventional agriculture is leading culprit of land degradation, contributing to deforestation, soil erosion and pollution. Unsustainable irrigation practices deplete freshwater resources, while excessive use of nitrogen- and phosphorus-based fertilisers destabilise ecosystems, the report said.

Degraded soils lower crop yields and nutritional quality, directly impacting the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. Secondary effects include greater dependency on chemical inputs and increased land conversion for farming. The infamous Dust Bowl of the 1930s resulted from large-scale land-use changes and inadequate soil conservation. Land degradation hotspots today stem from intensive agricultural production and high irrigation demands, particularly in dry regions such as South Asia, northern China, US High Plains, California, and the Mediterranean. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 3*)

China to build world's largest hydropower dam in Tibet

China has approved the construction of what will be the world's largest hydropower dam, kicking off an ambitious project on the eastern rim of the Tibetan plateau that could affect millions downstream in India and Bangladesh. The dam, which will be located in the lower reaches of the Yarlung Zangbo River, could produce 300 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, according to an estimate provided by the Power Construction Corp of China in 2020. That would more than triple the 88.2 billion kWh designed capacity of the Three Gorges Dam, currently the world's largest, in central China. (*Business Recorder, December 27th, 2024, Page 5*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

India's rice stocks surge to record high

Rice inventories in India surged to a record high at the start of December, reaching more than five times the government's target and potentially boosting overseas shipments from world's biggest exporter of staple food. Rice reserves, including unmilled paddy, in state granaries totalled 44.1 million metric tons on Dec. 1 against a government target of 7.6 million tons, data compiled by the Food Corporation of India. Wheat stocks on Dec. 1 stood at 22.3 million tons against a targetted 13.8 million tons. Higher rice stocks would allow India to boost shipments without jeopardising domestic supplies. The expectation of a bumper crop prompted India to remove export curbs on all rice grades, except for broken rice. (*Business Recorder, December 14th, 2024, Page 8*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

31 crew of Thai fishing vessels held in Myanmar

More than 30 crew members of Thai fishing boats were detained in Myanmar waters after an encounter with other vessels which left one person dead. Suwat Donsakul, a naval commander in the southern province of Ranong, said one Thai fisherman drowned and "31 people were taken into Myanmar", without specifying who had detained them. Suwat said several Thai fishing boats were operating within Myanmar's waters at the time of the incident. The deceased "jumped into the water during the attack". Suwat said he had instructed local authorities to negotiate with their Myanmar counterparts to secure release of fishermen. Incident prompted Ranong provincial fisheries department

to issue a warning to fishers and boat owners to avoid areas near the Thai-Myanmar maritime border. Thai fishing boats have been illegally operating in Myanmar waters, raising tensions between the two countries. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 11*)

5 # TRADE

World trade outlook uncertain for 2025 on US tariff threats: UN

World trade faces an uncertain outlook in 2025 because of the threat of trade wars, after global commerce hit a new peak this year, the UN said. The UN trade and development agency UNCTAD said global exchanges of goods and services are expected to reach a record level of nearly \$33 trillion in 2024. This \$1 trillion increase, reflecting 3.3 percent annual growth, highlights resilience in global trade despite persistent challenges. But the report added that “the 2025 trade outlook is clouded by potential US policy shifts, including broader tariffs that could disrupt global value chains and impact key trading partners.” US President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to impose steeper tariffs on the country’s trade partners, whom he accuses of taking advantage of America’s open markets. (*Business Recorder, December 6th, 2024, Page 5*)

EU, South American bloc sign free trade accord; France, Italy oppose move

The European Union and South America’s Mercosur bloc dragged a long-delayed free trade deal over the line, announcing an agreement — at least in principle — on the pact that has deeply divided nations in Europe. In a press conference in Montevideo, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and her Mercosur counterparts heralded the deal after 25 years of talks, citing the need for free trade in the face of rising protectionism globally. The Mercosur bloc consists of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. European officials and proponents of the deal say that it offers a way to reduce reliance on trade with China as well as insulating EU nations from the impact of likely trade tariffs being threatened by US president-elect Donald Trump. European farmers have repeatedly protested against an EU-Mercosur deal that they say would lead to cheap imports of South American commodities, notably beef that do not meet the EU’s green and food safety standards. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 10*)

‘Intra-trade among Saarc countries remains in low range of 5pc’

The SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry has said intra-trade among SAARC countries continues to remain in the low range of just 5% of the total trade of the region while this trade in NAFTA region is over 40%, 68% in EU and 27% in ASEAN, laying emphasis on exploring the vast untapped trade potential in SAARC region. This was stated by speakers at a reception held in honour of SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s President Md Jashim Uddin, organized by SAARC CCI Vice President Mian Anjum Nisar. Md. Jashim Uddin observed that South Asia with its diversified resources and skilled workforce has tremendous potential to be fastest-growing exporting region to globe. He said that other regional associations like EU, ASIAN, & NAFTA are doing very well and they are getting regional benefits but it’s still unfortunate for us, that we couldn’t utilize SAARC till now. (*Business Recorder, December 15th, 2024, Page 1*)

