

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

February, 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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ACAC: Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee

ACTED: Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development

AEDs: Alternate Executive Directors

AfD: Alternative for Germany

AGEGA: All Government Employees Grand Alliance

AIT: Agriculture Income Tax

API: Active Pharma-ceutical Ingredients

APSEA: All-Pakistan Solvent Extractors Association

BDM: Biennial Delegates Meeting

BRAVE: Addressing Vulnerabilities to Emergencies

BYC: Baloch Yakjehti Committee

CACs: Central Asian Countries

CCI: Council of Common Interests

CCRI: Central Cotton Research Institute

CDA: Cholistan Development Authority

CDU: Christian Democratic Union

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

COAS: Chief of Army Staff

CPEC: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPF: Country Partnership Framework

CPP: Communist Party of Pakistan

CRHR: Climate Resilience and Humanitarian Response

CSA: Climate Smart Agriculture

DTL: Drug Testing Laboratory

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

ECC: Economic Coordination Committee

ECF: Extended Credit Facility

EDs: Executive Directors

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

FAA: Federal Aviation Administration

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FBR: Federal Board of Revenue

FCA: Federal Committee on Agriculture

FCDO: Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

FDE: Federal Directorate of Education

FEA: Foreign Economic Assistance

FOB: Free on Board

FPCCI: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry

G2G: Government-to-Government

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GCF: Green Climate Fund

GKI: Green Kissan Ittehad

GM: Genetically Modified

GPEI: Global Polio Eradication Initiative

GST: General Sales Tax

HCCI: Hub Chamber of Commerce Industry

HCSTSI: Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry

HLSCC: High Level Strategic Cooperation Council

ICAC: International Cotton Advisory Committee

IFAD: International Fund for Agricultural Development

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

ILO: International Labour Organisation

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IPPs: Independent Power Producers

IRRI-6: Long Grain White Rice

IRSA: Indus River System Authority

IRW: Islamic Relief Worldwide

JAC: Joint Action Committee

KDP: Kurdistan Democratic Party

KPC: Karachi Press Club

LHC: Lahore High Court

LSM: Large-Scale Manufacturing

MFRO: Military Family Rehabilitation Organisation

MIGA: Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency

MNF&R: Ministry of National Food Security and Research

MoU: Memorandums of Understanding

MPC: Multiparty Conference

MRL: Modern Maximum Residual Level

MVP: Minimum Viable Product

NEPRA: National Electric Power Regularity Authority

NIAB: Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology

NICH: National Institute of Child Health

NTDC: National Transmission and Dispatch Company

OMFIF: Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum

PBC: Pakistan Business Council

PBG: Plant Breeding and Genetics

PCCC: Pakistan Central Cotton Committee

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PCRWR: Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources

PECA: Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act

PFUJ: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

PHCBA: Peshawar High Court Bar Association

PIA: Pakistan International Airlines

PIBs: Pakistan Investment Bonds

PMA: Pakistan Medical Association

PMT: Porhiyat Muzahimat Tehreek

PPAF: Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund

PPMA: Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers' Association

PSDP: Public Sector Development Programme

PSQCA: Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority

QAT: Qaumi Awami Tehreek

QCCI: Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry

RSF: Resilience and Sustainability Facility

SAB: Sindh Abadgar Board

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBA: Standby Arrangements

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SCF: Sindh Community Foundation

SHC: Sindh Hari Committee

SIFC: Special Investment Facilitation Council

SMEDA: Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority

SSGCL: Sui Southern Gas Company

STB: Sindh Textbook Board

STP: Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party

SUP: Sindh United Party

TCP: Trading Corporation of Pakistan

TDAP: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

TGA: Trade in Goods Agreement

TGB: Turkish Youth Union

UNFPA: United Nations Population Fund

UoM: University of Malakand

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USSEC: US Soybean Export Council

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WB: World Bank

WBG: World Bank Group

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Women farmers in rural areas of Punjab and Sindh are spearheading a nutrition-focused agricultural shift by cultivating biofortified zinc-enriched wheat, improving both household health and financial stability.
- Pakistan marked a significant milestone with a bumper harvest of nearly 15 million metric tonnes of zinc-enriched wheat in the last cropping season.
- Over 4,730 smallholder farmers, including 3,135 women (66 per cent of the total) participated in training programmes organised by HarvestPlus across nine districts in the 2024-2025 cropping season.
- The US-funded Climate Smart Agriculture investment programme in Pakistan aimed to help farmers adapt to climate change has been shut down as a result of US administration's decision to suspend funding of all US foreign aid programmes.
- USAID personnel currently posted outside United States, Agency, in coordination with missions and the Department of State, is currently preparing a plan, under which Agency would arrange and pay for return travel to US within thirty days.
- SBP Deputy Governor emphasised need for market-driven mechanisms in agriculture sector instead of relying on government support price interventions.
- Senior agro-economist Matteo Lagatti from FGM International said that corporate farming remains in its infancy in Pakistan, with only 4pc of country's total cultivable land (840,000 hectares) allocated for its development.
- Punjab Chief Minister and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir inaugurated an ambitious agriculture initiative to irrigate barren land in Punjab's Cholistan area.
- An inclusive farmers' conference reiterates the demand for halting plans for the construction of six 'strategic' canals on the Indus River and corporate farming projects and redistribution of land among landless haris.
- Unanimously rejected the canals and corporate farming projects, declared Green Pakistan initiative as anti-farmer, and condemned the proposed agricultural tax bill as an attack on farming community.
- Over 100 residents of a remote settlement in Cholistan have approached the Lahore High Court (LHC), claiming they are being forced to hand over their land to make way for an official project.
- A multiparty conference unanimously declared that the people of Swat would not cede an inch of their land for any projects, including the establishment or expansion of a cantonment board, and vowed united resistance against any such government attempts. "We refuse to surrender further residential or agricultural land," they asserted.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The State Bank of Pakistan reported a record agricultural credit disbursement of Rs2.216 trillion in FY24, marking a 25 per cent increase from the previous year. The first half of FY25 recorded disbursements of Rs1.266tr, whereas the number of borrowers rose modestly to 2.86 million.
- The Punjab government is considering inclusion of farmers owning up to 25 acres of land in the second phase of the Chief Minister Kisan Card scheme.
- Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz inaugurated a landmark project to solarise agricultural tubewells in Punjab.
- Nuclear science has helped Pakistan achieve self-sufficiency in mung bean production, as most varieties grown in the country have been developed by the Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology (NIAB), in collaboration with the joint FAO-IAEA Centre for Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture.
- The IAEA says more than 3,400 new varieties of over 230 plant species have been produced to-date using radiation-induced genetic variation and mutation breeding, including many food crops, ornamental plants and trees used by farmers in 75 countries.
- Chief Minister was briefed by the authorities concerned that 1,000 farmers earned Rs 579.5 million just in a few months by using super seeders. As much as 330 tons of seeds have been saved in wheat cultivation through super seeders in the province. About 1.87 million liters less diesel was used when compared with the traditional methods, saving Rs 486.2 million in diesel cost.
- Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was apprised that 7805 farmers in 31 districts cultivated wheat on 110014 acres of land through super seeders. Farmers saved Rs 3666 per acre on sowing wheat. As many as 7805 farmers used super seeders on 68,185 acres through rental service.
- Balochistan Assembly passed law to tax agriculture income. The Agriculture Income Tax Bill (AIT), introduced by Revenue Minister Mir Asim Kurd, said no tax would be imposed on agriculture income of up to Rs600,000 per annum.
- The provincial assembly unanimously passed the Sindh Agricultural Income Tax Bill to meet the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme amid reluctance and concerns.
- Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had already passed the amended agricultural income tax law.
- The Bill aims to include corporate farming in the tax net. Small companies will be subject to a 20pc tax rate on their annual agricultural income, while large companies will face a tax rate of 29pc.
- PM revealed that all four provinces have agreed to impose an agriculture tax, fulfilling a key condition set by the IMF. The tax is set to come into effect from the next fiscal year, starting July 1, 2025.

- The Green Kissan Ittehad (GKI) has strongly rejected the 35 per cent tax on agricultural production in Balochistan and across the country, imposed under the IMF's directive, calling it a cruel and anti-farmer measure.
- Urea sales clocked in at 446,000 tonnes in January, down 27pc year-on-year.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- The Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) reported a 34pc decline in production against the target set for 2024-25.
- The textile industry purchased a record 2.7m bales (35pc) less from ginning units than last year.
- The main reason for this is the permission to import cotton and cotton yarn free of tax, while 18pc sales tax is imposed on the purchase of domestic cotton.
- Reports suggest that 1.5 million bales of cotton have been imported from abroad, while agreements to import 3.5m more cotton bales have been signed.
- Agricultural experts have called for flourishing oilseed crop cultivation in order to curtail edible oil import bill worth \$ 4 billion which is around half of the total agrarian import.
- Dr Humera Razzaq Inchange Oilseeds Research Laboratory said that with the quality seed of Brassica, farmers can get more than 36 mounds of productivity. She added with 40 kg of the seed, 18 kg of oil can be produced easily.
- The local cotton industry is facing a severe crisis due to unfavourable import policies and adverse weather conditions.
- The government's import policies have encouraged textile mills to import cotton and yarn instead of purchasing them domestically.
- At least Rs1bn is outstanding against defaulting millers on the imported cotton, while cess amounting to Rs2.5bn is pending on the local purchase of cotton.
- Cotton cultivation for the crop year 2025-26 has started in several cotton districts of Sindh and Punjab, while the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) has yet to fix the cultivation and production targets.
- A report of United States Department of Agriculture puts the total cotton production in Pakistan at 7.75 million bales (160 kg) or 27 percent higher than the domestic figures for the crop year 2024-25.
- The Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association report says that the total local cotton production is expected to be around 5.55 million bales this year. The country will need to import more than 6.53 million bales this year.
- The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) has opposed the provincial government's unilateral decision of not fixing the support price of wheat crop.
- It said Sindh government's decision of deregulating wheat crop would affect its productivity as well as cultivation.

- SAB president added that government had already started executing that deregulation plan from the last year. He said the export market remained closed and added that the cost of inputs had increased manifold in last couple of years.
- The Sindh Agriculture, Supply & Price Department has said that a decision to fix the support price of wheat has been postponed until the recommendations of a cabinet sub-committee.
- The national food security and research secretary informed National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security that there will be no minimum support price for wheat this year as per the agreement with IMF.
- Pakistan will not import wheat during current year owing to sufficient stock in country.
- Sindh Minister for Agriculture Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar has warned if farmers do not receive official prices for wheat, cotton and sugar cane, the country may face crisis of food security.
- Federal government is exploring olive cultivation on commercial basis in Chagai area of Balochistan under its project to promote olive cultivation in country.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- The provincial cabinet has approved the Balochistan Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy 2025-2035.
- Pakistan and Türkiye agreed to boost collaboration in agriculture and livestock, the key sectors of the economy.
- After more than two years, Pakistan proudly celebrated arrival of US Soybeans.
- This milestone comes after continuous efforts from the poultry and oilseeds industry collaborating together with legislative bodies to secure approval of the import licenses for genetically modified (GM) soybeans.
- Approximately 265,000 metric tons of US Soybeans are arriving in Pakistan over the next few months.

TRADE

- Government has set an ambitious export target of \$60bn to be achieved in three years.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 5.14pc to \$6.558bn in first half of current fiscal year from \$6.237bn over the same period last year.
- According to the PBS data, imports grew 6.95pc to \$33.04bn in July-January FY25 from \$30.89bn over the last year.
- The trade deficit increased by 2.84pc to \$13.48bn in July-January FY25 from \$13.12bn in the same period last year.
- The country's exports increased by 9.98 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$19.551bn compared to \$17.777 billion during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24).

- Pakistan's exports to five central Asian countries (CACs) contracted 17 per cent during the first half of 2024-25.
- Pakistan and China have agreed to deepen trade liberalisation under the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (Phase-II).
- Pakistan's exports witnessed an increase of 10.16 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of fiscal year 2024-25, reaching \$19.58 billion, compared to \$17.78 billion in the same period last year.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 5.62 per cent to \$7.984 billion in the first seven months of FY25 from \$7.559bn in the same period last year due to higher petroleum imports.
- Bangladesh has resumed direct trade with Pakistan for the first time since its secession from the latter in 1971, with the first shipment of 50,000 tonnes of rice leaving Port Qasim under a government-to-government deal.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries surged by 40.42pc to \$6.379bn during the first seven months of FY25 from \$4.543bn a year ago.
- Pakistan is set to export 50,000 metric tons of rice to Bangladesh under a Government-to-Government (G2G) arrangement.
- Exports to European countries grew 8.32pc in the first half of 2024-25, mainly due to higher shipments to western states. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to EU reached \$4.429 billion in July-December FY25 from \$4.089bn last year.
- The textile and clothing exports rebounded 15.85pc in January from a year ago.
- Pakistan's raw food exports rose 8.17 per cent to \$4.62bn during the first seven months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.26bn in the corresponding period last year, mainly driven by a significant rise in rice shipments.
- Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said that Pakistan's imports rose from \$ 5 billion to \$ 5.2 billion in December 2024.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) declared at least 28 brands of bottled water unsafe for human consumption due to microbiological or chemical contamination.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- The FDI surged 56 per cent in the first seven months of FY25. The State Bank reported that the FDI increased by \$548 million, or 56pc, to \$1.523 billion during July-January FY25 compared to \$975m a year ago.
- Effects of the suspension of all US foreign aid programmes have started to appear in Pakistan as over 60 health facilities will be closed down, leaving 1.7 million people, including 1.2m Afghan refugees, cut off from life-saving reproductive health services.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Sindh Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon has said provincial government has accepted IMF's condition for deregulating crops' prices in agriculture sector "under compulsion".
- A technical mission from IMF begins discussions in Islamabad today on Pakistan's request for over \$1bn in additional financing for climate resilience.

POLICY

- The Punjab government is developing a plan for the agricultural development of Potohar region to avoid drought-like conditions amid a prolonged dry spell that threatens yields in region.
- Sindh Minister for Agriculture Sardar Mohammad Bakhsh Mahar has said provincial government has launched "Climate Smart Technology" to address impacts of climate change on agriculture and ensure food security by achieving higher yields with limited resources.
- The technology could save 25pc to 30pc of water for wheat and increase production by 10pc to 15pc. Double-row planting method for wheat could reduce seed usage by 60pc while cultivation of low-water crops like mustard could serve as a better alternative during droughts.
- The government has accelerated the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), moving the financial closure deadline up to June 1, 2025 — four months earlier than the previously planned October timeline.

SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

- The federal government's domestic debt surged by Rs2.5tr in first half of the current fiscal year government's domestic debt rose to Rs50.193tr at the end of Dec 2024 from Rs47.724tr on June 30, 2024.
- In the first six months of the current year, foreign debt inflows amounted to \$3.6bn, almost 66pc lower than \$5.968bn in the same period last year.
- The Balochistan government has not allocated funds for the last over 10 years for the malnutrition programme to feed mother and child in the province.

ENVIRONMENT

- The survival of Pakistan's wetlands and the species that depend on them is under severe threat due to water stress, industrial pollution, land reclamation, and agricultural runoff.
- The Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL) has identified drugs of as many as seven pharmaceutical companies as spurious.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Experts from academic, agricultural and research institutions in Sindh have warned that climate change has produced new diseases and pests in crops, observing that increasing warming, irregular rainfall and pest attacks have impacted agricultural yields.
- The use of water for non-agricultural purposes in Pakistan is expected to rise significantly due to climate change, with a high-growth rate of 4.9 per cent per year and a 3°C temperature increase by 2047, water demand is projected to grow by 60pc.
- A technical mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) begun crucial talks regarding Pakistan’s request for around USD 1.5 billion in additional financing to combat climate change.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- Pesticides are significantly harming wildlife across the planet, stunting growth, damaging reproduction and even causing behavioural changes in animals not meant to be targeted.
- Species loss has reached a level not seen since an asteroid smashed into earth and wiped out the dinosaurs 66 million years ago, with scientists warning that human activity is pushing the world into its sixth mass extinction event.
- More than 800 species in land and in water were assessed to have suffered detrimental effects, including reducing how fast they grow, their reproductive success and even their ability to catch prey or attract mates. Ultimately, the authors said this can lead to death.
- In a landmark report in December, UN biodiversity experts warned that overconsumption and unsustainable farming are fuelling overlapping crises in nature and the climate, having already warned that a million species are threatened with extinction.

TRADE

- China will provide some funding through loans for the project, which is expected to cost more than \$8 billion. It is one of two railway lines to China that Vietnam plans as part of its “Two Corridors, One Belt” initiative, which connects to Beijing’s Belt and Road global infrastructure programme
- US President Donald Trump suggested that a trade deal was “possible” with China — a key target in the US leader’s tariffs policy.

- In 2020, the United States had already agreed to “a great trade deal with China” and a new deal was “possible”, Trump told.
- One month into his second term in office, Trump has threatened sweeping tariffs on allies and adversaries alike — targeting China as well as neighbors Canada and Mexico, and the European Union — and using levies as his main policy tool for lowering the massive US trade deficit.
- At the beginning of February, he slapped additional customs duties of 10 percent on all products imported from China.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- US President Donald Trump’s order to suspend most foreign aid has sent shock waves through the humanitarian sector, threatening to trigger mass layoffs at many NGOs and possibly destroy others altogether.
- The US president has ordered a 90-day review of USAID, which runs health and emergency programmes in around 120 countries, including the world’s poorest.
- More than 630,000 people were employed in the aid sector in 2020, more than 90 percent of them local staff.
- USAID manages a budget of \$42.8 billion, representing 42 per cent of humanitarian aid disbursed worldwide.
- President Donald Trump’s decision to suspend US overseas funding could result in millions more deaths from AIDS.
- The UN appealed for six billion dollars to provide desperately-needed aid to people in war-ravaged Sudan.
- The aim is to provide assistance to nearly 26 million people this year.
- The United States has slashed its multi-year aid contracts by 92 percent, as it sought around \$60 billion in savings in development and overseas humanitarian programs, the State Department said.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Pakistan, of course, has participated in more than 20 IMF programmes since 1958, including the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and Extended Credit Facility (ECF), Standby Arrangements (SBA) and one Structural Adjustment Facility Commitment that was availed in 1988.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Global food commodity prices fell in January, led by sharp declines in sugar and vegetable oils, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said.

ENVIRONMENT

- Extreme heat will reach dangerous levels — even for younger people — across an area equivalent to the size of the United States if Earth’s global warming hits two degrees Celsius, scientists warned.
- The study concluded that between 1994 and 2023, heat and humidity reached unsafe levels for people aged under 60 in areas equivalent to about two percent of global land area. For more vulnerable older people, that rose to about 20 percent of land area.
- Europe has so far recorded the highest number of deaths from heatwaves, with more than 70,000 deaths in 2003, 60,000 in 2022 and more than 47,000 in 2023.
- Asia has also documented the heavy toll of rising temperatures, including several thousand deaths in India and Pakistan during heatwaves in 2015. Last month was the hottest January on record.
- Argentina said it will pull out of World Health Organisation, following in the footsteps of the United States and citing similar complaints over the UN body’s management of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- WHO data shows Argentina contributed some \$8.75 million in membership fees to the organisation across 2022 and 2023 — 0.11 per cent of the total budget. It is slated to contribute \$8.25 million for the two-year 2024/25 cycle.
- Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its \$500 million pledge to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) by signing an agreement during the fourth Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum.
- Thai government has ordered a crackdown on farmers flouting a ban on crop burning, as pollution in Bangkok spiked a week after toxic air forced hundreds of schools to close.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Nearly all nations missed a UN deadline to submit new targets for slashing carbon emissions, including major economies under pressure to show leadership following the US retreat on climate change.
- The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the world’s largest fund helping developing countries deal with the impacts of climate change, said it had approved \$686.8 million in financing at a board meeting this week.
- Tense negotiations on the timing and content of the UN’s next blockbuster assessment of global warming science opened in China, with US scientists reportedly absent.
- Donald Trump’s withdrawal of United States from Paris Agreement on climate change will also cast a shadow, with media reports suggesting Washington will not send a delegation to the five-day meetin

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

‘Women farmers spearheading nutrition-focused agricultural shift’

Women farmers in rural areas of Punjab and Sindh are spearheading a nutrition-focused agricultural shift by cultivating biofortified zinc-enriched wheat, improving both household health and financial stability. This was stated at an interactive session held under the aegis of HarvestPlus, an international entity working to promote fortified crops. After receiving training on its benefits, these women have integrated the nutrient-rich crop into their diets, addressing zinc deficiencies and enhancing overall well-being, said officials in the ministry of food security.

Pakistan marked a significant milestone with a bumper harvest of nearly 15 million metric tonnes of zinc-enriched wheat in the last cropping season, strengthening food security and fostering healthier communities. Key to this achievement was the training and empowerment of women farmers, equipping them with the skills to adopt better farming practices. Over 4,730 smallholder farmers, including 3,135 women (66 per cent of the total) participated in training programmes organised by HarvestPlus across nine districts in the 2024-2025 cropping season. These initiatives covered modern farming techniques, seed procurement, crop management and loss prevention besides incorporating nutrition education. For many women, this was the first opportunity to access the knowledge and resources necessary to boost their yields and improve their families’ well-being. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 4*)

Closure of US project in Pakistan a setback to agri cooperation

The US-funded Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA) investment programme in Pakistan aimed to help farmers adapt to climate change has been shut down as a result of US administration’s decision to suspend funding of all US foreign aid programmes. The five-year programme at a cost of \$24 million was launched by US Ambassador Donald Blome in November last year. US officials managing the project are preparing to leave Pakistan while the national staff connected to the project are on the verge of losing jobs. While launching CSA project at University of Agriculture in Faisalabad in November last, Ambassador Blome had remarked: “Together, we’re planting the seeds of success.”

