

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

January, 2025

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

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

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ACIAR: Australian Center for International Agricultural Research

ADB: Asian Development Bank

AGEGA: Government Employees Grand Alliance

AIIB: Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank

APTMA: All Pakistan Textile Mills Association

BHU: Basic Health Units

BIEK: Board of Intermediate Education Karachi

BYC: Baloch Yakjehti Committee

CCI: Common Interests

CCI: Council of Common Interests

CCP: Competition Commission of Pakistan

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

CPEC: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPF: Country Partnership Framework

CPI: Consumer Price Index

CRBC: Chashma Right Bank Lift Canal

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FAPUASA: Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association

FDI: Foreign direct investment

FEE: Foreign Exchange Earning

FIA: Federal Investigation Agency

FPCCI: Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry

FUUAST: Arts, Science and Technology

GB: Gilgit Baltistan

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GCF: Green Climate Fund

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

HCFCs: Hydro-chlorofluorocarbons

IBRD: International Bank for Reconstruction and Development

IDA: International Development Association

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IJT: Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IP: Intellectual Property

IPO: Intellectual Property Organisation

IRC: International Rescue Committee

KBA: Karachi Bar Association

KCCI: Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry

KKH: Karakoram Highway

KPC: Karachi Press Club

LBA: Lahore Bar Association

LIP: Livestock Improvement Project

MIC: Methyl Isocyanate

MMIDSP: Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan

MNAs: Members of the National Assembly

MoM: Month-on-Month

MPP: Multi-Phase Programme

MUET: Mehran University of Engineering and Technology

NDMC: National Drought Monitoring Centre

NIH: National Institute of Health

NSDRA: National Seeds Development and Regulatory Authority

NWS: National Weather Service

ODA: Official Development Assistance

OGDCL: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited

OICCI: Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry

OMB: Office of Management and Budget

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PDMA: Provincial Disaster Management Authority

PDWP: Provincial Development Working Party

PECA: Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act

PFUJ: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

PHF: Pakistan Humanitarian Forum

PIC: Punjab Institute of Cardiology

PKI: Pakistan Kisan Ittehad

PMD: Pakistan Meteorological Department

PPA: Pakistan Pediatric Association

PSDP: Public Sector Development Programme

PTSDC: Professional Training and Skill Development Center

QESCO: Quetta Electric Supply Company

RSF: Rapid Support Forces

SAAPE: South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication

SAB: Sindh Abadgar Board

SAI: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SCA: Sindh Chamber of Agriculture

SCP: Sehat Card Plus

SDGs: Sustainable Development Goals

SEZs: Industrialisation, Special Economic Zones

SHC: Sindh High Court

SIDA: Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency

SMIU: Sindh Madressatul Islam University

TCP: Trading Corporation of Pakistan

UHC: Universal Healthcare

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UPPs: Ultra-Processed Products

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

VCs: Vice Chancellors

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WB: World Bank

WHO: World Health Organisation

WWA: World Weather Attribution

YoY: Year-on-Year

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- The participants at a conference, which Awami Tahreek had organised in the capital, unanimously rejected the construction of six new canals on the Indus River, amendments to Irsa Act, and corporate farming, labelling them as anti-state and anti-people projects. They demanded that these lands be distributed among landless farmers to spark genuine agricultural and economic growth.
- Constructing six new canals and promoting corporate farming pose an existential threat to Sindh's agriculture, environment, and livelihoods, endangering fragile Indus delta and worsening food insecurity across Pakistan.
- The speakers alleged that 52,713 acres of land in Sindh have already been handed over to the military-affiliated Green Pakistan Initiative Private Ltd. In Umerkot district alone, an additional 14,000 acres have been allocated to the same company. Similarly, over 45,000 acres in Bhakkar, Khushab and Sahiwal have been transferred to the Green Pakistan Initiative.
- SAU Vice Chancellor Dr Altaf Siyal said that 67pc women were practically part of agriculture sector.
- The Vice Chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam, Dr. Fateh Marri, highlighted that 35% of Pakistan's land is affected by salinity.
- Dr. Marri pointed out that 6.3 million hectares of land in Pakistan suffer from salinity and water-logging, stressing the need to implement innovative agricultural practices.
- Sindh government has postponed for a month decision on allotment of 14,008 acres of state land to an army-backed company for corporate agriculture farming.
- Last year, the caretaker Sindh government had formally entered into an agreement with army-backed company to give it over 52,000 acres of land in six districts for corporate farming.
- The KBA demanded to review and reverse the lease decision, emphasising that state land should be allocated primarily for the benefit of local communities.
- A convention of lawyers strongly condemned the leasing of state land to corporate entities and urged the provincial government to immediately take back its decisions in this regard.
- It expressed serious concern over the lease of 14,008 acres of state land and the proposed allocation of an additional 190,195 acres across several districts in Sindh.
- The resolution demanded an immediate halt to land leasing and insisted that land should be allocated to benefit local farmers and communities instead.

- The Sindh Bar Council has strongly condemned the “illegal lease” of 14,008 acres of state land to the green corporate initiative for corporate agriculture farming in Umerkot area as well as the proposed allocation of 190,195 acres of land in other districts of the province by the government.
- The constitution bars the armed forces from carrying out corporate farming or any other commercial business directly or indirectly through some affiliated commercial entities.
- The bar members also condemned illegal extraction of water from the Indus River, especially the proposed construction of six highly disputed canals without Sindh’s consent in glaring violation of the Constitution.
- Landowners in Usta Muhammad and other areas of Balochistan have expressed fears that their standing crops might get destroyed due to reduced water supply from Sindh.
- A ‘water conference’ organised by the Sindh Hari Committee has rejected the federal government’s plan of constructing six canals on Indus River.
- Pakistan’s agriculture sector, which contributes 23 percent to the country’s GDP, is facing severe challenges due to water scarcity.
- The Quetta Electric Supply Company (Qesco) has completed the first phase of its project to convert agricultural tube well connections to solar energy in the Quetta and Pishin districts.
- High Court Bar Associations of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and district bar associations of the lower region of the province have slammed federal government’s “unconstitutional” action to build “strategic” canals on Indus River and warned further cuts to the river will render Sindh barren.
- Sea intrusion had already destroyed 3.5m acres of land in Indus Delta and groundwater continued to be saline.
- This convention condemned illegal actions of Sindh’s government to lease out thousands of acres of land to corporate entities in name of “corporate farming”.
- Constitution did not permit armed forces to engage in corporate farming [or other businesses] directly or indirectly [through affiliated entities].
- Water and Power Development Authority Chairman Lt. General Sajjad Ghani (retd), revealed that the construction of new dams in the country will make an additional 10 million acre feet of water available within the next 4-5 years.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The Punjab government has delivered 3,973 tractors under the “Punjab Green Tractor Programme” with 9,500 farmers selected through a lottery for the initiative.
- Wheat sowing across 16.2 million acres in the province has been completed.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- The Sindh Abadgar Board focused on production losses in paddy, cotton, sesame and sugar cane crops in kharif 2024.
- Mian Zahid Hussain said that SIFC's focus on agricultural development is yielding promising results which is commendable.
- In 2024, rice exports to Saudi Arabia alone have increased by 25 percent, while total exports have reached US four billion dollars, which are planned to increase to US five billion dollars in 2025.
- More than \$10 billion in foreign exchange is earned in the form of exports from the cotton obtained from the agricultural sector.
- Pakistan is the fourth largest cotton producer in world, fifth in milk production, sixth in wheat and sugarcane production, eleventh in rice production, sixteenth in meat production, and fourth largest producer of apricot production.
- The country has limited means for water shortage, expensive agricultural inputs, and poor seed quality are also matters of concern.
- Due to the increasing use of pesticides and other chemicals, the water salinity problem is becoming serious.
- Land erosion is a significant problem in rainfed areas, which reduces fertility, land area, agricultural production, forest area, and water reserves.
- The year 2024 marked a significant crisis for Pakistan's cotton industry, with production and cultivation targets falling substantially short.
- The target for cotton cultivation in 2024 was set at 3.118m hectares. However, only 1.974m hectares were cultivated, achieving a mere 63% of the target."
- In the absence of a support price, many farmers opted for more lucrative crops such as sugarcane and maize, further reducing area under cotton cultivation.
- The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Senior Vice President Saqib Fayyaz Magoon revealed that cotton production has plummeted from 14 million bales to just 5 million bales over the past decade, forcing Pakistan to import cotton worth \$2-3 billion annually.
- Sindh government has decided not to fix sugar cane crop's indicative price for year 2024-25 to comply with an IMF condition calling 'open market' in this sector.
- Last year Sindh agriculture department had fixed Rs425 per 40kg for 2023-24 season. "Until recently, a price of Rs400 per 40kg was being offered, & then it was dropped to Rs350 per 40kg. But again there are vibes that millers may further reduce it,"
- As part of the structural reforms being implemented under the ongoing IMF programme, the Ministry of National Food Security is working on developing a comprehensive strategy for deregulating the wheat market while ensuring strategic reserves and food security.

- Amid the private sector calls for an open market to foster competition, the provincial governments have supported the deregulation of the wheat market

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has urged the private sector to invest in the livestock and fisheries sectors to achieve substantial returns and enhance the national economy.
- Two important MoUs were signed to strengthen the livestock and agriculture sectors in Sindh.
- A \$137 million project has recently been secured from the World Bank to strengthen livestock sector.
- Provincial Minister for Education Syed Sardar Ali Shah noted the significant shift since 1947 when 65% of the country’s economy depended on crops and 35% on livestock. Today, livestock contributes 65%, while agriculture accounts for 35%.

TRADE

- Pakistan’s merchandise exports grew 11.83pc in July, followed by 16pc in August, 13.52pc in September, 10.64pc in October, 8.98pc in November and 0.67pc in December.
- The exports reached \$2.84bn in December against \$2.82bn in the corresponding month last year.
- Imports grew 6.11pc to \$27.73bn in July-December FY25 from \$26.14bn over the last year.
- The trade deficit in July-December FY25 increased by 0.18pc to \$11.17bn from \$11.15bn over the last year.
- The country’s exports increased by 10.52 percent during the first half (July-December) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$16.561 billion compared to \$14.985bn during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24).
- Trade deficit widened by 46.61 percent on a month-on-month (MoM) basis in December 2024 and 34.80 percent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with the Middle East increased 3.86 per cent to \$5.514 billion in the first five months of 2024-25 from \$5.309bn due to the rise in petroleum imports.
- Pakistan’s trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries surged by 43.22 per cent to \$5.328 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year (FY25) from \$3.72bn in the corresponding period last year.
- Trading Corporation of Pakistan has received 11 bids for the supply of 50,000 metric tons of long grain white rice to Bangladesh.

- Exports to European countries grew 8.62 per cent in the first five months of the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$3.866 billion in July-November FY25 from \$3.559bn in the same period last year.
- Pakistan's exports to five Central Asian countries witnessed a negative growth of 8.87 percent during first five months of the current fiscal year over the corresponding period last year.
- The textile and clothing exports grew 9.67 percent in the first half of 2024-25.
- Pakistan's raw food exports grew 13.83% to \$3.96bn in July-December 2024-25 compared to \$3.48bn in the same period last year, Exports of foodstuffs have risen for past 17 months despite unprecedented food inflation.
- In the first half of FY25, rice exports rose by 14.50pc year-on-year to \$1.87bn in value.
- Exports of non-textile products rose 12.83 per cent to \$7.56 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year from \$6.70bn in the same period last year.
- Non-textile product exports rose 24.95pc to \$14.02bn in FY24 from \$11.22bn the preceding year.
- Rice exports reached a record high of \$4 billion in the last fiscal year (FY24).

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Formula milk companies are lobbying to have breast milk substitutes or formula milk declared as 'food' to remove it from the purview of health and medicine authorities, enabling them to freely market their products without regulatory oversight.
- Pakistan has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates globally, with only 48.4% of mothers exclusively breastfeeding their babies during the first six months.
- The act prohibits formula milk advertisements in hospitals, restricts its sale without a doctor's prescription, and mandates the formation of a regulatory board with representatives from the Sindh Healthcare Commission and PPA.
- These companies are using all possible means to derail breastfeeding protection laws across the country.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Maersk Line, Dubai Port and Abu Dhabi ports and have shown interest to invest in the ports and shipping sector of the country.
- Pakistan received a total of \$1.329 billion in FDI during the first half of the current fiscal year, compared to \$1.108bn in the same period last year, reflecting a growth of 20pc.
- China contributed \$535.5 million, accounting for over 40pc of the total FDI.

- Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the government has agreed terms for a \$1 billion loan with two Middle Eastern banks at a six to seven per cent interest rate.
- A high-level United States investment delegation has arrived in Pakistan for a crucial two-day visit.
- Several investment agreements will be signed between Pakistan and the US.
- The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has paused all funding for programmes in Pakistan following the Trump administration's decision to halt all foreign aid on January 20, barring that to Egypt and Israel.
- During his first tenure, on January 2, 2018, US President Donald Trump stated that the United States had foolishly handed Pakistan more than \$33 billion over 15 years while getting nothing in return, and pledged to put a stop to it. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Almost a month before scheduled negotiations on its \$7bn Extended Fund Facility with Pakistan, IMF lowered the country's growth estimate to 3pc for current fiscal year, down from 3.2pc it had projected about three months ago.
- Mian Zahid Hussain said that IMF reforms have also slowed down economy.
- World Bank has pledged \$20 billion under its first-ever 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Pakistan.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- The federal government's total debt stocks reached Rs 70.37 trillion mark by the end of November 2024.
- The central government's debt, encompassing both domestic and external borrowings, rose by 2 percent in the first five months (July-Nov) of the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25).
- Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue has said Pakistan's total debt is Rs71.3 trillion which is 67.4 percent of debt-to-GDP ratio till June 2024.
- The minister told the National Assembly that there is Rs24.1tr of external debt and Rs47.2tr of domestic debt last June 2024.
- Over 18.2 million children 35 every minute were born into hunger in 2024, with Pakistan accounting for 1.4m of these births.
- As one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, Pakistan finds itself caught in a perfect storm of environmental disasters, economic instability, and systemic poverty.
- Around 22 per cent people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity.
- Only 38pc of children are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Over 40pc of children under five years are stunted; 17.7pc are wasted; 28.9pc

are underweight; while more than half are anaemic and suffering from deficiencies in essential nutrients and vitamins such as iron (28.6pc), zinc (18.6pc), vitamin A (51.5pc) and vitamin D (62.7pc).

- In a positive development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has removed Pakistan from the list of “hunger hotspots”.
- The United Nations’ arm has projected that acute food insecurity will remain at 20-25% in the provinces of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan.
- Additionally, chronic air pollution remains a public health concern affecting more than 70pc of population. Real agricultural incomes rose by 5pc in the fiscal year 2024.
- Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research raised concerns over food safety standards in country.
- The committee chairman decided to form a subcommittee to deliberate on and formulate a comprehensive national food security policy and draft new legislation aimed at ensuring food quality across the country.
- The average inflation for six months (Jan-June FY21) was 9.2pc, followed by 12.5pc in FY22, 29.18pc in FY23, 23.41pc in FY24, and 7.22pc in the first half of FY25.
- In the first half of FY25 (July-December), inflation averaged 7.22pc compared to 28.79pc during the same period last year.
- Usually, rates of the sweetener come down during the crushing season. But this season the situation is contrary and rates are going up though the crushing season is in full swing.
- The findings of a World Bank report state that the poverty rate in Pakistan stood at 25.3 per cent in 2024, showing an increase of seven percentage points compared to 2023, with about 13 million additional people falling into poverty.
- Pakistan spends less than 2pc of its GDP on social protection, significantly below global average of 11.2pc. Only 9.2pc of population is covered by at least one social protection programme, with particularly low coverage for vulnerable groups: children (5.4pc), persons with disabilities (1.7pc) and elderly (5.8pc).
- Ten years ago, our debt was lesser than defence expenditure, but now the debt is four times higher than defence budget.

ENVIRONMENT

- Over 75 percent of Pakistani women suffer from calcium deficiency due to poor dietary habits and insufficient awareness.
- Pakistan has the largest number of hepatitis C patients in the world, with 10 million of the global 60 million cases.
- The federal government, in collaboration with provincial governments, has launched the Prime Minister’s Programme for the Elimination of c(HCV)

Infection to address these challenges with a plan to allocate Rs34.15 billion over the next three years.

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department has spent around Rs100 billion on the provision of free healthcare under Sehat Card Plus (SCP) programme to 3.89 million patients since its launch in 2016.
- Private hospitals earned Rs54.32bn and public hospitals Rs44.66bn from the SCP, with the former receiving 2.05 million patients and the latter 4.12 million.
- Consumption of ultra-processed products (UPPs), laden with unhealthy additives, sugar, and artificial ingredients, is a leading cause of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases in Pakistan.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has said Pakistan needs a staggering \$348 billion by 2030 to meet its climate adaptation and mitigation goals.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of a drought-like situation in most parts of the country due to scarce rainfall.
- The rainfall was 40 per cent lower than normal across Pakistan from September 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025.
- The major anomalies were observed in Sindh, where the rainfall was 52pc lower than normal, Balochistan (45pc lower) and Punjab (42pc lower).
- The Met Office raised a red flag regarding the worsening drought situation in various parts of the country following a rain-deficit monsoon last year.

NATURAL DISASTER

- It was fifth earthquake to strike Chaman, Kalat, Khuzdar and Sibi in January.

TRADE

- The US trade gap widened in November as imports rose faster than exports ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House.
- In November, the US trade deficit rose 6.2 percent to \$78.2 billion.
- India is set to allow exports of 1m metric tons of sugar during current season.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- More than 700 young workers are suing McDonald's UK after widespread harassment claims were exposed in the media in 2023.
- Clients have described experiences of discrimination, homophobia, racism, ableism, and harassment, saying more than 450 restaurants were involved.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- More than 30 million people, over half of them children, are in need of aid in Sudan after twenty months of war.
- The UN has launched a \$4.2 billion call for funds, targeting 20.9 million people across Sudan from a total of 30.4 million people it said are in need in what it called "an unprecedented humanitarian crisis".
- Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised to pile \$600 billion into US trade and investments.
- Azerbaijan has refused to renew its cooperation agreement with The United States Agency for International Development (USAID).
- Trump White House has ordered a pause of all federal grants and loans, as well as any money intended "for foreign aid" & for "non-governmental organisations".

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Global economic growth is projected to remain at 2.8 percent in 2025, unchanged from 2024, held back by the top two economies, the US and China.
- Despite continued expansion, the global economy is projected to grow at a slower pace than the 2010–2019 (pre-pandemic) average of 3.2%.
- Protection gap widens as 1.8bn children lack access to cash benefits, leaving them exposed to economic shocks that push families deeper into poverty.
- Donald Trump ordered a freeze on potentially trillions of dollars in federal funding to Americans, impacting everything from education grants to small businesses loans, and sparking accusations that he is violating constitution.
- World food commodity prices declined by 2.1 per cent in 2024 compared to the previous year.

- The head of the World Food Programme in Afghanistan says the agency can only feed half the millions of Afghans in need after cuts in international aid and an impending freeze in US foreign funding.
- Shortly before finishing her three-year term in Afghanistan that funding cuts had meant that roughly half the 15 million Afghans in acute need of food were not receiving rations during this year's harsh winter.

ENVIRONMENT

- A UNs report found that Israeli strikes on and near hospitals in the Gaza Strip had left healthcare in the Palestinian territory on the verge of collapse.
- The World Health Organization appealed for \$1.5 billion for emergency operations this year, warning that conflict, climate change, epidemics and displacement had converged to create an “unprecedented global health crisis”.
- UN health agency estimated that health crises would leave 305 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance this year.
- WHO is seeking \$1.5billion to support our life-saving work for emergencies.
- United States will leave WHO, Donald Trump said the global health agency had mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic and other international health crises.
- The Central Intelligence Agency has assessed that the COVID-19 pandemic is “more likely” to have emerged from a lab rather than from nature.
- A Kazakh court fined a consortium of oil companies over \$6 million for excessive gas flaring from a giant oilfield under the Caspian Sea.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Last year was Brazil's hottest on record, The average temperature in 2024 was 25.02 degrees Celsius (77.04 Fahrenheit) — 0.79 degrees above the 1991-2020 average, It was the warmest year since records began in 1961, exceeding the 2023 figure of 24.92 degrees Celsius, which was also a record high.
- An annual average of 4,077 climate-related disasters in the four-year period.
- The UNs said that 2024 was set to be the hottest year on record for the planet.
- Wealthy nations have failed to reach an agreement on curbing public finance for fossil fuel projects.
- President Donald Trump announced the US would withdraw from the Paris climate accord.
- United Nations agencies launched an appeal to scale up efforts to rescue the world's 275,000 glaciers, which are rapidly melting away as the planet warms.
- In 2023, glaciers suffered their largest volume loss in five decades.
- Over 242 million students in 85 countries had their schooling disrupted by extreme climate events last year.

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Govt asked to end new canals, corporate farming projects [P.1]

Training in China: Govt to foot expenses of 1,000 agri graduates: PM [P.1]

1.1 # Farmers

SAU to host first Int'l moot on women's empowerment in agriculture on 15th [P.1]

Govt plans 115 day care centres for children of women farm workers, says minister

1.2 # Land

VC SAU announces establishment of bio-saline center [P.2]

Cabinet body defers plan to allot 14,008 acres of state land for corporate farming [P.3]

Two brothers among three shot dead in land dispute [P.4]

Lawyers' convention demands halt to leasing of land for corporate farming, canals on Indus

Man, two sons gunned down to 'avenge double murder' over land dispute [P.4]

SBC condemns 'illegal lease' of 14,008 acres of state land for corporate farming [P.4]

Land dispute claims fourth life [P.5]

1.3 # Water

Water shortage in Kirthar Canal threatens Balochistan's crops [P.5]

Rabbani resents Ahsan Iqbal's new canal plan on Indus River in Punjab [P.5]

Water conference rejects Indus canals' project [P.6]

'Agri sector is facing severe challenges due to water scarcity' [P.6]

Qesco completes first phase of tube well solarisation [P.7]

Lawyers' convention strongly opposes federal govt's six-canal project [P.7]

New dams to add 10 MAF of water to reserves in 4-5 years: Wapda chief [P.8]

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

'Green Tractor Scheme': Punjab govt delivers 3,973 tractors [P.9]

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finances

Agriculture income; LHC disposes of plea challenging assessment [P.10]

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

New partnership aims to drive agri-tech innovation, entrepreneurship [P.10]

2.3 # Seed

Maize growers concerned at high seed prices in open market [P.10]

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Growers' body decries decline in production of all major crops in Sindh [P.11]

'SIFC's focus on agri development is yielding promising results' [P.11]

VC UAF for increasing per acre production [P.12]

3.1 # Cash Crop

'2024 marked a significant crisis for cotton industry' [P.12]

Cotton production plunges over 33pc [P.12]

Punjab seeks proposals to revive cotton cultivation [P.13]

SCA slams millers for stopping cane procurement process [P.13]

'No delays in cane crushing' [P.13]

SAB moves court over cane support price [P.13]

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Govt asked to end new canals, corporate farming projects

The federal government was urged to abolish corporate farming projects and land allocation to foreign multinationals. The participants at a conference, which Awami Tahreek had organised in the capital, unanimously rejected the construction of six new canals on the Indus River, amendments to the Irsa Act, and corporate farming, labelling them as anti-state and anti-people projects. The conference accused the Shehbaz-Zardari government of pursuing policies detrimental to the country's agriculture, environment and local communities. They demanded that these lands be distributed among landless farmers to spark genuine agricultural and economic growth. They also demanded reversal of amendments to the Irsa Act, immediate cancellation of the construction of new strategic canals, equal rights for marginalised communities of Pakistan and full implementation of the 1940 Lahore Resolution to align the Constitution with its spirit.