Russia using bitcoin in foreign trade

Russian companies have begun using bitcoin and other digital currencies in international payments following legislative changes that allowed such use in order to counter Western sanctions, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said. Sanctions have complicated Russia's trade with its major partners such as China or Turkey, as local banks are extremely cautious with Russia-related transactions to avoid scrutiny from Western regulators. This year, Russia permitted the use of cryptocurrencies in foreign trade and has taken steps to make it legal to mine cryptocurrencies, including bitcoin. Russia is one of the global leaders in bitcoin mining. "As part of the experimental regime, it is possible to use bitcoins, which we had mined here in Russia (in foreign trade transactions)," Siluanov told. (*Business Recorder, December 26th, 2024, Page 1*)

5.1 # Exports

US unveils fresh export curbs targeting China's chip sector

The United States announced new export restrictions targeting China's ability to make advanced semiconductors, drawing swift condemnation from Beijing as competition deepens between the world's two biggest economies. The moves step up US efforts to tighten curbs on exports of state-of-the-art chips to China, aiming to hinder the country's ability to make chips that can be used in advanced weapons systems and in artificial intelligence. Beijing vowed to defend its interests, with a Chinese commerce ministry spokesperson saying US "abuses export control measures" and has "hindered normal economic and trade exchanges." (*Business Recorder, December 3rd, 2024, Page 12*)

Russia cuts export duty on peas, chickpeas and lentils

Russia, the world's top exporter of peas, announced a fixed 5 percent export duty on peas, chickpeas and lentils from Jan. 1, effectively lowering the duty by 30 percent after exports of pulses slowed and left large volumes unsold. The measure will help maintain a balanced ratio between exports and domestic consumption of legumes. Russian production of pulses has boomed in the last two years, with many farmers switching to more profitable pulses from wheat, currently the country's main agricultural export. In 2023, the country became the world's largest exporter of peas, exporting 2.9 million tons of peas and surpassing former top exporter Canada, mostly due to booming exports to China. Russia has also begun exporting pulses to India, another major consumer. (*Business Recorder, December 29th, 2024, Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

7 # INTERNATIONAL / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Biden meets Angolan leader in visit showcasing US investment in Africa

US President Joe Biden met his Angolan counterpart Joao Lourenco at start of a two-day visit to the African country centred on a major infrastructure project that showcases US investment on the continent, where rival China is boosting its own interests. The

two presidents were expected to discuss trade, security and investment, including on a massive project to rehabilitate a railway line that transports minerals from inland countries to Angolan port of Lobito for export. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 11*)

‘World on fire’: UN seeks \$47bn for aid in 2025

The UN appealed for more than \$47 billion to deliver vital aid next year in a world ravaged by surging conflicts and the climate crisis, but warned many in need would not be reached. “The world is on fire,” the United Nations’ new humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher told reporters in Geneva, acknowledging he was looking ahead to 2025 with “dread”. With brutal conflicts spiralling in places like Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine, and as climate change and extreme weather take an ever-heavier toll, the UN estimated that 305 million people globally will need some form of emergency assistance next year. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2024, Page 16*)

Gaza, West Bank: UN appeals for over \$4bn for aid

The UN appealed for over \$4 billion to provide desperately needed aid in war-ravaged Gaza and the West Bank next year, saying that the actual amount needed was far higher. The aim will be to provide assistance to “the entire population of Gaza, estimated at 2.1 million people, and 900,000 people in the West Bank,” the United Nations humanitarian agency said in its appeal. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2024, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIS)

8.1 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF, Egypt reach deal unlocking \$1.2bn

The International Monetary Fund said that it has reached a deal with Egyptian authorities allowing the country access to about \$1.2 billion. The funding access is subject to executive board approval. “The Egyptian authorities have continued to implement key policies to preserve macroeconomic stability, despite ongoing regional tensions that are causing a sharp decline in Suez Canal receipts,” said Ivanna Vladkova Hollar, who led the IMF mission involved in discussions with Egyptian authorities. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2024, Page 9*)

8.2 # World Bank

Developing countries face record foreign debt costs: WB

The world’s developing countries paid a record \$1.4 trillion to service their debts last year, as high lending rates pushed interest costs to a two-decade high, the World Bank said. The poorest countries paid out more than \$96 billion to service their debts, the Bank announced in its latest report on international debt, noting that interest costs alone amounted to almost \$35bn. The high cost of servicing foreign debt has pushed many developing countries to borrow more money from multilateral institutions like the World Bank, stretching their finances.

The World Bank report noted that high interest rates have been a key driver of the rising cost of servicing foreign debt, with the rate paid on loans from official creditors doubling to more than 4 per cent. Rates charged by private creditors were even worse, rising to a 15-year high of 6pc — an increase of more than 1 percentage point. Although interest rates have started to come down in many advanced economies, including the United States, overall, “they are expected to remain above the average that prevailed in the decade before Covid-19,” the Bank said. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 10*)

WB estimates total external debt stocks at \$130.847bn by end 2023

The World Bank (WB) has estimated Pakistan’s total external debt stocks at \$130.847 billion by end 2023 compared to \$127.708 billion by end-2022. The World Bank in its latest report, “International Debt Report 2024, noted that the South Asia region saw the biggest yearly increase in interest payments on public and publicly guaranteed (PPG) debt in 2023, rising 62 per cent to \$12.5 billion. The increase was most noticeable in Bangladesh and India, whose interest payments increased by more than 90per cent in 2023; Pakistan made the second-largest interest payments in the region.