The CSA programme could have enabled Pakistani farmers adapt to environmental changes such as unpredictable weather, heatwaves, drought, and irregular rainfall. It would have improved access to climate-resilient seeds for farmers, which could withstand drought and heat, and also increase yields. Major goals of the programme were to improve crop yield and food security, increase resilience to climate change, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase incomes for farmers. Through CSA, Pakistani farmers were to be introduced to modern and improved farm practices, advanced machinery for planting and harvesting, agricultural drones and sensors,

irrigation and farm management software. This could have facilitated timely diagnosis of crop health and potential issues, conservation of water and land resources, and timely access to markets and capital, thereby increasing crop yields.

An announcement by USAID says effective February 7, “all USAID direct hire personnel will be placed on administrative leave globally, with the exception of designated personnel responsible for mission-critical functions, core leadership and specially designated programmes. For USAID personnel currently posted outside the United States, the Agency, in coordination with missions and the Department of State, is currently preparing a plan, under which the Agency would arrange and pay for return travel to US within thirty days.” With the closure of the climate-smart project which could have ensured Pakistani farmers access cutting-edge agricultural technology to improve productivity, the long and strong partnership between the United States and Pakistan has now come to an end. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 9*)

AT dares PPP to reject canals project, corporate farming in unambiguous terms

Awami Tehreek (AT) leaders have dared the Pakistan Peoples Party to reject the six ‘strategic’ canals projects in unambiguous terms from all constitutional forums or quit Sindh government if Wapda chairman’s claim about having the party’s endorsement of the canals was right. “If the claim is false, the PPP must initiate legal action against the Wapda chairman. If it is true, the party [leadership] must apologise to people of Sindh and step down,” they said in their speeches before participants in a big march organised by the party from Makli to Thatta. AT condemned in strong terms the government’s corporate farming and canals projects. They termed the projects a direct threat to people of Sindh, Balochistan and other marginalised communities, contending that vast tracts of farmland were being handed over to foreign investors at expense of local farmers.

The speakers opposed formation of the Special Investment Facilitation Council. The body was unconstitutional and undemocratic, which undermined the autonomy of provinces. They condemned amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act and described it as a frontal attack on media freedom and human rights. They warned that under corporate farming plans, millions of acres in Sindh, Balochistan, and the Seraiki belt were being given to multinational companies. It was a “hybrid invasion” for dispossessing local farmers. They said the amendment to the Irsa Act pushed by Shehbaz and Bilawal-led coalition government was an attempt to sell Indus River water to private corporations. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2025, Page 15*)

Training session on micro agro-entrepreneurship concludes

A comprehensive Training of Trainers (ToT) session on Micro Agro-Entrepreneurship was successfully held at the ICMA Hyderabad Campus, jointly organized by Sukkur IBA University and the Small & Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) under the ITC-GRASP project. The session attracted a diverse group of professionals, including representatives from universities, NGOs, government

institutions, the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industry (HCSTSI), social development agencies, and various trade organizations. The session covered core principles of agricultural business, facilitation techniques for master trainers, the concept of a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) in agribusiness, financial planning for agro-startups, and modern strategies for scaling agricultural enterprises. (*Business Recorder, February 10th, 2025, Page 5*)

Controversy over corporate farming echoes in NA, again

The controversy over a plan to divert water to Cholistan for corporate farming once again echoed in the National Assembly with a PPP lawmaker warning that thrusting the Cholistan canal project would lead to a war between the federation and federating units. Sharmila Farooqui of PPP said that moving ahead with the Cholistan canal project without addressing concerns of Sindh and Balochistan would be a great injustice with two smaller provinces. She said that Sindh was already facing water shortage and taking away water would mean economic strangulation of poor farmers of Sindh.

Rejecting the argument that Punjab would provide more than 4000 cusec of water for the controversial project out of its share, she asked as to where would Punjab meet the shortfall. She said the country received 40 per cent less rains during July-December, adding that Punjab would get water from Chashma-Jhelum link canal linking Indus River with Jhelum River, which would affect Sindh. She said that Sindh was already getting less water than its share. She demanded the immediate convening of the Council of Common Interests (CCI) to discuss this vital issue and provide an opportunity to Sindh to voice its concerns at the constitutional forum.

Ms Farooqui also noted that the CCI has not met for the last 11 months in violation of Article 154 of the Constitution, adding that strong federating units guaranteed a strong federation. She also said that Irsa member of Sindh was forced to give water availability report on behalf of the province to start the controversial water project. Ms Farooqui said that following imposition of agriculture tax, the Cholistan canal project would further add to problems of growers in Sindh. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 3*)

Call for market-driven agri reforms

State Bank Deputy Governor Saleem Ullah emphasised the need for market-driven mechanisms in the agriculture sector instead of relying on government support price interventions, insisting that sectors operating without state interventions naturally adjust to market dynamics. Speaking at the Agri Conference and Expo 2025 at the Expo Centre Karachi, Mr Saleem highlighted that subsidies should be limited to vulnerable segments while the broader sector should transition towards a market-based framework to strengthen the national economy. Special Assistant to the Sindh Chief Minister on Investment and Public-Private Partnerships, Qasim Naveed Qamar noted that the provincial government offers various support programmes, including subsidised tractors, drip irrigation systems, agricultural machinery and direct subsidies for farmers.

“We need strategic investments in modern farming techniques, precision agriculture and sustainable irrigation methods to drive productivity and profitability. Encouraging innovation in agri-tech, climate-smart farming and value chain development is essential,” Mr Qamar said.

He said the Sindh government was also facilitating farmers with access to loans on easy terms, supported by banks, to help them acquire modern equipment. Additionally, initiatives such as Kibor subsidy provisions through the Sindh Enterprise Development Fund aim to ease financial constraints. Senior agro-economist Matteo Lagatti from FGM International said that corporate farming remains in its infancy in Pakistan, with only 4pc of the country’s total cultivable land (840,000 hectares) allocated for its development. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2025, Page 9*)

SBP deputy governor explains how to target subsidies in Pakistan

Saleem Ullah, Deputy Governor of the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) emphasised that subsidies should be targeted only at vulnerable segments. Speaking at the Pakistan Agriculture Coalition’s two-day Agri Conference and Expo at the Expo Centre, he said a transition towards a market-driven agricultural sector would better support the national economy. Olivier Durand, Lead Agriculture Specialist, The World Bank, while speaking about policy framework for agriculture said the public support is favourable to large farmers but we should target small farmers to fill a large productivity gap.

Earlier, Chief Executive PAC Kazim Saeed said “The policies and economic structures set up in our agriculture sector in the 1960s and 1970s achieved their goals by the 1990s. So, if Pakistan’s agriculture sector is to salvage our economy, we need to accelerate the transition where the private sector is driving change and investing”. Matteo Lagatti, Senior agro-economist, FGM International said “There are 17 companies who are currently investing in corporate and contract farming for a total surface of 26,000 hectares and it is expected by FGM that the invested surface will increase to 80,000 hectares in the coming year”. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2025, Page 4*)

Ambitious project launched to turn Cholistan green

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir inaugurated an ambitious agriculture initiative to irrigate barren land in Punjab’s Cholistan area. Under the initiative, farmers would be provided with high-quality seeds, fertilisers, modern machinery and scientific support to increase the yield of their crops. The main components of the project are the Green Agri Mall and Service Company, Smart Agri Farm and Agri Research and Facilitation Centre.

The Green Agri Mall and Service Company will be a “one-stop solution” for farmers, providing them high-yield seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and fuel at subsidised rates at their doorstep. Modern farming machines, including tractors and drones, will also be rented out to farmers. A 5,000-acre Smart Agri Farm will be irrigated through a ‘High

Efficiency Irrigation System’ or maximum crop yield at the lowest possible cost. The Agri Research and Facilitation Centre would provide technical input and laboratory services, including soil testing, to farmers. Over 100,000 animals have been registered through the livestock card, adding that an animal tag and trace system has been started to improve bread, milk and meat production. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2025, Page 1*)

Experts from US, Turkiye, Iran visit SAU

A delegation of international and national agricultural experts, including renowned scientists and academicians from the United States, Türkiye, and Iran, visited Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, to assess ongoing research initiatives and explore collaboration opportunities. The visiting experts highlighted the importance of sustainable agricultural practices, stressing the need for precision farming, soil health management, and climate-resilient agricultural techniques. They further noted that international collaborations would strengthen global agricultural research networks, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and expertise to promote sustainable and efficient farming. The adoption of modern agricultural technologies would ultimately benefit global agricultural sector by enhancing productivity and resilience. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 7*)

Cholistan project

The Green Pakistan Initiative took off with the launch of three business franchises under the umbrella project in Cholistan last week. The ventures, which are backed by the military, promise to serve farmers as a ‘one-stop shop solution’, providing them with high-yield seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and fuel at discounted rates. Farming implements and machines, including tractors and drones, will also be rented out to them at affordable prices. In addition, soil testing and other research services will be offered to growers in collaboration with agriculture research institutions in the country to encourage innovation in this most important economic sector upon which depends our food security and much of our export earnings.

The GPI was created in 2023 to ‘promote corporate farming’ to attract Gulf investment in agriculture, introducing contemporary best practices, reducing costs, and increasing yields to boost farm exports. The army has already been given control of thousands of acres of both ‘barren’ and fertile state land in Punjab, mostly in Cholistan. While the business services mentioned have ostensibly been introduced for farmers of all sizes, and are likely to be extended to other parts of the province later, only large corporate farms spread over at least 5,000 acres will likely benefit from most of these facilities due to the cost and area under coverage. With the expansion of business services, the benefits may also trickle down to large family-based growers.

It is apparent that the GPI goals of bringing foreign investors and introducing modern farming practices to improve agricultural productivity and exports are largely aligned with Pakistan’s broader economic aims. However, manner in which the initiative was launched

during caretaker set-up raises questions. First and foremost is issue of the construction of two canals to irrigate land in Cholistan under GPI's control. The project approved by federal government in agreement with Punjab has caused much anxiety in Sindh.

Both the Sindh government and farmers in the province are objecting strongly to the controversial plan, pointing out that the schemes were approved without discussion at the CCI for dubious reasons. Punjab's argument that these canals will be fed with floodwaters from India-controlled Sutlej does not have a leg to stand on. What happens during the years when there is no flood in the river? From where will the water come in floodless years? There is also the issue of evictions of tenants from state land in Punjab in order to transfer those lands to the GPI. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 6*)

Farmers' moot rejects corporate farming

An inclusive farmers' conference with participation of representatives from Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and the Seraiki region reiterates the demand for halting plans for the construction of six 'strategic' canals on the Indus River and corporate farming projects and redistribution of land among landless haris. The conference organised by Pakistan Kisan Rabita Committee in collaboration with Awami Tehreek in Bhitt Shah other day unanimously rejected the canals and corporate farming projects, declared Green Pakistan initiative as anti-farmer, and condemned the proposed agricultural tax bill as an attack on farming community.

The speakers said that Pakistan had been enslaved by the IMF and media and judiciary had been suppressed at the behest of imperialist institutions. They said the government had amended the Irsa Act to sell Sindh's water to foreign corporations, labeling projects like Green Pakistan, Agricultural Revolution, and Uraan Pakistan as mere deceptive slogans aimed at displacing farmers and selling national resources. They accused the ruling coalition of betraying Sindh and said the Pakistan Peoples Party had deprived Sindhis of their basic rights and had now become complicit in conspiracy to turn Sindh into a desert. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 15*)

Cholistan residents approach LHC over dispossession fears

Over 100 residents of a remote settlement in Cholistan have approached the Lahore High Court (LHC), claiming they are being forced to hand over their land to make way for an official project. Around 124 residents of Basti Kheer Sir, Chak No.176/DB maintain that they are bona fide Cholistanis, and their ancestors had been in possession of this land for several decades, who had worked to transform it from barren sand dunes into cultivable land. In 2024, then-LHC Justice Shahid Jamil Khan had disposed of a plea filed by the same parties after they were granted the first right of refusal in the allotment of the land, which had been placed in 'category A' for the purposes of auction.

The Cholistan Development Authority (CDA) was supposed to auction the land, which the petitioners wanted to purchase. But instead, the petitioners alleged, the Punjab Board of Revenue had reserved 30,000 acres of land in Cholistan — which includes Chak

No.176/DB. The petitioners asked that the Board of Revenue be restrained from transferring the land for any purpose. The petitioner and other inhabitants of the locality are poor people who have no other place of residence and no other source of income except the lands in question, the petition said. According to a court order, seen by *Dawn*, Justice Asim Hafeez has sought reports from the law officer, while officials of the provincial Board of Revenue have also been asked to appear before the court at the next hearing. (*Dawn*, February 24th, 2025, Page 12)

1.1 # Farmers

Skills development centres: 47 women cotton workers enrolled

Sindh Community Foundation (SCF), under the Asian Venture Philanthropist Network, AVPN supported program, has enrolled 47 women cotton workers in three newly established Skills Development Centres to support their economic empowerment in district Matiari. These centres aim to provide training in embroidery, stitching, hand embroidery, and sewing, enabling women to secure alternative livelihoods during the off-season. (*Business Recorder*, February 3rd, 2025, Page 11)

1.2 # Land

Two brothers killed over land dispute

Two brothers were gunned down and their father and two cousins critically injured by their rivals over a land dispute in the rural area of Gujar Khan. The incident occurred in the Notla Rajgan village in the limits of Gujar Khan police. Mohammad Rizwan told the police that his uncle Raja Nazeer had a dispute with his rivals over cultivation of wheat crop on the Jhelum River land. (*Dawn*, February 10th, 2025, Page 4)

Three killed in fierce gun battle over land dispute

A fierce gun battle between two rival groups in a land dispute claimed three more lives in Thull taluka of Jacobabad district. The police force started raiding different places to arrest those involved in the violence. (*Dawn*, February 15th, 2025, Page 15)

Balochistan cabinet approves computerisation of land record

Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti urged cabinet members to review performance of their departments and take steps for further improvement to serve the masses. The meeting approved the digital land settlement under which all land records will be computerised to ensure transparency and easy access to them. The cabinet also agreed to provide relief to landlords in provincial tax on agricultural produce obtained from Kachhi Canal to facilitate farmers and to improve the agricultural sector. The cabinet also approved the Balochistan Water Resources Management Bill which will ensure correct and effective use of water resources in the province. The meeting also decided to implement an effective law to switch to solar energy agricultural tube-wells of the province. The meeting approved a new policy for fisheries and aquaculture, which will be helpful in developing the fisheries sector on modern lines. (*Dawn*, February 21st, 2025, Page 5)

Swat MPC vows not to give land for cantonment project

A multiparty conference unanimously declared that the people of Swat would not cede an inch of their land for any projects, including the establishment or expansion of a cantonment board, and vowed united resistance against any such government attempts. The declaration emerged from a joint session organised by Tanzeem Sama Lar and Swat Qaumi Jirga held in Kanju area of Kabal tehsil here. The speakers alleged that militancy and terrorism were orchestrated to justify cantonment projects in Swat, citing past land acquisitions for airports, cantonments, Frontier Corps camps, and golf courses. “We refuse to surrender further residential or agricultural land,” they asserted. Criticising Swat Expressway as a conspiracy to divide the district and destroy farmland, they condemned the cantonment board proposal as “forced land capture”. The speakers argued that while India dismantles cantonments, Pakistan’s government prioritises expanding them, insisting Swat’s populace “will no longer be deceived”. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Two killed in armed clash over land dispute in Larkana

An armed clash between two rival groups over an old land dispute left two persons dead and two others critically wounded in Sahib Khan Korai village, Mirokhan. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

Punjab govt to revisit Cholistan land transfer, LHC told

The Punjab government has held in abeyance two agreements — made by the caretaker government — transferring vast swathes of land in Cholistan to two entities associated with the Pakistan Army, officials told LHC. According to an order issued by Justice Asim Hafeez of LHC’s Bahawalpur bench, Punjab government officials informed court that provincial cabinet had initiated a fresh review of land transfer agreements and subsequent notifications, issued by Board of Revenue under caretaker set-up.

The order came after bench disposed of a petition, filed by over 100 residents of Chak No.176/DB — a remote settlement in Cholistan — who claimed they were being forced to hand over their land to make way for a state-sponsored project. The court observed that the caretaker government had exceeded its mandate when it executed joint venture agreements with M/s Green Corporate Initiatives and the Military Family Rehabilitation Organisation for transfer of thousands of acres of land in Cholistan. The order observed that cabinet should also consider 11 questions, earlier framed by court, regarding scope of a caretaker government’s powers and legality of agreements it had made with a private limited company to lease out a large chunk of land. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2025, Page 1*)

1.3 # Water

Closure of Nara Canal 12 days ahead of scheduled date causes water shortage in Mirpurkhas district

The district and all the towns falling within its jurisdiction are facing acute shortage of water even for drinking purposes in wake of stoppage of water supplies in Nara Canal

for annual maintenance and desilting. Officials at water supply schemes in the towns failed to store required quantity of water in reservoirs as the Nara Canal was closed earlier than its scheduled date of closure on Jan 6. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

MPC in Larkana flays PPP's 'double-faced' policy on provinces' water rights

A multiparty conference (MPC) convened by Qaumi Awami Tehreek and its woman wing, Sindhyani Tehreek, has rejected federal government's plan for the construction of six 'strategic' canals on Indus River, termed amendment to Irsa Act as unconstitutional and flayed Pakistan Peoples Party for its 'double-faced' policy on Sindh's water rights. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 15*)

New canals to devastate Sindh's agri economy, moot told

Second Sindhi Nari Day was observed at the Karachi Press Club under the auspices of Sindh Women Lawyers Alliance. The theme of the event was "Resources, Extremism, and Resistance", During various sessions, speakers opposed the construction of new canals on the Indus River, stating that it would further devastate Sindh's agricultural economy and harm the overall environment. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 14*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

SBP chief pushes banks to expand agri-financing

The State Bank of Pakistan reported a record agricultural credit disbursement of Rs2.216 trillion in FY24, marking a 25 per cent increase from the previous year, SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad said. Speaking at the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) meeting in Multan, Mr Ahmad reaffirmed SBP's commitment to boosting agricultural financing and ensuring sustainable growth in the agriculture sector. "Building on this momentum, the first half of FY25 recorded disbursements of Rs1.266tr, whereas the number of borrowers rose modestly to 2.86 million," he said.

Emphasising the need to expand financial outreach, the SBP governor urged banks to increase their rural presence, particularly in underserved and unserved areas, by designating more branches for agricultural lending and deploying additional credit officers to facilitate small farmers. Mr Ahmad underscored the vital role of agriculture in the country's economy, highlighting its contributions to food security, rural livelihoods and its integration with the industrial and services sectors.

He also urged banks to fully implement their Agricultural Credit Expansion Plans and invest in human resources, infrastructure and digital technologies to better serve the farmers. He told the financial institutions to collaborate with relevant government departments, fintechs, microfinance institutions and agri-tech companies to deliver end-to-end digital loan solutions and advisory services tailored for small farmers. He highlighted that there are three key areas for stakeholders to focus on to uplift the agriculture sector. First, addressing the climate change challenges calls for targeted

strategies to mitigate risks and enhance resilience by adopting climate-smart agriculture, green financing and farmer training to ensure food security and sustainable growth. Second, leveraging modern technology is crucial for transforming Pakistan's agriculture. Globally, geospatial technologies are transforming agriculture by enabling precise crop monitoring, enhancing resource management, and minimising production risks. Pilot projects in Pakistan can adopt these tools to enhance productivity and reduce resource waste. Third, enhancing focus on the livestock sector, which contributes 14pc of the GDP and 2.1pc of the country's total exports, offers a massive opportunity for diversifying income streams and reducing dependency on traditional crop cycles by creating an exportable surplus. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

Investment, innovation: 'AgriConnections' to unlock agricultural potential

The Pakistan Agricultural Coalition (PAC), in collaboration with the World Bank Group, will host the AgriConnections 2025 conference and expo on February 12 and 13 at Karachi Expo Centre to unlock Pakistan's agricultural potential through investment and innovation. The two-day conference will bring together top international and Pakistani experts, policymakers, financial institutions, and agribusiness leaders to explore investment opportunities and transformative solutions for Pakistan's agriculture sector. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2025, Page 7*)

Kisan Card phase-II likely to include farmers with 25 acres

The Punjab government is considering inclusion of farmers owning up to 25 acres of land in the second phase of the Chief Minister Kisan Card scheme. The proposal came under discussion in a meeting between Agriculture Minister Ashiq Kirmani and Bank of Punjab President Zafar Masood held at BoP Head Office. The possibility of increasing per-acre loan limit was also considered, with final approval to be given by chief minister. Mr Kirmani sought introduction of a cotton crop insurance pilot project under the Kisan Card and forming a disaster crop insurance plan for other key crops. A total budget of Rs54 billion has been approved for the scheme out of which Rs34.7bn have already been utilised, with 86pc spent on fertilizer purchases.