The moot further declared that constructing six new canals and promoting corporate farming pose an existential threat to Sindh's agriculture, environment, and livelihoods, endangering fragile Indus delta and worsening food insecurity across Pakistan. Experts warned that these projects, coupled with amendments to Irsa Act, are enabling capitalist control over vital resources, displacing millions of small-scale farmers, and prioritising elite interests at expense of rural communities. Speakers alleged that 52,713 acres of land in Sindh have already been handed over to military-affiliated Green Pakistan Initiative Private Ltd. In Umerkot district alone, an additional 14,000 acres have been allocated to same company. Similarly, over 45,000 acres in Bhakkar, Khushab and Sahiwal have been transferred to Green Pakistan Initiative. (*Dawn, January 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Training in China: Govt to foot expenses of 1,000 agri graduates: PM

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced that government will cover all educational expenses of 1,000 Pakistani agriculture graduates selected for advanced agricultural training in China, with the first group set to depart in March. The meeting was informed that out of total 1,287 applicants, 711 candidates qualified based on the established criteria, including candidates from Balochistan and Gilgit-Baltistan. The meeting was briefed that the students will be sent to China in two separate groups. The first group of 300 students will undergo training in various areas, including irrigation enhancement, livestock disease diagnosis and monitoring, livestock breeding and modern genetics, seed preparation and processing. (*Business Recorder, January 23rd, 2025, Page 12*)

1.1 # Farmers

SAU to host first Int'l moot on women's empowerment in agriculture on 15th

Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam, in collaboration with the Sindh Agriculture Women Development Organization, is set to host the first-ever International

Conference on “International Conference on Agriculture Development and Women Empowerment: Challenges and Way Forward (ICWADE-2025)” on January 15-16, 2025. The conference aims to promote women’s empowerment in sustainable agriculture, shedding light on the challenges and opportunities faced by women in agricultural development. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 2*)

Govt plans 115 day care centres for children of women farm workers, says minister

The Sindh government is planning 115 day care centres for the children of women labourers who toil on farmland throughout the day along with their children. This was stated by Sindh Women Development Minister Shahina Sher Ali at inaugural session of the first-ever two-day conference on the “Women Empowerment in Agricultural Growth: Challenges and Way Forwards” held in Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) Tandojam. SAU Vice Chancellor Dr Altaf Siyal said that 67pc women were practically part of agriculture sector, but there were no arrangements for ensuring them adequate wages. He informed that mostly men held proprietary rights of lands. Former VC Fateh Marri said that unfortunately girls had a 2pc share among the luckiest 10pc children who got access to the higher education.

Ms Anne Klervimarie Cherriere from the FAO drew attention of audience towards health and socio-economic challenges confronting women. She said those women worked 12-14 hours daily in fields and noted that their disproportionate exposure to climate change impacts, food insecurity and gender-based inequalities. Zahida Detho, a social activist, stressed need to reform system to integrate women into marketing roles. She said that while women performed majority of labour-intensive tasks in agriculture, men dominated market-side activities. She said those women didn’t have access to legal remedies. Highlighting insufficient facilities like support systems, including shelters, protection cells & complaint mechanisms for women, she advocated for comprehensive reforms to ensure equitable treatment for them. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 15*)

1.2 # Land

VC SAU announces establishment of bio-saline center

The Vice Chancellor of SAU Tandojam, Dr. Fateh Marri, highlighted that 35% of Pakistan’s land is affected by salinity. He announced the establishment of a Bio-Saline Center aimed at developing strategies for adaptation and productive utilization of saline-affected lands. He stressed the importance of innovative approaches to rehabilitate degraded lands, ensuring their optimal use for agricultural and environmental sustainability. Speaking at the project completion report ceremony for “Adopting to Salinity in the Southern Indus Basin,” Dr. Marri highlighted the project’s achievements. Funded by Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR), the initiative was executed in collaboration with Mehran University of Engineering and Technology (MUET) Jamshoro, Agriculture Research Sindh, and SIDA in Deh Reti Shoro, Taluka Bulri Shah Karim, District Tando Muhammad Khan. Dr. Marri pointed out that 6.3 million hectares of land in Pakistan suffer from salinity and water-logging,

stressing the need to implement innovative agricultural practices. He shared that SAU is actively engaging with international organizations to enhance agricultural and irrigation efficiency through significant projects. He further elaborated on a water management plan developed by university and its partners. The plan includes monitoring water discharge at head regulators of 14 canals, analyzing its agricultural usage and assessing water productivity. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

Cabinet body defers plan to allot 14,008 acres of state land for corporate farming

The Sindh government has postponed for a month decision on allotment of 14,008 acres of state land to an army-backed company for corporate agriculture farming. While the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) had adopted a resolution to condemn what it called the provincial government's decision to lease out 14,008 acres of state land to an army-backed company for agriculture farming that no such decision has so far been taken. Instead a meeting of sub-committee of Sindh cabinet had actually put off matter for a month and decided that local public representatives and stakeholders should first hold a meeting to ascertain availability of the state land in district Umerkot.

The meeting discussed at length the issue of lease of 14,008 acres in dehs Horingo and Chhor in Umerkot district in favour of Green Corporate Initiative (Pvt) Ltd, a company under umbrella of the Pakistan army for the corporate agriculture farming initiative for cultivating available barren land in all provinces of the country. The meeting was of the view that a lot of homework was yet to be done before taking final decision to allot land for corporate agriculture farming. They said the local administration of Umerkot had been instructed to identify the land and check if some portions were in legal possession of local residents. They said the administration had also been asked to check how much grazing area was included in the land to be allotted for corporate farming. Meeting also observed that no advertisement regarding the proposed land was given in newspapers.

Last year, the caretaker Sindh government had formally entered into an agreement with army-backed company to give it over 52,000 acres of land in six districts for corporate farming. A government-to-government Joint Venture Agreement was signed at Chief Minister House between the Sindh government and M/s Green Corporate Initiative (Private) Limited. The local administration in the province had identified approximately 52,713 acres of "barren" land — 28,000 acres in Khairpur, 10,000 acres in Tharparkar, 9,305 acres in Dadu, 1,000 acres in Thatta, 3,408 acres in Sujawal and 1,000 acres in Badin — to be handed over to the company to execute its 'Green Pakistan Initiative'. However, nationalist parties and civil rights campaigner have been voicing concern against project since the launch of the initiative. KBA released a statement, terming the provincial government's decision as a "dangerous precedent". It said that the move undermined the rights of local farmers and small-scale agriculturalists who depended on such lands for their livelihood. The KBA demanded to review and reverse the lease decision, emphasising that the state land should be allocated primarily for the benefit of the local communities. (*Dawn, January 6th, 2025, Page 13*)

Two brothers among three shot dead in land dispute

Two brothers and one of their relatives were shot dead in Jacobabad district. Residents of the village and police said that the attack was linked with a land dispute between two groups of Banglani community which had already claimed two lives in recent months. (*Dawn, January 8th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers' convention demands halt to leasing of land for corporate farming, canals on Indus

A convention of lawyers strongly condemned the leasing of state land to corporate entities and urged the provincial government to immediately take back its decisions in this regard. A general body meeting of the Karachi Bar Association convened to discuss “alarming developments” regarding the leasing of agricultural land to corporate entities and Sindh’s water rights was converted into a lawyers’ convention due to strong participation and support from members from across Sindh, KBA General Secretary Rehman Korai said. The convention passed a resolution condemning these actions as “unconstitutional and harmful to local communities, farmers, and environment.” It expressed serious concern over the lease of 14,008 acres of state land and the proposed allocation of an additional 190,195 acres across several districts in Sindh.

The resolution demanded an immediate halt to land leasing and insisted that land should be allocated to benefit local farmers and communities instead. It called on the federal government to halt construction of any projects including canals or dams initiated on Indus River without the province’s consent. Should these violations persist, pledged to lead a comprehensive legal and public campaign to challenge the unconstitutional actions of the relevant authorities. The resolution urged the legal fraternity to unite in advocating for the rights of farmers, the preservation of Sindh’s water share, and the restoration of the Indus Delta ecosystem. It stressed that these actions not only threatened the livelihoods of farmers and indigenous populations but also undermine the environmental stability of Indus Delta, which is vital for sustaining ecosystems and preventing seawater intrusion in coastal areas. (*The News, January 12, 2025, Page 13*)

Man, two sons gunned down to ‘avenge double murder’ over land dispute

A man and his two sons were gunned down in Larkana district. Officials at the Mirokhan police station said that Allahdino had an old land and blood dispute with some of his in-laws. They said Allahdino was accused of killing his two brothers-in-law in the heat of land dispute in 2010. The triple murder was very likely to have been committed to avenge double murder. (*Dawn, January 15th, 2025, Page 15*)

SBC condemns ‘illegal lease’ of 14,008 acres of state land for corporate farming

The Sindh Bar Council has strongly condemned the “illegal lease” of 14,008 acres of state land to the green corporate initiative for corporate agriculture farming in Umerkot area as well as the proposed allocation of 190,195 acres of land in other districts of the province by the government. They were of view that the decision for grant of land was against spirit of the federalism as agriculture, and agriculture-related activities were

exclusive domain of provinces and not federation under Constitution. They said that constitution bars armed forces from carrying out corporate farming or any other commercial business directly or indirectly through some affiliated commercial entities. SBC termed move of Sindh government as a dangerous precedent by favouring corporate entities particularly those with military affiliation while undermining local farmers by depriving them their lawful and constitutional right, which it said was highly regrettable.

The bar members also condemned illegal extraction of water from the Indus River, especially the proposed construction of six highly disputed canals without Sindh's consent in glaring violation of the Constitution. The bar council said that proposed construction of six canals are also against international legal principles as Sindh was lower riparian in Indus Basin; therefore, to construct any project upstream or divert water without the consent of Sindh is also against Articles 154, 155 and 156 of the Constitution. The bar resolved that no project including the construction of canals be permitted on the Indus River and also demanded that illegal lease of state land to the corporate entities should also be cancelled or recalled. They said that the bar council and legal fraternity will resist these projects and lodge their strong protests all over Sindh if these projects were not withdrawn. (*The News, January 26th, 2025, Page 15*)

Land dispute claims fourth life

A labourer, Barkat Ali Khoso, was shot dead near Shahen Jo Dero locality of Mehar town. Locals and the A-Section police of Mehar said that Khoso, a resident of Virand village, was carrying a fertiliser bag to his fields on his bicycle when he was attacked by the assailant, who later fled the locality. His body was transported to the Mehar Taluka Hospital, where the bereaved family attributed the attack to their tribe's old land dispute with the Magsi tribe that had already claimed three lives. The Khosos lost their third member and Magsis one. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 15*)

1.3 # Water

Water shortage in Kirthar Canal threatens Balochistan's crops

Landowners in Usta Muhammad and other areas of Balochistan have expressed fears that their standing crops might get destroyed due to reduced water supply from Sindh. Balochistan, an arid region with no major river flowing through it, depends on supply from the Indus River to irrigate land in many areas. Kirthar Canal, the main watercourse connecting the two provinces, was facing an acute water shortage from Sindh due to a sharp dip in the water level at the origin point — Sukkur Barrage. The canal's executive engineer, Mehrullah Ansari, has said the water supply from the Sukkur Barrage to the canal has been heavily affected due to a sudden drop in the pond level at the barrage. (*Dawn, January 11th, 2025, Page 5*)

Rabbani resents Ahsan Iqbal's new canal plan on Indus River in Punjab

Former Chairman Senate Mian Raza Rabbani took strong exception to the statement of Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal on the construction of six canals

on the Indus River, and said the Federal Minister for Planning should respect provincial autonomy under the Constitution, 1973, the Water Accord, the rights of the Sindh being lower riparian and the sentiments of the people of the province while making a statement on new canals on the Indus River in Punjab.

Rabbani stated, “The decision to construct new canals to divert water from the Indus River for farming in Punjab’s Cholistan region cannot be unilaterally made by the Federal Government.” He criticized Minister Ahsan Iqbal’s statement and emphasized that this issue should have been addressed at the Council of Common Interests (CCI), which the Federal Government has not convened during its current term.

Raza Rabbani said this issue should have been and should be, brought before the Council of Common Interest (CCI) which the Federal Government has failed to call since inspection of its present tenure. He said the agriculture sector is the linchpin of the provincial economy, Sindh also contributes approximately 23% of the federation’s national value-added; 41% of the national output of rice; 31% of sugarcane and 21% of wheat. He said Sindh has already been devoid of its just and rightful share of water.

The Former Chairman Senate said the Provincial Government has written to the Federal Government to summon a meeting of the CCI, which it continues to avoid. Raza Rabbani said the people of Sindh have expressed their severe reservations about the construction of the said canals and have been holding continuous demonstrations throughout the province. Given the already destabilized political atmosphere, Raza Rabbani warned that federal political tensions will only add to destabilization, which can harm the system and the federation. (*The News, January 12, 2025, Page 3*)

Water conference rejects Indus canals’ project

A ‘water conference’ organised by the Sindh Hari Committee has rejected the federal government’s plan of constructing six canals on Indus River. Stating that the canals were matter of life and death for the people of Sindh, they accused Punjab of usurping all resources of Sindh including gas, coal, water and land. They said Sindh would have to launch a unified struggle on those issues. Through a resolution, the conference rejected the canal project and the allotment of 1.3m acres land in Gorakh Hill and at Haleji Lake. It said that all the projects sponsored by the Special Investment Facilitation Council in Sindh should be shelved. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 15*)

‘Agri sector is facing severe challenges due to water scarcity’

Pakistan’s agriculture sector, which contributes 23 percent to the country’s GDP, is facing severe challenges due to water scarcity, said Romina Khurshid Alam, coordinator to the prime minister for climate change. Speaking at the “Pakistan’s Humanitarian Future 2025” event organised by the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF), and supported by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Alam stressed the urgent need for long-term solutions to address the country’s worsening water crisis. She highlighted Pakistan’s

increasing reliance on glaciers and rivers for water supply, noting that the country is grappling with acute water shortages that are intensifying challenges for agriculture, a vital sector for the national economy.

“Our agriculture is significantly threatened by water scarcity, and we need to invest in long-term solutions to tackle these challenges,” Alam said. She also underscored the importance of advocating for increased access to international climate finance. Alam called for the allocation of climate funds to support projects that focus on building resilience against climate change, particularly in disaster preparedness and environmental sustainability. “It is essential to enable access to climate financing to implement projects that strengthen our resilience to climate change impacts,” she added. Additionally, Alam urged the development of robust climate risk management strategies at the national, provincial, and district levels to improve preparedness for natural disasters and reduce their economic, social, and environmental impacts. (*Business Recorder, January 17th, 2025, Page 3*)

Qesco completes first phase of tube well solarisation

The Quetta Electric Supply Company (Qesco) has completed the first phase of its project to convert agricultural tube well connections to solar energy in the Quetta and Pishin districts. As part of the initiative, Qesco disconnected the electrical connections of agricultural users who had received government funding for the solarisation programme. (*Dawn, January 22nd, 2025, Page 5*)

Lawyers’ convention strongly opposes federal govt’s six-canal project

The High Court Bar Associations of Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas and district bar associations of the lower region of the province have slammed federal government’s “unconstitutional” action to build “strategic” canals on Indus River and warned further cuts to the river will render Sindh barren, which legal fraternity sees as “ecocide”. They said at a convention held in HCBA Hyderabad that water of Indus River Basin and its distribution was an interprovincial issue and part of the Federal Legislative List-II hence it was the prerogative of Council of Common Interests (CCI) to take a decision on the construction of any hydraulic project on Indus Basin.

They said that Sindh government had already raised objections to the project by moving a summary to the CCI against Cholistan Canal and Greater Thal Canal Phase-II, but the federal government was acting unconstitutionally and illegally by working on the projects. The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) had bypassed the CCI by referring the first phase of Cholistan Canal project to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) for approval. HCBA Hyderabad said in a press release issued that president was a constitutional head of state and had nothing to do with issues of water distribution, irrigation projects and “Green Initiatives.” Taking a briefing from “Green Pakistan Initiative” the controversial subject of strategic canals in the presidency on July 8, 2024, was against the spirit of Constitution and federation.

The HCBA asserted that Sindh was a federating unit and co-sharer in the water of Indus River Basin. According to international legal principles, Sindh was a lower riparian in Indus Basin. Hence, to construct any project upstream or divert water without consent of Sindh was against Articles 154, 155, and 156 of the Constitution and globally recognised legal principles of water distribution, they said. They said that Sindh already faced water shortage every year and was not getting its due share in water according to Water Apportionment Accord of 1991. Resultantly, Sindh had witnessed a decrease in its already arable land over the years, they said.

Sea intrusion had already destroyed 3.5m acres of land in Indus Delta and groundwater continued to be saline. In this situation, further cuts to Indus River and construction of strategic canals would render Sindh a barren land. Moreover, this convention condemned illegal actions of Sindh's government to lease out thousands of acres of land to corporate entities in the name of "corporate farming". They said that Sindh government had illegally leased out 14,008 acres of land to "Green Corporate Initiative Pvt. Ltd.," in Umerkot district and 190,195 acres in Deh Khalrai Thar, Barai, Mokhal Bah, Chor Thar, Horingo and Gorakh areas.

Previously, they said, the Sindh government had leased out thousands of acres in different districts such as Khairpur Mirs, Thatta and Dadu. "We clearly state that constitutionally, the provincial government is representative of people of Sindh and custodian of the province's lands which actually belong to its people. People of Sindh, especially farmers and indigenous people, have raised a clear and strong voice against such corporate grabs. Hence, Sindh government has no mandate to lease out land on such massive scale," it said.

Secondly, they said, the Constitution did not permit armed forces to engage in corporate farming [or other businesses] directly or indirectly [through affiliated entities]. This convention demanded the above-mentioned projects must be halted immediately. "We stand by people of Sindh, who are resisting such illegal designs in a peaceful, democratic and fair manner," resolved the bars. (*Dawn, January 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

New dams to add 10 MAF of water to reserves in 4-5 years: Wapda chief

Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman Lt. General Sajjad Ghani (retd), revealed that the construction of new dams in the country will make an additional 10 million acre feet of water available within the next 4-5 years. He made this statement in response to a series of questions raised by Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) from the PPP during a meeting of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Water Resources, which was presided over by Khalid Hussain Magsi. PPP MNAs expressed their dissatisfaction with the federal government's decision to build the Thal Canal to irrigate lands in Thal, a move they believe would deprive Sindh of its rightful share of water. (*Business Recorder, January 31st, 2025, Page 16*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

‘Green Tractor Scheme’: Punjab govt delivers 3,973 tractors

The Punjab government has delivered 3,973 tractors under the “Punjab Green Tractor Programme” with 9,500 farmers selected through a lottery for the initiative. By the end of this month, the number of tractors delivered is expected to reach 9,010, with the remaining units scheduled for delivery by March 31, 2025. The announcement was made during a meeting at the Agriculture House, chaired by Punjab’s Minister for Agriculture, Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani. The meeting reviewed the progress of several key agricultural initiatives, including the Chief Minister of Punjab’s Kissan Package, the Grow More Wheat Campaign, and Solarisation of Tube Wells Programme.

During the briefing, the minister was informed that 1.373 million farmers had applied online for the Chief Minister’s Kissan Card, with over 500,000 cards already approved for issuance. Of these, 450,000 have already been distributed. A budget of Rs 53 billion has been allocated to the Kissan Card Programme, of which Rs 32 billion has already been utilized. The programme facilitates daily transactions worth Rs 100 to RS 120 million. Minister directed officials at Bank of Punjab to engage with farmers to resolve any technical issues related to the Kissan Card. He emphasized the need to expedite delivery of cards to ensure that farmers benefit from programme as soon as possible.

The minister highlighted the chief minister’s commitment to promoting agricultural mechanization in the province. He encouraged service providers and the private sector to facilitate farmers in renting high-powered tractors and modern harvesters, ensuring easy access to advanced agricultural machinery. The meeting also discussed the ongoing Solarization of the Tube Wells Programme, which has received over 500,000 applications. The initiative aims to convert 8,000 electric and diesel-operated tube wells to solar-powered systems. Among the applications, 60,000 are for diesel-operated tube wells, and 441,000 are for electric-operated ones.

Under the Smog Control Programme, Phase-1 has delivered 1,000 super seeders to farmers, effectively utilizing 110,000 acres of paddy residue last year. In Phase II, 2,000 allocation letters have been issued, and 1,608 farmers have already deposited their shares. By July 2025, an additional 4,000 super seeders will be distributed to prevent future burning of paddy residue. The meeting also reviewed progress on establishing Agri Malls in Sahiwal, Sargodha, Multan, and Bahawalpur. Construction has been completed up to 79 percent in Sahiwal, 60 percent in Sargodha, 70 percent in Multan, and 62 percent in Bahawalpur. Civil works for all Agri Malls are expected to be completed by June 30, 2025.

Under the Grow More Wheat Programme, 28,000 applications have been received for laser land levellers and tractors, the meeting was informed. Secretary Agriculture Punjab, Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, affirmed that the timelines for implementing the Chief Minister’s Kissan Package are being strictly followed. Wheat sowing across 16.2

million acres in the province has been completed, achieving the set target through a comprehensive action plan. The collaborative efforts of the Agriculture Department's field teams, divisional and district administrations ensured the campaign's success. (*Business Recorder*, January 7th, 2025, Page 2)

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finances

Agriculture income; LHC disposes of plea challenging assessment

The Lahore High Court disposed of a petition filed by Mian Ilyas Meraj challenging the assessment of agriculture income under the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 and the notices issued by the FBR officials for amendment of assessment order. The court advised the petitioner to approach the concerned assessee authority and raise his legal and factual objection before him. The court also directed the respondent authority to pass a speaking order after hearing the objections of the petitioner. Earlier, the petitioner through his counsel Sultan Ali Awan contended that through the impugned notices the respondents are trying to assess the agriculture income by misconstruing the provisions of the ordinance in question. (*Business Recorder*, January 30th, 2025, Page 28)

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

New partnership aims to drive agri-tech innovation, entrepreneurship

The Intellectual Property Organisation (IPO) of Pakistan and the National Seeds Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA) have joined forces to advance innovation and entrepreneurship in the agriculture sector. The collaboration aims to leverage intellectual property (IP)-protected technologies to benefit farmers, universities and research centres. Discussions focused on enhancing cooperation and introducing modern Agri-Tech innovations. (*Dawn*, January 1st, 2025, Page 9)

2.3 # Seed

Maize growers concerned at high seed prices in open market

Rizwan Iqbal, provincial president of the Pakistan Kisan Ittehad (PKI), has strongly criticised the monopolisation of maize seed prices by two multinational companies operating in Punjab. He accused these companies of exploiting maize growers during the sowing season by unilaterally setting exorbitant seed prices. Maize seed is reportedly being sold for Rs20,000 to Rs25,000 per bag in the open market. Growers have held both the federal and provincial governments responsible for failing to establish a systematic and transparent mechanism to regulate seed prices.

Mr Rizwan said that the same seed was sold for Rs10,000 a few years ago, but prices have since doubled, while the open market price of maize crops has dropped from Rs3,500–4,000 to Rs2,000–3,000 per 40 kilogrammes. Mr Rizwan highlighted this disparity, saying, "The reason lies with multinational companies controlling inputs, while the crop belongs to farmers." He accused two major companies of doubling their seed prices over the past five years, making them unaffordable for many growers. He

further claimed these companies sell seeds at much lower prices in neighbouring countries, where governments intervene to regulate seed costs.

The PKI president also alleged that one multinational company had appointed select dealers who sell seeds at inflated black-market prices. “While the official rate is Rs20,000, some dealers are selling it for Rs25,000–26,000,” he claimed. He criticised the Punjab government for actively regulating wheat prices while failing to address the maize seed price crisis. Mr Rizwan demanded immediate government intervention, akin to practices in India, to rationalise seed prices. He claimed that PKI had raised the issue with the Punjab chief secretary and the Federal Ministry of Industry and Trade, but both cited helplessness against multinational companies. “Why have TORs been developed that allow seed companies to monopolise rates?” he questioned, urging regulatory action. (*Dawn, January 27th, 2025, Page 8*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Growers’ body decries decline in production of all major crops in Sindh

The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) pointed out noticeable decline in the production of major crops in the just-concluded kharif 2024 and a disproportionate rise in prices of farm inputs. The board, which met with its president Mahmood Nawaz Shah in the chair, focused on production losses in paddy, cotton, sesame and sugar cane crops in kharif 2024. Yields in cane crop being harvested were 15pc to 20pc less than last year’s and these losses could be attributed to very high temperatures in summer, said the meeting. Conversely, the crops prices saw reduction from last year’s and rising trend in farm inputs. (*Dawn, January 6th, 2025, Page 15*)

‘SIFC’s focus on agri development is yielding promising results’

The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, Mian Zahid Hussain said that SIFC’s focus on agricultural development is yielding promising results which is commendable. He said that SIFC is striving to develop Pakistan’s agriculture according to its potential, which includes increasing agricultural production, exports, value addition, and exports of agricultural machinery. Mian Zahid Hussain said that efforts are being made to increase the agricultural area by developing uncultivated lands to increase production.

The country has limited means for water shortage, expensive agricultural inputs, and poor seed quality are also matters of concern. Due to the increasing use of pesticides and other chemicals, the water salinity problem is becoming serious, so there is a need to establish a standard for their use. Land erosion is a significant problem in rainfed areas, which reduces fertility, land area, agricultural production, forest area, and water reserves. If agricultural universities in the country are directly connected to the farmers, many problems can be solved. (*Business Recorder, January 10th, 2025, Page 4*)

VC UAF for increasing per acre production

Agricultural scientists and experts should gear up efforts to disseminate modern trends in order to increase per-acre production and address daunting issues including climate changes, water scarcity and deteriorating soil health, said University of Agriculture Faisalabad Vice Chancellor. He was talking to officers of Agriculture Department Punjab at ongoing four-week workshop titled Finance, Administration Management and E-governance arranged by Professional Training and Skill Development Center UAF. (*Business recorder, January 13th, 2025, Page 3*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

‘2024 marked a significant crisis for cotton industry’

The year 2024 marked a significant crisis for Pakistan’s cotton industry, with production and cultivation targets falling substantially short. Sajid Mahmood, Head of Technology Transfer at the Central Cotton Research Institute, Multan while talking to Business Recorder said that the target for cotton cultivation in 2024 was set at 3.118m hectares. However, only 1.974m hectares were cultivated, achieving a mere 63% of the target.”