For IDA-eligible countries, interest payments on total debt stock have tripled since 2013 to an all-time high of \$34.6 billion in 2023. Interest payments as a share of export earnings, a measure of the repayment capacity of a country, significantly increased by 1.6 percentage points in 2023 to 5.8 per cent, equivalent to an increase last recorded in 2005. Mozambique (38.3 per cent), Senegal (25.9 per cent), Pakistan (13.6 per cent), Kenya (12.8 per cent), and Dominica (10.3 per cent) had the highest ratios of interest payments on total debt to export earnings, a situation that has weakened their fiscal positions. The IMF repurchases for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), excluding Argentina, more than doubled in 2023 to \$12.2 billion, with the top repurchases registered from Egypt, Ukraine, and Pakistan.

The IMF repurchases outpaced the increase in new lending, which rose 12.9 per cent to \$14.8 billion in 2023, as new IMF lending has stabilised after the extraordinary support provided in 2020 during the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. In terms of volume, the top five LMIC recipients of personal remittances in 2023 were India at US\$119.5 billion, followed by Mexico (\$66.2 billion), the Philippines (\$39.1 billion), China (\$29.1 billion), and Pakistan (\$26.6 billion).

The World Bank report noted that total external debt stocks stood at \$130.847 billion by 2023 including the use of IMF credit and SDR allocations of \$11.532 billion against \$11.522 billion in 2022, long-term external debt of \$110.437 billion in 2023 against \$107.418 billion in 2022. Public and publicly guaranteed debt, by creditor and creditor type in 2023, including IMF credit includes 46per cent multilateral, (18 per cent World Bank, 15 per cent ADB, 13 per other multilateral), 45 per cent bilateral (22 per cent China, 7 per cent Saudi Arabia, 8 per cent other bilateral) and 9 per cent private (8 per

cent bondholders, 8 per cent multiple lenders). Short-term external debt stood at \$8.878 billion in 2023 compared to \$8.768 billion in 2022.

According to the data, external debt stocks as percentage of export was 352.4 in 2023 compared to 322.1 per cent in 2022, external debt stocks to GNI was 39.3 per cent in 2023 compared to 34.6 per cent in 2022, debt service as percentage of exports was 43.1 in 2023 compared to 42 per cent in 2022, gross national income (GNI) was 332,603.5 in 2023 compared to 369,540.0 in 2022. Of the long-term external debt stocks include; public and publically guaranteed debt \$92.990 billion in 2023 compared to \$91.220 billion in 2022. Commercial banks and others stood at \$440 million in 2023 compared to \$2.096 billion in 2022. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2024, Page 1*)

WB announces record \$100bn support for world's poorest countries

The World Bank announced that it had raised close to \$24 billion to provide loans and grants for some of the world's poorest nations, which it can leverage to generate a record \$100 billion in total spending power. Donor countries committed \$23.7 billion to replenish the bank's concessional lending arm, known as the International Development Association (IDA), a World Bank spokesperson told, marking a slight increase from the roughly \$23.5 billion pledged during the last fundraising round three years ago. The Bank can use this money to borrow on financial markets, allowing it to leverage the amount raised by around four times, unlocking around \$100 billion in new loans and grants, up from \$93 billion in 2021. "This funding will be deployed to support the 78 countries that need it most," World Bank President Ajay Banga said in a separate statement, referring to the developing countries that are eligible for IDA support. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2024, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

Sri Lanka records highest deflation since 1961

Sri Lanka's consumer prices fell by 2.1 per cent in November, the highest deflation rate recorded by the economically fragile island nation since 1961. An unprecedented financial crash in 2022 brought months of consumer goods shortages, with inflation peaking at nearly 70 per cent that year. Since then, a \$2.9 billion bailout loan from IMF, tax hikes and other austerity measures have slowly made headway in repairing the island's economy. Sri Lanka had already seen deflation of 0.8 per cent in October and 0.5 per cent in September. (*The News, December 1st, 2024, Page 17*)

10.1 # Food

Death toll in Nigeria food queue stampedes rises to 32

Nigerian police raised total death toll from two stampedes at food distribution centres to 32, as the country grappled with a spate of deadly crowd crushes at charity events.

Twenty-two people were killed as people queued outside a centre distributing rice in the southern town of Okija, police said, after previously warning “many” were dead as a result of the incident. And on the same day a separate stampede outside a church giving food to the “vulnerable and elderly” in the capital Abuja killed at least 10 people, prompting Nigeria’s President Bola Tinubu to clear his schedule in the wake of the twin tragedies. The stampedes outside food distribution centres come as Africa’s most populous country grapples with its worst economic crisis in a generation, with inflation soaring to 34.6 pc in November. (*Business Recorder, December 23rd, 2024, Page 9*)

War-torn Sudan faces ‘widening’ famine, UN warns

Famine has spread across war-torn Sudan and is projected to expand even further, a UN-backed assessment said, with refugee camps and displaced communities hit particularly hard. The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) review, which is used by UN agencies, determined that famine had spread to two additional displacement camps in the country’s west and parts of the south. Sudan is reeling from 20 months of fighting between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, led by rival generals, which have led to a dire humanitarian crisis.