Under the mechanisation scheme, the BoP will provide high-tech farm machinery over the next three years at a total cost of Rs50 billion. A farmer can receive interest-free loan up to Rs50m for purchasing farm machinery. Farmers will have the option to buy both locally manufactured and imported agricultural machinery. Minister Kirmani also highlighted the need to increase the number of rice and cotton farming machines. The meeting also finalised arrangements for upcoming Green Tractor Programme launching by the chief minister scheduled for this month. Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said second phase of Kisan Card would commence on May 16, specifically targeting the Kharif crop season. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 2*)

Socio-Cultural Agri Finance Mela 2025 held in Sujawal

The vibrant district of Sajawal was scene of an engaging Socio-Cultural Agri Finance Mela, organised by the SBP in collaboration with Sindh Bank and with the support of Govt of Sindh (GoS) local administration. This event brought together farmers, banking institutions, and community members for a day filled with knowledge, cultural performances, and prizes. The Chief Guest, Minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Muhammad Ali Malkani, graced the occasion and emphasized the importance of financial literacy and access to resources for the agricultural community. His presence highlighted the Government's commitment to improving the livelihoods of farmers in the region. (*Business Recorder, February 11th, 2025, Page 4*)

Barkat Frisian Agro book-building starts today

Barkat Frisian Agro IPO's book building phase will start on 17th February and continue till 18th February where high net worth individuals and institutional investors will subscribe to 100 percent of the issue size. The successful bidders; however, will be provisionally allotted only 75 percent of the issue size; i.e., 50,801,250 shares, and the company will offer the remaining 25 percent or 16,933,750 shares to the retail investors through general public subscription. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

Maryam launches solar project for Punjab farmers

Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz inaugurated a landmark project to solarise agricultural tubewells in Punjab. Following the Kisan Card, Agri Mechanisation, and Agricultural Internship programmes, this initiative aims to ensure sustainable and cost-effective farming. Officials briefed her that in first phase, 8,000 tubewells across Punjab would be converted to solar energy through a lottery system. The chief minister was informed, "Farmers will save more than Rs10,000 per day and over Rs350,000 per month by switching to solar-powered tubewells." (*The News, February 2nd, 2025, Page 1*)

Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology tackles climate change impact on crops

Nuclear science has helped Pakistan achieve self-sufficiency in mung bean production, as most varieties grown in the country have been developed by the Nuclear Institute for Agriculture and Biology (NIAB), in collaboration with the joint FAO-IAEA Centre for Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture. These varieties have improved crop yields, enhanced disease resistance and enhanced nutritional profile. The two varieties released in 2021 — NIAB Mung 2021 (NM-2021) and Abbas Mung — were grown on about 70 per cent of Pakistan's mung bean land area that year, making a substantial contribution to the country's food security and economy, the IAEA states.

The IAEA says more than 3,400 new varieties of over 230 plant species have been produced to-date using radiation-induced genetic variation and mutation breeding, including many food crops, ornamental plants and trees used by farmers in 75 countries. IAEA DG Rafael Mariano Grossi during his meetings with Prime Minister Shehbaz

Sharif and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar last week discussed nuclear energy's role in climate change mitigation, nuclear techniques and applications used in agriculture, food preservation and industry besides financing of nuclear power and peaceful uses of nuclear technology. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 3*)

Punjab CM says 'agri mechanisation is just a beginning...'

“Agricultural mechanisation is just a beginning; more revolutionary steps will be taken to ensure prosperity of farmers through innovation and development in agriculture,” said Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif while expressing satisfaction over the use of super seeders in wheat cultivation in Punjab. She added: “The dream of innovation in agriculture is becoming a reality with super seeders. Farmers got great relief by saving labour cost, time and fuel.” Chief Minister was briefed by the authorities concerned that 1,000 farmers earned Rs 579.5 million just in a few months by using super seeders. As much as 330 tons of seeds have been saved in wheat cultivation through super seeders in the province. About 1.87 million liters less diesel was used when compared with the traditional methods, saving Rs 486.2 million in diesel cost.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif was apprised that 7805 farmers in 31 districts cultivated wheat on 110014 acres of land through super seeders. Farmers saved Rs 3666 per acre on sowing wheat. As many as 7805 farmers used super seeders on 68,185 acres through rental service. Chief Minister said: “93% of the farmers, growing wheat on cultivation with super seeders, have declared that wheat sowing through super seeders have yielded best results.” She added: “Rs. 100 per acre has also been saved in labour cost due to sowing with super seeders, besides reduction in seed use from 50 kg to 47 kg per acre.” The farmers in their feedback said that sowing wheat through super seeders is better than the traditional method. The use of super seeders to increase fertility of soil has yielded excellent results. They said they will continue to cultivate wheat using super seeders in the future. They said that since sowing of wheat on one acre with super seeders can be completed in just one hour, it saves time and resources. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 4*)

2.3 # Agricultural Taxes

Aurangzeb thanks provinces for passing agri tax law

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb thanked the provincial governments for imposing the agriculture income tax (AIT), in line with the commitment made to the IMF. The statement followed the Sindh Assembly's passage of the AIT law, which occurred on the same day the provincial cabinet approved the draft bill. Sindh was the last province to pass the law, ensuring that agriculture income tax will be implemented nationwide from July 1, 2025. Originally, the IMF had set a deadline for the introduction of the bills in the provincial assemblies by the end of October 2024, with their passage required by January 1, 2025. Despite a month-long delay, completion of the legislative process is still within an acceptable margin of slippage. As part of Pakistan's \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility with the IMF, the country is obligated to recover taxes from all

sectors, including real estate, wholesale, and agriculture — sectors that had previously been exempt from taxation. This has led to an inequitable tax burden on salaried individuals. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

Balochistan Assembly passes law to tax agriculture income

The Balochistan Assembly passed the law to tax agriculture income. The Agriculture Income Tax Bill (AIT), introduced by Revenue Minister Mir Asim Kurd, said no tax would be imposed on agriculture income of up to Rs600,000 per annum. There will be a 15 per cent tax on income between Rs600,000 and 1.2 million. A fixed tax of Rs90,000 will be charged on income between Rs1.2m and Rs1.6m. The tax on income between Rs1.6m and 3.2m will be Rs170,000. On income between Rs3.2m and Rs5.6m, Rs650,000 will be charged as tax. The income over Rs5.6m will attract a tax rate of 40pc. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

Sindh Assembly passes bill to tax agriculture income

In a rare show of unity, the provincial assembly unanimously passed the Sindh Agricultural Income Tax Bill to meet the requirements of the IMF programme amid reluctance and concerns. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had already passed the amended agricultural income tax law that was a part of the federal government's commitments under the IMF's \$7bn agreement spanning 37 months. Before the assembly session, the Sindh cabinet approved the draft of the bill amid concerns.

Additionally, the Bill aims to include corporate farming in the tax net. Small companies will be subject to a 20pc tax rate on their annual agricultural income, while large companies will face a tax rate of 29pc. Notably, livestock has not been included in the tax net, and the advance agricultural income tax, based on land cultivation, will no longer be levied. The payment, collection, and filing of agricultural income tax will be fully automated for greater efficiency. Later, the Sindh Agricultural Income Tax Act Bill 2025 was presented in the house, which was unanimously approved by the house. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 13*)

All provinces agree to impose agriculture tax: PM

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif revealed that all four provinces have agreed to impose an agriculture tax, fulfilling a key condition set by the IMF. According to sources, the rate of agricultural tax will vary across provinces, with Punjab and Sindh expected to generate the largest share of revenue. The tax is set to come into effect from next fiscal year, starting July 1, 2025. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 1*)

Agriculture tax

With Sindh and Balochistan finally approving changes to their agriculture income tax laws to harmonise their AIT rates with the federal personal and corporate income tax regime, the country has met another IMF funding programme goal. Even though the provinces, barring Punjab, breached the deadlines set by the IMF for the passage of the

required changes in their AIT laws, the amended versions should help reinforce Pakistan's case during the first biannual performance review of the programme, due later this month or early March. The provinces had committed with the lender to make the required legislative changes in their respective farm tax laws before the start of 2025 to increase their own tax collection efforts.

The harmonisation of the provincial agriculture tax laws with the federal income tax laws is not only crucial for broadening the tax base, it is also important for plugging a big loophole that facilitates tax evasion due to a low slab rate. While it is senseless to expect the changes in the provincial AIT regimes to significantly increase revenues immediately, the measure should make the national tax system a bit more equitable. Therefore, criticism of the centre for 'imposing' the new AIT rates on Sindh's people by the province's chief minister and other PPP legislators was misplaced.

What the recent economic and financial crisis has underlined is that the state, which has one of the lowest tax-to-GDP ratios of less than 10pc in the world, has no option but to collect taxes from every segment of the economy. Nor can it shift the tax burden of one segment onto another to meet its increasing revenue needs for building infrastructure and improving public services. That said, the passage of the amendments to the law was the easier part. It will more difficult to revamp the collection system. For that, the provinces must build the capacity of their revenue officials and digitise their land records. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 6*)

Balochistan farmers reject agri income tax

The Green Kissan Ittehad (GKI) has strongly rejected the 35 per cent tax on agricultural production in Balochistan and across the country, imposed under the IMF's directive, calling it a cruel and anti-farmer measure. At a press conference, GKI President Agha Lal Jan Ahmadzai demanded that compensation be provided to farmers affected by the construction of the Quetta-Karachi Highway in Khuzdar, Kalat, Mangochar, Mastung, Surrab and other areas. He said that 75pc of the population in Balochistan is associated with the agriculture sector, which supplies vegetables, fruits and other agricultural products to the entire country and contributes millions of rupees in taxes. Despite this, the agriculture sector is on the verge of collapse, he regretted.

The livestock sector is also struggling due to a lack of quality medicines and vaccinations, he said, calling for measures to prevent the use of substandard drugs and the provision of mobile dispensary services for livestock owners. He also reiterated their commitment to the ongoing struggle against illegal trawling in the coastal areas of Balochistan. The GKI president said that in other provinces, modern agricultural technology is being used to benefit farmers and landowners by providing high-quality seeds and training. However, Balochistan has been deprived of these facilities, pushing agriculture, livestock and fishing sectors to the brink of disaster. With little government support, farmers are forced to take their own initiatives to promote agriculture. He

condemned the policy of extracting six additional canals from the Sindh River in Punjab, calling it an anti-Balochistan policy and an infringement on the rights of Balochistan's farmers. Mr Ahmadzai pledged to continue the struggle for the timely provision of water, barley and wheat purchases in the green belt and to address other issues affecting farmers and cultivators. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 5*)

Murad again voices concern over increased agri tax

Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah said that the enhanced agriculture tax, imposed to meet the requirements of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme, would place a heavy burden on the farmers. Discussing the agriculture tax with Ambassador of France Nicolas Galle during a meeting at the Chief Minister's House, he stated that the tax had been increased from 15 per cent to 45pc. He clarified that while the agriculture tax was already in effect in the province, its increase was a condition set by the IMF. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 14*)

Asad Qaiser opposes tax on farmers

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) central leader and former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser opposed the imposition of income tax on farmers, terming it an unjust burden on the agriculture sector. Talking to journalists, Asad said the decision to further burden the farmers with taxes would further strain small farmers already struggling with rising costs. (*Business Recorder, February 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

2.4 # Fertilizer

Oil sales rise 8pc, fertiliser demand plunges

Urea sales clocked in at 446,000 tonnes in January, down 27pc year-on-year. According to Topline Securities, on a month-on-month basis, urea sales had declined by 55pc due to the high base of last month and seasonality factor. This is likely to take the closing inventory of urea to around 454,000 tonnes in January, up from 360,000 tonnes in December 2024. Total DAP sales in January 2025 was around 63,000 tonnes, down 6pc year-on-year and 54pc month-on-month. Closing inventory of DAP stood at 141,000 tonnes in January compared to 102,000 tonnes in December 2024 and 72,000 tonnes in January 2024. (*Dawn, 5th February, 2025, Page 9*)

'Sona Urea Zinc Coated' launch

Fauji Fertilizer Company Limited, a Pakistan's leading fertilizer manufacturing and distributing company has extended its product portfolio by launching a new enhanced efficiency fertilizer "Sona Urea Zinc Coated", on February 03. Senior Management of FFC was also present at the launch event. Urea is widely used fertilizer in Pakistan and is very popular among farming community as it provides the highest nitrogen content than any other nitrogenous fertilizer. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2025, Page 4*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Minister underscores need for steps aimed at boosting agri output

Sindh's Agriculture Minister Sardar Muhammad Baksh Khan Mahar said that there is need to take bold steps to modernize, improve productivity, and create a more resilient agricultural sector. He was speaking at the two-day Pakistan Agriculture Coalition's conference and expo that concluded at Karachi Expo Centre. He said agricultural economies across the world were working on improving their Agri-supply chains by making them more efficient, innovative, and enterprising. "The challenges such as post-harvest losses (average 40% loss of horticulture crops), limited access to modern storage facilities, and climate change (major biblical level floods in the last 15 years in Sindh) remain significant hurdles to development of our agriculture sector," said the minister.

Florence Rolle, Country Representative of United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization, said that private sector can shape the future of market-led agri market in Pakistan. "There is a big gap between farmers and investors. Collaboration is not happening in Pakistan as it is happening in other countries," said Florence. "Agriculture contributes the most to greenhouse gases, especially from the livestock's methane, fertilizer from nitrous oxide, deforestation and use of energy in agriculture and is contributing 50 pc," said Irfan. (*Business Recorder, February 14th, 2025, Page 4*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

Minister vows reforms as lint output plunges 34pc

National Food Security Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain said that the government was working to reform the cotton sector, including reviewing the 18 per cent GST on local lint to create a fairer market environment. Meanwhile, the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) reported a 34pc decline in production against the target set for 2024-25. The minister also announced that the National Cotton Revival Conference in Multan will be held, where key stakeholders will discuss strategies for enhancing cotton productivity and trade. Government will continue working closely with international partners like the International Cotton Advisory Committee (ICAC) to strengthen Pakistan's position in the global cotton market and ensure long-term growth.

The country produced cotton that was around half of the target set for the crop year 2024-25 and 34pc less than the output for the same period last year, PCGA data showed. It says that up till Jan 31, over 5.5 million bales of cotton were produced, almost 50pc of the 11.2m bales target fixed by the Federal Committee on Agriculture for the ongoing crop year. Despite this, cotton and cotton yarn stocks lying with the ginning factories and spinning mills are much higher than last year. There are 486,000 bales of cotton available for sale with the ginning units, 114,000 bales (31pc) more than last year.

During this period, the local cotton market witnessed a significant decline in cotton purchases by the textile mills from ginning factories. The textile industry purchased a record 2.7m bales (35pc) less from ginning units than last year. The main reason for this

is the permission to import cotton and cotton yarn free of tax, while 18pc sales tax is imposed on the purchase of domestic cotton. Thus, this year, textile millers purchased less cotton and yarn from the domestic market. Reports suggest that 1.5 million bales of cotton have been imported from abroad, while agreements to import 3.5m more cotton bales have been signed. It is believed that around 5m bales of cotton will be imported over and above the import of cotton yarn and grey cloth this year. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Experts worried over fall in cotton output, urge govt to take corrective measures

Experts and growers attending the First National Cotton Revival Conference in Multan, the hub of research in southern Punjab, called upon the government to take measures on priority basis to restore cotton production in the country, expressing serious concern over declining production. The speakers highlighted the critical role of cotton in the country's economy, emphasising the urgent need for comprehensive policy reforms, including the development of high-yield and climate-resilient seed varieties, efficient irrigation systems, and enhanced farmer support programmes. The importance of incorporating modern technology at every stage of the cotton value chain was underscored to strengthen production, processing, trade, and exports.

The Chief Executive Officer of CottonConnect, Allison Ward, addressed the conference virtually, emphasising the need for sustainable production. She spelled out initiatives taken by CottonConnect to train small farmers, improve water management, promote organic farming, and to increase female participation in the cotton sector. It was agreed to establish a platform under the aegis of PCCC, to be supported by CottonConnect. Primark, BCI and APTMA, as well as several government departments. Experts reaffirmed their commitment to collaborative efforts for revitalising the country's cotton industry. They stressed the importance of sustainability, modern technology, and policy reforms to overcome production challenges. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 9*)

Cotton production

Pakistan's cotton crop is on the ropes. The crop output has been falling since FY15, when the country harvested a record quantity of nearly 14m bales. In the past 10 years, its production has fluctuated from 4.9m bales to just over 10m. This year is no different, as the output is estimated to plunge by nearly a third to around 7m bales from last year's 10.2, the latest cotton arrivals indicate. Even though Pakistan remains the world's fifth largest cotton producer, our share in global production has plunged to around 6pc compared to India's 22pc.

The reasons for the collapse of the cotton crop, the backbone of the textile exports, which fetch over half our export revenue, range from government policy failures to farmers shifting from cotton to more profitable crops like sugarcane due to unavailability of quality seeds, slow adoption of modern farming practices and the impact of climate change. Our scientists and researchers have done little to build new

seed technologies to help cotton farmers fight crop diseases and manage the impact of the climate change as seen in heatwaves, drought, and excessive rain. It was against this backdrop that First National Cotton Revival Conference was held in Multan recently.

The government officials, scientists, researchers, and growers attending the moot called for `policy reforms, including the development of high-yield and climateresilient seed varieties, efficient irrigation systems, and enhanced farmer support programmes` to revitalise the cotton economy. The world is implementing `sustainable and better cotton` initiatives to improve the social, environmental, and economic sustainability of cotton production. This makes it imperative for Pakistan to urgently implement suggested policy reforms to revive the cotton economy so that it remains a part of the global textile and clothing supply chain. However, if the past is any guide, there is little chance of the authorities considering these suggestions, let alone implementing the much-needed reforms. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 6*)

Cotton production under multidimensional stress: ILO study

Cotton production is under multidimensional stress brought about collectively by several factors ranging from low yields to low government support, to outdated farming methods on many farms, to constant fragmentation of farmland from one generation to the next, to palpable impact of climate change, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has stated in a report on Pakistan. Titled Mapping of the cotton supply chain at the community level in Pakistan: A report on selected districts in Punjab and Sindh provinces, the ILO study has found that by and large, the cotton smallholder farmers, frameworks, and workers and businesses along much of the supply chain do not partake of the success and abundance of the cotton success story.

The report has described how the cotton supply chain at the community level is under strain. The cotton farms in Pakistan contribute significantly to the GDP, generate critical foreign exchange for the country, feed raw material to the critical textile and garment industry, provide livelihoods to millions in the cotton supply chain and enable it to be the fifth largest producer in the world. Pakistan's agriculture sector is critical to the country's economic and human resource growth. Policies and initiatives, including social protection measures, are being introduced to support the sector further, but implementation is weak. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2025, Page 3*)

Agri experts advocate flourishing oilseed crop cultivation

Agricultural experts have called for flourishing oilseed crop cultivation in order to curtail edible oil import bill worth \$ 4 billion which is around half of the total agrarian import. They addressed the Hands-on Training on Emasculation, Pollination and Oil Extraction methods in Brassica napus arranged by Oilseeds Research Laboratory, Department of Plant Breeding and Genetics (PBG), University of Agriculture Faisalabad at the Center for Advanced Studies Auditorium.

UAF Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Sarwar Khan said that it was a matter of grave concern that despite being an agrarian country, we are importing the agri goods worth billions. He added progressive farmers were getting around the double production than the traditional farmers. It means that technology is available but common farmers are not adopting such technology. We have to reach out them to create awareness.

Dr Humera Razzaq Inchage Oilseeds Research Laboratory said that with the quality seed of Brassica, the farmers can get more than 36 mounds of productivity. She added with 40 kg of the seed, 18 kg of oil can be produced easily. The farmers need to be attracted towards oilseed crop that will not only help become self-sufficient but also improve their economic conditions. (*Business Recorder, February 16th, 2025, Page 5*)

Unfavourable policies, weather threaten cotton production

The local cotton industry is facing a severe crisis due to unfavourable import policies and adverse weather conditions. The situation has raised concerns about a significant decline in the production of white lint this year. The government's import policies have encouraged textile mills to import cotton and yarn instead of purchasing them domestically. This has led to a sharp decline in prices of local cotton and un-ginned cotton (*phutti*), causing financial difficulties for cotton growers as well as ginning factories.

In addition to the import policies, unfavourable weather conditions have also taken a toll on cotton production. Unexpected rains in February and March last year, followed by heatwaves and further rains in July and September, have severely affected the germination of cotton seeds. The germination rate has dropped to 30-40 per cent, much lower than the required 70pc to 75pc for certified seeds.

At least Rs1 billion is outstanding against the defaulting millers on the imported cotton, while cess amounting to Rs2.5bn is pending on the local purchase of cotton. This has plunged the PCCC into a financial crisis and severely affected research work. Even employees of the Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI) in Multan could not be paid salaries for several months. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 3*)

Cotton cultivation blooms in Punjab, Sindh

Cotton cultivation for the crop year 2025-26 has started in several cotton districts of Sindh and Punjab, while the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) has yet to fix the cultivation and production targets. In Sindh, cotton cultivation is in full swing in the coastal districts of Badin, Thatta, Hyderabad, Mirpurkhas, Sanghar and Umerkot, while in Punjab, partial cultivation has started in districts of Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, Vehari, Sahiwal and Bahawalpur. However, there are fears that cotton cultivation may be lower than expected this year due to the low prices of cotton and seed cotton (*Phutti*).

However, sales tax exemption for the imported cotton may affect the farmers' choice for the crop because this has made the textile industry to import cotton instead of buying the local lint and thus suppressing its prices in the domestic market. A report of United

States Department of Agriculture puts the total cotton production in Pakistan at 7.75 million bales (160 kg) or 27 percent higher than the domestic figures for the crop year 2024-25. The Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association report says that the total local cotton production is expected to be around 5.55 million bales this year. The country will need to import more than 6.53 million bales this year. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2025, Page 2*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Growers` body opposes govt`s decision of not fixing wheat support price

The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) has opposed the provincial government's unilateral decision of not fixing the support price of wheat crop while describing the construction of six canals on Indus river as against the interest of the country. It vowed to continue its ongoing struggle against canals. It said Sindh government's decision of deregulating wheat crop would affect its productivity as well as cultivation. Briefing the meeting, the SAB president added that government had already started executing that deregulation plan from the last year. He said that deregulation regime and strict conditions remained one sided whilst growers failed to export their commodities. He said the export market remained closed and added that the cost of inputs had increased manifold in the last couple of years. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Govt waiting for cabinet body`s recommendation on wheat support price

The Sindh Agriculture, Supply & Price Department has said that a decision to fix the support price of wheat has been postponed until the recommendations of a cabinet sub-committee. The sub-committee has been constituted by the Services, General Administration and Coordination Department to examine the fixation of support prices for raw commodities. The department had submitted a summary to the Sindh chief minister for the fixation of wheat support price, but the finance department had sought recommendations of cabinet sub-committee. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 15*)

Govt abolishes support price for wheat

The federal government has decided to stop its intervention in the domestic wheat marketing system by abolishing the traditional announcement of minimum support price every year. The national food security and research secretary informed National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security that there will be no minimum support price for wheat this year as per the agreement with International Monetary Fund (IMF). The official informed the committee that sufficient wheat is available for current year, and no import will be required, and there are no restrictions on wheat movement between provinces or districts. The government is working with the private sector to ensure that storage facilities are available to farmers through commercial banks. The government intervention seemed to have the objectives to protect the interests of consumers by keeping the domestic price below the import parity price, and to protect interests of producers by reducing price fluctuations and guaranteeing a support price.