He further elaborated that cotton farmers faced numerous challenges this year, including the impact of climate change, poor seed quality, and pest infestations. “Unusually low temperatures hindered seed germination, while extreme heatwaves and unexpected rainfall during June and July exacerbated the situation, severely affecting overall production,” he explained. The shortfall in cultivation was evident across all provinces. Sajid Mahmood noted, “In Punjab, cotton was cultivated on 1.304 million hectares, achieving 78% of the target, while Sindh achieved 87% of its target. However, both provinces recorded a decline in production compared to the previous year.” Discussing the financial strain on farmers, he highlighted, “In the absence of a support price, many farmers opted for more lucrative crops such as sugarcane and maize, further reducing the area under cotton cultivation.” (*Business Recorder, January 1st, 2024, Page 2*)

Cotton production plunges over 33pc

Phutti or raw cotton arrivals registered a significant drop of over 33 per cent as of Dec 31, 2024, compared to the same period of the previous year, reveals the data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA). Total phutti arrivals during the ongoing season stand at 5.452 million bales compared to 8.171m bales recorded on Dec 31, 2023, reflecting an overall decline of 33.27pc or 2.719m bales. On a fortnightly basis, phutti arrivals marginally improved by 2pc compared to 5.367m bales recorded on Dec 15, 2024.

Cotton production saw a significant decline in Punjab and Sindh. In Punjab, phutti arrivals remained at 2.659m bales compared to 4.079m bales, and in Sindh the figure was 2.793m bales compared to 4.092m bales registered for the same period last season. The two provinces reflected a fall of 35pc and 32pc, respectively. However, on a fortnightly basis, cotton arrivals in Punjab were up by 3pc compared to 2.594m bales,

and in Sindh increased by 1pc compared to 2.773m bales recorded on Dec 15. The decline in phutti arrivals rings an alarm bell for the national economy, textile industry and financial stability of farmers because country will need to import cotton worth over \$2bn to meet needs of the domestic textile sector. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Punjab seeks proposals to revive cotton cultivation

Suggestions have been sought from stakeholders and an action plan will be finalized to promote cotton cultivation in Punjab accordingly. These views were expressed by Secretary Agriculture, Punjab, Iftikhar Ali Sahoo while presiding over a meeting at Agriculture House, Lahore, to devise a cotton strategy. He stated that early sowing of cotton results in higher per-acre yield. Maximum land will be brought under early cotton cultivation, and only approved high-yielding cotton varieties will be sown. He further emphasized that February and March are the most suitable months for early cotton cultivation. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

SCA slams millers for stopping cane procurement process

The SCA) has complained that sugar millers have drastically scaled down the cane crushing process. It has also deplored that the millers have reduced procurement price of the 2024-25 cane crop by Rs100-150 per 40kg. SCA General Secretary Zahid Bhurgari said that the millers had a capacity of crushing 200,000 maunds per day but they were crushing only 50,000 maunds. (*Dawn, January 11th, 2025, Page 15*)

‘No delays in cane crushing’

The Sindh Agriculture Department has claimed that there are no delays in sugar cane’s crushing and reduction in cane procurement price by sugar mills for 2024-25 season and said the mills are operating at full capacity. A spokesperson for the department said in a statement that mills in the southern region, particularly in areas affected by rains, including Thatta, Badin and Sanghar, faced shortage of cane and therefore upped price over and above Rs450 per 40 kg to attract cane growers from other areas, said the official. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025 Page 15*)

SAB moves court over cane support price

The Sindh Abadgar Board’s Mirpurkhas chapter filed a petition in the Mirpurkhas circuit bench of the Sindh High Court, appealing to court to direct Sindh government to announce support price of sugar cane and end sugar mills excesses against growers. They regretted that Sindh government had itself become a party [with sugar mills] and had not yet announced the cane’s support price, thus allowing sugar mills to keep exploiting farmers by compelling them to accept unfavourable rates. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 15*)

FPCCI concerned at dramatic decline in cotton production

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) have raised serious concerns about the dramatic decline in Pakistan’s cotton production. Speaking at a press conference at Federation house, Senior Vice President Saqib Fayyaz Magoon revealed that cotton production has plummeted from 14 million bales to just 5 million

bales over past decade, forcing Pakistan to import cotton worth \$2-3 billion annually. During a press conference, Magoon highlighted the disparity in taxation policies, noting that while locally produced cotton faces sales tax, imported cotton remains tax-free. He urged the government to implement customs duties on imported cotton and establish a support price mechanism for domestic cotton producers. FPCCI Vice President Asif Inam emphasized the critical lack of research in cotton cultivation, while Agriculture Task Force Chairman Sham Lal Manglani pointed out that cotton-growing land has been rapidly converted to rice and sugarcane cultivation, with cotton acreage reduced by half. (*Business Recorder, January 19th, 2025, Page 2*)

Sindh not fixing sugar cane indicative price ‘to meet IMF condition’: official

The Sindh government has decided not to fix sugar cane crop’s indicative price for the year 2024-25 to comply with an IMF condition calling ‘open market’ in this sector. “We will be informing Sindh High Court that since the government is showing its compliance of IMF conditions under an agreement, the price of sugar cane can’t be fixed. It is in the larger national interest, and we have placed this [decision] before Sindh cabinet as well,” Sindh agriculture secretary. He was alluding to the petitions filed in the SHC to seek fixing of sugar cane indicative price by the provincial government.

The cane crushing process, which had started in November last year, is inching towards closure. Around 30 sugar mills procured and crushed the cane crop in the ongoing season. Sindh has produced 2,022,780.929 tonnes of sugar in the 2023-24 season by crushing 19,279,206.410 tonnes of cane, recording 10.370pc sugar recovery percentage as per Sindh Cane Commissioner’s figures. When compared with 2022-23 season, 16,789,161.093 tonnes of crop was crushed to produce 1,744,808.150 tonnes of sugar although with a lesser recovery percentage of 10.1574pc. Lesser acreage and recovery in 2022-23 was attributed to crop losses on account of 2022 heavy rainfall and flooding.

Last year Sindh agriculture department had fixed Rs425 per 40kg for 2023-24 season. Since no price is being fixed by the department this year, cane growers are selling their produce at any rate being offered by millers. “Until recently, a price of Rs400 per 40kg was being offered, and then it was dropped to Rs350 per 40kg. But again there are vibes that millers may further reduce it,” said Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) President Nawab Zubair Talpur. Two other organisations of growers, SAB and SAI, through their representatives Umer Bughio and Zubair Talpur, respectively, have moved SHC to seek orders to government to fix sugar cane price. The cases are pending before the court. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 15*)

3.2 # Food Crop

MPAs demand urgent wheat procurement plan

Both treasury and opposition lawmakers in the Punjab Assembly criticised the lack of wheat policy, cautioning that inertia could create food security issues in the country. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

Strategy being developed to deregulate wheat market

As part of the structural reforms being implemented under the ongoing IMF programme, Ministry of National Food Security is working on developing a comprehensive strategy for deregulating the wheat market while ensuring strategic reserves and food security. The strategy aims to transition from traditional procurement practices and introduce innovative solutions to maintain wheat reserves in a deregulated market. Ministry has decided to hold consultations with all stakeholders including provincial governments.

A ‘National Workshop on Deregulating the Wheat Sector’ will be held in Islamabad on January 24, which according to Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain, reflects the government’s dedication to ensuring food security while reforming the agricultural sector to meet modern demands. Representatives from the four provinces have been invited to present strategies. These presentations will address key challenges and propose actionable solutions for managing wheat reserves and ensuring food security. In a press statement, the ministry of national food security reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring sustainable agricultural reforms that benefit all stakeholders. (*Dawn, January 22nd, 2025, Page 3*)

Wheat deregulation urged

Amid the private sector calls for an open market to foster competition, the provincial governments have supported the deregulation of the wheat market. Speaking at a workshop organised by the Ministry of National Food Security and Research in collaboration with ADB, the representatives of provinces highlighted the challenges facing the sector, such as infrastructure deficits, policy gaps, and resource constraints. The private sector stakeholders asked the government to develop clear policies and a stable regulatory environment essential for fair investment in the sector.

World Bank Lead Agriculture Specialist Oliver Durand pointed out Pakistan’s low wheat productivity and called for policy reforms, strategic investments, and market-driven value chain development. Comprehensive discussions on wheat price trends (2009-2023) further contextualised the economic challenges in the sector. Participants presented plans to modernise Pakistan’s grain storage infrastructure, focusing on efficiency and food safety. They emphasised the need for private-sector investment in strategic wheat reserves. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 9*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Maryam launches ‘livestock card’ scheme

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif said that she wants to come up to the expectations of the people likewise Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif. Addressing the launching ceremony of the “Chief Minister Punjab’s Livestock Card” in Pakpattan. The target of 6.5 million wheat cultivation has been achieved. (*Business Recorder, January 10th, 2025, Page 12*)

Livestock in Upper Chitral faces starvation

The residents of Broghil in Upper Chitral have demanded of government to take measures on emergency basis to save their yaks and other animals from perishing due to shortage of fodder during the current winter season. Local species of grass was the major source of fodder for animals in the valley which they harvested and stored during the summer season, but this year the unusual scale of rains had spoiled the cache of dried grass, causing their decay. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 8*)

Murad inaugurates three-day Livestock Expo-2025

Sindh Chief Minister (CM) Syed Murad Ali Shah has urged the private sector to invest in the livestock and fisheries sectors to achieve substantial returns and enhance the national economy. Numerous opportunities in agriculture, livestock and fisheries possessed immense potential for growth and innovation, said the CM after inaugurating the three-day Livestock Expo-2025 here at Expo Centre. The show is being organised by the livestock & fisheries department in collaboration with the departments of agriculture, sports & youth affairs and that of culture, tourism & antiquities besides the KMC and the commissioner of Karachi. Speaking at the inauguration ceremony, the CM emphasised the significance of the livestock sector in boosting the provinces economy and enhancing food security. He stressed the necessity of increasing exports to fortify the country's foreign exchange reserves. (*Dawn, January 18th, 2025, Page 14*)

Two MoUs signed to strengthen agri & livestock sectors

Two important memorandum of understanding (MoUs) were signed to strengthen the livestock and agriculture sectors in Sindh. The first, a tripartite agreement, was signed between the Livestock & Fisheries Department, Thar Foundation, and Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam. Dr Kazim Hussain Jatoi, Secretary of Livestock & Fisheries Department, CEO of Thar Foundation, and Dr Altaf Ali Siyal, VC of Sindh Agriculture University, came together to formalize a partnership focused on enhancing training, research, and capacity building in region. This collaboration also includes the Livestock Improvement Project 2025-2026, a joint initiative by Thar Foundation, the Livestock & Fisheries Department, and Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam, aimed at improving livestock management practices in the area.

The second MoU, signed between the Livestock & Fisheries Department and Uthal University of Agriculture, Water & Marine Sciences, marks another significant step in advancing agricultural practices in Sindh. Dr Jatoi and VC of Uthal University represented their respective organizations, pledging to work together on research and service delivery initiatives. These agreements come just ahead of the Sindh Livestock Expo & DALFA Cattle Show, being held at Expo Centre Karachi from January 17-19, 2025. Thar Foundation, with its vision to enhance quality of life in Thapakrak through sustainable development and its mission to transform Islamkot into a model tehsil, is central to driving these efforts to promote innovation, improve local skills, and deliver essential support to community. (*Business Recorder, January 19th, 2025, Page 8*)

WB's \$137m project secured to strengthen livestock: Nasir

Provincial Minister for Energy, Development and Planning Syed Nasir Hussain Shah stated that the Sindh government ranks sixth in the region for exemplary performance in public-private partnerships. Under the vision of PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto and Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, a \$137 million project has recently been secured from the World Bank to strengthen the livestock sector. He made these remarks while addressing the closing ceremony of the Sindh Livestock Expo.

Provincial Minister for Education Syed Sardar Ali Shah expressed his longstanding desire for a grand livestock expo in Sindh. Recalling his tenure in Culture Department, he had envisioned a combined expo for culture, livestock, and agriculture. He noted the significant shift since 1947 when 65% of the country's economy depended on crops and 35% on livestock. Today, livestock contributes 65%, while agriculture accounts for 35%. Sardar Shah remarked that the Red Sindhi cow, which has been bred locally for over 6,000 years, has survived due to private breeders, not government farms. He urged that government farms should collaborate with private breeders under public-private partnerships to preserve local breeds. (*Business Recorder, January 20th, 2025, Page 11*)

5 # TRADE

Iran aims to boost Pakistan trade to \$10bn: envoy

Iranian Consul General Hassan Darwishvand has expressed Tehran's goal of increasing trade between Pakistan and Iran to \$10 billion, emphasising the need for mutual cooperation. During a farewell meeting with business leaders from Balochistan, Mr Darwishvand informed them that the bilateral trade volume had already surpassed \$3bn. He stressed that further growth in trade could only be achieved through continued collaboration between the Iranian Consulate and the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry. (*Dawn, January 1st, 2025, Page 5*)

Exports post modest rise of 0.67pc in December

Pakistan's merchandise exports slowed for the second consecutive month in December due to a steep fall in international demand, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The growth momentum picked pace in July owing to improved orders and stability in the exchange rate. Demand from North America and European countries is anticipated to pick up pace from January onwards. The exports grew 11.83pc in July, followed by 16pc in August, 13.52pc in September, 10.64pc in October, 8.98pc in November and 0.67pc in December.

The exports reached \$2.84bn in December against \$2.82bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, exports slightly increased 0.28pc. In the first half of FY25, export proceeds stood at \$16.56bn in July-December FY25 as against \$14.98bn over the corresponding months of last year, showing an increase of 10.52pc. In FY24, Pakistan's merchandise exports rose 10.54pc to \$30.64bn from \$27.72bn in the preceding year.

According to the PBS data, imports grew 6.11pc to \$27.73bn in July-December FY25 from \$26.14bn over the last year. Imports surged to \$5.28bn in December from \$4.50bn last year. Month-on-month, imports increased 17.44pc. The IMF revised its import forecast downward by \$3.3bn from \$60.5bn to \$57.2bn for FY25, converging with the government's projection of \$57.3bn. In FY24, imports fell 0.84pc to \$54.73bn compared to \$55.19bn in FY23. The trade deficit in July-December FY25 increased by 0.18pc to \$11.17bn from \$11.15bn over the last year. In December, the deficit increased by 34.80pc to \$2.44bn from \$1.82bn last year. The trade gap contracted to \$24.08bn in FY24 from \$27.47bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, January 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

H1 exports soar 10.52pc to \$16.561bn YoY

The country's exports increased by 10.52 percent during the first half (July-December) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$16.561 billion compared to \$14.985 billion during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24). Trade deficit widened by 46.61 percent on a month-on-month (MoM) basis in December 2024 and 34.80 percent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis, revealed the trade data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The data showed that trade deficit widened by 0.18 per cent during the first half of the current fiscal year and stood at \$11.172 billion compared to \$11.152 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.

The country's imports increased by 6.11 per cent and stood at \$27.733 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$26.137 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. Pakistan's trade deficit in December 2024 widened by 34.80 per cent year-on-year (YoY) to \$2.444 billion as compared to a deficit of \$1.813 billion recorded in the same month last year, according to PBS. Exports registered 0.67 per cent growth and stood at \$2.841 billion in December when compared to \$2.822 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. Imports registered 14.02 per cent growth and stood at \$5.285 billion in December when compared to \$4.635 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, January 2nd, 2024, Page 1*)

Uzbekistan envoy vows to increase trade with Pakistan

Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Alisher Tukhtaev, while highlighting the progress in bilateral trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan, stated that, as agreed by the leaders of both countries, the Uzbek Embassy is aiming to increase bilateral trade to US\$1 billion in the coming years. During a meeting at the Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Ambassador added that bilateral trade has been progressing well, with mutual trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan increasing from US\$122m in 2019 to US\$387m in 2023. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 7*)

Higher petroleum imports widen trade gap with Middle East

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 3.86 per cent to \$5.514 billion in the first five months of 2024-25 from \$5.309bn due to the rise in petroleum imports. According to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, the widening trade gap would

concern policymakers mainly because of the rising arrival of petroleum products from the region. Petroleum consumption has risen in the current fiscal year because the crude oil import surged 17.81pc in quantity in the first five months of the current fiscal year. In FY24, the 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 owing to rising local prices.

Exports to Middle East rose 8.52pc to \$1.349bn in July-November from \$1.243bn 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 preceding year. At the same time, Pakistan's imports from the Middle East also saw an increase of 4.74pc to \$6.863bn in July-November from \$6.552bn 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. Pakistan has recently signed a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to minimise its trade imbalance with the region. (*Dawn, January 7th, 2025, Page 9*)

Azerbaijan to set up trade centre in Lahore

Azerbaijan is set to establish a trade centre in Lahore to strengthen ties between the business communities of both countries and create new opportunities for mutual cooperation. This was announced by Azerbaijan's Ambassador Khazar Farhadov during his speech at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "We are going to establish Azerbaijan Trade Centre in Lahore and Pakistan-Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce to bring the business communities of both countries closer and open new avenues for mutual cooperation," he said.

The ambassador highlighted the duty-free access granted to Pakistani rice by Azerbaijan until 2027, encouraging traders to capitalise on this opportunity, especially considering Punjab's reputation for producing high-quality Basmati rice. He assured that Azerbaijani authorities would provide maximum facilitation to Pakistani traders exploring opportunities in Azerbaijan. Referring to the positive impact of direct flights between the two countries, the ambassador revealed that bilateral trade volume has tripled since 2022, growing from \$10 million to significantly higher levels. (*Dawn, January 14th, 2025, Page 9*)

Trade deficit with nine countries surges 43pc

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries surged by 43.22 per cent to \$5.328 billion during the first half of the current fiscal year (FY25) from \$3.72bn in the corresponding period last year. The trade gap with the regional countries widened mainly due to higher imports from China, India and Bangladesh 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 decline in exports to China.

In FY24, the trade deficit with these countries was \$9.506bn, up 49pc from \$6.382bn in the preceding year. Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka saw a paltry growth in July-December 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 7.85pc to \$2.404bn in July-December FY25 from \$2.229bn over the same period last year. Pakistan's total exports reached to \$16.56bn in the first half of FY25, up 10.52pc from \$14.98bn over the corresponding months last year. Pakistan's share in total exports to the regional countries is just around 14.51pc.

Contrary to this, imports surged 29.97pc to \$7.732bn in 6MFY25 from \$5.949bn over the same period of the previous fiscal year. Further analysis showed that imports from China grew by 30.42pc to \$7.541bn in 6MFY25 from \$5.782bn over the same period 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 and Bangladesh. (*Dawn, January 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan, Serbia to boost trade ties

Pakistan and Serbia have agreed to take practical steps to strengthen bilateral trade. (*Dawn, January 31st, 2025, Page 9*)

5.1 # Export

H1 textile exports grow 10pc YoY

The country's textile exports have witnessed a 10% increase, totalling \$9.09 billion in the first half of the ongoing fiscal year (2024-25), compared to \$8.29 billion during the same period in 2023-24. According to statistics provided by All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (APTMA), textile exports initially saw a 3% decline in July 2024. However, subsequent months showed positive growth, with August rising by 13%, September by 18%, October by 13%, November by 11%, and December by 6%. "During the first half of FY25, exports grew by 10% compared to the first six months of FY24. However, the current fiscal year shows a 3% decline in exports compared to FY22," APTMA reported, referring to its role as a major stakeholder in the textile industry. In FY22, the textile sector's total exports for the first six months amounted to \$9.38 billion, followed by \$8.72 billion in FY23. The textile exports in December of previous years were \$1.62 billion in 2022, \$1.36 billion in 2023, \$1.40 billion in 2024, and \$1.48 billion in 2025. (*Business Recorder, January 6th, 2025, Page 1*)

Rice export to BD: TCP receives 11 bids

The Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has received 11 bids for the supply of 50,000 metric tons of long grain white rice to Bangladesh. The procurement is part of an ongoing effort to meet Bangladesh's rice import requirements, with TCP evaluating the offers. The successful bidder will be responsible for ensuring timely delivery and

meeting the contractual specifications set by TCP. The state-run grain trader issued an international tender on December 31, 2024 and invited separate sealed bids from Companies dealing in export of Rice, for purchase of 50,000 metric ton Long Grain White Rice (IRRI-6) and 50,000 metric ton Non-Basmati Parboiled Rice both on Free on Board (FOB) Karachi/Gwadar Ports and CIF liner out Chattogram Port Bangladesh Basis through Karachi or Gwadar Port for export to Bangladesh in the shape of break bulk cargo packed in 50 kg polypropylene (PP) woven bags as per specification provided in the bidding document. (*Business Recorder*, January 7th, 2025, Page 2)

Exports to Europe rise to \$3.8bn in July-Nov

Exports to European countries grew 8.62 per cent in the first five months of the current fiscal year, mainly due to higher shipments to western states. The resurgence in exports to Europe in the current fiscal year was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods in western, eastern and northern Europe. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$3.866 billion in July-November FY25 from \$3.559bn in the same period last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY24, Pakistan's exports to the EU dipped 3.12pc to \$8.240bn despite its GSP+ status, which allows duty-free entry into most European markets. In October 2023, the European Parliament unanimously voted to extend the GSP+ status for another four years until 2027 for developing countries, including Pakistan, to enjoy duty-free or minimum duty on European exports.

Western Europe, which includes countries such as Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Belgium, accounts for the largest portion of Pakistan's exports to the EU. The exports to this region increased by 11.67pc to \$1.933bn in 5MFY25, up from \$1.731bn in 5MFY24. There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern and northern Europe during the period under review. The exports to the north of Europe saw a rise of 10.44pc to \$288.351m in 5MFY25, up from \$261.092m in the corresponding months last year.

Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry decline of 2.89pc to \$1.273bn in 5MFY25 from \$1.311bn in the corresponding period last year. In this region, exports to Spain dipped 5.94pc to \$600.87m in 5MFY25 from \$638.85m in the preceding year. Pakistan's exports to Western Europe increased by 11.67pc to \$1.933bn in 5MFY24 from \$1.731bn last year. (*Dawn*, January 12th, 2025, Page 9)

Drastic cut in kinnow export to Afghanistan, Central Asia feared in KP

Fresh fruit exporters feared a drastic reduction in the export of kinnow (citrus fruit) to Afghanistan and some Central Asian states in the current season due to imposition of some new export related taxes by the Federal Board of Revenue in the recent past. Fruit dealers in Torkham told *Dawn* that taxes on a 35 tons vehicle loaded with kinnow meant for export to Afghanistan or Central Asia were suddenly increased from Rs95,000 in 2024 to Rs131,000 with the start of the kinnow export season on January 1. (*Dawn*, January 13th, 2025, Page 9)

Textile parks to boost exports

Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar has emphasised the need to establish state-of-the-art textile parks through partnerships with international and domestic investors to boost exports and create jobs. Chairing a meeting of the Working Group for the Establishment of Textile Parks in Pakistan, Mr Dar observed that these parks would help drive export-led industrialisation in the country. Mr Dar, who also holds the foreign minister's portfolio, underscored the need to capitalise on available land in Special Economic Zones (SEZs) by upgrading them into 'plug-and-play' facilities to attract immediate industrial investments. (*Dawn, January 14th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan signs MoU with BD on rice export

Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and the Directorate General of Food, Bangladesh, today signed a MoU for the export of rice from Pakistan to Bangladesh. Syed Rafeo Bashir Shah, Chairman TCP and Mr. Md. Abdul Khaleque, DG, Directorate General of Food, Bangladesh, signed the MOU from their respective sides. The signing ceremony was attended by Syed Ahmed Maroof, High Commissioner for Pakistan, Mr. Shakeel Ahmed Mangnejo, Special Secretary, Ministry of Commerce, Pakistan, and Mr. Md. Masudul Hasan, Secretary, Ministry of Food, Bangladesh. They congratulated both delegations on this significant step toward strengthening trade and economic ties between two countries. (*Business Recorder, January 15th, 2025, Page 12*)

Exports to five Central Asian states fall 9pc

Pakistan's exports to five Central Asian countries (CACs) witnessed a negative growth of 8.87 per cent during the first five months of the current fiscal year over the corresponding period last year. The country's exports to the region have yet to attain their full potential. Similarly, imports from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan have increased significantly despite regular high-profile visits to balance trade deficit.