The war since April 2023 has killed tens of thousands of people and uprooted 12 million, creating what the United Nations has called the world’s largest displacement crisis. In its latest report, the IPC said 638,000 people are now facing catastrophic levels of hunger, with a further 8.1 million on the brink of famine. Between December and May, the IPC said that 24.6 million people representing around half of Sudan’s population are projected to face “high levels of acute food insecurity”. The report said that this “marks an unprecedented deepening and widening of the food and nutrition crisis”. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2024, Page 11*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

UN plastic talks collapse as countries fail to agree targets

Countries negotiating a global treaty to curb plastic pollution failed to reach agreement with over 100 nations wanting to cap production while a handful of oil-producers were prepared only to target plastic waste. The fifth UN Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee meeting to yield a legally binding global treaty in Busan, South Korea, was meant to be the final one. However, countries remained far apart on the basic scope of a treaty, and could agree only to postpone key decisions to a future meeting. The most divisive issues included capping plastic production, managing plastic products and chemicals of concern, and financing to help developing countries implement the treaty. An option proposed by Panama, backed by over 100 countries, would have created a path for a global plastic production reduction target, while another proposal did not include production caps.

Had such divisions been overcome, the treaty would have been one of the most significant deals relating to environmental protection since the 2015 Paris Agreement.

The postponement comes just days after turbulent conclusion of the COP29 summit in Baku, Azerbaijan. At Baku, countries set a new global target for mobilising \$300 billion annually in climate finance, a deal deemed woefully insufficient by small island states and many developing countries. Plastic production is on track to triple by 2050, and microplastics have been found in air, fresh produce and even human breast milk. Chemicals of concern in plastics include more than 3,200 found according to a 2023 UN Environment Programme report, which said women and children were particularly susceptible to their toxicity. Despite the postponement, several negotiators expressed urgency to get back to talks. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2024, Page 11*)

2024 ‘certain’ to be hottest year on record, says EU monitor

This year is “effectively certain” to be the hottest on record and the first above a critical threshold to protect the planet from dangerously overheating, Europe’s climate monitor said. The new benchmark affirmed by the Copernicus Climate Change Service caps a year in which countries rich and poor were hammered by disasters that scientists have linked to humanity’s role in Earth’s rapid warming. Copernicus said an unprecedented spell of extraordinary heat had pushed average global temperatures so high between January and November that this year was sure to eclipse 2023 as the hottest yet.

“At this point, it is effectively certain that 2024 is going to be the warmest year on record,” the EU agency said in its monthly bulletin. Copernicus scientist Julien Nicolas said that 2025 would start with global temperatures “at near-record level” and this could persist for the next few months. In another grim milestone, 2024 will be the first calendar year 1.5 degrees Celsius hotter than before the industrial revolution when humanity started burning large amounts of fossil fuels. Copernicus said the year to date was almost 1.6C warmer than the pre-industrial era, taken as between 1850 and 1900.

The world is nowhere near on track. In October, the UN said the current direction of climate action would result in a catastrophic 3.1C of warming. Emissions from fossil fuels keep rising despite a global pledge to move the world away from coal, oil and gas. When burned, fossil fuels release greenhouse gases that raise global temperatures, with extra heat trapped in the oceans and atmosphere. Scientists say this warming effect disrupts climate patterns and the water cycle and makes extreme weather more frequent and ferocious. 2024 saw deadly flooding in Spain and Kenya, violent storms in United States and the Philippines, and severe drought and wildfires across South America.

In total, disasters caused \$310 billion in economic losses in 2024, Zurich-based insurance giant Swiss Re said this month. Developing countries are particularly vulnerable and by 2035 will need \$1.3 trillion a year in outside assistance for their energy transitions and to cope with climate change. At UN climate talks in November, big historic polluters most responsible for global warming committed to raising at least \$300 billion annually by 2035, an amount decried as woefully inadequate. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 10*)

11.1 # Health

Malaria mortality has returned to pre-Covid levels, says WHO

Malaria mortality has fallen back to levels seen before the Covid-19 crisis, the WHO said, but called for faster progress against the disease that killed nearly some 597,000 people last year. In a new report, the World Health Organisation estimated that there were 263 million cases of malaria worldwide in 2023 — 11 million more than a year earlier — while the death toll remained relatively stable. In 2020, disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic led to a sharp increase in malaria-related mortality, with an additional 55,000 deaths counted that year. Since then the total number of deaths from malaria, which is caused by a mosquito-borne parasite, has gradually shrunk, as has the mortality rate.