The sugarcane productivity also came up for discussion, and the committee expressed concern over the negligible increase in yield from 620 to 720 maunds per acre, despite considerable financial investments. Committee questioned why, despite introduction of modern initiatives and high-budget projects, yields are still low, especially for the past 12 years, sugarcane varieties were yielding up to 2,600 maunds per acre. PARC officials explained that Thatta 300 seed variety yields approximately 2,300 to 2,500 maunds per acre. However, the committee chairman expressed concern, with one member noting that in his region, the yield is only around 1,500 maunds per acre. The committee expressed dissatisfaction with figures and directed PARC to submit a detailed report on national and regional sugarcane yields. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2025, Page 9*)

‘No wheat import this year owing to sufficient stock’

Pakistan will not import wheat during the current year owing to sufficient stock in the country, said Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNF&R) Secretary Waseem Ajmal Chaudhry. The secretary, while briefing National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research which met with MNA Syed Hussain Tariq in the chair, said that neither the federal government nor the provisional governments will import wheat during the ongoing year. “Sufficient stock of wheat is available with provinces,” he said, adding that there will be no issue regarding the availability of wheat this year. He said the private sector would be brought in to increase wheat storage capacity. (*Business Recorder, February 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

As Pakistan and India spar over basmati rice, some fear for its survival

Long before this land was part of a frontier between India and Pakistan, farmers here grew a precious long-grain rice that was coveted world over. Basmati rice -- region’s ‘scented pearl’ -- was probably once exported to the Roman Empire, historians say, and is today in growing demand in US and Europe. Yet its origins have never been more divisive or its future more uncertain, according to a recent report published by The Washington Post. Officials in New Delhi are pushing for basmati rice to be granted protected status in global markets as a uniquely Indian product. They have been met with vehement opposition from Pakistan, which claims rice is part of a shared heritage between two countries.

But in the world’s basmati heartlands, The Washing Post report adds, many fear the real threat is being ignored by leaders in both nations. As analysts predict international demand for basmati to double over the next few years -- reaching an estimated \$27 billion by 2032 -- farmers and rice connoisseurs say the signature strain is on the brink of disappearing. Basmati’s name is derived from an ancient Indo-Aryan word for ‘aromatic’ and ‘fragrant’, and it is described by many here in almost religious terms. (*The News, February 9th, 2025, Page 12*)

Minister fears food security crisis if farmers not given support price for crops

Sindh Minister for Agriculture Sardar Muhammad Bakhsh Khan Mahar has warned if farmers do not receive official prices for wheat, cotton and sugar cane, the country may

face crisis of food security. He called for bold steps to modernise Sindh's agriculture and make it more resilient as it currently faced challenges from climate change impacts and post-harvest losses. The minister was speaking at the closing ceremony of the two-day Agri Connections Conference & Expo 2025 organised by Pakistan Agriculture Coalition at the Karachi Expo Centre. He said that Pakistan needed resilient agriculture and must make bold decisions to increase production through modern farming practices. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

Paddy nurseries: Agri experts underscore need for imposing ban on early sowing

Agri-experts have recommended the government impose a complete ban on the early sowing of paddy nurseries and bound seed companies to only provide seeds to dealers near sowing period recommended by provincial agriculture departments. Additionally, they advise against promoting early or multiple sowings of the rice crop to avoid the impact of heat due to climate change on the yield of the crops.

Members of a technical committee, formed by the government to investigate the reasons behind the low yield of rice during the 2024 crop season, believe that the decline in yield is primarily due to early sowing combined with high temperatures during the pollination period. Temperatures exceeding 35°C to 25°C significantly disrupt panicle extrusion, flowering, and spikelet and thesis. This heat has caused a marked reduction in pollen viability and tube length, poor pollen dehiscence, and a lower number of pollen grains on the stigma. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 4*)

Rain spell maybe too little, too late for wheat crop

The widespread spell of intermittent rain in Punjab for the last 24 hours is expected to continue for another 72 hours, increasing the farmers' hopes for a salutary effect on wheat crop. They, however, see a limited benefit as the prolonged dry spell and delay in rain has already damaged the crop, which is in no position to recover fully. The current rain spell may still bring the temperature down, supplement water availability and help the crop. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 2*)

3.3 # Fruits / Vegetables

Centre exploring olive production on commercial basis in Chagai

The federal government is exploring olive cultivation on commercial basis in Chagai area of Balochistan under its project to promote olive cultivation in the country. Besides Chagai area Taftan, Bramcha, Aminabad, Saindek, Chattear areas of Balochistan have enormous potential for olive cultivation with thousands of hectares of land available and suitable and well-adapted promising varieties can be grown in these areas, according to the project director of Olive Cultivation Development Programme. Pakistan has a total of 8.2 million hectares of cultivable land, out of which Balochistan has 4.0 million hectares of land. Under the second phase of the olive cultivation programme, commercial olive farming on 75,000 acres of land preferably in identified clusters will be included in the programme. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2025, Page 3*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Fisheries

Three Gwadar fishermen burnt alive as fire engulfs boat

Three fishermen were burnt alive when their boat caught fire in open sea near the Gwadar coast. A five-member crew from Peshikan in Gwadar district had set out on a fishing expedition 20 days ago. While fishing in open sea, their boat was suddenly engulfed in flames late last night. “The fire was massive, trapping three fishermen, who were burnt alive,” an official said. They were identified as Mursal, Riaz and Allah Baksh. Two other crew members miraculously survived and managed to reach Gwadar safely. The deceased fishermen were buried in Peshikan after funeral prayers, which were attended by a large number of locals. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2025, Page 5*)

Balochistan approves fisheries policy

The provincial cabinet has approved the Balochistan Sustainable Fisheries and Aquaculture Policy 2025-2035. The meeting termed the policy a “landmark achievement” and first of its kind in country’s history. It noted that policy was a testament to Balochistan government’s commitment to sustainable development and good governance that will ensure responsible use of provincial resources. The policy will promote aquaculture development for socio-economic uplift with alternative livelihoods in province.

The financial support help was provided by International Fund for Agricultural Development under Gwadar-Lasbela Livelihood Support Project Phase-II. The salient features of the policy included the declaration of fisheries and aquaculture sector as an industry. The policy also focused on sustainable management and rebuilding fish stocks. It maintained a ban on trawling and restricted use of harmful gears. It has envisioned to improve governance through establishment of Balochistan Fisheries & Aquaculture Council.

A special provision has been added to the policy for the creation of the Endowment Fund and Balochistan Fisheries Welfare Fund. A provision has been made to revisit the existing outdated legislation and to establish special courts for speedy justice. Reforms will also be brought in existing governing setup of harbours and coastal development. The Fisheries Department will establish monitoring, control and surveillance system and collaborate with the federal law enforcement agencies in this regard. All unregistered fishing vessels shall be registered and the Vessel Monitoring System shall be installed. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2025, Page 5*)

22 Indian fishermen released from Karachi jail

A total of 22 Indian fishermen have been released from Malir Jail in Karachi. They were sent to Wagah Border by bus for repatriation to India. According to the Edhi Foundation spokesperson, the organization will cover all travel expenses for the fishermen from the jail to the border. (*Business Recorder, February 22nd, 2025, Page 2*)

4.2 # Livestock

Widows, divorced women of South Punjab: Minister opens digital ballot of livestock assets distribution programme

Punjab Minister for Livestock and Agriculture Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani formally inaugurated the digital balloting of the livestock assets distribution programme among widows and divorced women of South Punjab. He held a draw and announced the names of lucky women for project. Under the programme, healthy cows and buffaloes (heifers, calves) will be provided free of cost in 12 districts of South Punjab. So far, more than 110,000 applications have been received. Out of applications received, applications of 11880 women have been verified. The provincial minister explained that the urban unit has completed the verification process of eligible female applicants after physical verification by going door to door. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2025, Page 2*)

Pakistan, Türkiye to boost collaboration in agriculture & livestock

Pakistan and Türkiye agreed to boost collaboration in agriculture and livestock, the key sectors of the economy. Both sides agreed to share contact points to facilitate further collaboration and to connect private sector stakeholders from both countries. Türkiye assured its full support to enhance Pakistan's agricultural production. According to the official statement issued here, Pakistan also extended an invitation to Türkiye to invest in livestock vaccination, citing the country's vast animal population of 220 million. In addition, the meeting covered topics such as organic farming, fisheries, water resource management, nursery techniques, and aquaculture breeding. Türkiye expressed its commitment to supporting Pakistan's efforts to enhance agricultural production. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2025, Page 4*)

4.3 # Poultry

Pakistan's industry celebrates the return of US soybeans

After more than two years, Pakistan proudly celebrated the arrival of US Soybeans in a ceremony held at Fauji Akbar Portia Marine Terminals Ltd. (FAP) in Karachi. Key stakeholders at the event included leadership from the All-Pakistan Solvent Extractors Association (APSEA), the US Soybean Export Council (USSEC), Farzana Altaf Shah, Director General of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Government of Pakistan and Scott Urbom, Consul General at US Embassy and Consulate in Pakistan.

This milestone comes after continuous efforts from the poultry and oilseeds industry collaborating together with legislative bodies to secure approval of the import licenses for genetically modified (GM) soybeans. Approximately 265,000 metric tons of US Soybeans are arriving in Pakistan over the next few months. This renewed market access will benefit poultry farmers by providing greater access to superior quality feed, and improved feed conversion ratios ultimately leading to profitable outcomes. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2025, Page 4*)

5 # TRADE

Govt urged to renegotiate trade agreements

Pakistan Business Council (PBC) has recommended comprehensive benchmarking of export incentives with competitor countries, advising the government to renegotiate trade agreements, particularly with China. The government has set an ambitious export target of \$60bn to be achieved in three years. Impeding this admirable objective are regionally uncompetitive energy costs, higher taxation, and the cash flow burden from withholding taxes, the council remarked. In a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, PBC Chief Executive Ehsan Malik said that while the council members are encouraged to hear the government's intent to reduce the cost of power, it may still leave a gap against tariffs prevalent in South Asian neighbours. The recent increase in the cost of gas for captive power plants will not help either.

“Our market access and trade representation in the 54 countries of the African continent pale in comparison to India's,” he said, adding that PBC has shared the lessons from past trade agreements with the Ministry of Commerce. He said PBC is encouraged to note a broad agreement to focus on export-oriented foreign direct investment. However, the existing investment policies do not differentiate in favour of such investment compared to market-seeking FDI. On fiscal policy and tax regime, he said PBC supports raising the tax-to-GDP ratio but this should be done by promoting business and investment growth by directing it towards exports and indigenisation, encouraging formalisation, corporatisation, and listing of companies, and broadening the tax base to include the untaxed and the under-taxed sectors. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

Growing fuel imports widen trade gap with Middle East

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 5.14 per cent to \$6.558 billion in the first half of the current fiscal year from \$6.237bn over the same period last year due to rise in petroleum imports. The widening trade gap would concern policymakers mainly because of the rising imports of petroleum products from the region. At the same time, exports record a paltry growth to a few countries, according to the figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. 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 the Middle East rose 6.04pc to \$1.597bn in July-December from \$1.506bn 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 5.32pc to \$8.155bn in July-December from \$7.743bn 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 recently signed a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to minimise its trade imbalance. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Boosting bilateral trade: FPCCI, Mashhad Chamber ink MoU

An MoU signing ceremony between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) and Mashhad Chamber of Commerce and Industries was held at the Governor House Lahore. Regional Chairman/Vice President of FPCCI, Zaki Ijaz signed the MoU on behalf of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, while President Mohammad Reza Tawaklizadi signed it on behalf of Mashhad Chamber of Commerce and Industries Mines and Agriculture. The aim of the MoU is to ensure bilateral exports of US dollars 10 billion between the two countries. (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2025, Page 4*)

Merchandise exports post meagre growth

The exports of merchandise slowed for the third consecutive month in January due to a slight fall in international demands, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said. On a year-on-year basis, the exports grew 11.83pc in July, followed by 16pc in August, 13.52pc in September, 10.64pc in October, 8.98pc in November, 0.67pc in December and 0.31pc in January. Exports in December 2024 were \$2.911bn. The slowdown may worry policymakers, although other analysts believe that exports often fall from November to January due to seasonal changes.

Trade deficit

According to the PBS data, imports grew 6.95pc to \$33.04bn in July-January FY25 from \$30.89bn over the last year. Imports surged to \$5.23bn in January from \$4.75bn last year, an increase of 10.04pc. Month-on-month, imports decreased 2.33pc. 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 increased by 2.84pc to \$13.48bn in July-January FY25 from \$13.12bn in the same period last year. In January, the deficit increased by 17.78pc to \$2.32bn from \$1.96bn last year. The trade gap contracted to \$24.08bn in FY24 from \$27.47bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Jul-Jan exports up 9.98pc to \$19.551bn YoY

The country's exports increased by 9.98 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$19.551 billion compared to \$17.777 billion during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24). Trade deficit widened by 2.84 per cent during the first seven months (July-January) of the current fiscal year compared to the same period of last fiscal year and widened by 17.78per cent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in January 2025 when compared to the same month of last fiscal year, revealed the trade data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The data showed that trade deficit widened by 2.84 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$13.488 billion compared to \$13.116 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.

The country's imports increased by 6.95 per cent and stood at \$33.039 billion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$30.893 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. Pakistan's trade deficit in January 2025 widened by 17.78 per cent YoY to \$2.313 billion as compared to a deficit of \$1.964 billion recorded in the same month last year, according to data released by the PBS. Imports registered 10.04 per cent growth and stood at \$5.233 billion in January 2025 when compared to \$4.756 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. Exports registered 4.59 per cent growth and stood at \$2.920 billion in January when compared to \$2.792 billion during the same month of last fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, February 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

Exports to central Asian states fall 17pc in July-Dec

Pakistan's exports to five central Asian countries (CACs) contracted 17 per cent during the first half of 2024-25. The country's exports to the region have yet to attain their full potential. Similarly, imports from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to Pakistan have increased significantly despite regular high-profile visits to balance the trade deficit. In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan's exports to the five central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — dipped by 17.02pc to \$90.84 million in July-December 2024-25 from \$109.479m during the same period last year.

Imports from the region increased by \$8.91m to \$136.64m in 6MFY25 from \$127.73m during the same period last year. The majority of these imports came from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Pakistan's trade with CACs is between \$400 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, February 6th, 2025, Page 9*)

FTA (Phase-II): Pakistan, China agree to deepen trade liberalisation

Pakistan and China have agreed to deepen trade liberalisation under the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (Phase-II), take China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) upgraded project to new heights and actively explore new bilateral trade facilitation measures. The two sides agreed to conduct further consultation on trade liberalisation under the framework of the Phase-II of China-Pakistan FTA, and actively explore the possible bilateral concessional arrangements based on the spirit of mutual benefit and win-win cooperation. Chinese-funded enterprises would be encouraged to "carry out mining investment cooperation in Pakistan" and cooperate in terrestrial and marine geological resources. (*Business Recorder, February 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

Pakistan, Turkiye to review trade agreement

Pakistan and Turkiye discussed the need to revamp their preferential trade agreement with a view to addressing existing challenges and unlocking the business potential between the two countries. Jam Kamal Khan reaffirmed Islamabad's commitment to

facilitating foreign investment, highlighting efforts to streamline business operations and improve the ease of doing business. He dwelt at length on the role of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) in ensuring a smooth investment process for Turkish companies. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan, Turkiye expand trade pact, aim for \$5bn bilateral trade

Out of the record 34 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Pakistan, as outlined in the Pakistan-Turkiye joint statement, the most significant outcome is the decision to expand the list of products benefiting from preferential tariffs under the Trade in Goods Agreement (TGA) between the two countries. Both sides have agreed to include new products in the TGA concession lists and draft an agreement covering trade in services, digital trade and investment facilitation. Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkiye Yusuf Junaid said that the record number of MoUs and the expansion of the TGA will accelerate efforts to achieve the \$5bn bilateral trade target between the two nations. It has also been agreed that technical discussions to incorporate new items under TGA will commence within two months and be completed within a year. (*The News, February 16th, 2025, Page 17*)

Jul-Jan exports jump 10.16pc to \$19.58bn YoY

Pakistan's exports witnessed an increase of 10.16 percent during the first seven months (July-January) of fiscal year 2024-25, reaching \$19.58 billion, compared to \$17.78 billion in the same period last year, according to advance releases on external trade statistics for January 2025 released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Imports also recorded a rise of 7.08 per cent totaling \$33.1 billion, up from \$30.89 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. In January 2025, exports stood at \$2.92 billion, reflecting a 4.59 per cent year-on-year increase from \$2.79 billion in January 2024. Meanwhile, imports reached \$5.23 billion, marking a 10.04 per cent rise compared to \$4.76 billion in the same month last year.

Pakistani exports in January 2025 totalled \$ 2.953 billion as compared to \$2.91 billion in December 2024 showing an increase of 1.44per cent over December, 2024 and of 5.77per cent as compared to \$2.79 billion in January 2024. In terms of US dollars, the imports in January 2025 totalled \$5.27 billion (provisional) as compared to \$5.36billion in December, 2024 showing a decrease of 1.59per cent over December 2024 but an increase of 10.87per cent as compared to \$4.76 billion in January 2024. In terms of US dollars, the imports during July-January, 2024 - 2025 totalled \$33,079m (provisional) as against \$30,893m during the corresponding period of last year showing an increase of 7.08pc. In terms of US dollars, the exports during July-January 2024-2025 totalled \$19,584m (provisional) against \$17,777m during the corresponding period of last year showing an increase of 10.16pc. Based on provisional figures of imports and exports the trade deficit in January, 2025 was recorded at \$2,320bn. While cumulative trade deficit from July-January 2024—2025 was recorded at 13.495bn. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

Rating upgrade: MIGA mulls \$500m trade finance guarantee package

The Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) has reportedly indicated a potential \$500 million Trade Finance Guarantee Programme for Pakistan, following an upgrade of the country's credit rating. MIGA has upgraded Pakistan's credit rating within the agency. A high-level delegation will visit Pakistan from February 19-21, 2025, to hold discussions on the proposed Trade Finance Guarantee with various ministries. (*Business Recorder, February 19th, 2025, Page 12*)

Trade deficit with Middle East widens

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East increased 5.62 per cent to \$7.984 billion in the first seven months of FY25 from \$7.559bn in the same period last year due to higher petroleum imports. The increasing trade deficit is a cause for concern among policymakers, primarily due to the rising influx of petroleum products from the region. In contrast, exports are experiencing only minimal growth to a limited number of countries in the area, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

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 the Middle East rose 4.92pc to \$1.856bn in July-January from \$1.769bn 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 grew 5.48pc to \$9.840bn in 7MFY25 from \$9.328bn 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 GCC states to minimise its trade imbalance with the region. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 9*)

BD and Pakistan resume direct trade after over 50 years

Bangladesh has resumed direct trade with Pakistan for the first time since its secession from the latter in 1971, with the first shipment of 50,000 tonnes of rice leaving Port Qasim under a government-to-government deal. The deal follows an improvement in diplomatic relations since an interim government in Bangladesh led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus taking over in the wake of protests that drove then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina out of the country. The new agreement, finalized earlier this month, sees Bangladesh purchasing white rice from Pakistan at \$499 per ton through Trading Corporation of Pakistan. The shipment will be delivered in two phases, with remaining 25,000 tonnes expected in early March.

However, the price of rice is higher than that of rice from Vietnam, which Bangladesh has been importing at \$474.25 per ton. The government has been battling to stabilize the rice market, as prices have risen by 15-20% in recent months, with medium-quality rice selling at around 80 taka (\$0.66) per kilo. To control rice prices, the government is importing more rice from international markets, including through tenders, and has scrapped import duties. (*Business Recorder, February 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

Pakistan and Uzbekistan agree to expand bilateral trade to \$2bn

Pakistan and Uzbekistan agreed to expand bilateral trade to \$2 billion as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met with Uzbekistan President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in Tashkent. The development comes days after a similar agreement to boost investments to \$2bn was reached with Azerbaijan during the premier's official visit there, which he concluded yesterday as he departed for Tashkent on a two-day state visit.