In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan's exports to the five central Asian countries — Kazakhs-tan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — dipped by 8.87pc to \$80.82 million during July-November 2024-25 from \$88.69m in the same period last year. Imports from the region increased by \$75.57m to \$82.03m in 5MFY25 from \$6.46m during the same period last year. The majority of these imports came from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Despite existing prospects, bilateral trade volume has yet to attain its full potential. Pakistan's trade with CACs ranged between \$400m and \$500m annually via Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has already implemented its transit trade agreement with Pakistan. Under the agreement, Uzbekistan has started importing goods under the transit agreement as well. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 9*)

Textile exports rise 9.6pc in 1HFY25

The textile and clothing exports grew 9.67 per cent in the first half of 2024-25, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed. The textile exports maintained a

bullish trend with robust growth of 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11pc in October, 10.81 pc in November and 5.55pc in December, respectively. However, exports contracted 3.09pc in July -- the first month of 2024-25. Textile and clothing exports have been static for the last two years despite having a \$25bn installed capacity due to structural issues, according to textile players. In absolute terms, the textile and clothing exports rose 9.67pc to \$9.08bn in July-December FY25 from \$8.28bn in corresponding period last year. (*Dawn, January 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

BD keen to import sugar on G2G basis

Bangladesh has expressed interest in importing up to 15,000 metric tons sugar from Pakistan on a Government-to-Government basis to address domestic supply shortages. Sources within the Ministry of Commerce told that Bangladesh is currently facing a sugar shortage and has decided to turn to Pakistan for its import needs. In December of last year, Bangladesh has already imported approximately 25,000 metric tons of sugar from Pakistan through private sector to meet its domestic consumption requirements.

Previously, Bangladesh was importing sugar from India, however due to some restrictions on sugar export, Bangladesh is looking import opportunities from Pakistan which has surplus sugar stocks and exporting commodity with the approval of the federal government to offload previous stocks and earn foreign exchange for country. Trade relations between Pakistan and Bangladesh are steadily growing as after export of 25,000 tons sugar last month, a deal for the import of 50,000 metric tons of rice currently in progress and expected to be finalized by next week. Bangladesh is importing rice on G2G basis through Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP). (*Business Recorder, January 21st, 2025, Page 1*)

Surging rice shipments fuel food exports

Pakistan's raw food exports grew 13.83 per cent to \$3.96 billion in July-December 2024-25 compared to \$3.48bn in the same period last year, mainly due to increased rice shipments. Exports of foodstuffs have risen for past 17 months despite unprecedented food inflation. As a result, consumers are paying higher prices because of supply and demand gaps. Official figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed that higher rice shipments significantly boosted food exports. In the first half of FY25, rice exports rose by 14.50pc year-on-year to \$1.87bn in value. The quantity of basmati rice surged 30.62pc to 416,491 tonnes year-on-year, and its value increased by 18.06pc to \$433.82m. Exports of non-basmati rice rose 13.47pc in value to \$1.44bn and 17.35pc in quantity to 2.643m tonnes. Exports of vegetables, especially onions, grew 1.71pc in July-December. The export of fruits declined by 1.32pc. The export of fish and fish products record a paltry growth of 1.47pc. (*Dawn, January 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Non-textile exports soar 13pc to \$7.5bn

Exports of non-textile products rose 12.83 per cent to \$7.56 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year from \$6.70bn in the same period last year, primarily driven by

rising demand for value-added products. According to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, leather, footwear and engineering goods contributed to the export growth during 6MFY25 from a year ago. Non-textile product exports rose 24.95pc to \$14.02bn in FY24 from \$11.22bn the preceding year. Exports of non-textile items continued to expand in the current fiscal year, building on the pace of the previous year. (*Dawn, January 26th, 2025, Page 9*)

NA panel questions quality negligence in rice exports

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Commerce has expressed concerns about neglect in the quality inspection procedure, which has interrupted rice shipments to the European market. The committee pointed to quality control issues, particularly in the inspection process, as the root cause of these challenges. It was revealed that the National Food Security Department has been unable to address these quality issues effectively. As a consequence of this issue, the government is now proposing a new regulatory authority to ensure better oversight. The committee noted that Punjab and Sindh together account for 5 million tonnes of rice exports, and the interceptions significantly impacted these exports. (*Dawn, January 30th, 2025, Page 9*)

Rice exporters advocate urgent reforms

In a bid to safeguard the future of the rice export industry, exporters have urged for immediate reforms for the export of rice aimed at reducing disruptions and streamlining the export process, ensuring greater efficiency and smoother operations. Rice exports reached a record high of \$4 billion in the last fiscal year (FY24), but exporters are now grappling with emerging challenges that threaten to disrupt this positive momentum. (*Business Recorder, January 30th, 2025, Page 28*)

5.2 # Imports

Various items from 7 countries: FBR announces tax concessions on imports

FBR has announced tariff concessions, from January 2025, on the import of a wide range of items and finished products from Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria and Turkiye under the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement. The FBR has issued SRO 2075(I)/2024 to allow lower rate of Customs duty on the import of listed items under the D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement. Whereas the imports into Pakistan from contracting member countries of D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement, namely; Bangladesh, Egypt, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Nigeria and Turkiye are made in conformity with D-8 Preferential Trade Agreement Rules of Origin, 2024, issued in pursuance of Preferential Trade Agreement Among D-8 Member States executed and read with Import Policy Order, 2020. (*Business Recorder, January 1st, 2024, Page 12*)

Falling tea imports causing losses, says association

The Pakistan Tea Association (PTA) claimed that the imposition of Rs1,200 per kg minimum retail price (MRP) has slowed down black tea imports. PTA Chairman Muhammad Altaf informed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) that tea imports

plunged to 31,651 tonnes (\$76 million) during November-December against 40,626 tonnes (\$97m) in the corresponding period last year. The declining imports have caused a revenue loss of Rs3.23 billion to the national exchequer in the first half of FY25. He warned that if the MRP stays, the loss of revenue to the exchequer will cross Rs10bn by the end of the current fiscal year. He urged the FBR to withdraw the SRO 1736(I)/2024 relating to MRP imposed from Nov 1, 2024, and also limit quantitative imports under Fata/Pata as per their population, which is four million, which means their tea imports to be limited to four million kgs only. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Financial and agricultural support to farmers: HBL Microfinance Bank teams up with HBL Zarai Services

HBL Microfinance Bank (HBL MfB), Pakistan's leading microfinance bank, and HBL Zarai Services Limited (HZSL), the pioneer agriculture-specialized extension services company in Pakistan, announced a strategic partnership aimed at empowering farmers through improved access to financial and agricultural support services. Under the partnership, 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. (*Business Recorder, January 1st, 2024, Page 4*)

FFC partners with Adamjee Insurance to introduce crop protection

Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited (FFC), Pakistan's leading fertilizer manufacturer, announced its strategic partnership with Adamjee Insurance Company Limited to launch a comprehensive crop protection insurance initiative. This collaboration, facilitated through FFC's extensive network of Sona Centres, aims to empower farmers by providing financial security against unpredictable agricultural risks. By collaborating with Adamjee Insurance, we aim to alleviate the financial burden on farmers caused by crop losses and reinforce their confidence in agricultural investments. (*Business Recorder, January 24th, 2025, Page 4*)

6.1 # Food Companies

Formula milk companies lobbying to redefine breast milk substitutes as 'food': health experts

Formula milk companies are lobbying to have breast milk substitutes or formula milk declared as 'food' to remove it from the purview of health and medicine authorities, enabling them to freely market their products without regulatory oversight, health experts warned. Leading paediatricians associated with Pakistan Paediatric Association (PPA) and health experts also claimed that efforts are being made to take this matter to the Council of Common Interests (CCI) for approval, which could have far-reaching consequences for the health of newborns and infants in Pakistan. Senior health experts congratulated the Sindh government on enacting the Sindh Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding Act. They urged federal government & other provincial administrations to pass similar legislation to protect breastfeeding and regulate formula milk marketing.

“Breast milk not only provides optimal nutrition but also offers antibodies and protection against various bacteria and viruses, helping babies build immunity and confidence,” Prof Masood Sadiq, president of the Pakistan Paediatric Association, said. He lamented that Pakistan has one of the lowest breastfeeding rates globally, with only 48.4 percent of mothers exclusively breastfeeding their babies during first six months. The experts highlighted that half of Pakistan’s mothers do not breastfeed their babies, resulting in a high prevalence of premature births, diarrhea, respiratory infections, and other illnesses that claim the lives of countless infants. They stressed the critical importance of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of a child’s life and urged strict regulatory oversight of formula milk marketing.

Recently, the Sindh Assembly passed Sindh Protection and Promotion of Breastfeeding Act with support from the Pakistan Pediatric Association (PPA), Unicef, and the Sindh Health Department. This legislation includes provisions to regulate the sale and marketing of formula milk and other nutrition-related products. “The act prohibits formula milk advertisements in hospitals, restricts its sale without a doctor’s prescription, and mandates the formation of a regulatory board with representatives from the Sindh Healthcare Commission and PPA,” Prof Masood Sadiq explained.

The board is tasked with monitoring compliance and penalizing violations. Hospitals found promoting formula milk will face heavy penalties, including fines of up to Rs500,000 and six months’ imprisonment for offenders. “If formula milk is deemed necessary in emergency cases, it will only be used under strict medical supervision for a limited time,” said Dr Saadullah Chachar. The paediatricians expressed concern that formula milk companies are actively lobbying against similar laws at the federal and provincial levels, fearing restrictions on their marketing strategies. “These companies are using all possible means to derail breastfeeding protection laws across the country,” Dr Khalid Shafi remarked.

Experts warned that declaring formula milk as food would make it freely available in markets and strip away the regulatory oversight that currently governs its marketing and sale. They urged parents, lawmakers, and healthcare providers to recognize the dangers of undermining breastfeeding promotion and to resist pressure from formula milk companies. “Formula milk does not build immunity like breast milk, leaving children vulnerable to infections and diseases,” Dr Mohsina Noor Ibrahim emphasized, adding that protecting and promoting breastfeeding should be a national priority to ensure health and well-being of future generations. (*The News*, January 26th, 2025, Page 16)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

CCP facilitates Rs29.6bn FDI during 2024

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has played an important role in facilitating FDI into Pakistan by reviewing and approving mergers and acquisitions that brought in Rs 29.6 billion during 2024. This highlights CCP’s growing influence in

shaping the country's competitive landscape. Throughout the year, the Commission processed 64 pre-merger applications spanning key sectors such as banking & financial services, oil and gas, consumer goods, pharmaceutical, energy, chemical and minerals, media, food & beverage, fertilizer, IT services, and automotive. These strategic mergers are expected to enhance competition, market dynamics, and investor confidence in the Pakistani economy. (*Business Recorder, January 3rd, 2024, Page 1*)

Significant investment coming into port, shipping sector: minister

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh said that significant foreign investment is coming into Pakistan's ports and shipping sector, establishing the country as a key gateway for regional trade. Speaking to media at KPC here he said that Maersk Line, Dubai Port & Abu Dhabi ports and have shown interest to invest in ports and shipping sector of country, besides Hutchison Ports has been planning to further investment in South Asia Ports Terminal. He said that Maersk Line has also offered to uplift the infrastructure in the areas surrounding the ports in Karachi, whereas green technology would be employed in ship-breaking industry with assistance of Denmark. About the Gwadar port, minister said that 90 percent of investment and management of the ports lie with China and government has decided to route sixty percent of the public sector foreign trade through this port. He said that improvement in the law & order situation would attract the shipping companies of the private sector towards this port, which is the strategic port of country. (*Business Recorder, January 12th, 2025, Page 3*)

FDI goes up by 20pc in six months

Foreign direct investment (FDI) increased by 20 per cent during the first half of the current financial year (FY25), the State Bank reported. The SBP data shows positive growth in FDI, but the total size of the inflows has not been significant enough to drive substantial economic change. According to the data, China remained the largest source of FDI in Pakistan, continuing its position as the biggest investor in recent years. Pakistan received a total of \$1.329 billion in FDI during the first half of the current fiscal year, compared to \$1.108bn in same period last year, reflecting a growth of 20pc.

Of this total, China contributed \$535.5 million, accounting for over 40pc of the total FDI, underscoring the limited interest from other countries in investing in Pakistan. Hong Kong contributed \$134.3m to the total FDI during the six-month period. Other significant contributors included the UK and Switzerland, with \$130m and \$100m, respectively. Notably, no Arab country made any significant investments during this period. (*Dawn, January 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan to tap global funding for three \$580m projects

Pakistan will present three high-impact projects worth \$580 million in hydropower and communication sectors to secure funding at the fourth international conference on financing for development in Spain in June. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has completed feasibility studies of the three SDG-aligned

projects, which include \$38.4m for a 10.96MW Mehar hydropower project in Kasur, \$318.1m for 500MW floating solar on Keenjhar Lake in Sindh and \$130m for the second phase of Swat motorway project.

According to informed sources, UNDP aims to continue supporting federal and provincial governments in developing bankable projects and supporting Pakistan's participation in the upcoming international conference, including a possible bespoke investment event for Pakistan. Pakistan will present its investment portfolio at the SDG Investment Fair, which will be a part of the conference. In the past years, 130 plus projects worth \$66 billion from 25 countries have been presented at the SDG investment fairs, with 15,000 participants tuned in from around the globe.

The Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development, taking place in Seville from June 30 to July 3, provides a unique opportunity to reform financing at all levels, including to support reform of the international financial architecture, the UNDP says. UNDP has partnered with the finance ministry to set up a Pakistan SDG Investments and Climate Financing Facility, providing technical assistance to accessing climate financing and investment opportunities. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 9*)

7.1 # Countries / Regions

\$1bn loan agreed with two Middle Eastern banks

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the government has agreed terms for a \$1 billion loan with two Middle Eastern banks at a six to seven per cent interest rate, as Pakistan looks for more financing. "With two institutions we have now gone forward in signing up the term sheet — one bilateral and one for trade (finance)," he said during an interview on the sidelines of the annual World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.

Mr Aurangzeb added that loans were short-term, or up to one year. SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad told Reuters in August that Pakistan aimed to raise up to \$4bn from Middle Eastern commercial banks by next fiscal year. Mr Aurangzeb said that Pakistan was aiming to discuss with ratings agencies a move towards a single B rating, hoping to see an upgrade in coming months. (*Dawn, January 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

7.2 # America

Naqvi offers attractive investment opportunities for US companies

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi visited the United States Chamber of Commerce and met with a high-level delegation of the US-Pakistan Business Council. Detailed discussions were held on increasing investment and cooperation in mining and information technology sectors. The interior minister also invited American investors to invest in Pakistan's mining and IT sectors. (*The News, January 26th, 2025, Page 8*)

High-level US team arrives to talk business

A high-level United States investment delegation has arrived in Pakistan for a crucial two-day visit, fostering economic and bilateral relations between the two countries,

sources revealed. The delegation is being led by Gentry Beach, a prominent hedge fund manager from Texas and a close business associate of the Trump family. The visit, occurring soon after the new US administration's assumption of office, is being viewed as a major diplomatic and economic milestone. During the visit, several investment agreements will be signed between Pakistan and the United States, opening avenues for collaboration in diverse sectors. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

USAID pauses funding programmes for country

The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has paused all funding for programmes in Pakistan following the Trump administration's decision to halt all foreign aid on January 20, barring that to Egypt and Israel. "Thank you for your message concerning President Trump's executive order on re-evaluating and realigning US foreign aid. We have been asked to refer all media queries on the President's Executive Orders to the White House", an email received from US Embassy Islamabad stated.

After US President issued the executive order on "Re-evaluating and Realigning United States Foreign Aid" on January 20, Secretary of State Marco Rubio sent out a memo stopping all foreign aid during a 90-day reassessment period with the exception of Israel and Egypt. According to the US government's Foreign Assistance website, disbursements for Pakistan declined from \$169.8m in 2023 to \$116.5m in 2024.

According to the portal, the main sectors for assistance in 2024 were basic health (\$21.53 million), disaster prevention and preparedness (\$14.01 million), business and other services (\$13.34 million), energy (\$12.04 million), conflict, peace and security (\$11.7 million), government and civil society (\$6.608 million), agriculture (\$4.823million), emergency response (\$3.3 million), other multi-sector (\$5.003 million), while operating expenses accounted for \$15.6 million.

During his first tenure, on January 2, 2018, US President Donald Trump stated that the United States had foolishly handed Pakistan more than \$33 billion over 15 years while getting nothing in return, and pledged to put a stop to it. "They give safe haven to the terrorists we hunt in Afghanistan, with little help. No more!" Trump wrote on Twitter." (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

7.3 # China

Chengdu official says will make \$700m investment in Punjab

A high-level Chinese delegation met Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif at Punjab House, Islamabad. The delegation was comprised Chengdu General Coordinator for ICT Hub Scarlett and Deputy CEO Huawei Yu Ray. Chengdu expressed its consent to make an investment worth 700 million dollars and she gave its principle approval. E-taxi service will be launched soon with the cooperation of Chengdu. A Chinese company will also establish a 'Computing Centre' in Lahore Nawaz Sharif IT City. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 10*)

Pakistan, China commit to top-notch CPEC 2.0

Pakistan and China have reaffirmed their commitment to high-quality development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) 2.0, with emphasis on industrialisation, Special Economic Zones (SEZs), clean energy, agriculture and livelihood projects. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to give \$500m loan for N-5 construction

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) will provide \$210.12 million in financing to Pakistan to reconstruct National Highway N-5 under the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework. The AIIB is evaluating the project and is expected to approve the loan by May. The first phase will cost \$247.75m, with the government providing \$37.63m, whereas the total cost of the Multi-Phase Programme (MPP) is \$587.98m, with an AIIB loan totalling \$500m. The federal government will contribute a total of \$87.98m. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 9*)

8.2 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Govt, ADB sign \$200m loan for power sector

Pakistan and Asian Development Bank signed an agreement to provide \$200 million support to country's ailing power distribution system through network improvement. The ADB board of directors approved the loan on Dec 10 to initially support three power distribution companies of Lahore, Multan and Sukkur — Lesco, Mepco and Sepco — through advanced metering infrastructure, data management systems, and asset performance management system. (*Dawn, January 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

KE, ADB discuss \$2bn plan

K-Electric CEO Moonis Alvi met with the Asian Development Bank's private sector operations team, led by Deputy Director General Cathy Marsh, to explore areas of cooperation and investment in power sector. Discussions focused on \$2bn plan to strengthen the power infrastructure, with ADB's potential role as a financier being a key area of interest. According to a press release, the engagement reinforced KE's commitment to sustainable growth and ensuring a reliable power supply for Karachi. (*Dawn, January 31st, 2025, Page 9*)

8.3 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Mian Zahid holds IMF responsible for economic slowdown

The Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the President of All Karachi Industrial Alliance, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board, Mian Zahid Hussain said in the past decade ongoing political confrontation and revenge politics have left the country politically and economically unstable. At the same time, terrorism had a terrible impact on the country economy, and the investment climate in the country could not be established.

He said that IMF reforms have also slowed down the economy. The government have to continuously increase the prices of energy, other commodities, and tax rates, which is improving the economy but increasing people anxiety. Electricity prices could be reduced next month. The State Bank has reduced the markup rate by another one percent to 12pc. The inflation rate has also come down to four percent, which has brightened the prospects of people getting relief. (*Business Recorder, January 30th, 2025, Page 5*)

8.4 # World Bank (WB)

WB approves 10-year Country Partnership Framework

The World Bank's Board of Directors has approved the first-ever 10-year Country Partnership Framework for Pakistan. Out of 24, 19 directors voted in favour of Pakistan. The World Bank has pledged \$20 billion under its first-ever 10-year Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for Pakistan, marking the largest commitment in the nation's history. This extended framework focuses on six key development areas, supported by a monitoring and evaluation scorecard to track progress. This extended framework focuses on six key development areas, supported by a monitoring and evaluation scorecard to track progress.

The World Bank will provide approximately three-fourths of the \$20 billion through the International Development Association, while remaining amount will be provided through the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD). The CPF will focus on six key development areas, including reducing child stunting, mitigating climate change, improving learning outcomes, providing clean water, and promoting public resources and private investment for comprehensive development. The International Finance Corporation will also provide additional funding to support CPF.

Specific goals include increasing tax revenue to over 15% of GDP, adding 10 Gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, providing quality education to 12 million students, and delivering healthcare services to 50 million people. The framework also aims to provide safe drinking water and sanitation facilities to 60 million people, strengthen food security for 30 million individuals, and increase access to family planning services for 30 million women. Additionally, the CPF includes objectives to address flood and disaster risks, benefiting 75 million people, the sources added. (*Business Recorder, January 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

Pakistan secures first longer-term World Bank country partnership

Pakistan has become the first country to launch a longer-term Country Partnership Framework (CPF) with the World Bank, after the bank's board of directors approved the 10-year programme at a meeting held in Washington, a day earlier. According to the World Bank, the new framework aims to "support inclusive and sustainable development through a strong focus on building human capital", in addition to fostering durable private sector growth. With around \$20 billion available in funding for the decade from 2026 to 2035, the CPF focuses on six key areas:

- Reduced child stunting through increased access to clean water and sanitation services, basic health and nutrition and family planning services
- Reduced learning poverty through quality foundational education
- Increased resilience to floods and other climate-related disasters and better food and nutrition security in the face of climate impacts on the water-agriculture nexus
- Cleaner and more sustainable energy and better air quality
- Increased fiscal space and better management and more progressive public expenditures for development
- Increased productive and inclusive private investment, particularly to improve external trade balances and higher, more sustainable growth.

These outcomes will be supported by cross-cutting interventions in social safety nets and financial inclusion to support and protect the most vulnerable populations, particularly women, as well as digital and transport connectivity, according to a World Bank statement. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 12*)

World Bank delegation shows interest in KP's mega projects

A team of World Bank, currently visiting Pakistan, has expressed interest in collaborating with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Chashma Right Bank Lift Canal and Peshawar-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway. (*Dawn, January 27th, 2025, Page 9*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

‘KP achieves 55.72pc utilization of development funds’

Advisor to the Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Finance and Inter-Provincial Coordination Muzammil Aslam, has said that province has made significant progress in utilizing its annual development funds. According to Aslam, 55.72% of funds allocated for the first six months of fiscal year 2024-25 have been utilized. Aslam revealed that a total of Rs 190,000 million was allocated for first six months, out of which Rs 79,584m has been released. He added that Rs 44.352bn has been utilized, which is 55.72% of the total funds allocated. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

PDWP approves 3 uplift schemes worth over Rs5bn

The Provincial Development Working Party Punjab approved three development schemes with estimated costs of over Rs 5.542 billion. The approval was accorded in the 57th meeting of the current fiscal year 2024-25, chaired by the Chairman P&D Board, Barrister Nabeel Ahmad Awan. (*Business Recorder, January 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Development spending falls off cliff in July-Dec

The Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) has flattened to just Rs148 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year against revised allocation of Rs1.1 trillion amid substantial revenue shortfalls and the government's tight control over disbursements to

meet requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). According to half-yearly (July-December 2024) data released by the Ministry of Planning and Development, the total PSDP spending stood at about Rs148bn, accounting for about 10.5pc of original budgetary allocation of Rs1.4tr. During the same period, the country faced a revenue shortfall of about Rs386bn against the target. (*Dawn, January 9th, 2025, Page 9*)

Uplift schemes worth Rs20bn approved

The Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP – Punjab) approved three development schemes at a cost of Rs20.59 billion. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 2*)

KP sets target of over Rs1trn for uplift portfolio

The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has set target to jack up the volume of its development portfolio to over Rs.1 trillion within the next four years. (*Business Recorder, January 25th, 2025, Page 2*)

CDWP refers seven projects worth Rs232bn to Ecneec for approval

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) cleared 16 development projects having an estimated cost of Rs259.68bn. The government intends to secure Rs200bn (\$710m) in the shape of foreign assistance for the projects. The CDWP itself approved nine projects with a total cost of Rs27.40bn. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 12*)

9.2 # Neo – Liberal Policy

Seven BHUs in Rawalpindi outsourced

As many as seven basic health units (BHU) in the Rawalpindi district have been outsourced by the Punjab government for one year to “improve” the provision of healthcare facilities, with privatisation to take effect from February 1. Out of total 98 BHUs in the district, eight have been outsourced and rebranded as the ‘Maryam Nawaz Clinic’. These clinics will provide free treatment for fever and flu among other diseases, as well as provide gynaecology facilities. The provincial government will pay for the private doctors. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 4*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Debt stocks hit Rs70.37trn mark by Nov-end

The federal government’s total debt stocks reached Rs 70.37 trillion mark by the end of November 2024, primarily driven by ongoing borrowing to cover the fiscal deficit, according to the latest report from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The central government’s debt, encompassing both domestic and external borrowings, rose by 2 percent in the first five months (July-Nov) of the fiscal year 2024-25 (FY25). The debt stock increased by Rs 1.452 trillion, climbing from Rs 68.914 trillion in June 2024 to Rs 70.366 trillion in November 2024.