The estimated 2023 mortality rate in Africa of 52.4 deaths per 100,000 population at risk meanwhile still remains more than double the target level set by a global strategy for combatting malaria through 2030, WHO said, insisting “progress must be accelerated”. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 11*)

Women`s medical training ban threatens Afghan health sector

From her private hospital in Afghanistan`s capital, Doctor Najmussama Shefajo predicts a rise in maternal mortality rates “within 3 or 4 years”, following latest restrictions on women`s education. The Taliban`s supreme leader is reportedly behind a ban on women studying midwifery and nursing at training institutes across the country, already among worst in world for deaths in childbirth. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2024, Page 10*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

India, Pakistan share climate challenges but not solutions

Choking smog, scorching heat and ravaging floods — arch-rivals India and Pakistan share the same environmental challenges, offering a rare but unrealised opportunity for collaboration. The two countries, together making up a fifth of the world`s population, frequently blame each other for smog blustering into their respective territories. But this year, pollution reached record highs in Pakistan`s eastern and most populous province of Punjab, prompting the regional government to make a rare overture calling for “regional climate diplomacy”. India did not comment and whether they will unite to face a common foe remains to be seen, though experts agree the two countries cannot tackle climate threats in isolation. “We are geographically, environmentally and also culturally the same people and share the same climatic challenges,” said Abid Omar, founder of the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative (PAQI).

India and Pakistan are at the mercy of extreme weather that scientists say is increasing in frequency and severity, owing to climate change. Heatwaves have regularly surpassed 50 degrees Celsius, droughts plague farmers and monsoon rains are becoming more intense. Pakistan`s 2022 monsoon floods submerged a third of the country, claiming as many as 1,700 lives. A year later, more than 70 died in northeastern India

when a mountain lake burst its banks, a phenomenon becoming more common as glaciers melt at higher rates. This July more than 200 people were killed in the southern Indian state of Kerala when monsoon downpours caused landslides that buried tea plantations under tonnes of rock and soil. Climate disasters can be devastating in both countries, where nearly half of people live below the poverty line. Experts say the geopolitical rivalry runs so deep that distrust undercuts any prospects of cooperation. Both sides have taken anti-smog measures albeit unilaterally, without any coordination. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 12*)

Climate change impacts grip globe in 2024

Climate change impacts gripped the globe in 2024, with cascading effects from mountain peaks to ocean depths on communities, economies and the environment, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in a report. The year 2024 is set to be the warmest on record, capping a decade of unprecedented heat fuelled by human activities, according to the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) of the United Nations. Greenhouse gas levels continue to grow to record observed highs, locking in even more heat for the future. The WMO will publish the consolidated global temperature figure for 2024 in January and will release full State of the Global Climate 2024 report in March 2025. Every fraction of a degree of warming matters, and increases climate extremes, impacts and risks. Intense heat scorched dozens of countries, with temperatures topping 50 °C on a number of occasions. Wildfires wreaked devastation.

Throughout 2024, a series of reports from the WMO community highlighted the rapid pace of climate change and its far-reaching impacts on every aspect of sustainable development. Climate change intensified 26 of the 29 weather events studied by World Weather Attribution that killed at least 3700 people and displaced millions, according to a new report from World Weather Attribution and Climate Central. The report said that climate change added 41 days of dangerous heat in 2024, harming human health and ecosystems, according to the report titled, `When Risks Become Reality: Extreme Weather In 2024`. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 12*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Natural disasters caused \$310bn in economic losses in 2024: Swiss firm

In a year set to be declared the hottest on record, natural disasters caused \$310 billion in economic losses globally in 2024, as climate change increasingly takes its toll. The estimated economic losses from natural disasters were six-percent higher than in 2023, which currently stands as the hottest year ever, Zurich-based reinsurance giant said. The EU's climate monitor Copernicus said last month that 2024 would likely be more than 1.55 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 average the period before the industrial-scale burning of fossil fuels. This does not amount to a breach of the Paris climate accords, which strive to limit global warming to below 2C and preferably 1.5C, because that is measured over decades and not individual years. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 10*)

2024 sees devastating climate disasters across the globe

From tiny and impoverished Mayotte to oil-rich behemoth Saudi Arabia, prosperous European cities to overcrowded slums in Africa, nowhere was spared the devastating impact of supercharged climate disasters in 2024. This year is the hottest in history, with record-breaking temperatures in the atmosphere and oceans acting like fuel for extreme weather around the world. World Weather Attribution experts on how global warming influences extreme events, said nearly every disaster they analysed over the past 12 months was intensified by climate change. The World Weather Attribution is an academic collaboration studying extreme event attribution and calculations of the impact of climate change on extreme meteorological events such as heat waves, droughts, and storms.

Extreme heat

That was tragically evident in June when more than 1,300 people died during the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia where temperatures hit 51.8 degrees Celsius (125 degrees Fahrenheit). Extreme heat, sometimes dubbed the ‘silent killer’, also proved deadly in Thailand, India, and United States. Conditions were so intense in Mexico that howler monkeys dropped dead from the trees, while Pakistan kept millions of children at home as the mercury inched above 50C. Greece recorded its earliest ever heatwave, forcing the closure of its famed Acropolis and fanning terrible wildfires, at the outset of Europe’s hottest summer yet.

Massive floods

Climate change isn’t just sizzling temperatures — warmer oceans mean higher evaporation, and warmer air absorbs more moisture, a volatile recipe for heavy rainfall. In April, the United Arab Emirates received two years’ worth of rain in a single day, turning parts of the desert-state into a sea, and hobbling Dubai’s international airport. Kenya was barely out of a once-in-a-generation drought when the worst floods in decades delivered back-to-back disasters for the East African nation.