Pakistan and Uzbekistan have strengthened ties through trade and economic cooperation. A \$1 billion trade deal was signed in 2023, and plans for further collaboration, including a roadmap for industrial cooperation, show the two sides' commitment to boosting regional connectivity. Addressing a joint press conference with PM Shehbaz, President Mirziyoyev said: "We came to the conclusions on different spheres and mutual trade turnover had exceeded \$400 million and we have plans to increase that to \$2bn." (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trade deficit with nine states widens

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries surged by 40.42 per cent to \$6.379 billion during the first seven months of FY25 from \$4.543bn a year ago. The trade gap with the regional countries widened mainly due to higher imports from China, India and Bangladesh. In contrast to last year, exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka increased unusually in July-January FY25. This growth has largely offset the 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. The value of Pakistan's exports to nine countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — rose 5.91pc to \$2.763bn in July-January FY25 from \$2.609bn over the same period last year. Pakistan's total exports reached \$19.58bn in 7MFY25, up 10.16pc from \$17.77bn in 7MFY24. The share of the regional countries is just around 14pc in overall exports. At the same time, imports surged 27.83pc to \$9.142bn in 7MFY25 from \$7.152bn in 7MFY24. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 9*)

5.1 # Export

All set to export 50,000 MTs of rice to BD

Pakistan is set to export 50,000 metric tons of rice to Bangladesh under a Government-to-Government (G2G) arrangement, following Trading Corporation of Pakistan's decision to award an international tender to two successful bidders. In December, to meet its domestic demand, Bangladesh expressed interest in importing rice from Pakistan on a G2G basis. In response, the TCP issued an international tender on December 31, inviting bids for the supply of 50,000 metric tons of Long Grain White Rice (IRRI-6) on Free on Board (FOB) Karachi/Gwadar and CIF liner out Chattogram Port, Bangladesh. The tender, opened on Jan 6, 2025, attracted participation from 11 exporters and traders, who submitted bids ranging from \$498.40 to \$523.50 per metric

ton for the export of 50,000 metric tons of Long Grain White Rice. Bangladesh also expressed interest in importing 50,000 metric tons of Non-Basmati Parboiled Rice. However, Pakistani bidders did not submit any offers for this category. (*Business Recorder*, February 7th, 2025, Page 1)

Almond exports struggle despite Balochistan's premium quality: TDAP

Pakistan's almond exports remain limited despite the availability of premium quality almonds, industry experts said at a seminar organised by the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP). The event, titled 'Global Trade Analysis of Almonds: Production and Reasons for Decline', highlighted that while global almond production reached 1.45 million tonnes in 2023/24, with Balochistan producing 93 per cent of the country's output, the country's share stood at just 18,106 tonnes. With domestic production falling short, Pakistan imported 3,278 tonnes in 2023, reinforcing its status as a net importer. TDAP focal person Zainul Abideen noted that the US dominates the global almond market with a 77 per cent export share, while Pakistan's exports stood at a mere 233 tonnes. Key challenges include fungal diseases affecting 60 per cent of Loralai's almond trees, delays at border crossings and inadequate export infrastructure. (*The News*, February 9th, 2025, Page 18)

Exports to Europe rise on improved demand in 1HFY25

Exports to European countries grew 8.32 per cent in the first half of 2024-25, mainly due to higher shipments to western states. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$4.429 billion in July-December FY25 from \$4.089bn last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. Export resurgence was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods in western, eastern and northern Europe. 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.

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 12.16pc to \$2.186bn in 6MFY25, up from \$1.949bn in 6MFY24. There is also a slight increase in exports to eastern and northern Europe. The exports to the north of Europe saw a rise of 14.29pc to \$353.42m in 6MFY25, up from \$309.22m in the corresponding months last year. Exports to southern Europe saw a paltry growth of 0.06pc to \$1.525bn in 6MFY25 from \$1.524bn in the corresponding period last year. In this region, exports to Spain dipped 3.07pc to \$724.92m in 6MFY25 from \$747.93m in the preceding year. (*Dawn*, February 11th, 2025, Page 9)

Textile exports surge 16pc

The textile and clothing exports rebounded 15.85 per cent in January from a year ago, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed. From the start of the new fiscal year, the textile exports maintained a bullish trend with robust growth of 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11 pc in October, 10.81 pc in November, and 5.55pc in December.

However, export growth bounced back to double digits in January, as was forecasted by exporters. The disruption in supply from Bangladesh has also boosted demand for Pakistani garments. In absolute terms, the textile and clothing exports rose 15.85pc to \$1.68bn in January FY25 from \$1.45bn in the corresponding month last year. In the first seven months (July-January), the exports of textile and clothing reached \$10.77bn as against \$9.74bn over the corresponding months of last year, showing an increase of 10.60pc. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Boosting exports to \$60bn in 5 years deemed crucial: govt

Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal underscored the urgency of increasing Pakistan's exports to \$60 billion in the next five years. The minister hosted a high-level delegation of Executive Directors and Alternate Executive Directors from the World Bank Group (WBG). The visit aimed to deepen the collaboration between Pakistan and the WBG, focusing on sustainable and inclusive economic growth. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

Rice drives raw food exports to \$4.6bn

Pakistan's raw food exports rose 8.17 per cent to \$4.62 billion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.26bn in the corresponding period last year, mainly driven by a significant rise in rice shipments. The exports have risen for 18 consecutive months despite unprecedented food inflation in the country's history. As a result, consumers nationwide are paying higher prices for food items because of supply and demand gaps. Official figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed that rice has significantly boosted overall food exports.

In the first seven months of the current fiscal year, rice shipments rose by 3.73pc year-on-year to \$2.19bn in value from \$2.12bn last year. The product-wise details show that the quantity of basmati rice shipments rose by 22.04pc to 487,221 tonnes year-on-year and its value by 11.98pc to \$511.59m. Exports of non-basmati rice increased 1.46pc in value to \$1.68bn and 7.72pc in quantity to 3.15m tonnes in the first seven months of the current fiscal year. New markets, such as Bangladesh, were opening up for Pakistani rice, further underscoring the sector's growth potential.

The rice sector is a major contributor to Pakistan's exports, especially in the European Union (EU) and the United Kingdom (UK). Due to sustained export growth over the past two years, the average price of basmati rice has surged to Rs400 per kg from Rs150, restricting buying from domestic consumers. According to the PBS data, in the first seven months, sugar exports reached 757,597 tonnes, compared to 33,101 tonnes in the same months last year, showing an increase of 2188pc. Millers have mainly exported sugar to Afghanistan. The price of sugar in the domestic market has also seen an unprecedented rise. Meat exports increased by 2.60pc in 7MFY25 compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The opening of new markets, participation of new companies in meat exports and approvals for additional slaughterhouses have

contributed to this growth. Meat prices in the domestic market have experienced an unparalleled surge in recent years. In the past three and a half years, the average cost of buffalo meat has jumped from Rs700 per kg to Rs1,400. The price of chicken has also experienced an unprecedented surge, reaching its highest level over the last three years.

Exports of vegetables have recorded a negative growth of 18.14pc in July-Jan FY25 from a year ago, mainly due to a drop in exports of onions, potatoes, and tomatoes. The export of fruits declined by 0.24pc during the months under review. The export of fish and fish products record a paltry growth of 1.25pc during the months under review. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Bids invited for export of another 50,000 MTs of rice to Bangladesh

The state-run grain trader has invited bids for the export of 50,000 metric tons of non-Basmati parboiled rice to Bangladesh. Following the successful 50,000 metric tons export deal of long-grain white rice with Bangladesh, Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) has issued a new tender seeking quotations for the export of an additional 50,000 metric tons of rice. According to a tender issued by the TCP, bids have been invited separate sealed bids from companies dealing in export of Rice, for purchase of 50,000 metric tons +/-5% more or less of Non-Basmati Parboiled Rice (5 percent Broken) till 1130 hours on February 27, 2025. (*Business Recorder, February 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

5.2 # Imports

Imports of US soybean begin

After more than two years, Pakistan celebrated the arrival of the US soybeans at Fauji Akbar Portia Marine Terminals Ltd. About 265,000 tonnes of US soybeans will arrive over the next few months. This will benefit poultry farmers by providing greater access to superior quality feed and improved feed conversion ratios, ultimately leading to profitable outcomes. All-Pakistan Solvent Extractors Association Chairman Zain Mahmood said the resumption of US soybean imports would boost the poultry sector and drive value addition within the country. “Instead of relying on imports for soybean meal and oil, we will now produce them domestically, strengthening our economy and ensuring a stable supply chain,” he added. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2025, Page 9*)

Customs allows import of iron scraps from Iran

The Pakistan Collectorate of Customs (Appraisalment) has granted permission for the import of iron scrap through Bazarcha Terminal at the Pakistan-Iran border. (*Dawn, February 15th, 2025, Page 5*)

Jam says rise in Dec imports reflects revival of industrial activity

Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan said that Pakistan’s imports rose from \$ 5 billion to \$ 5.2 billion in December 2024. In a written reply to a question posed in the National Assembly, Jam Kamal Khan said that this surge in imports has widened the trade deficit, which crossed \$ 2 billion, standing at \$ 2.35 billion in December 2024

adding that Pakistan's trade deficit has slightly increased to \$ 10.4 billion in the first two quarters of FY 2024-25 (July-December) from \$ 10.3 billion compared with the same period of last fiscal year. Jam Kamal further noted that in December FY25 compared to FY24 imports of power generation and transmission equipment (e.g., solar panels, transformers, converters) rose by 60%, reaching \$ 319.0 million. Industrial machinery and equipment saw a 20% increase, while textile industrial machinery imports surged by 40%, indicating expansion in production capacity, he said adding that imports of auto parts for heavy vehicles and trailers climbed by 58%, reflecting growth in the transport and logistics sectors. He said that additionally, heavy equipment and parts imports more than doubled, growing by 109%.

Answering another written question, the Minister said 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. He said that the largest export destination for citrus fruits was Afghanistan, which imported 77,547.44 MT, contributing \$ 16.72 million, or over 54% of total revenue. This highlights Afghanistan's dominance as the primary market for Pakistani citrus fruits, he said. 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 \$ 3.30 million. These three markets collectively accounted for the majority of both volume and revenue, he said. (*Business Recorder, February 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

Oil imports post paltry growth in July-January

The oil import bill grew a paltry 1.35 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year to \$9.46 billion from \$9.33bn over the corresponding period last year, showed data released by PBS. In the agriculture sector, the import of fertilizers saw a negative growth of 7.08pc in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from a year ago, followed by insecticides at 26.69pc. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

6.1 # Food Companies

1st OICCI Climate Excellence Awards: Nestle Pakistan wins top Climate Champion Award

Nestle Pakistan's efforts towards climate action, sustainability, renewable energy and regenerative agriculture were recognized at the 1st OICCI Climate Excellence Awards, as it won the top Climate Champion Award, held during the two-day 3rd Pakistan Climate Conference 2025. (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2025, Page 5*)

28 bottled water brands declared unsafe for human consumption

Pakistan Council for Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) declared at least 28 brands of bottled water unsafe for human consumption due to microbiological or chemical contamination. According to the organisation, 176 samples of mineral water brands were collected from 20 cities across Pakistan. A comparison of test results with the

bottled water quality standards of the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) revealed that 28 brands were unsafe for human consumption due to microbiological or chemical contamination. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2025, Page 8*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Foreign investment soars to \$1.52bn

The foreign direct investment (FDI) surged 56 per cent in the first seven months of FY25. The State Bank reported that the FDI increased by \$548 million, or 56pc, to \$1.523 billion during July-January FY25 compared to \$975m a year ago. The growth is impressive, but the size of the FDI was the poorest in the region. The government has been trying to attract foreign investments but could not materialise the idea for higher foreign investments. The Special Investment Facilitation Council has been established to resolve the problems and remove all hurdles to foreign investments, but the situation has not changed much. The FDI inflows in January were much better than the last year as the country received \$194m compared to an outflow of \$132m in January 2024.

However, the inflows in 7MFY25 are much better than last year's performance. The country received \$2.346bn in FY24, while inflows reached \$1.5bn in 7MFY25. The investment from China jumped by manifold to \$633.6m in 7MFY25 against just \$118m in the same period last fiscal year. China alone made the difference for higher inflows. Other significant inflows were from Hong Kong (\$154.7m), Switzerland (\$144m) and the UK (\$148m). Economists and analysts offer several reasons for this poor size of the FDI, but they believe that the external account is unstable, discouraging foreign investors. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Shehbaz, Aliyev discuss \$2bn investment

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev finalised matters related to \$2 billion investment by Baku in Pakistan, with the two sides agreeing to expand bilateral trade volume and promote joint defence production. President Aliyev assured PM Shehbaz during his two-day official visit to the Central Asian state that he would visit Islamabad this April to formalise the \$2bn agreements for investment in Pakistan. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

7.1 # Countries / Regions

Uzbek investors interested in investment in Balochistan, says envoy

The Uzbekistan ambassador to Pakistan, Ali Sher, has reaffirmed his country's commitment to strengthening trade relations with Pakistan and stressed that Uzbek investors are keen to explore investment opportunities in Pakistan, particularly Balochistan. He made these remarks in a meeting with a delegation of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry (QCCI). The QCCI leaders highlighted vast investment opportunities in Balochistan, particularly in agriculture, mining, and livestock. They expressed interest in Uzbekistan's collaboration in modernising Balochistan's mining sector and urged for exchange of trade delegations to further

enhance bilateral trade. They noted that Pakistan's current exports to Uzbekistan stand at approximately \$150 million, while imports range between \$300m and \$350m. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 5*)

Saudi Arabia agrees to provide \$1.2bn oil on deferred payment

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed two \$1.61 billion agreements — one pertaining to oil import on deferred payment for one year and the other to a water scheme. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

Multiple MoUs likely during Erdogan's visit

Pakistan and Türkiye are expected to sign multiple memoranda of understanding to expand economic cooperation, including the agriculture sector, during the upcoming visit of President Tayyip Erdogan to Pakistan. Senior officials of the ministries of national food security and agriculture of Pakistan and Türkiye held a meeting to design an action plan for future collaborations in the agriculture and livestock sectors. Pakistan invited Türkiye to invest in livestock vaccination, highlighting the country's 220 million animal population, while Türkiye has assured its full support to enhance Pakistan's agricultural production. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 9*)

US aid suspension to hit 60 health facilities in Pakistan

Effects of the suspension of all US foreign aid programmes have started to appear in Pakistan as over 60 health facilities will be closed down, leaving 1.7 million people, including 1.2m Afghan refugees, cut off from life-saving reproductive health services. These health facilities in Pakistan were being administered by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The UNFPA's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, Pio Smith, expressed his deep concern saying that millions of women and girls now face life-threatening risks due to the lack of access to UNFPA's crucial services across Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. In response to the US administration's decision to pause nearly all US foreign aid programmes pending a 90-day review, UNFPA has suspended services funded by US grants that provide a lifeline for women and girls in crises, including in South Asia, Pio Smith said. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 12*)

Erdogan's visit to ensure deeper economic ties

Türkiye and Pakistan agreed to expand the scope of their goods trade agreement, marking a significant step towards achieving a \$5 billion bilateral trade target, and laid the groundwork for Turkish firms to develop a special economic zone in Pakistan. This was announced during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Islamabad, where he co-chaired the seventh session of the Pakistan-Türkiye High Level Strategic Cooperation Council with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. During visit, two countries signed 24 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) to enhance cooperation in defence, energy, agriculture, information technology, health and other sectors. Bilateral trade between Türkiye and Pakistan reached a record high of \$1.4bn in 2024, rising nearly 30 per cent from the previous year. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 1*)

Islamabad, Riyadh to upgrade trade ties

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia explored ways to enhance cooperation in bilateral commerce, investment and finance, reaffirming their commitment to further strengthening this strategic partnership. The conference, organised in collaboration with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Saudi Ministry of Finance, has invited representatives from 48 countries. It will consist of nine sessions, with 200 participants and 36 speakers. *(Dawn, February 16th, 2025, Page 9)*

Multiple accords to boost economic ties with UAE

Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) signed multiple agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs) for cooperation in various sectors, including banking, mining, infrastructure, and railways. *(Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 1)*

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Sindh accepted IMF condition for deregulating crop prices, ‘under compulsion’: Sharjeel

Sindh Minister for Information Sharjeel Inam Memon has said provincial government has accepted IMF’s condition for deregulating crops’ prices in agriculture sector “under compulsion”. The Sindh government would, however, urge the federal government to find out some solution to this problem so that neither farmer had to face losses nor the government had to import expensive wheat at the cost of foreign exchange. He said that since IMF’s conditions were binding, the prices of sugar cane and wheat were not fixed by provincial governments. It was indeed an issue that if support price was not offered then it might lead to drop in farm production that might force the government to import grain at Rs9,000 per 40kg. He said that when the Sindh government had offered Rs4,400 per 40kg support price for wheat it was criticised. If farmers were not supported they might lose interest in the cultivating the crop, he said, adding the federal government would be approached to find out a solution to this problem so that some incentive was provided to farmers. *(Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 15)*

IMF talks on \$1bn climate funding kick off today

A technical mission from IMF begins discussions in Islamabad today (Monday) on Pakistan’s request for over \$1 billion in additional financing for climate resilience. This will be followed by a policy review early next week to assess authorities’ performance under the ongoing \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The technical team will engage mostly with key ministries, including planning, finance, climate change, petroleum, and water resources, as well as the Federal Board of Revenue, disaster management agencies and provincial governments. Without going into specifics, the IMF resident representative in Islamabad, Mahir Binici, confirmed the engagements spanning over three weeks from now. *(Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 1)*

IMF calls for strict climate adaptation plans

IMF has urged Pakistan to prioritise climate adaptation measures at federal and provincial levels to build resilience against natural disasters triggered by extreme weather events, including floods and droughts. The team has recommended stringent measures to prevent construction near rivers, nullahs, other waterways and forests, alongside plans for energy-efficient buildings in urban and rural areas. This emerged as a four-member technical mission of the Fund continued discussions with federal and provincial governments to prepare for country's request for over \$1billion in additional financing for climate resilience. Meanwhile, official sources confirmed that a nine-member staff team of the IMF led by Mission Chief Nathan Porter would arrive at Islamabad on March 3 for a two-week-long review of Pakistan's performance under the \$7bn Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The mission is tentatively scheduled to wrap up its first biannual review by March 15. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 1*)

8.2 # World Bank

SOEs, especially DISCOs: WB team apprised of sell-off plan

Minister for Economic Affairs Ahad Cheema welcomed the delegation of Executive Directors (EDs) and Alternate Executive Directors (AEDs) from the World Bank Group (WBG). The Minister appreciated this third high-level delegation from WB in a limited time, which reflects WB's confidence in our vibrant and impactful ongoing economic reform process and its strong partnership with Pakistan. He added that the visit aimed at enhancing understanding of Pakistan's economic, political, social, and governance landscape while exploring opportunities for future development support under the newly launched Country Partnership Framework (CPF) for 2026-2035.

Minister Cheema outlined government's priority to privatise State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs), recognising that approximately one-third of these SOEs are strategic assets. He reiterated the government's goal to privatise the remaining SOEs in phases. In the first phase, the government is focusing on the privatisation of power distribution companies (DISCOs), and in the second phase, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) and other SOEs are to be privatised. The Minister shared that the government aimed at privatising up to 50 SOEs over the next 3-4 years. The Minister also emphasised the critical challenges currently faced by Pakistan's power sector, including high tariffs for consumers, significant losses in line efficiency, and the ongoing efforts to achieve full cost recovery for the sector. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Agricultural Policy

Punjab agri plan on the cards to counter drought in Potohar region

The Punjab government is developing a plan for the agricultural development of Potohar region to avoid drought-like conditions amid a prolonged dry spell that threatens yields in region. This was stated by Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, while chairing a

special meeting at Commissioner's Office, Rawalpindi. In Agricultural Transformation Plan, the focus will be on increasing the cultivation of high-value crops, like olives, avocados, groundnuts, apples, and exotic vegetables. It also aimed to increase the number of water reservoirs, like small and mini dams and water ponds. A special package will be announced by the Punjab government on the installation of high-efficiency irrigation systems and solarisation. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 4*)

Govt launches initiative to address climate change impact on agriculture

Sindh Minister for Agriculture Sardar Mohammad Bakhsh Mahar has said provincial government has launched "Climate Smart Technology" to address impacts of climate change on agriculture and ensure food security by achieving higher yields with limited resources. The minister said at inauguration ceremony for the initiative in Tandojam that the technology included establishment of a modern maximum residual level (MRL) laboratory to prevent spread of Panama disease, promote early cotton cultivation and test pesticide residues in agricultural commodities.

Pakistan which contributed to global carbon emissions marginally was facing severe impacts of climate change. Agriculture was backbone of economy which was hit by floods, droughts, glacial melting and unpredictable rainfall, he said. He said that in the light of these challenges, agricultural research institutions in Sindh had introduced the advanced "Climate Smart Technology" to ensure food security by achieving higher yields amidst limited resources. He said the technology could save 25pc to 30pc of water for wheat and increase production by 10pc to 15pc. Double-row planting method for wheat could reduce seed usage by 60pc while cultivation of low-water crops like mustard could serve as a better alternative during droughts, he said.

He said that other initiatives included tunnel farming of vegetables, trial plantation of saffron in local soil, production of disease-free banana plants, early cotton cultivation and establishment of an MRL laboratory. He said that the goal of Climate Smart Technology was to minimise effects of climate change and establish sustainable agricultural practices in Sindh. These advanced technologies would help address challenges faced by agricultural production. He said that if adopted on a large scale, such techniques could increase farmers' income and improve agricultural exports. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 15*)

9.2 # Development Policy

Budgetary proposals for FY26 PSDP: Information ministry's 14 projects worth Rs8.558bn cleared

National Assembly Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting approved the budgetary proposals of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting for Public Sector Development Programme 2025-26, comprising a total of 14 projects with proposed allocation of Rs8.558 billion. The committee, while according approval to the proposal, asked the Finance and Planning Divisions to accord priority to these projects and make

timely financial releases enabling the ministry to initiate and complete the projects. The committee met under the chairmanship of Pullain Baloch, to discuss agenda relating to PSDP of Ministry of Information and Broadcasting and its associated public bodies. (*Business Recorder*, February 7th, 2025, Page 2)

PSDP 2024-25: Rs628.891bn development funds released in 7 months

The government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 628.891 billion, out of a total allocation of Rs1100 billion, for various ongoing and new social sector uplift projects of the federal ministries and divisions during the first seven months (July-January) of the fiscal year 2024-25 under its Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP). Out of the total authorized/dispensed amount, the total amount spent so far on the development projects during the corresponding period stood at Rs220.196 billion. (*Business Recorder*, February 11th, 2025, Page 1)

Standing committee approves PSDP projects, stresses climate accountability

A parliamentary committee approved proposed PSDP projects, highlighting the need for transparent implementation, enhanced monitoring mechanisms, and strengthened institutional capacity. Deliberations were held when standing committee on Climate Change convened to review budgetary proposals for the Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) 2025-26 for the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and its affiliated departments. (*Dawn*, February 20th, 2025, Page 4)

Central Development Working Party clears 15 projects worth Rs70bn

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) cleared 15 development projects, with an estimated cost of Rs69.275bn. (*Dawn*, February 22nd, 2025, Page 9)

Maritime affairs: NA panel approves Rs3bn PSDP proposals

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs has approved Rs3.046 billion under Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) budgetary proposals for the next financial year 2025-26. (*Business Recorder*, February 26th, 2025, Page 7)

PD proposes Rs392.5bn PSDP for in-house projects

The Power Division has proposed a Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) of Rs 392.5 billion for various development projects within its entities for fiscal year 2025-26. (*Business Recorder*, February 27th, 2025, Page 1)

9.3 # Neo – Liberal Policies

Government speeds up privatisation of PIA

The government has accelerated privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines moving the financial closure deadline up to June 1, 2025 — four months earlier than the previously planned October timeline. The decision, spearheaded by PM Shehbaz Sharif, is part of broader economic reforms designed to reduce the state's financial burden and enhance the efficiency of state-owned enterprises. IMF has also agreed to waive 18 percent GST on new aircraft acquisitions once PIA transitions to private ownership.