During the review period, a significant increase was observed in domestic debt, which rose by 3 percent. In absolute terms, the central government’s borrowings from domestic sources grew by Rs 1.425 trillion, reaching Rs 48.585 trillion in November

2024, up from Rs 47.160 trillion in June 2024. This domestic borrowing comprised Rs 38.869 trillion in long-term loans and Rs 9.637 trillion in short-term loans. External debt, measured in rupee terms, saw a slight rise of Rs 25 billion during the first five months of FY25, bringing the total external debt to Rs 21.780 trillion by the end of November 2024, compared to Rs 21.754 trillion in June 2024. According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the Weighted Average Customer Exchange Rate for the US dollar was Rs 278.0737 in November 2024, slightly down from Rs 278.7742 in July 2024. (*Business Recorder*, January 7th, 2025, Page 1)

IMF lowers Pakistan's GDP growth estimate to 3pc

Almost a month before scheduled negotiations on its \$7bn Extended Fund Facility with Pakistan, IMF lowered the country's growth estimate to 3pc for current fiscal year, down from 3.2pc it had projected about three months ago. In its World Economic Outlook Update the IMF kept the economic growth forecast for next fiscal year (FY2026) unchanged at 4pc but lowered by 0.2 percentage points for current year. The IMF did not specifically explain factors leading to its downward revision in GDP growth rate while keeping the global growth rate unchanged at 3.3pc for both current and next years. Lower than estimated cotton output and struggling industrial output appeared to be key reason that is also creating substantial revenue shortfalls.

Though the fund kept the global growth outlook broadly unchanged from October, it said divergences across countries were widening. Among advanced economies, the US is stronger than previously projected on continued strength in domestic demand, thus raising growth projection for the US this year by 0.5 percentage point to 2.7pc. Growth in the euro area, by contrast, is likely to increase only modestly, to 1pc from 0.8pc in 2024, mainly because of geopolitical tensions. In emerging market and developing economies, growth performance in 2025-26 is expected to broadly match that in 2024. With respect to the projection in October, growth in 2025 for China is marginally revised upward by 0.1 percentage point to 4.6pc. World trade volume estimates have been revised downward slightly for 2025 and 2026 owing to sharp increase in trade policy uncertainty, which is likely to hurt investment disproportionately among trade-intensive firms. (*Dawn*, January 18th, 2025, Page 1)

Total debt stands at Rs71.3trn, Aurangzeb tells NA

Muhammad Aurangzeb has said Pakistan's total debt is Rs71.3 trillion which is 67.4 percent of debt-to-GDP ratio till June 2024. The minister told the National Assembly that there is Rs24.1 trillion of external debt and Rs47.2 trillion of domestic debt last June 2024. He said that maintaining a zero current account deficit or positive account before interest, along with achieving higher growth in Foreign Exchange Earning compared to the interest rate on external public debt, will gradually reduce the external public debt. He said that Pakistan's current account posted a surplus of \$944 million in the first five months of current fiscal year (5MFY 25), in contrast to a massive deficit of \$1.676 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.

In another written reply to a question, Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan told the House that during the period of July to December 2024-25, Pakistan exported a total of 105,690.3 metric tons (MT) of citrus fruits generating a revenue of \$30.9 million of various countries. He said that the largest export destination was Afghanistan, which imported 77,547.44 MT, contributing \$16.72 million, or over 54 per cent of total revenue. He said that this highlights Afghanistan's dominance as the primary market for Pakistani citrus fruits. He said that other significant contributors included the United Arab Emirates (UAE), with 9,173.09 MT exported, generating \$3.99 million, and Indonesia, which imported 6,384.01 MT and contributed \$3.3 million. About the export of mangoes, the minister said that Pakistan exported a total of 17,031 MT mangoes to UAE generating a revenue of \$10.58 million in July to December 2024-25. He said Pakistan exported 4,783 MT mangoes to UK generating revenue of \$17.97 million. He said that these two countries were largest exporters of mangoes during this period. (*Business Recorder, January 21st, 2025, Page 1*)

10.1 # Food Scarcity

Born into hunger

Over 18.2 million children 35 every minute were born into hunger in 2024, with Pakistan accounting for 1.4m of these births. This sobering statistic was shared recently by Save the Children, which also found that we stand second only to the Democratic Republic of Congo among countries with over 20pc of the population undernourished. Such distressing findings demonstrate our collective failure as a nation. As one of the world's most climate-vulnerable nations, Pakistan finds itself caught in a perfect storm of environmental disasters, economic instability, and systemic poverty. The devastating floods of 2022 were not merely a temporary setback but a harbinger of the climate-driven challenges that continue to threaten our food security. The connection between climate vulnerability and hunger is no longer theoretical it is playing out in real time across our provinces.

Throughout Pakistan, particularly in rural areas, mothers face impossible choices daily. Many are forced to reduce portions, skip meals, or choose which child gets enough to eat heart-wrenching decisions no parent should have to make. Behind each statistic is a family struggling to provide their children with basic nutrition, their suffering compounded by rising food prices and limited access to healthcare services. Additionally, the government should revitalise the National Food Security Policy, integrating it with climate adaptation strategies and modern agricultural practices. Pakistan needs to strengthen its early warning systems for food insecurity, enhance the coverage of nutrition-specific interventions through lady health workers, and improve coordination between federal and provincial food security initiatives.

The non-profit Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund should prioritise agricultural microfinance and climate smart farming techniques. And while international support is crucial, domestic resource mobilisation is equally important. The government must

increase health sector spending with a specific focus on nutrition programmes. Moreover, the National Disaster Risk Management Fund needs enhancement to better respond to climate-induced food crises. The fact that more babies are being born into hunger today than in previous years represents not just a humanitarian crisis but a national emergency that threatens Pakistan's future. We must ensure that the next generation of Pakistanis is not condemned to a life of hunger and deprivation. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 6*)

Pakistan faces major nutrition, food security challenges

Pakistan faced significant challenges in nutrition and food security in 2024, and despite some progress, the country still struggles with high rates of malnutrition and food insecurity, the latest nutrition sector bulletin says. High food prices, climatic shocks, and reduced livelihood opportunities contribute to acute food insecurity. Around 22 per cent people are facing high levels of acute food insecurity. This situation is expected to improve slightly post-harvest season, according to the bulletin, published by the ministry of national health services, registrations and coordination.

The country faces major challenges in meeting the food security and nutrition targets of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. Only 38pc of children are exclusively breastfed for the first six months of life. Over 40pc of children under five years are stunted; 17.7pc are wasted; 28.9pc are underweight; while more than half are anaemic and suffering from deficiencies in essential nutrients and vitamins such as iron (28.6pc), zinc (18.6pc), vitamin A (51.5pc) and vitamin D (62.7pc). The National Nutrition Survey 2018 had revealed persistently high rates of under-nutrition along with an emerging trend of being overweight and obese. Wasting is extremely high in Pakistan, with several areas in the country considered to be at emergency levels of wasting. (*Dawn, January 7th, 2025, Page 12*)

Pakistan removed from list of 'hunger hotspots', says FAO

In a positive development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has removed Pakistan from the list of "hunger hotspots". However, the United Nations' arm has projected that acute food insecurity will remain at 20-25 per cent in the provinces of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. According to a recent World Bank Brief on poverty and equity, food price inflation in Pakistan showed significant changes from April to June 2024, easing price pressure for the poor, vulnerable, and aspiring middle-class households who allocate 42-48pc of their budgets to food.

However, energy inflation rose 65pc & core inflation including transportation remained elevated in rural areas. Higher indirect taxes drove further price increases for consumer goods and services. These adversely affected families falling in the above-mentioned categories who allocate 23-28pc of their budgets to energy, housing and transportation services. Report said that primary-to-middle and middle-to-secondary schools transition

rates improved by two percentage points in 2023. However, over 35pc of children across Pakistan remained out of school entirely as per 2023 population census.

Additionally, chronic air pollution remains a public health concern affecting more than 70pc of population. Approximately, 14 days of schooling were lost in Punjab due to smog and poor air quality. Real agricultural incomes rose by 5pc in the fiscal year 2024, but other sectors employing the poor such as construction, trade and transportation saw falling real wages. Manufacturing activity did not register any increase over the fiscal year 2023. Similarly, employment and labour force participation rates and job quality indicators did not rise. (*Dawn, January 8th, 2025, Page 3*)

Senators raise food safety issues

The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research on Wednesday raised concerns over food safety standards in the country, with members highlighting issues such as plastic rice and substandard milk being sold in the market, posing a threat to public health. “More milk is being sold than what is produced in the country. What is being sold as food is often poison,” remarked Senator Ajmal Wali Khan during a meeting of the committee chaired by Senator Syed Masroor Hussain. “The Senate should legislate to ensure the quality of food in Pakistan, as the provinces have failed to address this critical issue,” he said.

With no national food safety policy in place, the committee discussed the need for stronger regulations and a unified approach across provinces. National Food Security Secretary Syed Zafar Ali Shah said highlighted that although the 18th Amendment shifted responsibility to the provincial governments, the federal government is drafting new laws to address food quality at the national level. The committee chairman decided to form a subcommittee to deliberate on and formulate a comprehensive national food security policy and draft new legislation aimed at ensuring food quality across the country. (*Dawn, January 9th, 2025, Page 3*)

10.2 # Inflation

CPI inflation hits near seven-year low at 4.1pc

The annual inflation maintained a sharp deceleration trend, hitting an 81-month low at 4.1 per cent in December due to a decrease in the prices of perishable food products. The current situation in Pakistan reflects disinflation, which signifies a slowdown in inflation. In contrast, deflation occurs when the general price levels decline. According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the average accumulative inflation over the last 47 months increased by 81.51pc, reflected in the retail prices of all consumer items during the period under review. This low inflation does not reflect that the cost of living has come down. The average inflation for six months (Jan-June FY21) was 9.2pc, followed by 12.5pc in FY22, 29.18pc in FY23, 23.41pc in FY24, and 7.22pc in the first half of FY25. The data shows a price rise since January 2021, contradicting the government’s assertions that prices have declined. 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 CPI inflation surged above 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. Improved crop yields, particularly of wheat, rice and sugar, helped reduce food prices this year, alongside a lower reliance on imports. The government's support for agriculture, including increased loans and favourable weather, played a crucial role in boosting production.

In first half of FY25 (July-December), inflation averaged 7.22pc compared to 28.79pc during same period last year. Analysts attributed the decline to lower global commodity prices, stable exchange rates and better agricultural outputs. IMF revises down inflation forecast to 9.5pc from 12.7pc for FY25. In December, urban and rural inflation was 4.4pc and 3.6pc year-on-year. Food inflation for December stood at 2.5pc in urban areas and -0.2pc in rural areas, whereas non-food inflation was 5.7pc in urban areas and 7.6pc in rural areas. Food inflation was 9.4pc in October 2021. Since then, food inflation has progressively increased, with a record 48.1pc reported in May 2023. Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was recorded at 8.1pc in urban areas and 10.7pc in rural areas in December. In the past 12 months, core inflation in urban areas was recorded at 18.4pc in July 2023. (*Dawn, January 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Pre-Ramazan speculative trade raises sugar prices

Speculative trade in sugar has begun pushing prices of the sweetener up even before the arrival of Ramazan and during the sugarcane crushing season. Sugar prices have registered a Rs12 per kg increase during the last week in city markets as a 50kg bag of the commodity in the local market has reached Rs7400 after an increase of Rs600. According to the report, the price of sugar per kilogram in the wholesale market has increased from Rs136 to Rs148, while it is being sold at Rs150 per kg by retailers. Usually, rates of the sweetener come down during the crushing season. But this season the situation is contrary and rates are going up though the crushing season is in full swing. (*Dawn, January 27th, 2025, Page 3*)

Jul-Dec inflation plunges to 7.2pc YoY

Inflation during the first six months of FY2024-25 (July-December) declined to 7.2 percent compared to 28.8 percent in the same period last year. In December 2024, inflation was recorded at 4.1 per cent, the lowest in 80 months (since April 2018, when it stood at 3.96 per cent). The sharp decline in inflation is attributed to exchange rate stability, prudent fiscal management, and improved supply arrangements for essential commodities. Strict action against illegal foreign exchange companies, smuggling, and hoarding has helped stabilize the exchange rate, boost market confidence, and ensure a steady supply of goods. The Sensitive Price Index (SPI), which tracks the weekly price movement of 51 essential items, has shown a continuous decline over the last four weeks of January 2025. In the week ending on 23rd January 2025, SPI decreased by

0.77 per cent. During this period, prices of 12 items decreased, 14 increased, and 25 remained stable, indicating overall stability or a downward trend in the prices of essential goods. (*Business Recorder, January 31st, 2025, Page 1*)

10.3 # Poverty

Country's poverty rate stands at 25pc

The findings of a World Bank report state that the poverty rate in Pakistan stood at 25.3 per cent in 2024, showing an increase of seven percentage points compared to 2023, with about 13 million additional people falling into poverty. Moreover, in addition to the projected increase in poverty, poor households face disproportionately higher welfare losses and get pushed deeper into poverty, according to the report 'Poverty Projections for Pakistan: Now casting and Forecasting' released by the World Bank.

The analysis shows that since 2019, the last year when data to estimate poverty and inequality levels was available, Pakistan has experienced experience large macroeconomic and natural shocks. However, the absence of new household survey information limits the ability to access the implications of the different shocks on household welfare to formulate appropriate responses. The now-casted results cover the period from the baseline in fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2023.

From 21.9pc in fiscal year 2019, poverty increased to 24.6pc during the Covid-19 crisis. After the main impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic passed, country saw a post-pandemic recovery where poverty went down consecutively for two years, reaching 17.1 in fiscal year 2022. However, at the start of fiscal year 2023, as a combination of devastating floods destroyed infrastructure and reduced agricultural output, together with record inflation levels and economic crisis, poverty increased again, analysis shows.

The report showcases how using various economic data sources can be useful to assess the current situation in the absence of the current data. The results highlight the vulnerability to falling into poverty or destitution that Pakistani households face when confronted with shocks. It also highlights that labour income has been the main driver for poverty reduction, resulting from people moving to better-paid employment opportunities during normal times. From a baseline value of 21.9pc in 2019, poverty is estimated to have increased to as high as 24.9pc and 25.3pc at the tail-end of the pandemic and period of high inflation in 2020 and 2023, respectively, with a period of recovery in between. Forecasts predict that, following economic recovery, the poverty headcount will decrease to 18.7pc by 2025. (*Dawn, January 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

Father of seven dies by suicide

A father of seven children hanged himself with a rope from a tree in Deh-148 of Kot Ghulam Mohammad taluka. Family sources said that Nihal Chand Meghwar, 45, had been jobless for long. Some villagers spotted Meghwar's body hanging from a tree on the outskirts of the village. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 15*)

Rising foreign debt, lack of social security contributing to poverty: report

Findings of a recent report have shown that poverty has increased in Pakistan over the years and has left people vulnerable in various ways mainly due to the lack of social security programmes, increasing foreign debts and disproportionate allocations of the gross domestic product (GDP) among other important factors. The 7th Triennial Poverty and Vulnerability Report, compiled by the South Asia Alliance for Poverty Eradication (SAAPE), was launched by the Pakistan Institute of Labour Education and Research (Piler) at Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto Institute of Science and Technology (Szabist).

Abida Ali, core committee member of SAAPE, who also moderated the event, shared some key finding of the report which showed that “Pakistan spends less than 2 per cent of its GDP on social protection, significantly below the global average of 11.2pc. Only 9.2pc of the population is covered by at least one social protection programme, with particularly low coverage for vulnerable groups: children (5.4pc), persons with disabilities (1.7pc) and the elderly (5.8pc).”

Speaking about the report, economist and researcher Dr Asad Sayeed said that poverty has increased in Pakistan during the past five-six years and with very few social protection programmes, people have become vulnerable. “Our biggest issue is that the country’s debt has significantly increased. Defence expenditure is quite a lot also, which is an issue, but that has been so for decades. Ten years ago, our debt was lesser than the defence expenditure, but now the debt is four times higher than defence budget,” he said. (*Dawn, January 28th, 2025, Page 13*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Economic Coordination Committee bans ozone-harming materials

Economic Coordination Committee of cabinet decided to immediately ban ozone-depleting insulation & foaming materials — polyol blended with hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) — due to climate concerns. Committee also approved supplementary grants totalling Rs10b. (*Dawn, January 7th, 2025, Page 9*)

11.1 # Biodiversity

Fire destroys hundreds of precious trees in Waziristan, Bajaur

Hundreds of precious trees were reduced to ashes when fire broke out in Kot Kunr forest mountain of Wana in Lower South Waziristan district. Eyewitnesses said that the fire was spreading rapidly, engulfing a significant portion of the mountain. The teams of Rescue 1122 and forest departments were trying to extinguish the blaze. The cause of the fire could not be ascertained. Locals feared that the fire could engulf the entire mountain if it was not extinguished. They urged authorities to expedite efforts to prevent any catastrophic. However, they failed to put out the fire owing to lack of proper tools and expertise. The villagers tried their best to control the fire but they were unable to do so. The fire destroyed a number of trees and plants in the mountain. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2025, Page 9*)

11.2 # Health

Only half of Pakistan's population has access to universal healthcare: report

The Universal Healthcare (UHC) Monitoring Report for Pakistan 2024 – a yearly report that assesses and monitors the progress of the country's health sector – has revealed that only half of Pakistan's population has access to UHC. The country lagged far behind in achieving the global target of over 80pc, said the report, which was prepared in collaboration between the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Last year's results revealed mixed performance across the country with the Islamabad Capital Territory securing at 63.9pc, which was the highest out of all federating units. Punjab followed with a score of 55.5pc, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 51pc, Sindh 50.7pc, and Balochistan 38.4pc. UHC is the main outcome of health-related SDGs and is measured with two targets – one for coverage of essential service delivery and the other for financial protection. According to the report, though there was considerable improvement in the UHC service coverage index from 40 in 2015 to 53.9 in 2023, the real challenges still lay ahead. (*Dawn, January 2nd, 2025, Page 4*)

Experts raise alarm over spread of vaccine-preventable diseases

Raising alarm over multiple outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases and deaths of a large number of children across the country, health experts said that these precious lives could have been easily saved if the governments at the federal and provincial levels had taken timely measures and plugged the loopholes in the routine immunisation programme. Representing major tertiary care private and public sector hospitals, the experts also said the health crisis continued in the country with a spike in cases of measles and other infectious diseases. They were speaking at a press conference organised by the Medical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases Society of Pakistan (MMIDSP) here at the Karachi Press Club. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 13*)

Over 75pc of Pak women suffer from calcium deficiency

Over 75 percent of Pakistani women suffer from calcium deficiency due to poor dietary habits and insufficient awareness. A theatre play, "Chuna Lagake" highlighting the prevalence of calcium deficiency among Pakistani women and its impact on their health, was staged at the Arts Council of Pakistan, Karachi. Organized by PharmEvo, a local pharmaceutical company, the event was attended by medical professionals and health experts who lauded the initiative for spreading awareness about a critical health issue affecting women. The play illustrated how calcium deficiency leads to weakened bones, osteoporosis, & fractures, significantly impairing women's ability to perform household and workplace responsibilities effectively. It also shed light on the resulting familial tensions caused by health-related challenges faced by women. Speaking after event, Dr Shaheen Zafar, a gynecologist, emphasized that calcium deficiency is a leading health issue for women in Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, January 6th, 2025, Page 2*)

Pakistan tops world in hepatitis C cases: PM's aide

Coordinator to PM on Health Dr Malik Mukhtar Ahmad Bharath said Pakistan has the largest number of hepatitis C patients in the world, with 10 million of the global 60 million cases. He further highlighted its dire consequences saying: "If we do not act, Pakistan will face over 11 million HCV cases by 2035, leading to 500,000 plus liver cirrhosis cases, over 100,000 cases of liver cancer and 130,000 HCV-related deaths." The economic impact would be a loss of over \$285 million annually.

Dr Bharath pointed out that as of 2021, only 16 per cent of Hepatitis C cases in the country had received treatment, with testing and treatment access being the key challenges. According to a statement, the federal government, in collaboration with provincial governments, has launched the Prime Minister's Programme for the Elimination of c(HCV) Infection to address these challenges with a plan to allocate Rs34.15 billion over the next three years. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025, Page 4*)

KP govt pours Rs100bn into free healthcare since 2016

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department has spent around Rs100 billion on the provision of free healthcare under the Sehat Card Plus programme to 3.89 million patients since its launch in 2016. Beneficiaries of the health insurance scheme included 2.09 million (53.07pc) women, 1.79 million (46.03pc) men and 17 transgender persons, according to an official report. According to it, private hospitals earned Rs54.32 billion and public hospitals Rs44.66 billion from the SCP, with the former receiving 2.05 million patients and the latter 4.12 million. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025, Page 8*)

Jacobabad's 5th polio case takes tally to 71

The National Institute of Health (NIH) has said it has detected the polio virus type 1 (WPV1) in a male child from Jacobabad. This latest detection takes the number of polio cases found in the year 2024 to 71. (*Dawn, January 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

Another polio case in DI Khan takes 2024 tally to 72

Polio cases continue to emerge unabated, with the country reporting another wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) case, raising last year's total to 72. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health confirmed the detection of the latest case from Dera Ismail Khan district in KP, marking the 11th case from the area. "Of these 72 cases, 27 are from Balochistan, 22 from KP, 21 from Sindh, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad". (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 3*)

'Consumption of ultra-processed products leading cause of diseases'

Islamabad: Consumption of ultra-processed products (UPPs), laden with unhealthy additives, sugar, and artificial ingredients, is a leading cause of obesity, diabetes, and other chronic diseases in Pakistan and thus taxing ultra-processed foods is a triple win for the government and the country as it will not only get the more needed revenues but will also reduce the disease burden and increase productivity. This was stated by General Secretary Pakistan National Heart Association Sana Ullah Ghumman in a press

conference organised by PANAHA and its coalition partners HeartFiles, Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA), Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI), PMA, Pakistan Academy of Family Physicians, All-Pakistan Kidney Welfare Association and Diabetic Association of Pakistan here at a local hotel in Islamabad. Calling on the government to prioritise public health over business interest, he said that the alarming rate of increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) has emerged as a pandemic in the country. The government should take immediate action by imposing taxes on ultra-processed products to reduce consumption of UPPs. The government has recently increased the tax on petrol which results in high inflation, increase in prices of medicine and other household items, he said.

The participants in the conference highlighted the concern that the prevalence of NCDs is escalating in Pakistan. Alarming statistics reveal that over 41 per cent of adults in Pakistan are either obese or overweight. Additionally, more than 33 million people are currently living with diabetes, with another 10 million on the verge of developing the disease. Without immediate policy interventions, the number of individuals with diabetes is projected to surge to 62 million by 2045. The number of people living with diabetes in Pakistan increased from 6.3 million in 2011 to 33 million in 2021 and approximately 36 million in 2024, with an additional one million as pre diabetic. (*The News, January 26th, 2025, Page 5*)

11.3 # Pollution

Lahore's air quality turns hazardous yet again

The air quality in the provincial capital again reached alarming levels, with its Air Quality Index (AQI) soaring to 529, that is categorised as hazardous. This places Lahore as the second most-polluted city globally, just behind Delhi (India) with an AQI of 641. The primary pollutant, PM_{2.5}, has reached a concentration that is 35.6 times higher than the World Health Organisation (WHO) standards. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Air Quality Experts (PAQE) group issued an advisory on air quality management measures that could help mitigate extremely high PM_{2.5} air pollution levels in Punjab, particularly in Lahore. (*Dawn, January 10th, 2025, Page 2*)

Growing pollution, dust increase diseases in megacity

Dusty roads and streets, particularly the under-construction University Road, are raising air pollution levels in the megacity, causing lung and heart diseases among citizens. Thousands of students travelling on the University of Karachi, NED University of Engineering and Technology, and other educational institutions situated on the University Road are badly hit. (*Business Recorder, 13th February, 2025, Page 7*)

Air pollution has become major threat to heart health: Sherry Rehman

Senator Sherry Rehman, chairperson of the Standing Committee on Environmental Change in the Senate, addressed a seminar on environmental pollution and its impact on heart health via video link. In her address, Senator Rehman emphasized the growing

threat of air pollution to cardiovascular health, highlighting the serious health risks associated with polluted air. She stated that air pollution has become a major threat to human heart health, contributing significantly to heart diseases, strokes, and high blood pressure. She pointed out alarming statistics, revealing that 79% of deaths caused by air pollution are linked to heart disease or stroke. She explained how harmful toxins like PM 2.5 and nitrogen oxides in polluted air directly damage blood vessels, elevating the risk of cardiovascular diseases. (*The News, January 26th, 2025, Page 16*)

11.4 # Climate Change

242m students' schooling disrupted by climate crises, Unicef says

Over 242 million students in 85 countries had their schooling disrupted by extreme climate events last year, including heatwaves, tropical cyclones, storms, floods, and droughts, exacerbating an existing learning crisis, according to a Unicef analysis. The report finds for the first time, Learning Interrupted: Global Snapshot of Climate-Related School Disruptions in 2024 — released on International Day of Education — examines climate hazards that resulted in either school closures or the significant interruption of school timetables, and the subsequent impact on children from pre-primary to upper secondary level. According to the analysis, South Asia was most affected region with 128 million students facing climate-related school disruptions last year, while in East Asia and the Pacific, 50m students schooling was affected. El Nino continued to have a devastating impact on Africa, with frequent heavy rainfall and floods in East Africa, and severe drought in parts of Southern Africa. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

11.5 # Climate Financing

Funds approved for Indus spurs, flood victims, Murree snow

The Punjab government has approved Rs53 million worth of funds for the construction of protective embankments along the Indus River, relief efforts for the 2023 flood victims in Kasur and measures to address winter and snowfall in Murree. A decision to the effect was made during a meeting held at Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) office. (*Dawn, January 3rd, 2024, Page 2*)

Climate adaptation, mitigation: Country needs \$348bn by 2030: Aurangzeb

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has said Pakistan needs a staggering \$348 billion by 2030 to meet its climate adaptation and mitigation goals. Speaking virtually at the 3rd Pakistan Climate Conference organised by Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OICCI) at a local hotel, the Finance Minister commended OICCI for organising the moot to address the urgent climate challenges faced by Pakistan. With the nation ranked among the top 10 most climate-vulnerable countries and the devastating 2022 floods causing over \$30 billion in damages, the need for climate finance and sustainable solutions has never been more critical. He said mobilizing sufficient climate finance is critical to address Pakistan's pressing climate challenges. "To achieve this, we must enhance access to international

funds such as Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund”. The success of Pakistan’s first green Eurobond in 2021, which raised \$500 million, highlights our potential to attract sustainable investments. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Drought

PMD warns of drought due to scarce rainfall

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has warned of a drought-like situation in most parts of the country due to scarce rainfall. In an advisory, PMD’s NDMC said the plains did not receive significant rainfall, which aggravated the drought conditions. The rainfall was 40 per cent lower than normal across Pakistan from September 1, 2024, to January 15, 2025. The major anomalies were observed in Sindh, where the rainfall was 52pc lower than normal, Balochistan (45pc lower) and Punjab (42pc lower). The lower rainfall has created mild drought-like conditions in different areas of the country, including rain-fed areas. (*Dawn, January 22nd, 2025, Page 12*)

Drought-like conditions grip Mirpur Bathoro as canal closure enters second month

A severe crisis has unfolded in Mirpur Bathoro taluka of Sindh as the closure of Ganjo Bahar Canal enters the second month, threatening the livelihoods of farmers, herders and thousands of other residents in the region. The closure has left thousands of acres of fertile land barren, endangering vital crops such as wheat, sugar cane and green fodder like berseem, which is crucial for livestock. The lack of water has resulted in reduced yields, with many farmers fearing significant financial losses.