Four million people needed aid after historic flooding killed more than 1,500 people across West and Central Africa. Europe, most notably Spain, also suffered tremendous downpours that caused deadly flash flooding. Afghanistan, Russia, Brazil, China, Nepal, Uganda, India, Somalia, Pakistan, Burundi and the United States were among other countries that witnessed flooding in 2024.

Cyclones

Warmer ocean surfaces feed energy into tropical cyclones as they barrel toward land, whipping up fierce winds and their destructive potential. Major hurricanes pummelled the United States and Caribbean, most notably Milton, Beryl and Helene, in a 2024 season of above-average storm activity. The Philippines endured six major storms in

November alone, just two months after suffering Typhoon Yagi as it tore through Southeast Asia. In December, scientists said global warming had helped intensify Cyclone Chino to a Category 4 storm as it collided head-on with Mayotte, devastating France’s poorest overseas territory.

Droughts and wildfires

Some regions may be wetter as climate change shifts rainfall patterns, but others are becoming drier and more vulnerable to drought. The Americas suffered severe drought in 2024 and wildfires torched millions of hectares in the western United States, Canada, and the Amazon basin — usually one of Earth’s wettest places. Between January and September, more than 400,000 fires were recorded across South America, shrouding the continent in choking smoke. The World Food Programme in December said 26 million people across southern Africa were at risk of hunger as a months-long drought parched the impoverished region.

Economic toll

Extreme weather cost thousands of lives in 2024 and left countless more in desperate poverty. The lasting toll of such disasters is impossible to quantify. In terms of economic losses, Zurich-based reinsurance giant Swiss Re estimated the global damage bill at \$ 310 billion, a statement issued early December. Flooding in Europe, particularly in the Spanish province of Valencia, where over 200 people died in October, and hurricanes Helene and Milton drove up the cost, the company said. As of November 1, the United States had suffered 24 weather disasters in 2024 with losses exceeding \$1 billion each, government figures showed. Drought in Brazil cost its farming sector \$2.7 billion between June and August, while climatic challenges drove global wine production to its lowest level since 1961. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2024, Page 12*)

13.1 # Cyclone

Cyclone makes landfall in India’s south

Heavy rains lashed India’s south and a major airport shut operations as cyclone Fengal made landfall. Cyclones — the equivalent of hurricanes in the North Atlantic or typhoons in the northwestern Pacific — are a regular and deadly menace in the northern Indian Ocean. India’s weather bureau said “the forward sector of spiral bands associated with the cyclone has entered into the land” with a forecast of sustained winds of 70-80 kilometres an hour (43-50 miles per hour). Authorities also said there was a “moderate to high flash flood risk” over a few areas. Several areas in the state of Tamil Nadu were flooded while authorities extended closure of the main airport in capital city Chennai. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 11*)

Cyclone kills 19 in India and Sri Lanka

Cyclone Fengal killed at least 19 people in India and Sri Lanka and caused flooding in Tamil Nadu state and the Puducherry region after crossing India’s southern coast from

the Bay of Bengal. Puducherry had been hit by the heaviest 24-hour rainfall in 30 years, India's weather office said on social media. The cyclone left parts of the southern city of Chennai inundated. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2024, Page 11*)

Cyclone batters French Indian Ocean island of Mayotte

Cyclone Chido inflicted "catastrophic" damage on the French Indian Ocean territory of Mayotte, a senior local official said, battering the archipelago with winds of up to 220 kilometres per hour. "We don't know if anyone has been killed but, given the damage, it's likely," said Madi Madi Souf, head of the Mayotte mayors' association, who was himself in mainland France. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 10*)

'Several hundred' killed as Cyclone Chido devastates Mayotte

Local authorities said that the likely death toll from cyclone Chido's passage across Mayotte was "definitely several hundred" though the disruption means reaching an exact count will be difficult. Rescue workers and supplies are being rushed in by air and sea, but their efforts are likely to be hindered by damage to airports and electricity distribution in a territory where even clean drinking water was already subject to chronic shortages. A previous toll shared by a security source had confirmed only 14 deaths. (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2024, Page 9*)

Cyclone kills over 34 people in Mozambique

Cyclone Chido claimed at least 34 lives after sweeping across Mozambique, National Institute of Risk and Disaster Management announced. The cyclone first hit the country at the Cabo Delgado province, where 28 people were killed. Another 319 people were reported injured by the cyclone. Nearly 23,600 homes and 170 fishing boats were destroyed and 175,000 people affected by storm. Authorities in Mayotte struggled to stop hunger, disease and lawlessness from spreading in the French overseas territory after the weekend's devastating cyclone. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 11*)

13.2 # Drought

UN warns global drought carries \$300bn annual cost

Drought costs the world more than \$300 billion each year, the United Nations warned in a report published on the second day of international talks on desertification in Saudi Arabia. Fuelled by "human destruction of the environment", drought is projected to affect 75 pc of the world's population by 2050. It said the crisis has already exceeded \$307 billion in costs annually around the globe. "The economic cost of drought extends beyond immediate agricultural losses. It affects entire supply chains, reduces GDP, impacts livelihoods, and leads to hunger, unemployment, migration, and long-term human security challenges," Kavch Madani, a co-author of the UN report, said. The warning coincides with a 12-day meeting in Riyadh for the 16th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP16) under the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), seeking to protect and restore land and respond to drought amid ongoing climate change.