The government is also formulating a strategy to manage these financial challenges, especially the Rs45 billion negative equity, which the IMF has allowed to be absorbed by the government and offer a clean balance sheet as to make the airline more attractive to investors. This 45 billion comprises Rs26 billion FBR taxes, Rs10 billion Civil Aviation charges and remaining as pension liabilities. Notably, previous privatisation attempt collapsed in October 2024 when the only bidder, Blue World City consortium, offered Rs10 billion for a 60 percent stake—far below the Privatisation Commission’s minimum expectation of Rs85.03 billion. The government is also moving and working on to reopen direct flight routes to US. Security audits will be conducted in collaboration with US Federal Aviation Administration, with American aviation experts expected to visit Pakistan in March or April 2025. (*The News, February 16th, 2025, Page 12*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMICAL CONDITION

Domestic debt up by Rs2.5tr in six months

The federal government’s domestic debt surged by Rs2.5 trillion in the first half of the current fiscal year despite significant support from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) in substantial profits. The data issued by the SBP showed that the government’s domestic debt rose to Rs50.193tr at the end of Dec 2024 from Rs47.724tr on June 30, 2024. What is more concerning is that the debt increased despite Rs2.7tr provided by the State Bank as profit, and the government started turning down bids for treasury bills in subsequent auctions as the inflow was enough to avoid borrowing bank money. However, the data showed that government borrowing had increased much more than estimated earlier to meet its growing spending requirements. Still, supply of enormous liquidity had created space to trim borrowing. The data shows government spent more than targets, and revenue collection remained short of projections. (*Dawn, February 15th, 2025, Page 9*)

Foreign debt inflows plunge 38pc in July-Jan

Amid a 66 per cent plunge in foreign inflows in the first half of FY25, the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) blocked the release of monthly data on external assistance for more than a month until a partial improvement to 38pc decline in seven months. The EAD released two separate sets of debt data. In the first six months of the current year, foreign debt inflows amounted to \$3.6bn, almost 66pc lower than \$5.968bn in the same period last year. In an unprecedented step, the data was not released last month, although it is always uploaded on the website in the third week of the following month. The second data set put total inflows at \$4.585bn in July-January, which was also 38pc lower than the \$6.31bn in the same period last fiscal year. The lower inflows this year were apparently because of delays in securing a bailout from the International Monetary

In its monthly report on Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) released, the EAD said that against its annual target of \$19.4bn, total FEA in July to January amounted to \$4.58bn when compared to \$6.31bn in the same period last year with an annual target of \$17.6bn. This does not include about \$1bn disbursed by the IMF on the last day of September 2024, which is accounted for separately by the State Bank of Pakistan, thus

putting the total inflows at \$5.58bn. The Asian Development Bank led the multilaterals with a \$1.49bn disbursement in 7MFY25, taking over the World Bank, which doled out \$1.058bn. Last year, the ADB had released only \$620m in seven months. ADB was followed by the World Bank, which extended about \$600m in seven months this year against \$1.058bn last year. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Govt borrows Rs690bn

The government raised Rs690 billion through auctioning treasury bills (T-bills) and Pakistan Investment Bonds (PIBs). (*Dawn, February 20th, 2025, Page 9*)

10.1 # Food Scarcity

No govt fund for mother, child nutrition plan, moot told

The Balochistan government has not allocated funds for the last over 10 years for the malnutrition programme to feed mother and child in the province and it is only depending on the aid of Unicef and other donors which have been working in 31 districts of the province and providing food and medicines to families suffering from food deficiency. This was disclosed by experts of health and other fields at a media advocacy workshop organised by Save the Children International (INGO) in collaboration with Unicef. The event brought together experts and representatives of various government departments, UN agencies, media professionals and nutrition development partners. Senior health officials expressed their concern over the increasing number of patients with food deficiency which also increased the mortality rate of mother and child during pregnancy and after the birth of a child. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2025, Page 5*)

Shortages of food, medicines add to uneasy calm in Kurram region

The persistent tense situation in troubled Kurram region has intensified the shortage of food and medical supplies in the district as the authorities disclose that security forces have dismantled over 30 bunkers erected by warring tribes to launch attacks against each other. The officials of district administration have confirmed the demolition of more bunkers on the cards, highlighting operation will continue until entire infrastructure is dismantled under the 14-point peace agreement and restore normalcy in the region. Officials revealed that medical stores in Parachinar and adjoining areas have been shutdown in protest due to non-supply of essential medicines. The prolonged road closures have exacerbated the dire situation since more than three months. (*Business Recorder, February 9th, 2025, Page 8*)

10.2 # Inflation

ECC concerned over rising prices of sugar, vegetables and edible oil

Even though inflation has fallen to a nine-year low, the ECC of the cabinet appeared unsure at a meeting whether it benefited the common people and expressed concern over rising prices of critical kitchen items like sugar, vegetables and edible oil despite declining international prices. The meeting of the ECC decided to set aside a significant amount of compound markup on K-Electric payables to Sui Southern Gas Company

(SSGCL) and extended deadline for settlement of KE and government entities dues through mediation. The meeting approved changes to the Export Finance Scheme to curtail tax evasion in its garb by exporters. Despite positive trends, the ECC “expressed concern over the rising prices of sugar, vegetables, and edible oil, particularly in light of declining prices in the international market”. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Inflation hits nine-year low at 2.4pc

The annual inflation maintained a decelerating trend, hitting a nine-year low at 2.4 per cent year-on-year in January, mainly due to a decline in prices of perishable food products. The headline inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), decreased to 9.6pc in August 2024, the first single-digit figure in more than three years, and the path of slowing down continued in the following months, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. However, there is a rising trend in prices of sugar, vegetables and edible oils in the domestic market despite declining prices in international market. Government has allowed sugar exports, especially to Afghanistan, on the plea of surplus stock. The CPI inflation surged above 10pc in November 2021 and remained in double digits for 33 consecutive months until July 2024. In between, it peaked at 38pc in May 2023, driven by unprecedented food and energy prices.

Food inflation for January recorded a negative growth of 0.6pc in urban areas and -2.9pc in rural areas, whereas non-food inflation was 5pc in urban areas and 7pc 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. Interestingly, the PBS index shows a dropping trend in food. However, the retail price of food products, except wheat flour and wheat, did not decrease in the open market for consumers. Core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, was recorded at 7.8pc in urban areas and 10.4pc in rural areas in January. In the past 13 months, core inflation in urban areas was recorded at 18.4pc in July 2023. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Govt sees inflation going up in March

While playing down falling industrial production and revenue shortfalls in the first seven months (July-January) of 2024-25, the government hinted at a spike in the consumer price index next month. ‘Inflation is anticipated to remain within the range of 2-3pc for February. However, there are prospects of a slight increase to 3-4pc by March,’ said the Ministry of Finance (MoF) in its Monthly Economic Update & Outlook for February, released. Overall, the MoF said the national ‘economy continued to demonstrate positive developments during July-January FY25, as evidenced by improvements in key economic indicators’. Export-oriented industries grew despite the slow recovery in the Large-Scale Manufacturing (LSM) sector. The MoF said the CPI inflation was recorded at 2.4pc on a YoY basis in January compared to 4.1pc in the previous month and 28.3pc in January 2024. ‘On MoM basis, CPI slightly increased by 0.2pc in January compared to an increase of 0.1pc in the previous month and an increase of 1.8pc in January 2024’, it said. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 9*)

10.3 # Poverty

Speakers at a seminar explain how poverty can be reduced

Speakers at a seminar have underscored that without equal access to education, financial resources, and entrepreneurial opportunities, poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth are not possible. Speaking at an event organised by the Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) titled, “Accelerating Women’s Rights and Empowerment” aiming at exploring strategies for advancing gender equality and women’s economic inclusion, they highlighted the organisation’s commitment to empowering women as a cornerstone of poverty alleviation. The session brought together women parliamentarians, government representatives, and key stakeholders to discuss actionable solutions for enhancing women’s participation in economic development. (*Business Recorder, February 14th, 2025, Page 3*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

WB’s support sought in obtaining carbon credits

City managers have sought World Bank (WB)’s technical support in obtaining carbon credits for environmental initiatives as the two sides discussed the issues of air quality and smog in Islamabad. Carbon credits are generated from projects that physically remove carbon emissions from atmosphere. This includes initiatives such as reforestation, afforestation and massive plantation or other projects like electric buses. In December 2024, smog and air pollution increased in Islamabad and the month remained the most polluted in terms of particulate matter (2.5 microns). The air quality index also spiked to 205 in the same month, making air quality unhealthy. On other hand, Islamabad has been facing fast growth in its population with planned and unplanned development, smoke emitting industries, shrinking green spaces and increase in the number of vehicles. Instead of creating more green areas to improve environment of the city, the federal cabinet recently converting buffer zone green areas/of four H-series sectors into residential sectors. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 4*)

Five die in fog-related accident

Five persons were killed and four were injured critically when a speeding car crashed into the wall of Asghar Bhatti Chowk at Jalalpur Bhattian in Hafizabad due to fog. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 2*)

Large-scale plantation drive launched In Lahore: Punjab govt says ‘natural forest’ to be created on 978 acres of land

Senior Provincial Minister Maryam Aurangzeb has announced that a large-scale plantation drive has been launched in Lahore to establish a natural forest on 978 acres. The initiative aims to transform Lahore into an “oxygen hub” by developing a natural air filter along the Ravi River. As part of this campaign, 105,000 trees have already been planted on 144 acres, with the process continuing at an accelerated pace. The Punjab government has set a target of planting 634,000 trees to improve air quality, making this initiative a significant step in the fight against smog. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 4*)

11.1 # Biodiversity

Degradation of wetlands threatens biodiversity: WWF-P

The survival of Pakistan's wetlands and the species that depend on them is under severe threat due to water stress, industrial pollution, land reclamation, and agricultural runoff, according to the WWF-Pakistan marking World Wetlands Day. The conservation organization warned that the rapid degradation of wetlands is shrinking critical habitats, putting species such as the Indus River dolphin, freshwater turtles, and migratory birds at risk of extinction. Pakistan is home to over 240 significant wetlands, covering approximately 10 percent of the country's land area. These ecosystems provide essential services, including water filtration, carbon storage, flood control, and habitat for countless species. They also support the livelihoods of local communities through fisheries, agriculture, and eco-tourism. However, unchecked pollution, encroachment, climate change, and unsustainable resource extraction are driving these wetlands toward destruction. (*Business Recorder, February 2nd, 2025, Page 2*)

11.2 # Health

Over 400 children with epilepsy come to NICH every month, says expert

Emphasising the need for creating public awareness about epilepsy, experts at a programme shared that the much stigmatised neurological disorder largely affected young children, the majority of whom could be effectively treated, if the disease was timely diagnosed and the parents ensured compliance to the treatment protocol. The event was organised in connection with World Epilepsy Day at the National Institute of Child Health (NICH) in collaboration with the Pakistan Paediatric Association and Child Neurology Society. It brought together leading paediatric neurologists, healthcare professionals and families affected by epilepsy — a brain disease where nerve cells don't signal properly, which causes seizures. According to experts, while the disease may occur without any reason in many cases, there could be many possible causes, from an underlying medical condition to an injury or illness. "It's important to know about this disease because it's the most common neurological disorder among children. An estimated 50m people in the world are affected by epilepsy and 70 to 80pc of this population lives in low-income-middle countries," said Dr Shazia Kulsoom heading the department of paediatric neurology at NICH. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2025, Page 14*)

Drugs of seven pharma firms declared 'spurious'

The Drug Testing Laboratory (DTL) has identified drugs of as many as seven pharmaceutical companies as spurious. It has claimed that some drugs may contain toxic and narcotic/psychotropic ingredients in unacceptable doses which may be life threatening. Medicines were being sold in the market but the licence numbers on the products were never allotted to those products. Even addresses of the pharmaceutical companies, mentioned on the drugs, were fake. According to documents signed by the DTL Sindh director, Syed Adnan Rizvi, and the lab performed testing of drugs taken by various provincial drug inspectors and products of seven pharmaceutical companies

were found to be fictitious, having no existence, possessing fake manufacturing licence and registration number, and devoid of Active Pharma-ceutical Ingredients (API) hence declared as spurious. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 3*)

CM Maryam launches ‘Chief Minister Punjab Transplant Programme’

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif launched the first most comprehensive transplant programme in Pakistan’s history, ‘Chief Minister Transplant Program.’ Under the Program, for the first time in Punjab, a common man will be able to get 05 transplant operations at Government’s expenses. These transplants include liver, kidney, bone marrow, cornea and cochlear implants for young children who are deaf by birth. After getting themselves registered with Punjab Human Organ Transplantation Authority, deserving patients can benefit from the Chief Minister Transplant Program. In addition to government hospitals, the organ transplant facility can also be availed at the private hospitals. (*Business Recorder, February 24th, 2025, Page 4*)

Country’s ailing health sector in dire straits, PMA warns

Presenting a bleak picture of Pakistan’s health sector, the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has said that the state has not only persistently failed in delivering fundamental human needs — access to clean drinking water and proper disposal of liquid and solid waste — it has deprived people of the right to healthcare as today the masses can neither afford drugs for common ailments, nor afford minor surgical treatment. PMA launched the Health of the Nation Report 2025 here at PMA House, which highlights a multitude of interconnected challenges, from alarming maternal and child mortality rates to the pervasive threat of preventable diseases, highlighting the urgent need for reforms.

“Unfortunately, the public health situation has worsened in the country. If you look at the figures over the past five years, you will see successive governments have increased drug prices at least 15 times,” regretted PMA-Centre secretary general Abdul Ghafoor Shoro. Referring to recent media reports, he said the Pakistan Pharmaceutical Manufacturers’ Association (PPMA) was once again urging an increase in the prices of 262 essential medicines, citing unsustainable costs.

The experts said that Pakistan’s health sector remained in dire straits and one of the key reasons was absence of investment in preventive healthcare. Providing clean drinking water, they said, could reduce 60 per cent cases of water-borne diseases and eliminating mosquitoes could also reduce vector-borne diseases by 40 per cent. “Contaminated water accounts for 40% of annual deaths in Pakistan, surpassing the fatalities from terrorism and natural disasters. Poor water quality is responsible for nearly 30% of all diseases nationwide. Immediate investment in water purification and sanitation infrastructure is imperative to prevent avoidable illnesses and deaths,” said Dr Shoro.

On behalf of the association, he also shared concern on the intense resurgence of poliovirus and called for audit of funds received from donor agencies and transparent

evaluation of the departments involved. “The reported 74 cases in 2024 is just tip of the iceberg. The situation on the ground is more serious as cases are underreported,” he said, demanding immediate and aggressive action to prevent further outbreaks.

According to the report, World Health Organisation places Pakistan at 125th out of 170 countries surveyed last year due to its critical stage in public health and population crisis. Within an estimated population of over 253 million, growing at an alarming rate of 2.4% per annum, Pakistan is on track to reach 403 million by 2050. “This rapid population expansion poses severe challenges in food security, healthcare, education, and housing. Unfortunately, our policymakers continue to overlook the dire consequences of unchecked population growth, failing to develop future-oriented strategies to mitigate its impact,” it says.

According to the report, Hepatitis B and C remain rampant, affecting over 15 million individuals, with approximately 150,000 new cases emerging annually. Pakistan has a high burden of Tuberculosis (TB) ranking 5th in the world for TB prevalence. Pakistan is also estimated to have the fourth highest prevalence of Drug-resistant TB (MDR-TB) globally. Maternal and newborn child nutrition remains a major health concern in Pakistan, affecting maternal health, infant survival, and development. Around 14% of pregnant women are undernourished, and 42% suffer from anaemia, increasing risks of complications and low birth weight.

Deficiencies in calcium, vitamin D, and protein further harm maternal health. For the newborn, 18% have low birth weight, leading to growth problems. “Exclusive breastfeeding rates are low (48%) and early introduction of complementary foods contributes to high child malnutrition rates (over 40%). Stunting affects 40% of children under five, showing the long-term impact of poor maternal nutrition,” it says. Pakistan, according to the report, also has a high burden of cancer, cardiovascular diseases and mental disorders as compared to other countries. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2025, Page 13*)

Pakistan reports two new polio cases

Two new cases of wild poliovirus type 1 (WPV1) have been confirmed in Pakistan. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health has confirmed the detection of cases in Kambar, Sindh, and Mandi Bahauddin, Punjab. “This is the third polio case from Sindh and the first from Punjab this year, bringing the total number of cases in 2025 to five,” a lab official told. The three previous cases in 2025 were reported in Sindh’s Badin and Larkana districts and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa’s Dera Ismail Khan district. Last year, 74 cases of WPV1 were reported all over country. Of these, 27 were from Balochistan, 23 from Sindh, 22 from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and one each from Punjab and Islamabad. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 5*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change produced new diseases and pests, say experts

Experts from academic, agricultural and research institutions in Sindh have warned that climate change has produced new diseases and pests in crops, observing that increasing warming, irregular rainfall and pest attacks have impacted agricultural yields. They were speaking at two-day national training workshop on ‘Wheat Varietal Development Through Conventional Techniques’ started Sindh Agriculture University (SAU).

SAU Vice Chancellor Dr Altaf Ali Siyal said that agriculture remained most vulnerable sector to climate change, resulting in declining produce. He said that there was need for climate-resilient and sustainable wheat production to ensure food security. “Wheat is not only Pakistan’s staple crop, but also a pillar of national food security and economic stability”. He stressed urgency of developing high-yielding, disease-resistant and climate-resilient wheat varieties. While modern biotechnology and genetic engineering had taken significant strides, conventional breeding techniques also remained indispensable in wheat improvement.

Agriculture Research Sindh Director General Mazharuddin Khoro discussed importance of integrating climate risk assessments into agricultural research. He said that researchers must embrace modern technologies to counteract climate-induced threats. “This workshop is designed to equip farmers, seed industry professionals and students with cutting-edge research and technical expertise to combat climate challenges,” he said. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2025, Page 15*)

Climate change to boost non-agri water use: World Bank

The use of water for non-agricultural purposes in Pakistan is expected to rise significantly due to climate change, according to the latest World Bank report. With a high-growth rate of 4.9 per cent per year and a 3°C temperature increase by 2047, water demand is projected to grow by 60pc. Climate warming will account for up to 15pc of this increase, while in the next three decades, about 10pc of all irrigation water will need to be repurposed to meet non-agricultural demand. Freeing up such quantities without compromising food security is a considerable challenge that will require substantial policy reforms to incentivise water conservation, increase water use efficiency in the agricultural sector, and shift away from water-intensive crops, according to the Country Partnership Framework for 2026-35 document.

The World Bank group’s engagement in Punjab will support access to markets and value chains to spur climate-resilient agricultural transformation, coupled with agriculture policy and water management reforms. Operations in Balochistan and Sindh will support flood resilience and strengthen infrastructure in the flood-affected areas. The International Finance Corporation (IFC) will increase focus on agriculture investments in value chains development. The World Bank and IFC will jointly support climate finance mobilisation efforts in line with the National Climate Finance Strategy

and explore options to facilitate access to international climate finance and private capital, with a focus on adaptation. The new framework will support a diversified agriculture sector that is resilient to water scarcity, droughts and changing rain patterns. The World Bank interventions will support the repurposing of inefficient, distortive and poorly targeted agricultural subsidies to spending on public goods like research and extension services, infrastructure and seed development, and promote climate-resilient solutions, climate smart farming practices and efficient use of water resources.

Saving schemes, financial inclusion and cash transfers will help protect the poorest for the impact of droughts and flooding. One World Bank intervention will help develop high-potential agriculture value chains and processing, including in livestock and agriculture. Focus will increase on supporting small farmers' alliances to supply value chains, as well as on financial inclusion of poor farmers and female farmers. The IFC will invest in climate smart agri-food companies and agri-logistics, including via public-private partnerships. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2025, Page 9*)

Talks on \$1.5bn climate resilience funding begin

A technical mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) begun crucial talks regarding Pakistan's request for around USD 1.5 billion in additional financing to combat climate change. The discussions come as part of the IMF's Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF) arrangements, which provide long-term financing for climate resilience projects. The IMF technical team is expected to hold meetings with key ministries, including Planning, Finance, Climate Change, Petroleum, and Water Resources, as well as the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), disaster management agencies, and provincial governments.

Official sources revealed that the federal government, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Sindh governments held meetings with the Fund team, while Punjab and Balochistan governments would hold a meeting on Tuesday (today). Official said that negotiations were held on green budgeting, climate spending, tagging, tracking, and reporting. The government is reportedly considering imposing a carbon levy for the next fiscal year 2025-26, with initial proposals set to be discussed in the next round of negotiations. The talks, which will continue until February 28, will also cover carbon levies, electric vehicles, and subsidies. Negotiations will focus on climate change initiatives, with federal and provincial representatives briefing the IMF delegation on their respective climate action plans. (*Business Recorder, February 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Consortium launched to boost Pakistan's disaster preparedness

A consortium comprising UN agencies and international humanitarian and development organisations has been launched to strengthen disaster preparedness, humanitarian response capacities, and long-term climate resilience in Pakistan's most vulnerable regions. Led by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and

supported by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) of the UK government, the “Climate Resilience and Humanitarian Response” (CRHR) programme in Pakistan (2024-2028) is a key component of FCDO’s national Building Resilience and Addressing Vulnerabilities to Emergencies (BRAVE) programme in Pakistan.