A farmer, Ghulam Nabi, lamented: “The standing crops are withering before our eyes. We have invested everything, but without water, we are helpless.” The scarcity of fodder crop has left the livestock owners scrambling their animals alive, adding to the economic strain. The ongoing crisis in Mirpur Bathoro taluka highlights an urgent need for sustainable water management solutions in the region. As farmers watch their crops fail, herders struggle to feed their livestock, and residents fight for every drop of water. The region teeters on the brink of a humanitarian disaster. It is imperative that the authorities act swiftly to restore provision of water and provide immediate relief to those suffering. Without their intervention, the livelihoods of thousands and the future of agriculture in the region remain at a grave risk. (*Dawn, January 23rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Worsening drought situation: Met Office raises the red flag

The Met Office raised a red flag regarding the worsening drought situation in various parts of the country following a rain-deficit monsoon last year. The National Drought Monitoring Centre (NDMC) has issued an advisory, underlining the critical need for immediate action as rainfall deficits and rising temperatures signal challenging months ahead. In the latest drought alert -II, the NDMC highlighted below-normal rainfall of 40 percent across Pakistan between September 1, 2024, and January 15, 2025. The most severely affected regions with Sindh leading at 52 percent rainfall deficit, followed by

Balochistan at 45 percent and Punjab at 42 percent. Such prolonged dry conditions have intensified mild drought-like situations across key agricultural zones, including the Potohar region, southern Punjab, and central Sindh. The PMD's analysis reveals that the situation could escalate further with forecasts suggesting limited rainfall and higher-than-normal temperatures for the second half of the winter season. These conditions may convert mild droughts into moderate droughts, compounding challenges for communities in rain-fed farming areas. It has urged the concerned stakeholders to prepare for the looming crisis. Farmers are advised to stay updated on weather forecasts and implement water conservation strategies to mitigate the impact of drought. (*Business Recorder, January 23rd, 2025, Page 4*)

13.3 # Wildfire

Fire erupts in KP's Koh-i-Suleman forest

A fire erupted in the forests of Koh-i-Suleman, affecting various points of Dara Zinda tehsil. The fire quickly spread towards the olive and pine forests in the area. Rescue spokesperson Aizaz Mahmood stated that the fire broke out at four different locations, including the village of Tajori on the northern side and Al-Mar-Kalan village on the southern side. The blaze is causing damage to valuable trees, such as olive, pine nut, nettle, and gur-gure, and is also harming local wildlife and bird species. The flames can be seen from the tehsil headquarters in Darra Zinda. Locals report that fire began two days ago, but in past few hours, it has spread over several kilometres area and is clearly visible from ground, especially during the night. (*Dawn, January 10th, 2025, Page 8*)

Forest fire breaks out on Karak, Bajaur mountains

A fire broke out in the mountainous area of Latambar union council of Karak district, a Rescue 1122 official said. He said the fire spread over a vast area in no time, prompting the rescue service to send a team of firefighters to the remote locality to put out the blaze. Meanwhile, scores of precious trees were burnt after a forest caught fire in Utmankhel tehsil of Bajaur district. According to a rescue statement, scores of trees were destroyed before the firefighters could reach the site located some 30 kilometres from Khar, the district headquarters. It said the fire was finally extinguished after two hours long joint efforts by the Rescue 1122 firefighters and a group of local residents. The people claimed it was the second time during the past two years that the said mountain had caught fire. (*Dawn, January 27th, 2025, Page 9*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Earthquake jolts Sibi region

A 4.7-magnitude earthquake struck the Sibi region, causing residents in the town and surrounding areas to flee their homes and seek shelter under the open sky. According to officials, the tremor was felt around 5:40am, lasting for around 30 seconds, creating panic among local population. Earthquake had a depth of 18 km. The epicenter was located about 22km southeast of Sibi. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

3.6 magnitude quake jolts Kalat

A 3.6 magnitude earthquake jolted Kalat and its surrounding areas causing the people to flee houses and seek shelter under open sky. Officials said the quake struck the district headquarter of Kalat and other areas in the morning creating panic among the residents of Kalat. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the earthquake had a depth of 33km and the epicenter was located 27km north of Kalat town. Officials said no casualty and property damage was reported from Kalat and surrounding areas. It was the third earthquake in last one week in the province after Chaman and Sibi. (*Dawn, January 6th, 2025, Page 5*)

Quake hits Quetta

An earthquake jolted the provincial capital and its surrounding areas. The 3.7 magnitude tremor on the Richter scale forced people to come out of their homes and their working places in the open sky, but no human or property loss was reported. According to the Seismological Centre, the earthquake struck at 6.01pm and its epicenter was some 19 kilometers west of Quetta. It was the fifth earthquake to strike Chaman, Kalat, Khuzdar and Sibi in January. (*Dawn, January 28th, 2025, Page 5*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Police action to clear Karachi roads of protesters sparks violence

Pitched battles between police and groups of youth broke out on multiple spots in the city as law enforcers fired tear gas to remove protesters staging sit-ins on the call of the Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) against the blockade and killings in Parachinar. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah told reporters during the day that “an administrative action” was launched during which the sit-ins at eight locations had been removed because they were “causing inconveniences to the people”. Initially, the police did not face resistance when they dismantled tents and dispersed protesters at around half a dozen locations in the city. However, they used force at Abbas Town, Numaish and Malir 15 to clear Abul Hasan Ispahani Road, M. A. Jinnah Road and the National Highway. (*Dawn, January 1st, 2025, Page 13*)

Parachinar sit-in continues despite peace deal

Protesters continued their sit-in in Parachinar, headquarters of Kurram district, as they announced that they would end their protest only when the roads are opened for traffic and they are made safe for public travel. The two sides signed the peace agreement in Kohat. Tehsil chairman Agha Muzammil Hussain said that the sit-in outside the Parachinar Press Club would continue until the roads are opened and normal traffic is restored on it and people’s security is ensured. Meanwhile, the people of both sides of Kurram district have welcomed the peace agreement and expressed hope that the roads to the affected areas would be opened soon and normalcy would return to the area. (*Dawn, January 3rd, 2024, Page 12*)

GB protests 22-hour power outages amid freezing weather

Protests erupted in several parts of Gilgit-Baltistan as residents decried over up to 22 hours of daily power outages amid harsh winter conditions and snowfall. Demonstrators observed a shutter-down strike in Hunza and blocked sections of the Karakoram Highway for hours, burning tyres to register their frustration. Fresh snowfall across most areas of the region has compounded people's woes. Protesters blamed poor planning and widespread corruption in the power sector for their hardships. In the Sost town of Hunza, residents staged demonstrations, disrupting trade activities between Pakistan and China. The protest was jointly organised by the All Parties Traders Association and the Awami Action Committee. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 3*)

Turbat-Karachi traffic halted due to missing persons protest

Traffic between Turbat and Karachi was suspended after the family members and workers of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee blocked the highway at two points to protest the disappearance of two persons. The family members have been staging the protest for last week at Fida Shaheed Chowk, demanding recovery of Zareef Umar and Naveed Hameed, who have been missing for 10 days. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

No end in sight to blockade of KKH over excessive loadshedding

People of Hunza continued their sit-in at Aliabad for the second consecutive day, blocking Karakoram Highway in protest against 22-hour loadshedding and demanding uninterrupted power supply to the area where temperatures have plunged to 20 degrees below freezing point. The protesters spent in a camp set up on the road. They said they would call off the protest only after an uninterrupted power supply is ensured to people of area. The sit-in call was given by the Hunza Awami Action Committee and the All Parties Traders Association. Demonstrations were held in Sost, near Khunjerab Pass, Galmit Gojal and Aliabad. The Karakoram Highway remained blocked for many hours and a strike was observed in many areas of Hunza. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 5*)

Kohat residents protest excessive power cuts

People from various areas locked the main entrance to the Rawalpindi Road grid station night to protest prolonged power cuts. The protesters marched on the grid station after staging a demonstration and locked its entrance to protest loadshedding. The protesters were led by former district nazim Naseem Afridi. Later, Peshawar Electric Supply Company officials accompanied by assistant commissioner Nisar Ahmed Khan and SP Farooq Zaman reached spot and held talks with protesters. The protesters said they faced difficulties as long power cuts created water shortage. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 8*)

KKH blocked as power protesters continue sit-in in Hunza

A protest sit-in against power crisis in Aliabad Hunza continued for third consecutive day with the KKH remaining blocked. The protest has been launched on the call of Hunza Awami Action Committee and All Parties Traders Association. The protesters spent at their protest camp despite freezing temperature and announced to continue it

till the government fulfilled their demand. A protest rally was also held in Ganish village and the participants later joined the sit-in. (*Dawn, January 6th, 2025, Page 4*)

Awami Tehreek holds 10km march against canals project

Awami Tehreek activists staged 10-kilometre march, from Sim Sorhadi saline water drain to Digri town in protest against government plans to construct six canals on Indus River, corporate farming and amendments to Irsa Act. The march started from Baloch Colony chowk & terminated at Muhammadi chowk. They slammed federal government and Pakistan Peoples Party co-chairman President Asif Ali Zardar and asked them to clarify their views on controversial project. (*Dawn, January 6th, 2025, Page 15*)

Trade remains suspended due to KKH blockade

The main highway connecting Pakistan to China in the mountainous Gilgit Baltistan (GB) region remained closed for trade and traffic for the fourth consecutive day. As per reports the demonstrators continued their sit-in protest against power outages that residents say last for almost 20 hours. The Karakoram Highway (KKH), a vital trade route between the two countries, was obstructed by protesters at Ali Abad, a significant point in the Hunza Valley. Protesters were enraged by frequent power outages in GB. The area has witnessed a gradual increase in trade activity following an agreement between Pakistan and China to keep the Khunjerab Pass open year-round to facilitate economic exchanges. (*Business Recorder, January 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

Stiff resistance against demolition drive leaves many policemen, protesters injured

Scores of policemen and protesters were injured when occupants of several hundred concrete houses and other structures reacted violently to an anti-encroachment drive launched in Qasimabad. Enraged protesters, many of them claiming ownership of their respective property, pelted vehicles of the demolition squad, police and local administration with stones. (*Dawn, January 8th, 2025, Page 15*)

People from over 40 villages stage sit-in against public-sector oil & gas explorer

Hundreds of farmers, landowners and local residents from over 40 villages staged a sit-in for more than eight hours against what they claimed damage to local crops, trees, land and water reserves destroyed during an oil and gas survey conducted by the Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL). They marched from Jhangara Bajara Road to the main gate of the OGDCL field office in Jhangara Bajara town, Johi taluka, and staged the sit-in there. The protesters claimed that the local community had been receiving threats of dire consequences after repeated complaints to the company's administration, prompting the farmers and villagers to demand immediate action. (*Dawn, January 9th, 2025, Page 15*)

Protest against cut in pension, leave encashment

Hundreds of activists from the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) Punjab protested against cut in pension, gratuity and leave encashment. The protest took place outside the civil secretariat, with employees carrying placards and banners

criticising, what they termed, the government's anti-worker policies. The interim Punjab government had issued notifications for these cuts, prompting AGEGA activists to demand that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz revoke them. During the interim government's period, a crackdown on protests led to the detention of many AGEGA leaders. They were taken to Jati Umrah for negotiations with Maryam Nawaz, who promised to revoke notifications after coming into power. Despite ending the initial protest, AGEGA leaders have continued to demonstrate outside secretariat for past few months to remind Maryam Nawaz of her promise. (*Dawn, January 10th, 2025, Page 2*)

Retirees of Urdu university protest against non-payment of pensions

The retired faculty and staff of the Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST) gathered outside the Karachi Press Club to protest against unpaid pensions and post-retirement dues. The protesters said that for the past five months, they had not received the pension amount, which had left them struggling with a number of issues. Out of the total 80, five retirees had passed away and their families were in financial distress. (*Dawn, January 10th, 2025, Page 14*)

Families demand action against human traffickers in Punjab

Families and children of dozens of missing people from the June 2023 Libyan Coast boat capsizing tragedy staged a protest after receiving phone calls from alleged human traffickers in Libya, demanding additional money. The demonstrators from Gujrat, Gujranwala, Mandi Bahauddin, Sheikhupura and Bhimber district of Azad Kashmir gathered at Kutchery Chowk. Their rally culminated at Gujrat Press Club, carrying banners and placards demanding that the government take immediate action for the recovery of their loved ones, dead or alive. The families claimed at least 75 Pakistanis were among those missing in the 2023 tragedy. Protesters alleged that hundreds of people were stranded in safe houses controlled by international human trafficking mafias in Libya. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025, Page 2*)

Highway blocked amid protest over Zehri arrests

Traffic between Quetta and Karachi remained suspended as a large number of protesters blocked the highway in the Anjira area of Khuzdar district, demanding the release of individuals arrested in connection with a recent militant attack in Zehri tehsil. Security forces earlier detained over a dozen people from Zehri after armed militants attacked government buildings, including the Levies station, the offices of Nadra, the municipal committee and a private bank. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2025, Page 5*)

Balochistan doctors to boycott OPDs over arrest of colleagues

Doctors and paramedics have announced a complete boycott of health services in all government hospitals across Balochistan in protest against the arrest of doctors and FIRs against them. Grand Health Alliance said its chairman, Dr Bahar Shah, and former chairman, Dr Hafeez Mandokhail, were arrested in a "false" FIR. Other doctors, including Young Doctors Association president Dr Kaleemullah Kakar, Dr Yasir Achakzai, Dr Saboor

Kakar and Dr Ayub Zarkoon, have been implicated in another bogus case, alliance claimed. Statement said doctors will neither hold outpatient services nor perform non-emergency operations across province. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2025, Page 5*)

JI stages big rally to show solidarity with people of Palestine

The Jamaat-i-Islami staged a big rally to express solidarity with the people of Gaza and condemn Israeli atrocities against innocent civilians. A large number of JI workers and supporters, including women and children, reached Nishan-i-Pakistan, Seaview, from different parts of the metropolis to participate in the ‘Gaza March’. (*Dawn, January 13th, 2025, Page 13*)

Highway blockades disrupt traffic in Balochistan

While traffic between Gwadar and Karachi was suspended for at least 24 hours due to a gas leak from a tanker carrying liquid petroleum gas, Quetta-Karachi highway remained blocked due to protests against the recent arrests in Zehri area. The coastal highway was closed by authorities as a precautionary measure to avoid any untoward incident, as there was a gas leak from the tanker heading from Iran to Karachi. Meanwhile, the Quetta-Karachi highway was blocked at Anjira cross and Surab area by protesters demonstrating against arrests made in Zehri area. (*Dawn, January 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

Wapda workers protest sackings

Wapda workers staged a demonstration outside the office of Hesco Laar operation circle in Qasimabad in protest against retrenchment of five colleagues. Office-bearers of All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union (CBA) Iqbal Ahmed Khan, Azam Khan, Hanif Khan, Allah Deen Kaimkhani and others, who led the protest, demanded immediate reinstatement of the five employees in the Hesco Laar operation circle. They said that despite shortage of staff, employees were being sacked by officers on the basis of personal likes and dislikes and some employees’ failure to pay to the officers ‘monthly’, a euphemism for bribe in cash. They said that officers accused the sacked employees of failing to meet recovery targets to justify their decision. The dismissal of experienced employees, who should rather be respected for their hard-work, was just condemnable. (*Dawn, January 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

Peace rally opposes military operation in Mohmand

A peace rally held opposed any military operation in the merged district and demanded of the government and security forces to take concrete steps to protect the life and property of people. Mohmand Political Alliance organised the rally in Halimzai tehsil’s Mian Mandi Bazaar. (*Dawn, January 15th, 2025, Page 2*)

Sindh university teachers to boycott classes today as stand-off with govt continues

The stand-off between the provincial government and university teachers over the former’s plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector universities continued as the Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Associations (Fapusa)-Sindh decided to keep academic activities suspended today and hold protest

rallies across province. “The association unequivocally holds the Sindh government responsible for the ongoing crisis in public sector universities. Instead of engaging constructively with stakeholders, the government’s dismissive and high-handed approach has intensified the crisis. “Faculty members have been compelled to suspend academic activities due to the government’s neglect and provocative behaviour,” says a statement released by association after meeting. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 14*)

Protesters block roads against rise in street crime

A large number of villagers blocked roads in Tangwani town, Kandhkot-Kashmore district, and in Sindhri town, Mirpurkhas district in protest against police failure to rein in criminals and control street crime. Members of Khoso clan staged a sit-in in the middle of Kandhkot-Thull road at Manjhy Stop to protest against abduction of a man and his nephew in Tangwani town and police failure to recover them. They said that Gul Hassan and his nephew Morzado Khoso were asleep at their farmland in Mohammad Hayat Khoso village last night when unknown armed men abducted them and disappeared into riverine area. (*Dawn, January 16th, 2025, Page 15*)

Teachers alliance holds rallies

All Government Employees Grand Alliance protested outside the Civil Secretariat against government decision to cut salaries, pension, and gratuity and leave encashment. Protests were held in other major cities of Punjab as well. Interim Punjab government had issued notifications for these cuts, prompting AGEGA activists to demand that Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz revoke them. During the interim government’s period, a crackdown on protests led to the detention of many AGEGA leaders. They were taken to Jati Umrah for negotiations with Maryam Nawaz, who promised to revoke the notifications after coming into power. Despite ending the initial protest, AGEGA leaders have continued to demonstrate outside the secretariat for the past few months to remind Maryam Nawaz of her promise. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

First-year students protest ‘changed’ BIEK results

A large number of students gathered outside the Board of Intermediate Education Karachi (BIEK) and staged a protest against what they termed wrongdoing in the first-year exam results which left over 60 per cent students failed. They were demanding free, fair and immediate investigation into issue. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 13*)

Academic activities come to a halt as university teachers across Sindh go on strike

Academic activities at most public-sector universities across the province came to a complete halt as teachers went on a strike in protest against recent government decisions including a plan to appoint bureaucrats on the post of vice chancellors and hire teachers on a contractual basis. The strike call was given by Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapuasa) a day earlier. There was a complete strike at over 20 public-sector universities today. Teachers would continue strike till their demands are met. “We want government to restore universities’ autonomy and

withdraw the proposed amendments from Universities Act for appointment of VCs and appoint university faculty members on a permanent basis,” Dr Ghumro explained. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 13*)

Families protest as police find no clue to whereabouts of abducted children

Family members of two children, who were kidnapped from the Garden area three days ago, staged a protest demonstration outside KPC and also met with Sindh Governor Kamran Tessori for the safe recovery of the minor boys as police have failed to make any progress in case so far. (*Dawn, January 18th, 2025, Page 13*)

25 protesters held as police break up BYC rally in Lyari

Over two dozen leaders and workers of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) were taken into custody in Lyari when law enforcers used force to foil their rally, organisers and police said. City SSP Arif Aziz told Dawn that 25 protesters, including women, were detained as they were “involved in an anti-Pakistan activity”. He denied that the police tortured any protester. However, BYC said in a statement that law enforcement agencies had launched a “violent crackdown on peaceful Baloch citizens” and participants of an awareness march. The BYC had planned a campaign in Lyari to mobilise the masses for their January 25 event in Dalbandin. However, when the BYC members and participants arrived at Miran Naka near Lyari, the police resorted to “baton charge and arrests”. (*Dawn, January 19th, 2025, Page 13*)

Women stage rally in Malir after 12 BYC activists booked on sedition charge

While police booked 12 workers and leaders of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) in a sedition case for organising a rally in Lyari, a large number of women activists gathered in Malir to condemn the police action. The 12 held persons were among 25 activists picked up by police when they tried to stage a rally in Lyari. The police said 13 of held persons were women and they were released without any charge. However, a case against the 12 suspects was registered at the Kalakot police station on behalf of the state through police officer Sadiq Husain. (*Dawn, January 20th, 2025, Page 13*)

Workers vow to defeat ‘plot to legalise’ contractual system

Workers and rights activists staged a rally in the metropolis and demanded abolition of the contractual employment system, implementation of labour laws and an immediate halt to privatisation of state institutions, corporate farming and construction of six canals over the Indus initiatives. The rally, jointly organised by the National Trade Union Federation Pakistan and Home-Based Women Workers Federation Pakistan, began from Regal Chowk and culminated at Karachi Press Club, where labour leaders delivered speeches. They demanded that the contract labour system be criminalised and abolished, workers must receive permanent employment, written appointment letters and be paid declared wages through bank accounts. (*Dawn, January 20th, 2025, Page 14*)

AT holds march against corporate farming, canals project

A large number of activists of Awami Tehreek and Sindhyani Tehreek, including women and children, staged over a kilometer long foot march that culminated in a sit-in in Jhuddo town in protest against corporate farming, construction of six new canals on Indus River, amendment to Irsa Act and water accord 1991. Speaking to protesters, leaders of the two parties said that millions of acres of Sindh's land was being parceled out to private companies and foreign investors in the name of corporate farming.