Up to 40pc of the world's land is degraded and droughts are becoming more frequent and severe, increasing by 29pc since 2000 due to climate change and unsustainable land management, the UN says. This threatens agriculture, water security, and the livelihoods of 1.8 billion people, with the poorest nations bearing the brunt. Scientists say drought worsens water and air quality and intensifies sand and dust storms, causing respiratory illnesses and disrupting electricity grids. An initial \$2.15 billion has been pledged to the partnership by Saudi Arabia, the Islamic Development Bank and the Opec Fund for International Development. The research found investment in natural capital the world's natural resources offered returns of \$1.40 to \$27 for every dollar spent within a couple of years. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2024, Page 11*)

New policy to mitigate impact of drought in South Asia

A drought risk management and mitigation strategy for South Asia has been prepared to improve early warning systems and strengthen drought risk management capacities. The strategy has been prepared by the Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC) in response to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand are the signatories of the international charter of ADPC, an organisation working for disaster risk reduction and building climate resilience in Asia-Pacific. The strategy has been developed to provide a comprehensive framework for reducing drought risk and mitigating its impacts across South Asia. The plan focused on enhancing early warning systems, strengthening institutional capacity and promoting sustainable practices to build resilience against droughts. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 3*)

World falls short of drought deal at talks in Riyadh

Negotiators failed to produce an agreement on how to respond to drought at Saudi-hosted UN talks, falling short of a hoped-for binding protocol addressing the scourge. The 12-day meeting of parties to United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), known as COP16. A press release said the parties, 196 countries and the European Union, had "made significant progress in laying the groundwork for a future global drought regime, which they intend to complete at COP17 in Mongolia in 2026".

The Riyadh talks came after the partial failure of biodiversity talks in Colombia, the failure to reach a UN deal on plastics pollution in South Korea, and a climate finance deal that disappointed developing nations at COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan. Droughts "fuelled by human destruction of the environment" cost the world more than \$300 billion each year, the UN said in a report published on December 3, the second day of the talks in Riyadh. Droughts are projected to affect 75pc of world's population by 2050. A delegate at COP16 from a country in Africa, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss private deliberations that African nations had hoped the talks would produce a binding protocol on drought. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2024, Page 11*)

13.4 # Flood

Massive floods displace over 122,000 in Malaysia

More than 122,000 people have been forced out of their homes as massive floods caused by relentless rains swept through Malaysia's northern states. The number surpassed the 118,000 evacuated during one of the country's worst flooding in 2014, and disaster officials feared it could rise further as there was no let-up in torrential downpours. The death toll remained at four recorded across Kelantan, Terengganu and Sarawak. Kelantan state bore the brunt of the flooding, accounting for 63 per cent of the 122,631 people evacuated, according to data from the National Disaster Management Agency. Nearly 35,000 people were evacuated in Terengganu, with the rest of the displacements reported from seven other states.

Nine killed in Thailand

Flooding driven by heavy rains in southern Thailand has killed nine people and displaced more than 13,000 as rescue teams using boats and jet skis worked to reach stranded residents. Local media footage showed residents wading through murky, chest-deep water and cars submerged in flooded streets. "Flooding across eight provinces in southern Thailand has affected 553,921 households and claimed nine lives, prompting agencies to mobilise urgent assistance. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2024, Page 12*)

13.5 # Storm

Power cuts, travel chaos as storm batters UK

Tens of thousands of people across the UK were left without power after Storm Darragh hit the country with strong winds and caused pre-Christmas travel disruption. The UK's Met Office had issued a rare red alert for high winds, covering parts of Wales and southwest England. The government warned three million people living in the area with a siren-like alert on their phones to stay at home. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2024, Page 12*)

Snowstorm cuts power to 170,000 in Bosnia

Parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina were cut off and more than 170,000 people were left without electricity due to a snowstorm gripping the region. Snowdrifts in some villages around Drvar are up to two metres (6.5 feet) high, and the heavy blizzard is making clearing efforts even more difficult. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2024, Page 10*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

Magnitude 7 quake strikes off California

A magnitude seven earthquake hit off the northern California coast, prompting a tsunami warning for a large stretch of the California and Oregon coasts. Some 4.7 million residents of California and Oregon were under the tsunami warning, the National Weather Service said. But the tsunami warning was lifted an hour later. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2024, Page 11*)

Six die as magnitude 7.4 quake hits Vanuatu

An earthquake of magnitude 7.4 struck Vanuatu's capital Port Vila, killing at least six people and damaging two reservoirs and a hospital, according to local media and the United Nations. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2024, Page 10*)

Strong quake strikes off battered Vanuatu

A magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck off the coast of Vanuatu, the US Geological Survey said, just days after a deadly 7.3-magnitude quake hit near the same island in the Pacific archipelago. The nation's main island, Efate, is still reeling from quake, which killed 12 people as it toppled concrete buildings in the capital and set off landslides. The latest quake occurred at a depth of 40 kilometres (25 miles) and was located some 30 kilometres west of the capital Port Vila. The first quake has damaged water supplies and resulted in halted operations at the capital's main shipping port. The South Pacific nation declared a seven-day state of emergency and a night-time curfew following the first quake, and had only announced it would lift a suspension on commercial flights, in an effort to restart its vital tourism industry. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2024, Page 11*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Tens of thousands go on strike at Volkswagen plants