Over the next three and a half years, the CRHR project will focus on three key outcomes, which include addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of those most acutely affected by natural hazards in Pakistan. Pakistan faces severe challenges from the escalating impacts of climate change, ranking eighth on the 2021 Climate Risk Index and 24th on the 2023 Inform Index, highlighting its extreme vulnerability to climate and environmental-related disasters such as floods, heatwaves, earthquakes and droughts. The CRHR-BRAVE consortium will have collaboration of the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations, Unicef, Islamic Relief Worldwide (IRW), CARE International and Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED). (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 3*)

13.1 # Flood

2022 floods: Senate body concerned at disparity in aid distribution

The Senate Standing Committee on Economic Affairs expressed serious concern over disparity in aid distribution during 2022 floods and provincial governments’ poor response over utilisation of foreign grants received under flood emergency rehabilitation assistance project. The committee meeting was chaired by Senator Saifullah Abro, convened at Parliament House to discuss flood rehabilitation initiatives across provinces. Taking serious notice of the situation, the committee has called chief secretaries of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan to explain provinces’ position about the utilisation of these foreign grants. The EAD secretary should sought details of provincial utilisation by the chief secretaries. Chairman of the committee Senator Abro stated that the committee wants to know where the grants were actually utilised in flood-affected areas. (*Business Recorder, February 28th, 2025, Page 3*)

13.2 # Rainfall

Two killed as rain, snowfall lash Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Two children were killed while two other family members were injured in a roof collapse incident in New Colony area of Teri City locality of Karak district due to heavy rain. Four members of a family were also injured in another roof collapse incident in Peshawar. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 8*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquake

4.8-magnitude quake jolts Islamabad, Rawalpindi, parts of AJK

A 4.8 magnitude earthquake jolted Islamabad, Rawalpindi and its suburban areas, however, no casualty or damage was reported. The tremors were also felt in Murree and

some parts of the Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) region, including Balouch, Dhirkot and its adjoining areas. The magnitude of the quake was recorded at 4.8, said the Pakistan Meteorological Department's Seismological Centre in a statement. The epicentre of the quake was around eight kilometres southeast of Rawalpindi and its depth was reported at 17 kilometres. In November last year, a 5.3-magnitude earthquake shook the federal capital, Islamabad, and several areas of neighbouring Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The epicentre was located in the Hindu Kush region of Afghanistan, a region known for frequent seismic activity. (*The News, February 16th, 2025, Page 12*)

Kalat jolted by another quake in a month

A 4.1 magnitude earthquake jolted Kalat and surrounding areas. According to the Meteorological Department, the tremor struck at a depth of 10 kilometres and its epicenter was 59km from Kalat town. Officials said there were no reports of casualty or damage to property from any place in Kalat district. It was the sixth earthquake over the last one month to have shaken Balochistan. The previous quakes had struck Chaman, Sibi and Kalat districts. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 5*)

Third quake in a month shakes Zhob, Sherani

A moderate earthquake with a magnitude of four struck Zhob and neighbouring Sherani district, forcing residents to flee their homes in panic and seek shelter in open areas. According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, the earthquake occurred with a depth of 22 kilometres. Its epicentre was located 13km west of Zhob town. Tremors were felt across a vast area, triggering fear among locals. Officials confirmed that although no casualties or major damage had been reported, survey teams were dispatched to assess any potential losses. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 5*)

Slew of small tremors prevent major quakes, experts say

Around 20 low-intensity earthquakes jolted Pakistan in the first half of February — an average of more than one tremor each day. While recurring reports of quakes tend to make people anxious, experts say these minor seismic activities are actually a silver lining. Such jolts “preempt” high-intensity earthquakes by constantly releasing accumulated energy within the plates. In the Himalayan region, major seismic activity takes place on a roughly 100-year cycle. The last major seismic events in the region were the earthquakes of 2005 and 2015. The former claimed around 80,000 lives in northern Pakistan, while the latter caused widespread damage in neighbouring Afghanistan. Eighty years earlier, the city of Quetta was levelled by a seven-magnitude quake, killing nearly 35,000 people. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

14.2 # Landslide

Three buried beneath snow avalanche in Neelum Valley

Three residents of the upper belt of Neelum Valley were buried under a snow avalanche, and despite relentless efforts by their community, their bodies had not been retrieved by late evening. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 4*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Jamaat protests exorbitant power bills

Jamaat-i-Islami, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa held demonstrations in different parts of the province against ‘unbearable’ rise in electricity bills and ‘controversial’ agreements with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs). In the provincial capital, the JI activists demonstrated outside the headquarters of Peshawar Electric Supply Company. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 8*)

Ji stages protest against loadshedding, high electricity tariff

The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) staged protest demonstrations at over a dozen city points demanding the government to bring an end to loadshedding and pass on the impact of revised agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) to consumers. Carrying placards and banners, the protesters also chanted slogans against the government, the National Electric Power Regularity Authority (Nepra) and the K-Electric. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 14*)

Journalists protest against PECA

The journalist community staged a protest demonstration against the controversial Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) and demanded the government to take back the amendment bill. A large number of journalists gathered outside National Press Club and staged a protest against the cybercrime law. The protesting journalists were seen wearing chains, black bands and holding placards and banners inscribed with slogans against the law and marched towards D-Chowk. They threatened if the government failed to take back the law they would stage country-wide protests. It was the responsibility of the government to take all stakeholders into confidence before they pass this bill. (*Business Recorder, February 1st, 2025, Page 10*)

Demonstration in Washington over Parachinar crisis

Pakistani-Americans staged a protest outside the Pakistani Embassy, demanding urgent government action to end the humanitarian crisis in Parachinar. Organised by United Voice for Parachinar, the protest highlighted the worsening crisis in Kurram, where shortages of food and medical supplies have left residents struggling to survive. The protesters claimed that over 200 children had died due to the lack of medical care. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2025, Page 5*)

Kashmir march calls for unity in freedom struggle

A massive gathering called for unity among all political and religious parties on the single-point agenda — the Kashmir freedom struggle. The march, organised by Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), unanimously adopted a declaration that stressed the need for fostering an ideological atmosphere in the base camp [a term often used for the liberated territory] to ensure the success of the ongoing freedom movement across the divide. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 1*)

PHCBA goes on strike today to protest lawyer's murder

The Peshawar High Court Bar Association (PHCBA) has strongly condemned the brutal murder of Nasir Hussain Tanoli Advocate. The body of a lawyer, murdered by unknown assailants, was found in a flat in Shalimar Colony. In a press release, the association demanded immediate action from the authorities to arrest the perpetrators and ensure they were brought to justice. In response to the call from the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, the PHCBA announced a complete judicial boycott on Monday (today). It said that no lawyer would appear in the high court as a mark of protest against the killing. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

Textbook board employees protest against minister

Employees of the Sindh Textbook Board (STB) staged a demonstration outside the local press club in protest against the Sindh education minister's outsourcing plan for the board. They said the outsourcing plan was in fact an anti-education step. They added that STB was founded in 1970 by late Z. A. Bhutto to improve the standard of education for children in Sindh. They said Benazir Bhutto had carried the vision of her father forward and ensured availability of free textbooks for the children. Now, they said, the STB was being privatised by education department through different measures. They said it was being done only to have publishers and contractors of someone's choice in order to benefit them. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Owners of Kurram medical stores protest medicine shortage

Owners of medical stores closed their outlets in protest against non-supply of medicines as two more bunkers were demolished in restive Kurram district. The district administration officials said that the bunkers were demolished in Lower Kurram, bringing the total number of bunkers destroyed to 28. The officials said that various measures were being taken to implement the 14-point peace agreement reached between the warring groups and to provide relief to the people. The office-bearers of the drugs' association closed medicines stores across Parachinar and other towns of the district, causing suffering to citizens, who are also hit by the shortage of food and other daily necessities. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 8*)

Teachers protest abolition of 25pc tax rebate

Teaching and non-teaching staff of Federal Directorate of Education (FDE)-run schools and colleges staged a protest demonstration against the federal government for the abolition of a 25pc tax rebate and seeking education allowance for all employees working in the education sector of Islamabad. The massive protest demonstration was staged by Joint Action Committee (JAC) headed by President of Schools Heads Association Fazal-i-Mola. Teachers from various universities, including QAU, IIUI and Arid Agriculture University also participated in the protest. Holding placards and wearing black armbands, the protesters demanded the government revive the 25pc tax rebate and provide education allowance to all employees of FDE-run institutions. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 8*)

Rallies, seminars held across Sindh to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day

Political and religious parties, human rights organisations and government institutions organised rallies, seminars and other activities across the province (Sindh) to mark Kashmir Solidarity Day, vowing to continue their support to the people of the India-held territory, and urging the global community to play their role to bring the injustice and violence in the occupied region to an end. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 13*)

Protesters block road in Mirpurkhas

Hundreds of people, including women, blocked main ring road opposite Mehran police station in protest against suspension of water and gas supply to their localities. The protesters from Malhi Colony, Shadman town and Sufi town raised hurdles on the road, bringing all vehicular traffic to a halt. Mehran police station's SHO Amin Marri rushed to the protesters and held negotiations with them, assuring them that he would ask the authorities concerned to get water and gas supplies resume to their areas. After an hour, protesters dispersed and opened road for traffic. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 15*)

Student's killing sparks protest in Charsadda

The students of Tangi College and local residents staged a protest against the brutal murder of a student by unknown assailants in Prang Ghar in jurisdiction of Tangi police station. He was gunned down by unknown assailants. His family members said that they had no enmity with anybody. Tangi police have registered an FIR and started investigation. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2025, Page 8*)

Legal fraternity widens scope of protest to all cities in Sindh

Members of legal fraternity boycotted proceedings of courts in several Sindh towns to express solidarity with their Hyderabad colleagues in their protest against an influential SSP's mistreatment of a lawyer. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2025, Page 15*)

Dalbandin protesters condemn enforced disappearances

Members and supporters of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), including families of missing persons, staged a protest against enforced disappearances. Before gathering outside Dalbandin Press Club, a number of protesters marched through roads of Chagai district's headquarters, carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans against government inaction. BYC leaders expressed grave concern over the growing number of enforced disappearances in Balochistan. The speakers also condemned the alleged abduction of a young woman, Asma Jattak, following an attack on her home by armed men. They also demanded the recovery of Mubarak Ali and Hafeez Baloch, who reportedly disappeared from Kharan. The protesters also called for justice for Asma Baloch. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2025, Page 5*)

Jamrud protesters demand release of rights activists

Speakers at a protest demonstration in Jamrud demanded the immediate release of the incarcerated Pakhtun rights activists, including Malak Naseer Ahmad, Ali Wazir and

others. They said that these leaders were arrested for their only sin that they raised their voice for the rights of the ‘deprived’ people of the province. Terming them as ‘prisoners of conscience’, the speakers said that fake cases were registered against the activists while they had only spoken in support of the rights of the people of ‘oppressed’ regions. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2025, Page 9*)

Demo over ‘inadequate compensation’ for Bhasha dam displaced

Thousands of people protested against the Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) in Diamer, Gilgit Baltistan, for not compensating locals for their land acquired to build the Diamer-Bhasha Dam. The protesters gathered in the airport area in Chilas, district headquarters of Diamer, over the weekend on call of people displaced due to dam’s construction, as well as religious scholars. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 3*)

Journalists to go on hunger strike today

On the call of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists against the passage of the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Peca) amendment law, the Karachi Union of Journalists has announced a three-day hunger strike camp at the Karachi Press Club. In addition to media workers, representatives of civil society, rights and labour organisations, lawyers’ bodies, political and religious parties were invited at the protest camp between 11am to 5pm to become part of the “anti-Peca struggle”, said a press release. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 13*)

Jl to block highway over govt’s failure to rein in dacoit gangs

The Sindh chapter of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) has announced that it will hold a big demonstration at Kundan Bypass in Shikarpur on Feb 16 against the provincial government’s failure to restore its writ in five districts and persisting collusion between dacoit gangs and certain feudal lords. Sindh JI Emir Kashif Saeed Shaikh, speaking at a news conference in the local press club, claimed that around 7.2 million people of Sukkur, Ghotki, Shikarpur, Jacobabad and Kandhkot-Kashmor district had practically been held hostage by these “katcha gangs and their facilitators in the pacca areas”. Mr Shaikh pointed out that recently released Sindh Police figures showed that the Larkana division topped in crime graph with 470 murder cases and highest number of robberies last year. He wondered how sophisticated heavy weapons were reaching the gangs and whose interests were connected with it. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 15*)

Journalists stage hunger strike to protest amendments to Peca

Hunger strike camps were set up across the country in response to a call of the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists against controversial amendments recently added to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca). The PFUJ said changes were tantamount to silencing free voice. The camps were set up in Islamabad, Lahore, Karachi, Sukkur, Peshawar, Hyderabad and Quetta, etc. While journalists observed symbolic hunger strike, people belonging to different walks of life visited the camps to express solidarity with the protesters. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2025, Page 3*)

Complete strike in Turbat against gun attack on educationist

A complete shutter-down strike was observed in Turbat town against the armed attack on an educationist, Sharif Zahir, enforced disappearance of political workers and members of civil society. The business community of Turbat responded well to the strike call given by the civil society organisations, as all bazaars, shopping centres and other businesses remained closed the entire day. Sharif Zakir who sustained injuries in the gun attack was hospitalised. All private schools also remained shut while lawyers' community boycotted court proceedings on the call of Kech Bar and Makran Bar Association. Meanwhile, the Baloch Women Forum condemned the armed attack and also sought recovery of all missing persons. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2025, Page 5*)

Poor results of govt school students trigger protests in GB

The Gilgit-Baltistan government has been facing severe criticism over the poor education standard in public schools after most students in grades five and eight failed the regional exams. The poor results have also triggered protests across GB. According to the result, only 41 per cent of students in Grade 5 passed the exam, while the passing rate for Grade 8 was 29pc. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

Mansehra people block NHA move to install toll plaza on MNJ Road

An enraged crowd set on fire the structure of a toll tax plaza before it could be installed on the Mansehra-Naran-Jalkhad Road in Bisian area of Balakot. "This toll tax plaza cannot be erected here as it is hardly 50 kilometres away from another toll point on the Karakoram Highway in Khatain Da Galla near Mansehra," Liaqat Khassan, a member of the Balakot tehsil council. The crowd, including transporters, traders, and local community members, gathered in Bisian after a National Highway Authority team began installing the plaza to collect toll tax from motorists travelling between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gilgit-Baltistan. (*Dawn, February 15th, 2025, Page 8*)

Bar protests lawyer's murder in Punjab's Hafizabad

The legal fraternity of Pindi Bhattian tehsil, Hafizabad district, is observing strike to register protest against the murder of a senior lawyer and three-time former president of tehsil bar Qamar Javed Gujjar. Also a PTI-backed independent candidate from PP-39, Mr Gujjar was gunned down by four unidentified armed men riding two motorbikes when he was on way to a mosque located close to his house in Kot Nikka. The assailants managed to flee the scene soon after the incident. Police shifted the body to the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

Mob ransacks hospital, blocks GT Road after manhole deaths

Protesters ransacked the Pattoki Tehsil Headquarters Hospital and blocked the GT Road after an elderly woman and a youth died in an open manhole. The protesters said lids of over a dozen manholes were missing in the town but the local admin was doing nothing. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

Harassment of Malakand varsity student sparks outrage

The alleged harassment of a female student by a teacher at University of Malakand (UoM) is making rounds on the social media and has sparked outrage among people. The harassment case surfaced when a female student of Urdu department approached Jehan Bakht Shaheed police station, Pul Chowki, Malakand district and registered an FIR against a teacher. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 9*)

Thousands take to streets in Karak for peace

Thousands of people staged a rally in Karak district and demanded of government and law enforcement agencies to restore peace and normalcy within 15 days. People from across the district holding white flags and raising slogans for peace participated in the rally, which appeared from Jail Chowk and converged at Saddam Chowk. Speakers announced to form a Lashkar (private armed force) to deal with terrorists and anti-peace elements, saying that those disturbing the peaceful environment in the district would be treated as a common enemy of people. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 9*)

Hub industry announces strike from 20th

Industrialists in Hub announced an indefinite strike due to ongoing water shortages disrupting production activities, leading to significant financial losses. The Hub Chamber of Commerce Industry (HCCI) spokesperson said, “We have exhausted all channels of communication from repeated complaints to local government bodies, yet the issue remains unresolved.” He added that production activities cannot be continued without water, and industrialists have no choice but to take this drastic step. He said the lack of water supply has not only affected the operations of factories but also placed the livelihoods of workers and residents at risk. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Peace march held in South Waziristan

A peace march was held in the Lower South Waziristan district under the banner of Muttahida Siyasi Aman Pashoon. The participants marched for five kilometres from Kari Kot Bazaar to Wana Bazaar, chanting slogans for restoration of lasting peace to the region. They carried placards and banners inscribed with slogans for peace. They demanded the immediate and safe release of the kidnapped customs superintendent Nisar Abbasi, inspector Khushal, a doctor of Pakistan Red Crescent Society, and Waziristan Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Saifur Rehman Wazir. The speakers said that the state must fulfill its responsibility and restore peace to the region. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 8*)

Shutdown in Larkana after violent robberies

A shutdown was observed in Larkana on a call given by the Jeay Sindh Mahaz-Riaz, led by Riaz Chandio, against deteriorating law and order situation in the city. Most trade centres, shopping malls and business establishments in Jiles Bazaar, Resham Gali, Bundar Road, Shahi Bazaar, Royal Road, Gajanpur Chowk, Bakrani Road and Station Road, besides fuel stations, remained closed. Small Traders’ Association held a protest

demonstration outside Jinnah Bagh against failure of the police to check criminals' activities and ensure safety of citizens. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Wapda union holds rallies against privatisation

Wapda workers held protests in parts of Sindh against the federal government's plan for privatisation of 'profit-making' power distribution companies at the behest of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union had issued a call for the countrywide protests. In Hyderabad, the union staged a rally from Labour Hall to local press club. Employees from power houses of the National Transmission and Dispatch Company (NTDC) also joined the protest. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2025, Page 15*)

Govt employees protest against pension reforms, salary 'disparities'

The government employees from departments staged a protest against the pension reforms and end salary disparities. Hundreds of government employees gathered at Secretariat Chowk under the banner of All Government Employees Grand Alliance (AGEGA), and attempted to march towards Parliament House but police barred them from marching ahead. Protesters blocked all entrances to the government secretariat. The protesting government employees chanted slogans against the recent reforms and urged the government to withdraw the recently introduced pension reforms as it will adversely impact their financial security. Police and protesters clashed during the protest. (*Business Recorder, February 21st, 2025, Page 4*)

Ji stages protests against deaths caused by heavy vehicles

The Jamaat-i-Islami staged demonstrations at over a dozen spots across Karachi in protest against "killings of Karachiites by heavy vehicles". Carrying placards and banners and chanting slogans against the Pakistan Peoples Party government, a large number of people participated in the protest demonstrations in response to a call given by the Ji. Last year a total of 775 Karachiites were killed in road accidents whereas 8,000 others received serious injuries. So far this year 115 people fell prey to traffic incidents whereas over 1,500 Karachiites were reportedly injured during the first 50 days of the year. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2025, Page 14*)

National Highway blocked for 10 hours after youth's murder

Enraged residents of Nihal Sohu village kept the Kotdiji section of National Highway blocked for over 10 hours in protest against murder of a youth and alleged complicity of the area police in the killers' escape. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2025, Page 15*)

GB journalists protest 'move to impose Peca'

Journalists across Gilgit-Baltistan strongly opposed the imposition of the recently amended Peca in the region and decided to resist the controversial move after the GB administration attempted to launch a campaign to create awareness about the legislation. The Gilgit-Baltistan Union of Journalists, in a statement, expressed serious concern and

reservations over the efforts to implement Peca in GB. The association will announce a date for protest against the move on Feb 25. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 5*)

Basha dam affected people vow to intensify protest as talks with minister end in deadlock

The first round of negotiations between the representatives of Diamer-Basha Dam affected people and Minister for Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan Amir Muqam held in Chilas ended in a deadlock. On his request, the protesters refused to call off their sit-in and instead urged people of other areas to join their sit-in. The minister is the chairman of a six-member committee constituted on the direction of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to address grievances of the dam-affected people, who have been staging the sit-in at Chilas for the last one week. Amir Muqam arrived in Chilas, the district headquarters of Diamer, in a helicopter to negotiate with the protesters and convince them to end their sit-in. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 4*)

Students get injured as police baton charge IJT protest

Several students sustained injuries when police resorted to baton charge to disperse a protest staged by Islami Jamiat Talba (IJT) outside Khyber Medical College at University of Peshawar. IJT was protesting against the administration for not allowing it to hold a book fair in the college. The injured students were shifted to Khyber Teaching Hospital where they were provided with medical treatment. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Farmers rally over neglect of canal

Farmers held a protest in Jamshoro town over neglect of the Budhapur canal and lift machines which have not been rehabilitated since the 2022 floods despite their repeated demands. The protesters raised slogans against the officials concerned and demanded immediate measures to rehabilitate the canal and repair the lift machines. Farmers said that despite approval of Rs80 million for the rehabilitation work, no practical step had been taken as yet. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

Bhasha dam-affected people continue sit-in at Chilas

Efforts were underway by federal and Gilgit-Baltistan governments to convince Diamer dam-affected people to end their sit-in at Chilas as protest entered ninth consecutive day. The affected people have announced to continue their protest till the fulfillment of their 31 demands. Organisers of protest movement for the rights of Diamer-Bhasha Dam affected people warned of the consequences if the implementation of their demands was further delayed. Thousands of people chanting slogans against Wapda and in support of their demands are participating in the protest. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 4*)

Shutterdown in Naudero

A shutterdown strike was observed in Naudero, a second within a month, over failure of police to track down killers of a prominent trader, Santosh Kumar, and check several

incidents of violent robberies in Larkana during the last few weeks. The Shehri Action Committee had organised protests soon after Mr Kumar's murder by suspected robbers on Jan 29, and had been pressing the police to track down the culprits. A fortnight back, the SSP concerned had heard the committee and assured it that the killers would be netted within the next 15 days. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 15*)

Press freedom curbs to be met with legal action, protest

The country's main union of journalists plans to launch legal challenges and a protest drive after Ramazan — to defend media freedom and ensure journalist safety and workers' rights — in face of growing suppression of press freedom. In the 'Islamabad Declaration', released by Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) Secretary General Arshad Ansari after its three-day Biennial Delegates Meeting (BDM), the union flayed the current government's efforts to enact anti-media laws and target critical voices under the guise of stemming 'fake news'. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 3*)

Protests over water and power outages cause citywide traffic mess

Protests over water and power shortages broke out across several areas of the metropolis, leading to hours-long traffic jams on key roadways. Moreover, authorities fear further unrest as city residents, who are already grappling with a severe water crisis for the past three days, would face more hardship because the water utility is still working to repair leaks in its supply lines and the water supply would not be restored. According to a traffic police spokesperson, there were several protest demonstrations and sit-ins on main roads across city (Karachi). (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 13*)

Govt 'agrees to accept' Bhasha dam protesters' demands

As the Chilas protest sit-in entered its 11th day, the federal committee formed by PM Shehbaz Sharif agreed to accept demands of those affected by the construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam to address their grievances. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2025, Page 5*)

Strike at Wana hospital enters eighth day

Employees of the District Headquarters Hospital, Wana, Lower South Waziristan, continued their protest for the eighth consecutive day over non-payment of salary for months. The doctors' strike has resulted in the suspension of all routine medical services at the hospital, with only emergency services currently available, leaving patients in distress. Meanwhile, MPA Ajab Gul Wazir held a meeting with KP secretary health Shahidullah Khan to discuss the issue and ensure immediate release of funds to the hospital for payment of salary to its employees. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2025, Page 8*)

Road closure to scuttle BYC rally in Karachi adds to commuters' miseries

Road users suffered hours-long traffic congestion in South District when law enforcers blocked some key roads in order to stop the BYC protesters' march on the Karachi Press Club (KPC). The move from the police authorities came in the second half of the day when the BYC announced organising a rally from Lyari to the KPC to protest against

alleged enforced disappearances of people. The announcement pushed the authorities to block Sarwar Shaeed Road, Aiwan-i-Saddar Road and part of M.R. Kayani Road by parking buses and police vans on both ends of the thoroughfares.