They said the corporate farming was an attempt to hand over the country entirely to global imperial forces, depriving Sindhi people of their land and the Indus River, effectively rendering them stateless in their own homeland, like Palestinians. They said the plan to build six new canals on the Indus through amendments to the Irsa Act was a death warrant for the people of Sindh. The federal government wanted to forcibly occupy the Indus to benefit Punjab. (*Dawn, January 20th, 2025, Page 15*)

Fishermen hold protest in Mirpur Sakro over denial of access to sea

Hundreds of fishermen staged a sit-in outside the gate of a windmill company in coastal town of Mirpur Sakro in protest against company management's obstructing their right to fish & access to sea. Protesters, who were also joined by local elected representatives, political leaders and social activists, vowed to continue their sit-in till company accepted their demands. They said the windmill company's management had unjustly and illegally restricted their access to sea under various pretexts, and also prevented them from reaching their ancestral cemeteries and coastal fishing grounds. They said company had had deprived them of their primary source of income, leaving them unemployed and facing severe financial hardships. (*Dawn, January 21st, 2025, Page 15*)

Protesting govt employees demand withdrawal of pension reforms in Islamabad

In the second stage of their protest, government employees gathered in front of 'Q' Block Pak Secretariat under the banner of the All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA) to demand better salaries, and the reversal of pension reforms. They demanded 200pc increase in house rent, medical, and conveyance allowances, as was recommended by the Pay and Pension Committee in 2020. They warned that if their demands were not met by Feb 10, the employees would hold a sit-in in front of the Parliament building for an indefinite period until their demands are met. The protest of AGEGA, which included over 100 unions and associations from various government departments, took place in Islamabad as well as provincial headquarters across the country. The protesters had been wearing black armbands since January 6 as a mark of protest. (*Dawn, January 23rd, 2025, Page 4*)

Govt employees stage sit-in in Peshawar against pension reforms

A large number of government employees from several government departments staged a protest sit-in against pension reforms outside the provincial assembly's building for several hours. The protesters, who initially gathered at Government Higher Secondary

School No 1, Peshawar city, later marched on the Grand Trunk Road to reach the roundabout in front of KP Assembly, where they staged a sit-in. The association leader said that the government was working to abolish pension for government employees on the International Monetary Fund's demand. (*Dawn, January 23rd, 2025, Page 8*)

Teachers take to streets across Sindh amid boycott of classes

Amid their ongoing province-wide boycott of academic activities, protesting university teachers took to the streets and demanded that the government withdraw its plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector universities and a notification regarding hiring of teachers on a contractual basis. Teachers representing city's three major universities — NED University of Engineering and Technology, University of Karachi and Sindh Madressatul Islam University — gathered outside the Silver Jubilee gate of KU in the morning for a demonstration. (*Dawn, January 23rd, 2025, Page 13*)

Rally seeks revival of student unions

Defying restrictions and road barricades raised by police, a large number of students marched from the Karachi Press Club to the Sindh Assembly in a protest against what they called the "anti-student policies" of the provincial government. The students, who gathered at the KPC under the platform of the Islami Jamiat-i-Talaba (IJT), were protesting against bulldozing of a resolution in favour of student unions by the Sindh Assembly, 'flawed' intermediate exam results, and a plan to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector universities. (*Dawn, January 24th, 2025, Page 14*)

BYC vows to 'safeguard rights and resources' of Baloch people

The "struggle for safeguarding the rights" of the Baloch will continue despite enforced disappearances, leaders of the BYC said in their speeches at a public meeting in Dalbandin. "We will no longer tolerate the plunder of Balochistan's resources," one of the speakers said at the event, which was organised by the Baloch Yekjehti Committee to mark what it called the 'Baloch genocide day'. The speakers said Jan 25 was 'a grievous day' for the Baloch as it recalls the alleged discovery of graves containing as many as 12 bodies in Khuzdar's Totak area in 2014. The identities of those buried in these graves remain unknown to this day. (*Dawn, January 26th, 2025, Page 3*)

Awami Tehreek protest against corporate farming, canals project continues in Sindh

A large number of people participated in a protest march, organised by the Awami Tehreek (AT) from Gozo to KN Shah against corporate farming and the construction of six new canals projects. The march called for the immediate allocation of Sindh's lands to local, landless farmers rather than to corporate entities. Women and children actively participated in march, which received a warm welcome from villagers along the route.

Upon reaching KN Shah, the march transformed into a massive public gathering, where key leaders delivered fiery speeches and demanded an immediate halt to the land seizures and called on the government to prioritise local farmers by providing them with modern agricultural tools and support to enhance productivity. They urged the PPP to

adopt a clear stance against these projects, repeal the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) Act's amendments, and use constitutional forums to oppose the canal construction. (*Dawn, January 26th, 2025, Page 15*)

Tribesmen protest killing of child in mortar shell blast in South Waziristan

Tribesmen demonstrated in front of the Azam Warsak police station against a mortar shell explosion in Birmal tehsil of Lower South Waziristan district other day, claiming life of a child and injuries to three others. The protesters, including relatives of the deceased child, demanded justice and compensation for the affected families. Police officials said the protesters presented four demands to the government, including a halt to 'unnecessary' firing by security forces and police at night, justice for the families of the children killed and injured by the mortar shell explosion and clearing the area of any explosive material. Furthermore, the protesters called for payment of compensation to families of the deceased and the injured children. (*Dawn, January 27th, 2025, Page 9*)

Patients suffer as Punjab Institute of Cardiology medics protest 'incompetence' of management

Hundreds of heart patients have reportedly been denied treatment at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology (PIC), Lahore, for the last two days or so as the doctors are protesting against the alleged incompetence of the institute's top management, failing to resolve core issues of the poor patients. The protesting doctors have closed down the OPDs and other wards of the only cardiac hospital in the city, besides refusing treatment to the indoor patients as well. The PIC has been facing a crisis due to an acute shortage of life-saving medicines, doctors, nurses and other staff. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 2*)

Civil society joins varsity teachers' protest as boycott continues

Teachers' struggle against the government move to appoint bureaucrats as vice chancellors of public sector institutions of higher learning gained more momentum when representatives of civil society joined faculty members from universities across the province outside the Karachi Press Club and held a demonstration. They were joined by students and representatives of Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association (SPLA), Federal Urdu University of Arts, Science and Technology (FUUAST), the University of Karachi, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan and Karachi Bar Association. The protest was organised by Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Staff Association (Fapuasa)-Sindh chapter. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 13*)

Sit-in over Sanghar killings continues as relatives refuse to bury victims

The sit-in staged by family members, relatives and supporters of the three people killed last week in a clash between two groups of the Junejo community in a village near Sanghar over trespassing of cattle in a field continued for the third consecutive day. The protesters refused to bury their dead until the registration of an FIR against Pakistan Peoples Party MNA Salahuddin Junejo, aka Allauddin, and others named by them.

On Jan 26, three people were gunned down and 19 others, including women, were wounded when two groups exchanged gunfire over trespassing of cattle into a field in Jani Junejo village near Sanghar. The protesters also levelled allegations on the district administration, saying that they were well aware of the tense situation but never made any effort to avert it. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 13*)

Retirees of Urdu University protest non-payment of pensions

The retired teaching and non-teaching staff of the Federal Urdu University of Arts Science and Technology (FUUAST) held another protest over non-payment of pension and other post-retirement dues outside KPC. They chanted slogans against the university administration, which, according to them, has not paid their pension amount for the past five months, despite having funds in the university's account while other dues are pending since 2017. The protesters also marched to the Sindh Governor House, where they rang the "Bell of Justice" installed outside, pleading with the governor to intervene and ensure that their rights are granted. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 14*)

Steel Town residents block National Highway for hours

Residents of Steel Town afternoon staged a sit-in on the main National Highway against disconnection of gas of their family quarters, causing inconvenience to the commuters for hours, officials and witnesses said. A traffic police spokesperson in a statement said the employees of steel mills were protesting against sui gas disconnection to the family quarters. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 14*)

Journalists rally against law regulating social media

Hundreds of journalists rallied against a proposed law to regulate social media content that they say is aimed at curbing press freedom and controlling the digital landscape. The law would establish a regulatory authority that would have its own investigation agency and tribunals. Those found to have disseminated false or fake information face prison sentences of up to three years and fines of 2m rupees (\$7,200). Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists led rallies in cities including Islamabad, Karachi and Lahore, to demand government withdraws the bill, which has been passed by parliament but has yet to be signed into law by president. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

Journalists stage demo against amendments to PECA

Like other parts of the country, the journalist community staged a protest demonstration against amendments to Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA). A large number of journalists took part in the protest. The protesting journalists were seen wearing chains and holding placards and banners inscribed with slogans against the amendments and marched towards D-Chowk headed by Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) president Afzal Butt. Protesting journalists tried to move towards Parliament House but police barred them from going ahead. The PFUJ president said they were not against regulations; however, no one would be permitted to attack freedom of expression. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 4*)

Sit-in against Sanghar killings continues

Family members, relatives and supporters of three clansmen killed in a clash between two groups of Junejo community in Jani Junejo village near Sanghar continued their sit-in for the fourth consecutive day at Mirpurkhas Chowk in Sanghar. The protesters refused to bury the victims till registration of FIR against an MNA of Pakistan Peoples Party, Salahuddin Junejo and others, accusing them of being involved in the clash. (*Dawn, January 30th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers rally against 26th Amendment, Peca Act

Lahore Bar Association (LBA) members staged a protest rally against 26th amendment and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Bill 2025. Earlier, a general house meeting was held under the leadership of LBA's newly-elected President Mubashir Rehman. Speaking at the meeting, he criticised the 26th amendment, calling it an attack on the independence of the judiciary. He labelled the latest amendments to Peca as a new example of human rights violations. He also condemned the removal of Supreme Court Bar Association Secretary Salman Mansoor for speaking against the amendment. (*Dawn, January 31st, 2025, Page 2*)

Teachers observe black day against abolition of 25pc rebate on salaries

On the call of Federation of All Pakistan Universities Academic Association, the teaching community in Islamabad observed a black day against the federal government's decision of abolishing 25pc tax rebate on teachers' salaries. Teachers of various universities, including Comsats, Quaid-i-Azam University, International Islamic University Islamabad, as well as several colleges and schools observed the black day. Faculty members opposed the federal government's decision to abolish the 25pc tax rebate and the controversial changes to the university Acts by the Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) governments. They wore black armbands as a symbol of protest against what they called anti-education policies of the government. (*Dawn, January 31st, 2025, Page 4*)

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3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

3.1 # Food Crops

Jordan buys estimated 50,000 tons of wheat in tender

Jordan's state grains buyer purchased about 50,000 metric tons of hard milling wheat to be sourced from optional origins in an international tender. It was believed to have been bought from Bulgarian trading house Buildcom at an estimated \$265.25 a ton cost and freight included (c&f) for shipment in the first half of June, they said. Reports reflect assessments from traders and further estimates of prices and volumes are still possible later. Traders said they received indications Jordan will issue a new tender in the coming days for 120,000 tons of wheat.

Offers are expected to be submitted on Feb. 4, with shipment expected to be sought in various combinations in the second half of April, full month of May and first half of June. Traders said other trading companies to participate in tender, with offers per ton c&f, were: CHS \$273, Viterra \$278, Al Dahra \$270, Cereal Crops \$293.50 and Ameropa \$270.87. In its previous wheat tender on Jan. 21, Jordan purchased about 60,000 tons at an estimated \$268 a ton c&f for shipment in the first half of April. A separate tender from Jordan seeking 120,000 tons of animal feed barley closes. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 9*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

5 # TRADE

US trade deficit widens on imports jump

The US trade gap widened in November as imports rose faster than exports ahead of President-elect Donald Trump's return to the White House. With Trump set to take office later this month, trade imbalances in the world's biggest economy could again come under the spotlight. In his first term, Trump engaged in a tit-for-tat tariffs war with China, the world's second biggest economy — with an eye on shrinking the trade gap between both countries. In November, the US trade deficit rose 6.2 percent to \$78.2 billion, said the Commerce Department. This was slightly more than the \$77.9 billion figure expected by a Briefing.com consensus forecast, and marked a widening from October's revised \$73.6 billion figure. Imports grew 3.4 percent to \$351.6 billion,

driven by goods shipments with increases seen in areas ranging from industrial supplies to semiconductors and passenger cars.

US exports, meanwhile, also rose by 2.7pc to \$273.4bn in November, Exports of industrial supplies such as crude oil and other petroleum products picked up, alongside those of autos and pharmaceutical preparations. Among countries and regions, the US goods deficit with China stood at \$25.4 billion, while that with the European Union was \$20.5 billion in November, said the Commerce Department. Looking ahead, importers are likely eyeing negotiations involving a US dockworkers' union as they try to reach agreement on a new labor contract with their employer group before a January 15 deadline. If both sides cannot reach a deal, there could be a new workers' strike — threatening supply chains. (*Business Recorder, January 8th, 2025, Page 12*)

India set to allow 1m tons of sugar exports this year

India is set to allow exports of 1 million metric tons of sugar during the current season, government and industry sources said, to help mills export surplus stocks from the world's second biggest producer of the sweetener and help prop up local prices. The permission to let mills sell 1 million tons of sugar on the world market could put further downward pressure on global sugar prices. The government is expected to soon issue an official order allowing exports of 1 million tons of sugar.

The decision to allow exports, which had been speculated for the past few weeks, comes as a surprise to a section of traders, as this year's production is expected to fall below consumption for the first time in eight years. Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh account for more than 80% of the country's total sugar production, with lower cane yields in these states prompting trade houses to reduce their output estimates for the current 2024-25 season. The production could fall to around 27 million tons from last year's 32 million tons and below annual consumption of more than 29 million tons, according to leading trade houses.

India, whose sugar export markets include Indonesia, Bangladesh and the United Arab Emirates, was the world's No. 2 exporter during the five years to 2022-23, with volumes averaging 6.8 million tons annually. India did not allow exports in the 2023-24 marketing year. The Indian Sugar and Bio-energy Manufacturers Association, a producers' body, said the permission to export 1 million tons of sugar would help sugar mills reeling from low local prices. Sugar prices in India are hovering around their lowest level in 1-1/2 years. (*Business Recorder, January 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

McDonald's sued for worker exploitation

More than 700 young workers are suing McDonald's UK after widespread harassment claims were exposed in the media in 2023, law firm Leigh Day said. Leigh Day is seeking compensation from the US fast-food giant on behalf of current and former staff

who were aged under 20 when working at McDonald's. "Clients have described experiences of discrimination, homophobia, racism, ableism, and harassment," the legal firm said in a press release, saying more than 450 restaurants were involved. It follows a BBC investigation in July 2023 highlighting the testimonies of those affected. The fast-food chain is one of Britain's largest employers with around 170,000 staff, many of whom are young workers, including teenagers.

"Those allegations described are abhorrent, unacceptable and there is no place for them in McDonald's," Alistair Macrow, chief executive of McDonald's UK and Ireland, told British MPs when questioned about the claims during a hearing over separate issue of employment rights. 29 workers have been dismissed over sexual harassment allegations in the past year. Macrow told a parliamentary committee in November 2023 that he was "absolutely determined to root out any of these behaviours" and the firm opened a specialist unit to investigate the allegations. But unions told the same parliamentary committee it had not improved the situation. (*Dawn, January 8th, 2025, Page 10*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Over 30m in need of aid in war-torn Sudan: UN

More than 30 million people, over half of them children, are in need of aid in Sudan after twenty months of war, the United Nations said. The UN has launched a \$4.2 billion call for funds, targeting 20.9 million people across Sudan from a total of 30.4 million people it said are in need in what it called "an unprecedented humanitarian crisis". Sudan has been torn apart and pushed to the brink of famine by the war that erupted in April 2023 between Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

Tens of thousands of people have been killed and more than eight million internally displaced, which, in addition to 2.7 million displaced before the war, has made Sudan the world's largest internal displacement crisis. A further 3.3 million people have fled across Sudan's borders to escape the war, which means over a quarter of the country's pre-war population, estimated at around 50 million, are now uprooted. Famine has already been declared in five areas in Sudan and is expected to take hold of five more areas by May, with 8.1 million people currently on the brink of mass starvation. Sudan's army-aligned government has denied there is famine, while aid agencies complain that access is blocked by bureaucratic hurdles and ongoing violence. Both the army and the RSF have been accused of using starvation as a weapon of war. For much of the conflict, the UN has struggled to raise even a quarter of funds it has targeted for its humanitarian response in the impoverished northeast African country. (*Business Recorder, January 7th, 2025, Page 11*)

S. Arabia plans \$600bn in new US investment

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman promised to pile \$600 billion into US trade and investments as he congratulated Donald Trump on his return to the White House. Prince Mohammed, de facto leader of the world's biggest oil exporter, made the pledge

in a phone call following Trump's inauguration. Trump forged close relations with Riyadh in his first term and is now expected to push Saudi Arabia towards normalising ties with Israel as a major foreign policy objective. "The crown prince affirmed the kingdom's intention to broaden its investments and trade with the United States over the next four years, in the amount of \$600 billion, and potentially beyond that," the Saudi Press Agency reported. Prince Mohammed, 39, also passed on congratulations from his father, King Salman, during the call with Trump. Trump's first visit as president in 2017 was to Saudi Arabia, and this week he joked that a major financial commitment could persuade him to do the same again. "I did it with Saudi Arabia last time because they agreed to buy \$450 billion worth of our product," he said. Trump quipped he would repeat the visit "if Saudi Arabia wanted to buy another 450 or 500 (billion dollars) — we'll up it for all the inflation". (*Dawn, January 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Qatar drafting new laws aimed at boosting foreign investment

Qatar plans to introduce three new laws as part of a sweeping review of legislation designed to make the Gulf Arab state more attractive to foreign investors, the new minister of commerce and economy. Sheikh Faisal bin Thani Al Thani said in an interview that Qatar plans to introduce new legislation including a bankruptcy law, a public private partnership law and a new commercial registration law.

"We're looking at 27 laws and regulations across 17 government ministries that affect 500-plus activities," he said, describing the legislative review. Sheikh Faisal said he expects the new bankruptcy and public private partnership laws to be drafted before the end of March. Qatar, one of the world's top exporters of liquefied natural gas, has set a cumulative target of attracting \$100 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI) by 2030, according to the latest version of its national development strategy published last year. But it has a long way to go to meet that target, and FDI inflows have significantly lagged behind neighbouring Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E.

KSA which also has a target to attract \$100 billion in FDI by 2030 as part of its national investment strategy, saw FDI inflows of \$26 billion in 2023, after a change to how it calculates FDI, while UAE, Gulf region's commercial and tourism hub, attracted just over \$30 billion according to the UN's trade and development agency. In contrast, Qatar's FDI inflows in 2023 were negative \$474 million, down from \$76.1 million in 2022. Negative FDI inflows indicate that disinvestment was more than new investment.

While Qatar does offer similar incentives to foreign investors as its neighbours, such as a favourable tax environment, free zone facilities and some residency schemes, UAE and Saudi Arabia are considered far ahead in terms of regulatory reforms and business friendly laws. Qatar's new laws also come as part of the Gulf Arab state's efforts to activate its private sector and transition away from government-funded growth. Sheikh Faisal joined government in November after serving at Qatar's \$510bn sovereign wealth fund, Qatar Investment Authority. (*Business Recorder, January 24th, 2025, Page 11*)

7.1 # America

Azerbaijan suspends cooperation with USAID

Azerbaijan has refused to renew its cooperation agreement with The United States Agency for International Development, Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov said, accusing Washington of using USAID to pursue its political agenda. Bayramov, who was speaking at a news conference with his Georgian counterpart, said that Baku had suspended cooperation with USAID in June 2024. Azerbaijan began criticising USAID in late 2023 after Samantha Power, agency's head, said that Azerbaijan's military operation to return its breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh had "forced more than a hundred thousand people to leave their homes and move into neighbouring Armenia."

In response to Power's statement, Hikmet Hajiyev, a foreign policy adviser to President Ilham Aliyev, said that USAID "has no place in Azerbaijan anymore." USAID describes itself as the US government agency which leads international development and humanitarian assistance efforts to partner countries. On its website it says its mission is also to "promote and demonstrate democratic values abroad, and advance a free, peaceful, and prosperous world" in support of American foreign policy. (*Dawn, January 17th, 2025, Page 10*)

US pledges \$117m in aid to Lebanon military

The United States announced it would donate more than \$117 million in security assistance for Lebanon's armed forces, as the crisis-hit country seeks to implement a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah. The State Department said in a statement that it had convened a "virtual donors meeting with partners and allies to discuss critical security assistance needed for Lebanon to fully implement the cessation of hostilities." It said the new assistance to Beirut would support both the country's armed forces and internal security forces "as they work to assert Lebanese sovereignty across the country." Earlier this week, Spain announced a 10-million-euro (\$10.3-million) aid package for Lebanon's army. (*Business Recorder, January 19th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trump freeze on foreign aid felt around the world

The Trump White House has ordered a pause of all federal grants and loans, as well as any money intended "for foreign aid" and for "non-governmental organisations", a move with wide-ranging consequences that is also affecting ongoing projects in Pakistan. In a memo, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said the money would be put on hold while the new administration reviews grants and loans to ensure they are aligned with the Republican president's priorities. As part of the foreign aid suspension, the administration began moving to stop the supply of lifesaving drugs for HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, as well as medical supplies for newborn babies, in countries supported by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) — considered the world's single largest aid donor. In addition, the Trump administration has put on leave about 60 senior career USAID officials and threatened "disciplinary action" for any staff ignoring its orders.

Those being put on leave comprised career staff in the leadership positions of almost all USAID bureaus based in Washington, with roles ranging from energy security to water security, children's education and digital technology. An internal memo sent to USAID employees said the new leadership identified several actions in the agency that "appeared to be designed to circumvent the President's Executive Orders and the mandate from the American people." A second memo made it clear to USAID staff that pause on foreign aid spending meant a complete halt. The only exceptions are for emergency humanitarian food assistance and for officials returning to their duty stations. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

UN predicts world economic growth to remain at 2.8pc in 2025

Global economic growth is projected to remain at 2.8 percent in 2025, unchanged from 2024, held back by the top two economies, the US and China, according to a United Nations report. The World Economic Situation and Prospects report said that "positive but somewhat slower growth forecasts for China and the United States" will be complemented by modest recoveries in the European Union, Japan, and Britain and robust performance in some large developing economies, notably India and Indonesia.

"Despite continued expansion, the global economy is projected to grow at a slower pace than the 2010–2019 (pre-pandemic) average of 3.2%," according to the report by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. "This subdued performance reflects ongoing structural challenges such as weak investment, slow productivity growth, high debt levels, and demographic pressures," it said. The report said US growth was expected to moderate from 2.8% last year to 1.9% in 2025 as the labour market softens and consumer spending slows.

It said growth in China was estimated at 4.9% for 2024 and projected to be 4.8% this year with public sector investments and a strong export performance partly offset by subdued consumption growth and lingering property sector weakness. Europe was expected to recover modestly with growth increasing from 0.9% in 2024 to 1.3% in 2025, "supported by easing inflation and resilient labour markets," the report said. South Asia is expected to remain the world's fastest-growing region, with regional GDP projected to expand by 5.7% in 2025 and 6% in 2026, supported by a strong performance by India and economic recoveries in Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, the report said. India, the largest economy in South Asia, is forecast to grow by 6.6% in 2025 and 6.8% in 2026, driven by robust private consumption and investment.

The report said major central banks are likely to further reduce interest rates in 2025 as inflationary pressures ease. Global inflation is projected to decline from 4% in 2024 to 3.4% in 2025, offering some relief to households and businesses. It calls for bold multilateral action to tackle interconnected crises, including debt, inequality, and climate change. (*Business Recorder, January 10th, 2025, Page 1*)

IMF chief sees steady world growth, disinflation

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will forecast steady global growth and continuing disinflation when it releases an updated World Economic Outlook on January 17, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told reporters. Georgieva said the US economy was doing “quite a bit better” than expected, although there was high uncertainty around the trade policies of the administration of President-elect Donald Trump that was adding to headwinds facing the global economy and driving long-term interest rates higher. With inflation moving closer to the US Federal Reserve’s target and data showing a stable labour market, the Fed could afford to wait for more data before undertaking further interest rate cuts, she said. Overall, interest rates were expected to stay “somewhat higher for quite some time,” she said. The IMF will release an update to its global outlook on Jan 17, just days before Trump takes office. Georgieva’s comments are the first indication this year of the IMF’s evolving global outlook, but she gave no detailed projections. (*Dawn, January 12th, 2025 Page 9*)

Debt servicing leaves little for social protection: Unicef

Stating that the world will face a new and intensifying era of crisis for children in the year ahead, Unicef in a new report, says debt service now consumes eleven times as much as social protection spending across developing countries. The report, ‘Prospects for Children: Building Resilient Systems for Children’s Future’, says since 2021, over 130 countries have embarked on fiscal consolidation — a trend expected to continue through 2025 — with social protection and assistance programmes emerging as key targets for cuts, driven either by mounting debt-servicing burdens or the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout conditions.

As developing countries face slowing growth and persistent domestic revenue challenges, becoming ever more dependent on external resources, the landscape of official development assistance (ODA) is changing. As a result, developing countries are receiving less assistance and — as ODA shifts from grants to loans — are increasingly burdened with debt. Meanwhile, the protection gap widens as 1.8 billion children lack access to cash benefits, leaving them exposed to economic shocks that push families deeper into poverty. the systematic underfunding of these social sectors has profound and enduring effects on children, especially the poorest and most marginalized, and risks fueling a cycle of inter-generational poverty. Chronic under-investment in education and health care erodes human capital, leading to a ‘lost generation’ that is less skilled, less healthy and ultimately less productive, making it harder for each generation to escape poverty. (*Dawn, January 15th, 2025, Page 11*)

Trump freezes federal aid to Americans

President Donald Trump ordered a freeze on potentially trillions of dollars in federal funding to Americans, impacting everything from education grants to small businesses loans — and sparking accusations that he is violating the constitution. The order was issued by the White House budget office in a memo a week into Trump’s second term. It was not clear in the memo, signed by acting director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Matthew Vaeth, how such a pause on disbursements of funding will work or for how long. The extraordinary measure follows a similar announcement that US foreign aid is frozen. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.1 # Food

World food prices fell 2pc in 2024: FAO

World food commodity prices declined by 2.1 per cent in 2024 compared to the previous year, mainly due to falls in cereals and sugar, the FAO said. Last year, the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s price index for cereals dropped 13.3 compared to 2023 and its sugar price index fell 13.2 percent. The decreases were offset in part by a 9.4-per cent rise in the vegetable oil price index. The United Nations’ food agency tracks monthly and global changes in the international prices of a set of globally traded commodities. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Aid cuts leave millions hungry in Afghanistan, says WFP

The head of the World Food Programme in Afghanistan says the agency can only feed half the millions of Afghans in need after cuts in international aid and an impending freeze in US foreign funding. Many people were living on just “bread and tea”, WFP Country Director Hsiao-Wei Lee told Reuters. Afghanistan was tipped to the brink of economic crisis in 2021 as the Taliban took over and all development and security assistance to the country was frozen, with restrictions also placed on the banking sector.