Tens of thousands of Volkswagen workers went on strike in an escalating industrial dispute, with unions warning that the crisis-hit German auto giant is intent on making mass layoffs and closing factories. Waving signs reading "You want war, we are ready!" and the red flags of the powerful IG Metall Union, employees at plants across the country walked out over management plans to make huge cuts. VW has been hit hard by high manufacturing costs at home, a stuttering shift to electric vehicles and tough competition in key market China. It also said that it had taken "measures to guarantee urgent deliveries" during the strike action. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2024, Page 11*)

Police teargas farmers to halt 'march to Delhi'

Indian police fired tear gas at protesting farmers attempting to march to the capital New Delhi to push for their long-standing demand of guaranteed minimum prices for their crops. Farmers this week revived their dormant "March to Delhi" campaign seeking to channel the spirit of a dramatic protest in 2021, when they stormed the capital on tractors. To stop the farmers at Shambhu, about 200 kilometres north of the capital, police set up heavy barricades of concrete blocks and lines of razor wire in advance of the march. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: New Delhi (India)

Farmers gather as they call for a march towards India's capital during a protest at the Punjab- Haryana state Shambhu border. The farmers are attempting to march to the capital to push for their longstanding demand of guaranteed minimum prices for their crops.-AFP (*Dawn, December 9th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Paris (France)

Protesters hold a banner reading "let's disarm the Bollore empire" during a rally against the Bollore group on the occasion of Vivendi's extraordinary "mixed general assembly. Vivendi's shareholders are debating a proposal to split the French media giant into four entities. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Nairobi (Kenya)

Activists chant slogans and hold placards as they take part in a march against femicide and gender-based violence. Kenyan police teargassed march and detained a number of protesters even as more streamed onto streets. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2024, Page 10*)

Tractors block London streets as farmers protest tax change

Hundreds of tractors blocked streets in central London, the latest protest by farmers against the government after it ended an exemption from inheritance tax for agricultural families. The measure, dubbed the "tractor tax" by critics, was introduced by the government to boost funds to pay for strained public services, but farmers say it will destroy family farms and reduce food production. Farmers lined their tractors up close to the Houses of Parliament, hoping to convince the government to change course, or face escalating protests. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2024, Page 10*)

News Makers: Belgrade (Serbia):

Students of Belgrade University block the street for 15 minutes to pay their respects to the same number of victims of a fatal roof collapse at a railway station last month. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2024, Page 10*)

Tens of thousands protest in Serbian capital over fatal train station accident

Tens of thousands protested in Serbia's capital Belgrade to demand that leaders take responsibility for the collapse of a train station roof that killed 15 people last month. For over seven weeks, the Serbian government has been under pressure from nation-wide demonstrations following the deaths in the northern city of Novi Sad, with many protesters accusing authorities of corruption and inadequate oversight. According to the Ministry of Interior statement, up to 29,000 people attended the protest. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2024, Page 11*)

Pay rise demand ahead of christmas

Harrods' members of staff hold a banners and chant slogans during a demonstration asking for pay rise and better working conditions, outside Harrods department store on the last shopping weekend before Christmas. Hundreds of staff at London's luxury department store Harrods will walk out just days before Christmas, a union said in a row. (*Business Recorder, December 23rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Merry Christmas

Christian Syrians lift crosses as they rally in the Duweilaah area of Damascus to protest the burning of a Christmas tree near Hama in central Syria. Hundreds of demonstrators took to the streets in Christian areas, (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2024, Page 1*)

March against air pollution in North Macedonia's capital

Around a thousand people protested in Skopje against air pollution in North Macedonia's capital, which often ranks among the most polluted cities in Europe. It was the second such demonstration in less than a month in Skopje, with the previous march involving a slightly smaller crowd of several hundred people. The participants of march through downtown Skopje, dubbed "Come out for clean air", sought from the authorities to undertake immediate measures over the issue. "Our air is poison, our government is deaf" and "Future cannot be seen from smog" read some of the banners carried by the protesters. The march was organised by several environmental groups and citizens' initiatives. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2024, Page 10*)

Thousands protest in Turkey to demand bigger hike in minimum wage

Thousands of people protested in Turkey's capital Ankara to demand a bigger hike in the minimum wage, chanting slogans calling on the government to resign and waving the opposition and national flags. The government announced this week that the net monthly minimum wage in 2025 will be 22,104 Turkish lira (\$630.28), a 30 per cent increase from 2024. The government said the level was set to maintain fiscal discipline and continue the fight against inflation. Turkish workers, who have faced a persistent cost-of-living crisis with an expected annual inflation of 45 per cent this year, had called for an increase of around 70 per cent in total: a 45 per cent inflation adjustment and a 20 per cent welfare increase. (*The News, December 29th, 2024, Page 18*)

Kenya detains protesters rallying against recent abductions

Kenyan police forcibly detained several demonstrators and a senator, firing tear gas into small peaceful rallies protesting recent alleged abductions that have enraged the country. Security forces in the East African nation have been accused of carrying out several detentions since youth-led anti-government demonstrations in June and July. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2024, Page 10*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

Roots for Equity

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