Since then humanitarian aid has filled some of the gap. But donors have been cutting steadily in recent years, concerned by Taliban restrictions on women, including their order that Afghan female NGO employees stop work, and competing global crises. Lee told Reuters shortly before finishing her three-year term in Afghanistan that funding cuts had meant that roughly half the 15 million Afghans in acute need of food were not receiving rations during this year’s harsh winter. “That’s over six million people who are probably eating one or two meals a day and it’s just bread and tea,” she said in an interview. (*Dawn, January 28th, 2025, Page 11*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

11.1 # Biodiversity

‘White wall’ of ice drifting towards penguin haven

World’s largest iceberg — a behemoth more than twice the size of London — is drifting toward a remote island where scientists say it could run aground and threaten penguins and seals. The gigantic wall of ice is moving slowly from Antarctica on a potential

collision course with South Georgia, a crucial wildlife breeding ground. Satellite imagery suggested that unlike previous “megabergs” this rogue was not crumbling into smaller chunks as it plodded through Southern Ocean, Andrew Meijers, a physical oceanographer at the British Antarctic Survey. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

11.2 # Health

Gaza healthcare nearing ‘total collapse’, says UN

A United Nations report found that Israeli strikes on and near hospitals in the Gaza Strip had left healthcare in the Palestinian territory on the verge of collapse. The report by the UN human rights office said such strikes raised grave concerns about Israel’s compliance with international law. “Israel’s pattern of deadly attacks on and near hospitals in Gaza, and associated combat, pushed the healthcare system to the brink of total collapse, with catastrophic effect on Palestinians’ access to health and medical care,” the UN human rights office said. Its 23-page report, entitled “Attacks on hospitals during the escalation of hostilities in Gaza”, looked at the period from Oct 7, 2023 to June 30, 2024. It said that during this time, there were at least 136 strikes on 27 hospitals and 12 other medical facilities, claiming significant casualties among doctors, nurses, medics and other civilians and causing significant damage to, if not the complete destruction of civilian infrastructure. (*Dawn, January 1st, 2025, Page 12*)

China reports 5 cases of new mpox strain

China said it had recorded five cases of a new mpox strain, but that the “outbreak has been effectively handled”. Mpox is caused by a virus transmitted to humans by animals but can also spread from person to person through close physical contact. It causes fever, muscular aches and large boil-like skin lesions, and can be deadly. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a global health emergency over the virus in August and renewed it in November following an outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where it has killed more than 1,000 people.

Two days after the WHO’s August declaration, China announced it would screen people entering the country for mpox over the next six months. Chinese health authorities said that they had discovered a cluster outbreak of the mpox strain Clade 1b, with the source of infection believed to be someone with a record of living in the DRC. Four people who had close contact with the patient were found to be infected by the strain and were showing relatively mild symptoms of rashes and blisters, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (*Business Recorder, January 10th, 2025, Page 5*)

WHO appeals for \$1.5bn to tackle ‘unprecedented’ global health crisis

The World Health Organization appealed for \$1.5 billion for emergency operations this year, warning that conflict, climate change, epidemics and displacement had converged to create an “unprecedented global health crisis”. The UN health agency estimated that health crises would leave 305 million people in need of urgent humanitarian assistance this year. “WHO is seeking \$1.5bn to support our life-saving work for the emergencies

we know about and to react swiftly to new crises,” WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said as he launched appeal. The agency’s emergency request, which was for the same amount as last year’s ask, outlined critical priorities and resources needed to address 42 ongoing health emergencies. (*Business Recorder*, 17th January, 2025, 11)

Too many US kids are dying of flu

Last year, at least 207 US children died from the flu, exceeding the grim record set during the 2019-2020 flu season. Most of those children were old enough to be vaccinated. Yet, of the kids who were eligible and died, some 80% hadn’t been vaccinated. (*The News*, January 19th, 2025, Page 12)

Trump orders US exit from WHO

The United States will leave the World Health Organization, President Donald Trump said, saying the global health agency had mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic and other international health crises. Trump said the WHO had failed to act independently from the “inappropriate political influence of WHO member states” and required “unfairly onerous payments” from the US that were disproportionate to the sums provided by other, larger countries, such as China. “World Health ripped us off, everybody rips off the United States. It’s not going to happen anymore,” Trump said at the signing of an executive order on the withdrawal, shortly after his inauguration to a second term. The WHO said that it regretted the move from its top donor country. (*Business Recorder*, January 22nd, 2025, Page 1)

Covid-19 more likely to have come from lab: CIA

The Central Intelligence Agency has assessed that the COVID-19 pandemic is “more likely” to have emerged from a lab rather than from nature, an agency spokesperson said. For years, the agency had said it could not conclude whether COVID-19 resulted from a lab incident or originated in nature. However, in the final weeks of the Biden administration, former CIA Director William Burns asked CIA analysts and scientists to make a clear determination, stressing the pandemic’s historical significance, according to a senior U.S. official. The CIA says it has “low confidence” in its assessment that a “research-related origin of the COVID-19 pandemic is more likely.” However, it notes in its statement that both scenarios—lab origin and natural origin—remain plausible.

The Chinese embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The extent to which the agency has collected new intelligence on COVID-19’s origins was unclear and whether that new evidence was used to formulate the latest assessment. China’s government says it supports and has participated in research to determine COVID-19’s origin. It has accused Washington of politicizing the matter, especially because of efforts by U.S. intelligence agencies to investigate. Beijing has said claims that a laboratory leak likely caused the pandemic have no credibility. (*The News*, January 26th, 2025, Page 10)

11.3 # Pollution

Kazakhstan fines oil giants over \$6m for pollution

A Kazakh court fined a consortium of oil companies over \$6m for excessive gas flaring from a giant oilfield under the Caspian Sea. The Central Asian country has stepped up fines on environmental violators in recent years, as it seeks to placate concerns about pollution while also exploiting its immense natural resources. The North Caspian Operating Company — a group that includes Shell, Exxon Mobil, China's CNPC and TotalEnergies — was fined 3.5bn tenge (\$6.6m) in damages “for excessive unauthorised flaring” at vast Kashagan oilfield. (*Dawn, January 11th, 2025, Page 10*)

Bangkok pollution forces closure of 352 schools

Seasonal air pollution has long afflicted Thailand, like many countries in the region, but this week's hazy conditions have closed the most schools since 2020. The Bangkok Metropolitan Administration said it had closed 352 schools across 31 districts due to air pollution. More than 250 schools in Bangkok were closed, and officials urged people to work from home and restricted heavy vehicles in the city. Air pollution hits Thailand seasonally as colder, stagnant winter air combines with smoke from crop stubble burning and car fumes. The level of PM2.5 pollutants — cancer-causing microparticles small enough to enter the bloodstream through the lungs — hit 108 micrograms per cubic metre. (*Dawn, January 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Brazil says 2024 was its hottest year on record

Last year was Brazil's hottest on record, its weather agency said, after a record-breaking drought and flooding in the South American country that climate experts have linked to global warming. The average temperature in 2024 was 25.02 degrees Celsius (77.04 Fahrenheit) — 0.79 degrees above the 1991-2020 average, the National Institute of Meteorology said. It was the warmest year since records began in 1961, exceeding the 2023 figure of 24.92 degrees Celsius, which was also a record high.

The weather agency said that the “statistically significant trend... may be associated with climate change resulting from rising global temperature and local environmental changes”. According to a study released last week, Brazil experienced an “alarming” increase in climate disasters between 2020 and 2023, with almost twice as many events each year, on average, as in the previous two decades.

Official data showed an annual average of 4,077 climate-related disasters in the four-year period, including droughts, flooding, violent storms and extreme temperatures, the research by the Federal University of Sao Paulo showed. The study found a correlation between climate disasters suffered in the country and a warming of ocean surface temperatures. The United Nations said that 2024 was set to be the hottest year on record for the planet. China, India, Indonesia, Taiwan and Hong Kong also reported this week that 2024 was their hottest year recorded yet. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 11*)

Wealthy nations fail to agree curbs on fossil fuel finance

Wealthy nations have failed to reach an agreement on curbing public finance for fossil fuel projects, the OECD said, days before climate-sceptic US President-elect Donald Trump takes office. Britain, Canada and the European Union supported plans to restrict support from export credit agencies to the oil and gas industry, but it was opposed by the United States. “Despite many months of negotiations and hard work, the Participants to the OECD Arrangement were unable to reach an agreement to further restrict the provision of support for fossil-fuel related projects,” the Paris-based organisation said. The discussions had started in 2023 under the auspices of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, a 38-member group of mostly developed nations. (*Business Recorder, January 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

Save the world’s glaciers to save the planet, says UN

Saving the world’s shrinking glaciers is a “survival strategy” for the planet, the UN said, a day after President Donald Trump announced the US would withdraw from the Paris climate accord. United Nations agencies launched an appeal to scale up efforts to rescue the world’s 275,000 glaciers, which are rapidly melting away as the planet warms. The UN’s educational, scientific and cultural agency Unesco, and its World Meteorological Organisation weather, climate and water agency, pointed to the essential role these giant ice masses play, providing fresh water to more than two billion people globally.

The world’s glaciers currently cover approximately 700,000 square kilometres (270,000 square miles). Glaciers and ice sheets play a crucial role in regulating the global climate and store approximately 70 percent of the world’s fresh water, which is essential for billions of people. In 2023, glaciers suffered their largest volume loss in five decades, according to WMO. (*Dawn, January 22nd, 2025, Page 11*)

US notifies UN about withdrawal from Paris climate deal

The United Nations confirmed it had received a notification from Washington of its withdrawal from the Paris climate change agreement, a key campaign pledge of US President Donald Trump. On his first day back in the White House, Trump announced the United States would leave the accord, which is managed by the UN climate change body and brings together almost all the nations with an aim to keep global average temperature rise below a critical threshold.

“I can confirm to you that the United States has notified the secretary-general, in his capacity as a depository, of its withdrawal on January 27 of this year from the Paris agreement,” said Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN chief Antonio Guterres. “According to Article 28, paragraph two, of the Paris agreement, the withdrawal of the United States will take effect on January 27, 2026.” Trump previously withdrew the United States from the Paris accord during his first term. Despite this, the agreement — adopted in 2015 by 195 parties to curb greenhouse gas emissions driving climate change — appears poised to endure. Washington typically provides 22pc of the United Nations

Framework Convention on Climate Change secretariat's budget, with body's operating costs for 2024-2025 projected at \$96.5 million. Billionaire entrepreneur Michael Bloomberg has announced his foundation will meet shortfall. The secretariat is tasked with supporting global response to climate threats, and organises international climate conferences, next of which will be COP30 held in November in Brazil. Since coming back to office, Trump has also declared a "national energy emergency" to expand drilling in the world's top oil and gas producer, said he would scrap vehicle emissions standards, and vowed to halt offshore wind farms. (*Dawn, January 29th, 2025, Page 11*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

The pioneering science linking climate to weather disasters

Extreme weather is becoming more destructive as the world warms, but how can we say that climate change intensified the fires in Los Angeles, typhoons in the Philippines, or flooding in Spain? That question was once difficult question to answer. But thanks to the pioneering field of attribution science, experts can quickly examine the possible influence of global warming on a specific weather event. The fast-growing field began two decades ago and is now firmly established, but it is still sometimes hampered by a lack of data.

Real-world impact

After disaster strikes, an attribution study can quickly help tell governments, industry and ordinary people if climate change played a role. "It's important for citizens, for decision-makers, and it's also very important for scientists, because with each case study, we learn new things about our models, our observations and the problems we encounter with them," said Robert Vautard, a leading scientist with the UN's climate expert panel, who has supported the development of attribution studies. In the future, these studies could also play a growing role in legal disputes. Already a 2021 scientific study was used by a Peruvian farmer in his battle against German electricity giant RWE, which he accused of playing a role in the melting of a glacier. That research found the glacier's retreat was "entirely attributable" to global warming.

Different approaches

The main questions attribution studies seek to answer are: did the warmer climate make a flood, heatwave, fire or storm more likely, and did it increase its ferocity? Several groups have developed methods that have been independently validated by other researchers. The most active and influential group of researchers is World Weather Attribution (WWA), whose work is often reported in the media. Using computer models, scientists can compare a simulation of a particular weather event against a world in which warming caused by the burning of fossil fuels and other human activities was not present.

In their most recent study, WWA researchers found that climate change increased the risk of the Los Angeles wildfires, which have killed at least 29 people and destroyed

more than 10,000 homes since igniting on Jan 7. Tinderbox conditions fuelling the blazes were approximately 35 per cent more likely due to global warming caused by burning fossil fuels, they found, reducing rainfall, drying out vegetation and extending the overlap between flammable drought conditions and powerful Santa Ana winds. Other organisations running attribution studies include Britain’s Met Office, which also compares today’s climate with simulations of a world with a climate more like the one before the Industrial Revolution. Yet others use more broad-brush techniques, including ClimaMeter, which describes itself as “an experimental rapid framework for understanding extreme weather events”. Group uses historical observational data, rather than more complex computer models, as well as news reports & AI tools like ChatGPT, although it admits that its method is less effective at analysing very unusual events.

No single cause

Scientists stress that climate change should not be considered the sole cause of an extreme event and its impacts. “For instance, if a heavy smoker develops lung cancer, we would not say the cigarettes caused the cancer — but we might say the damage caused by the cigarettes made it more likely,” WWA explains on its website. Researchers also look at political or social factors that make a weather disaster more deadly or destructive — poor quality construction, for example, or badly maintained infrastructure. Some types of extremes have a well-established link with climate change, such as heatwaves or heavy rainfall.

“More and more, we’re starting to have events that we can clearly say would have had a near-zero probability without our influence on the climate,” said Sonia Seneviratne, a climate scientist who has worked with WWA. “Events are now becoming so extreme that it’s easier to detect this influence,” she notes. Other phenomena like droughts, snowstorms, tropical storms and forest fires can result from a combination of factors and are more complex.

Search for data

Another limitation that worries researchers is the scarcity of observational data and measurements in certain parts of the world, particularly in Africa. That dearth makes it harder to study impacts, leading to inconsistency between different analyses. “The lack of observed data is penalising in certain regions. There is also a lack of model data, i.e. high-resolution climate simulations,” said Aurelien Ribes, a climate scientist at the French meteorological research agency CNRM. He stressed the need for consistency and said that “any future use of this data in legal or compensation proceedings will have to be based on more systematic approaches”. (*Dawn, January 30th, 2025, Page 11*)

13.1 # Heatwave

Australia’s southeast region sweats through heatwave, faces threat of bushfire

Australia’s southeast sweltered in a heat wave that raised the risk of bushfires and led authorities to issue fire bans for large parts of Victoria state. Australia faces a high-risk

bushfire season that has already seen Victorian authorities battle a large fire that last week ripped through the state's vast Grampians National Park, razing homes and farmland. The nation's weather forecaster said temperatures would be up to 14 degrees Celsius (25.2 degrees Fahrenheit) above average in some areas, with Melbourne, the capital of Australia's second most populous state Victoria, set to hit 37 C (98.6 F). The country's last few fire seasons have been quiet compared with the catastrophic 2019-2020 "Black Summer" of wildfires that destroyed an area the size of Türkiye and killed 33 people. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 11*)

13.2 # Snow Storm

Brewing storm to unleash snow, ice, bitter cold across US

A colossal US winter storm is brewing, with meteorologists warning of deep snowfalls, frigid temperatures and ice-covered roads as millions of Americans brace for treacherous conditions. More than 55 million people are in the path of the dangerous storm set to plunge the eastern half of the United States into a deep freeze through, with the National Weather Service (NWS) warning of blizzard conditions in states from the central plains to the Mid-Atlantic. Winter storm warnings or advisories have been issued from Montana, in the country's Rocky Mountain northwest, clear across to the coastal states of Maryland, Delaware and Virginia. Parts of the eastern states of New York and Pennsylvania are facing "heavy lake-effect snow" coming off the Great Lakes which could dump as much as two feet (61 centimeters) of snow on the region, according to the NWS. (*The News, January 5th, 2025, Page 11*)

First major US winter storm of year hits mid-Atlantic states

The first major winter storm of the new year swept into the US Middle Atlantic states, closing down federal offices and public schools in Washington D.C. after dumping more than a foot of snow in the Ohio Valley and Central Plains. The nation's capital can expect accumulations of six to nine inches before the system pushes out to sea, the US National Weather Service said. Governors in several states, including Kansas, Kentucky, Arkansas, West Virginia and Virginia, have already declared states of emergency. In the wake of the storm, frigid Arctic air was filling the void, bringing freezing rain and icy conditions to a swath of country stretching from Illinois through Maryland and Virginia. Treacherous driving conditions are expected in many areas.

The Central Plains, where the storm dumped heavy snow over the weekend, were already in a deep freeze. Parts of Kansas experienced bitter cold wind chills, with values from five to almost 25 degrees Fahrenheit below zero (minus 15 to 32 degrees Celsius) overnight. The cold air will persist, with daytime highs only in the mid-teens to lower 20s. In Washington, the storm will not keep the US Congress from meeting to formally certify Republican Donald Trump's election as president, House Speaker Mike Johnson said. But federal offices in the nation's capital will be closed, the Office of Personnel Management said. (*Dawn, January 7th, 2025, Page 12*)

13.3 # Wildfire

Two killed as wildfires rage out of control near Los Angeles

At least two people were killed as a trio of fast-growing wildfires raged out of control near Los Angeles, destroying hundreds of buildings, scorching hillsides and prompting officials to order some 70,000 people to evacuate their homes. Fierce winds were hindering firefighting efforts and fuelling the fires. The biggest blaze had consumed more than 5,000 acres in the picturesque Pacific Palisades neighbourhood, which lies east of Los Angeles between the beach towns of Santa Monica and Malibu and is home to many film, television and music stars. More than 1,000 structures have been destroyed, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marrone said at a news conference. Another fire, the Eaton fire, had grown to more than 2,000 acres as it burned some 50 km inland in Altadena, near Pasadena. Two fatalities were reported there, though officials said they did not have further details. (*Dawn, January 9th, 2025, Page 11*)

Death toll from Los Angeles fires rises, with dangerous winds incoming

Firefighters were battling massive wildfires that have ravaged Los Angeles and killed at least 24 people, with officials warning of incoming dangerous winds that could whip up the blazes further. The fires ripped through the United States' second-largest city for the seventh day, reducing whole communities to scorched rubble and leaving thousands without homes. Massive firefighting efforts have staunched the spread of the Palisades Fire, which was looming toward upscale Brentwood and the densely populated San Fernando Valley. (*Business Recorder, January 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

14 # Natural Disaster

Earthquakes trigger evacuations in Ethiopia

Evacuations were underway in Ethiopia after a series of earthquakes, the strongest of which, a 5.8-magnitude jolt, rocked the remote north of the Horn of Africa nation. The quakes were centred on the largely rural Afar, Oromia and Amhara regions after months of intense seismic activity. No casualties have been reported so far. Ethiopia's government Communication Service said around 80,000 people were living in the affected regions and the most vulnerable were being moved to temporary shelters. The latest shallow 4.7 magnitude quake hit just before 12:40pm about 33 kilometres north of Metehara town in Oromia, according to the European Mediterranean Seismological Centre. The earthquakes have damaged houses and threatened to trigger a volcanic eruption of the previously dormant Mount Dofan. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 11*)

Tibet quake kills 126, destroys over 3,000 houses

A devastating earthquake in China's remote Tibet region killed at least 126 people and damaged thousands of buildings, state media reported, with tremors also felt in neighbouring Nepal's capital Kathmandu and parts of India. The quake struck rural, high-altitude Tingri county, about 80 kilometres north of Mount Everest near China's border with Nepal, at around 9:00am (0100 GMT). Twenty-eight people in critical

condition were transferred to hospital for treatment and 3,609 houses had collapsed. China Earthquake Networks Centre measured the quake's magnitude as 6.8, while the US Geological Survey reported it as 7.1. (*Dawn, January 8th, 2025, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

News Makers: WARSAW:

Farmers hold a giant statue that is meant to depict European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen as a "grim reaper", outside European Commission's office. Farmers are protesting against European Union's agricultural policies. (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 10*)

Two set themselves on fire to protest disposal of Bhopal disaster waste

Two people set themselves on fire in India to protest against the disposal of hazardous waste from the decades-old Bhopal industrial disaster, local government officials said. Images on social media showed the two men dousing themselves in liquid before being engulfed in shooting flames, although officials said the men survived. The protests erupted after authorities moved hundreds of tonnes of hazardous waste—remaining from the world's deadliest industrial disaster in Bhopal in 1984—to the town of Pithampur for disposal. "The self-immolation attempt was unfortunate, but both people are safe now," said Priyank Mishra, the administrative head of Dhar district where Pithampur is located. A long convoy of trucks with a police escort ferrying the 337 tonnes of waste—sealed inside containers—arrived in Pithampur, Madhya Pradesh state. The waste dates back to the Dec 1984 disaster at the Union Carbide factory in Bhopal—when some 3,500 people were killed in the immediate aftermath of a chemical leak, and up to 25,000 are estimated to have died overall.

Twenty-seven tonnes of methyl isocyanate, used in production of pesticides, swept through city of over two million people after one of tanks storing deadly chemical shattered its concrete casing. Communities have for decades blamed a high level of sickness on contamination of the groundwater in the wake of highly toxic gas leak. The order to clear the waste was made last month and Mishra insisted that its disposal would be done safely. "The process is being carried out under aegis of top scientific institutions of the country," "We have already held many public consultations and we will continue to explain to people in even simpler terms that it is a safe exercise." Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister has also said that trial disposal exercises had showed that there it had "no impact on environment". (*Dawn, January 4th, 2025, Page 11*)

News Makers: The Hague:

Activists, some holding flags of Extinction Rebellion, participate in a climate march from Arnhem to The Hague. On Jan 11, demonstrators will arrive in this city, where Extinction Rebellion plans to block a motorway again. (*Dawn, January 5th, 2025, Page 10*)

Climate activists paint over Darwin's grave at Westminster Abbey

Climate activists from Just Stop Oil painted over the grave of British naturalist Charles Darwin at Westminster Abbey. Two activists entered Westminster Abbey — Britain's

site for royal weddings, coronations, burials and a major tourist attraction — and used spray chalk on Darwin’s grave. The activists wrote “1.5 is dead” in orange over the surface of white marble gravestone — a reference to recent news that global temperatures in 2024 had exceeded 1.5 Celsius above pre-industrial era for first time.

“We have passed the 1.5 degree threshold that was supposed to keep us safe,” one of the activists said. “Darwin would be turning in his grave to know we are in the midst of the sixth mass extinction.” Darwin, best known for his theory of evolution by natural selection, died in 1882. He is buried in Westminster Abbey’s Scientists’ Corner, where Isaac Newton and Stephen Hawking are also buried. The church confirmed the incident in a statement. “The Abbeys conservators are taking immediate action to clean the memorial and do not anticipate that there will be any permanent damage,” a spokeswoman said. “The police were called to the scene and dealt with the incident. The Abbey remains open for visiting and worshipping.” Just Stop Oil activists have staged a number of high-profile protests in Britain including by disrupting sports and theatre events, painting over the US embassy building in London and throwing soup at Van Gogh paintings. (*Dawn, January 14th, 2025, Page 10*)

Thousands turn out at London pro-Palestinian rally

Thousands of pro-Palestinian supporters gathered in central London, on the eve of the start of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, hoping to put “pressure” to ensure the ceasefire holds. “We desperately want to be optimistic” about the truce, Sophie Mason said. “And so we need to be out on the streets in order to make sure the ceasefire holds,” 50-year-old, who is a regular at pro-Palestinian demonstrations in the British capital. The London rally took place in Whitehall, site of the main British government offices, after police rejected the route initially proposed by organisers — which the Met police said would have been in the vicinity of a synagogue. Participants held up placards bearing slogans including “Stop arming Israel” or “Gaza, stop massacre” amid regular chants of “From river to sea, Palestine will be free”. (*Dawn, January 19th, 2025, Page 11*)

Serbian PM quits as anti-corruption protests persist

Serbian Prime Minister resigned, becoming highest-ranking official to step down amid a wave of anti-corruption protests that have spread across the Balkan country. The anti-government demonstrations sprang up in the wake of the roof collapsing at a railway station in the city of Novi Sad, killing 15 people and leading to calls for Vucevic to quit. What began as small gatherings in Novi Sad have ballooned and spread to the capital Belgrade as students, teachers and other workers have turned out in their thousands to blame station disaster on corruption within government of President. Minister for construction, transportation and infrastructure, and trade minister have already stepped down because of incident, but that failed to quell protests. (*Business Recorder, January 29th, 2025, Page 5*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

Roots for Equity

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