Within few minutes, the closure led to severe traffic jams on all connecting roads as motorists were forced to use alternative routes which caused congestions on Deen Muhammad Wafai Road, Sarwar Shaheed Road, the road connecting PIDC House and Dr Ziauddin Ahmed Road, I.I. Chundrigar Road and Court Road. BYC protesters, mostly women and children, reached Zainab Market from where they were not allowed to march on the KPC. The protesters carried banners inscribed with slogans for release of “missing persons”. They chanted slogans against alleged extrajudicial killings in Balochistan and release of “missing persons”. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2025, Page 13*)

Shutdown observed in Qambar, protest in Karachi over unbridled lawlessness

A complete shutdown strike was observed in Qambar over police inaction amid deteriorating law and order situation in town. A large number of people had taken out a rally in town a day earlier over failure of area police to arrest the killers of a man, Zeshan Jattak, who was murdered on January 22. They held a demonstration after suspending their routine business, trade and commercial activities to voice their concern over increasing lawlessness in & around town. Raising slogans against police, they marched along main roads before reaching Bhutto Chowk to hold a demonstration and sit-in.

Protest camp in Karachi

A three-day protest camp, which culminated in a rally, highlighted the growing concern over government’s inaction regarding the unbridled incidents of extortion, kidnapping and robbery in Kandhkot-Kashmore district and neighbouring areas of upper Sindh. The protest was organised by the ‘Progressive Alliance for Peace in Kashmore’ and attended by civil society activists, traders and residents who traveled from Kandhkot-Kashmore to set up the camp outside the Karachi Press Club. The protesters demanded immediate intervention by law enforcers to dismantle criminal networks in region. The objective to set up the camp was to draw government’s attention to the deteriorating law and order situation. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 15*)

15.1 # Protests against Six-Canal Project

Awami Tehreek holds march in Dadu against canals project

Activists of Awami Tehreek organised a 10-kilometre foot march from Loung Mahesar village to Mehar town in protest against construction of so-called six strategic canals on Indus River and corporate farming projects. They denounced move as unconstitutional, asserting that no institution, including the CCI, had the authority to deprive 70 million Sindhis of their water rights, and termed the projects as act of terrorism because the canals would destroy the Indus Delta. They warned that corporate farming and canals projects posed an existential threat to Sindhi people, and accused Bilawal-Shehbaz

coalition government of reviving the controversial Kalabagh Dam project, calling it a conspiracy against the country. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 15*)

Protests against six-canal project on Indus, Irsa Act amendments continue across Sindh

The Awami Tehreek (AT) staged a 12-kilometre-long march in the metropolis to protest against the federal government's plan to construct six canals on the Indus River and the proposed amendments to the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) Act. Carrying placards and banners, a number of AT workers, including women and children, marched from Ghaghar Phatak to Gulshan-i-Hadeed to register their protest.

SHC, PPP-SB also hold marches

Activists of Sindh Hari Committee (SHC) staged a march in Hyderabad and PPP-Shaheed Bhutto workers took out a procession in Badin to record a protest against canals project. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

STP stages marches against canals project

The Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party chairman Dr Qadir Magsi has condemned plans for the construction of six canals on Indus River and said people of Sindh will never accept the canals. He said while addressing participants in marches staged by his party in Dadu, Khairpur Nathan Shah and Mehar towns that the projects were akin to terrorism as they would deprive 60m Sindhis of their right to water. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2025, Page 15*)

Six canals, Kalabagh Dam not essentially different projects: SUP president

A large number of activists of anti-canal action committee, a conglomerate of different political parties and growers' organisations, took out a large procession from Qambar bypass in protest against federal government's plans for the construction of six 'strategic' canals on Indus River. The Sindh United Party (SUP) President Syed Zain Shah, who is also vice chairman of the Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB), said in his speech outside Jinnahbagh where the protesters had converged that the six canals were essentially not different from Kalabagh Dam project in that both were aimed at irrigating Cholistan's arid land. Shah, who is also convener of the Save Indus River movement, said the designated command area of the six canals would come to 3,500,000 acres and it would not only deprive people of their fertile land but also make them thirst for even a drop of water. He feared the project would render 3.5 million acres barren in the province within five years and the affected area would soon reach 8 million acres. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

GDA holds march in Dadu against 'anti-Sindh' projects

Activist of component parties of the Grand Democratic Alliance took out a procession against 'strategic' canals projects, which started from Sehwan, made stopovers in Dadu and Khairpur Nathan Shah and ended in Mehar where the leaders condemned the anti-Sindh water projects in their speeches. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 15*)

CPP rally in Hyderabad

Activists of Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) and Sindh Hari Committee formed a human chain at Al Manzar resort on the Indus River's bank in Jamshoro to express their protest against the six 'strategic' canals projects and corporate farming. CPP leader Comrade Imdad Qazi said in his speech before the protesters that people of Sindh were protesting against the canals. When water was not available in the country such a huge expenditure of funds on the canals was not understandable. It was obvious the new canals would render the irrigated land barren and make the uncultivable land arable. He said that CPP would always oppose corporate farming and the canals project. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 15*)

Activists of QAT, AT stage protests against canals, corporate farming projects

Qaumi Awami Tehreek and Awami Tehreek held protests against deferral government's plan for the construction of six 'strategic' canals, corporate farming and water theft in Wahi Pandhi and Tangwani towns, respectively. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2025, Page 15*)

Clash erupts as police try to break up nationalists' rally

Activists belonging to different Sindhi nationalist parties clashed with law enforcers on Sharea Faisal after their rally towards the Karachi Press Club was stopped near the FTC flyover, causing injuries to many policemen. Different groups of the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mazahz (JSQM), in collaboration with some other parties, had launched a "foot march" from Sukkur to Karachi around four weeks ago. They entered Karachi and the participants had planned to march on the KPC via Sharea Faisal to end their rally. Some of the protesters allegedly beat police officers. The traffic on the main artery, which links the city with the airport and National Highway, was disrupted. The rally turned into a public meeting when it reached the Karachi Press Club, where speakers demanded an end to the controversial canals project, corporate farming, religious extremism, forced conversion of Hindu girls and 'enforced disappearances' of youths amid tight security. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 13*)

Protests against federal govt's 'anti-Sindh' policies continue

Nationalist outfits and their allied groups continued their sustained protest against federal government's 'Sindh-hostile' policies by staging rallies and demonstrations in several cities and towns in the province. Qaumi Awami Tehreek leader led a rally from Ghanta Ghar Chowk to Library Chowk in Kandhkot against federal government's plan to draw six new canals from the Indus River, corporate farming and increasing lawlessness in upper Sindh. A large number of men and women participated in the rally.

Mithi: A rally was organised by the Awami Tehreek (AT) Tharparkar district against corporate farming, six new canals and granite extraction from Karoonjhar Hills. Rally started from the Kandi Stop on bypass road and ended at Kashmir Chowk, where a sit-in was held. In Umerkot, Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party leader held a press conference to express his party's serious concern over ongoing exploitation of Sindh's resources.

Porhiyat Muzahimat Tehreek (PMT) organised a protest outside local press club against corporate farming and federal government's plan for the construction of six canals on the Indus River. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

JUI-F holds rallies against six-canal project

Workers of the Jamait Ulema-i-Islam-Fazal (JUI-F) held demonstrations in almost all major cities and towns of Sindh in protest against the controversial six-canal project planned on River Indus. They took out a rally from Jamia Islami Madressah in Larkana. The Awami Worker Party and Sindh United Party also held a demonstration outside the local press club in protest against the six-canal project and growing lawlessness in the province. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 15*)

Strike observed in parts of Sindh on JSM-R's call against six canals

Activist of Jeay Sindh Mahaz-Riaz (JSM-R) observed strike in Shaheed Benazirabad, Sanghar and Naushahro Feroze and their colleagues staged a token hunger strike in Mirpurkhas in protest against the construction of six canals on Indus River, arrest of Grand Democratic Alliance leader Ghulam Murtaza Jatoi and disappearance of nationalist worker advocate Amir Umrani. All main markets and bazaars in Nawabshah town, Naushahro Feroze, Kandiaro, Bhria, Tharu Shah, Sanghar, Shahdadpur, Tando Adam and other towns remained shuttered while administration deployed heavy contingents of police in the towns. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 15*)

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

India's infrastructure push robs farmers of land in held Kashmir

Farmers in India-occupied Kashmir say a major government infrastructure drive is taking their deeply cherished land, fearing it spearheads a push to “Hinduise” the Muslim-majority region. Musadiq Hussain said police “destroyed” his rice crop when a large chunk of his smallholding was expropriated to make way for a four-lane, 60-kilometre highway around Srinagar. “It has affected my sense of who I am and my self-respect,” said 41-year-old Hussain, adding he can no longer grow enough rice and vegetables to feed his family. “I feel like my mind is shrinking, just like my land.” Hussain’s land was taken in 2018, but the process has intensified in recent years. The road, along with other highways and railways, is also swallowing swathes of orchards prized for their almonds, apples and other fruit. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2025, Page 10*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Pesticides causing widespread harm to animals and plants: study

Pesticides are significantly harming wildlife across the planet, stunting growth, damaging reproduction and even causing behavioural changes in animals not meant to be targeted, according to a large-scale study. Species loss has reached a level not seen since an asteroid smashed into earth and wiped out the dinosaurs 66 million years ago, with scientists warning that human activity is pushing the world into its sixth mass extinction event. Researchers have already shown that pesticides are detrimental to a wide range of species — adding to the damage to the natural world caused by habitat loss and, increasingly, climate change.

In a new study, published in the journal *Nature Communications*, scientists in China and Europe looked at 1,700 previous research papers to look into how these chemicals harm animals and plants across the world. The authors said that unlike previous studies with a narrower focus on specific habitats or species like fish or bees, the new research looked to build a comprehensive picture of global impacts from 471 different pesticide types used in farms, businesses and homes. “It is often assumed that pesticides are toxic primarily to the target pest and closely related organisms but this is clearly not true,” said co-author Dave Goulson of the University of Sussex.

“Concerningly, we found pervasive negative impacts across plants, animals, fungi and microbes, threatening the integrity of ecosystems.” More than 800 species in land and in water were assessed to have suffered detrimental effects, including reducing how fast they grow, their reproductive success and even their ability to catch prey or attract mates. Ultimately, the authors said this can lead to death.

Co-author Dr Ben Woodcock, at the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology, said the chemicals were “a necessary evil, without which global food production and farmers’ livelihoods would likely collapse”. But researchers in the latest study said that farmers can cut pesticide use by planting crops at different times, or sowing wildflowers to encourage pest-eating species. The study comes ahead of United Nations negotiations on biodiversity in Rome later in February that aim to secure funding to protect species from deforestation, overexploitation, climate change and pollution. In a landmark report in December, UN biodiversity experts warned that overconsumption and unsustainable farming are fuelling overlapping crises in nature and climate, having already warned that a million species are threatened with extinction. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2025, Page 10*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

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4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

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5 # TRADE

Vietnam parliament approves \$8bn rail link to China

Vietnam’s parliament approved plans for an \$8 billion rail link from its largest northern port city to the border with China, boosting links between the two communist-ruled countries and making trade easier. The new rail line will run through some of Vietnam’s key manufacturing hubs, home to Samsung, Foxconn, Pegatron and other global giants, many of whom rely on a regular flow of components from China. The route will stretch 390 kilometres (240 miles) from the port city of Haiphong to the mountainous city of Lao Cai, which borders China’s Yunnan province, and will also run through the capital Hanoi. Construction of railway was backed in a vote by 95 percent of parliamentarians in Vietnam’s rubber-stamp National Assembly. China will provide some funding through loans for the project, which is expected to cost more than \$8 billion. It is one of two railway lines to China that Vietnam plans as part of its “Two Corridors, One Belt” initiative, which connects to Beijing’s Belt and Road global infrastructure programme. (*Business Recorder, February 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trump says trade deal with China ‘possible’

US President Donald Trump suggested that a trade deal was “possible” with China — a key target in the US leader’s tariffs policy. In 2020, the United States had already agreed to “a great trade deal with China” and a new deal was “possible”, Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One. Asked about the comments, Beijing’s foreign ministry said the two countries should handle trade tensions with “mutual respect.”

One month into his second term in office, Trump has threatened sweeping tariffs on allies and adversaries alike — targeting China as well as neighbors Canada and Mexico, and the European Union — and using levies as his main policy tool for lowering the

massive US trade deficit. At the beginning of February, he slapped additional customs duties of 10 percent on all products imported from China.

Beijing's foreign ministry said that China and the United States "should resolve their concerns through dialogue and consultation based on equality and mutual respect". "Trade and tariff wars have no winners and only serve to damage the interests of people all over the world," ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said at a regular press briefing. At a separate news conference, China's commerce ministry said Beijing "urges the US side not to wield the big stick of tariffs at every turn, using tariffs as a tool to engage in coercion all around." (*Dawn, February 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

US funding freeze 'bombshell' for humanitarian sector

US President Donald Trump's order to suspend most foreign aid has sent shock waves through the humanitarian sector, threatening to trigger mass layoffs at many NGOs and possibly destroy others altogether. Less than a week after he returned to power, the US Agency for International Development told NGOs they would have to cease operations immediately because the new administration had frozen USAID's budgets. The US president has ordered a 90-day review of USAID, which runs health and emergency programmes in around 120 countries, including the world's poorest. However, the Trump administration has issued waivers for some "life-saving" aid, while the freeze included exceptions to funding for Israel and Egypt. But confusion reigns over how those waivers will be implemented and the uncertainty has already taken its toll.

The order to stop work immediately hit "like a bombshell", said a source at an NGO in Kenya. He asked to remain anonymous out of fear his charity could be punished by the Trump administration. "It threw people into panic mode," the aid worker said of the freeze, pointing out that the lack of notice meant staff had no time to adapt. They were instantly put on compulsory unpaid leave and the organisation was no longer able to pay their rents or salaries. According to aid network ALNAP, more than 630,000 people were employed in the aid sector in 2020, more than 90 percent of them local staff. For many locals, the US freeze spells unemployment in countries with fragile economies where finding another job is almost impossible. Expatriates working for aid agencies also face disruption. "We notified everyone on US budgets that they had been suspended temporarily," said a source at the European headquarters of an NGO mostly financed by US funds.

USAID manages a budget of \$42.8 billion, representing 42 per cent of humanitarian aid disbursed worldwide. NGOs will have to "lay off employees in proportion to their dependence on US funds", she said. "If an NGO depends 60 per cent on USAID, it will

have to lay off 60 per cent of its employees. If it depends 40 per cent, it will lay off 40 per cent.” It would be “impossible to compensate for the loss of US funds”, she said.

The Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the world’s largest aid agencies, said it was forced to abruptly suspend US-funded “urgent humanitarian work for hundreds of thousands of people in nearly 20 countries affected by wars, disasters and displacement”. Just under 20 per cent — \$150 million — of its funding came from the United States last year, providing vital support for 1.6 million people. While the initial US funding freeze was set to last 90 days, the administration has already begun slashing USAID’s workforce, and many in the aid sector fear a drastic long-term drop in US support. Trump and Musk have publicly vowed to shutter USAID for good. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2025, Page 12*)

Trump’s aid freeze could cause millions of deaths: UN

President Donald Trump’s decision to suspend US overseas funding could result in millions more deaths from AIDS, the head of the UN’s programme for the illness warned. The United States is the world’s largest provider of official development assistance, with most funds directed through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Trump ordered the bulk of US foreign assistance to be frozen for three months on returning to office in January, leaving global humanitarians scrambling to deal with the fallout. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 11*)

UN appeals for \$6bn for Sudan crisis aid in 2025

The UN appealed for six billion dollars to provide desperately-needed aid to people in war-ravaged Sudan, as African country faced an emergency of “shocking proportions”. The aim is to provide assistance to nearly 26 million people this year, the United Nations’ humanitarian agency OCHA and refugee agency UNHCR said in a joint appeal. Since April 2023, Sudan has been locked in a brutal conflict between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who leads the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. The UN agencies said the civil war has displaced 12 million people, including around 3.5 million who have fled the country. At the same time, nearly two-thirds of Sudan’s population needs emergency aid, as swathes of the nation face famine conditions. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2025, Page 12*)

Trump admin keeps foreign aid funds frozen despite court order

The Trump administration said in court filings that it is not disbursing funds for thousands of foreign aid contracts and grants despite a federal judge’s order last week to lift a widespread freeze on foreign aid funding. The administration said in the filings that it was complying with US District Judge Amir Ali’s temporary restraining order, pointing to a line in the order saying that the US Agency for International Development and the State Department were not barred from “enforcing the terms of contracts and grants.” It said it was reviewing the frozen agreements and had determined that all of them allowed the administration to terminate or suspend them, either on their own terms

or “implicitly.” It also said that USAID and the State Department had legal authority to halt payments that did not depend on Republican President Donald Trump’s Jan 20 executive order instituting a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, which Ali’s order barred the administration from enforcing.

It was not immediately clear whether any funding had been restored as a result of Ali’s order. Pete Marocco, who is currently acting as deputy administrator of USAID, said in a court filing that, since order, USAID had approved 21 payments worth more than \$250m. He did not say whether those approvals were a direct response to order. Marocco also said that, since Trump took office, 498 USAID contracts, grants or other funding agreements had been terminated for policy reasons, including because they were related to diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility; sustainability and climate change; or were wasteful. He said other USAID contracts and grants were suspended, though not how many. State Department has terminated 25 foreign assistance contracts and 733 grants, according to Marocco’s filing. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2025, Page 11*)

US cuts overseas aid contracts by more than 90pc

The United States has slashed its multi-year aid contracts by 92 percent, as it sought around \$60 billion in savings in development and overseas humanitarian programs, the State Department said. President Donald Trump signed an executive order on his first day in office, demanding a 90-day freeze on all US foreign aid to give his administration time to review overseas spending, with an eye to gutting programs not aligned with his “America First” agenda. A federal judge had given the Trump administration less than two days to unfreeze all aid after a previous court order issued nearly two weeks earlier went ignored. But the Trump administration filed an emergency petition to the US Supreme Court, which issued an administrative stay, pausing the lower court’s order. “At the conclusion of a process led by USAID leadership, including tranches personally reviewed by Secretary (Marco) Rubio, nearly 5,800 awards with \$54 billion in value remaining were identified for elimination as part of the America First agenda — a 92 percent reduction,” a State Department spokesperson said in a statement. (*Business Recorder, February 28th, 2025, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

What happens if the US pulls out from IMF, World Bank?

Alarm is rising over Washington’s potential withdrawal from global institutions, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB), with the no-show of US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent at G20 meetings adding to anxiety. So what would happen if Washington pulls out from these two institutions? To understand this, one has to go back in time, as both institutions were formed in the ashes of the Second World War to encourage global integration and forestall future wars. The IMF is often called a lender of last resort for countries in trouble. A swathe of emerging market countries rely heavily on the IMF: Argentina could not pay government workers without it, and others from Senegal to Sri Lanka also currently count on its cash.

Pakistan, of course, has participated in more than 20 IMF programmes since 1958, including the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and Extended Credit Facility (ECF), Standby Arrangements (SBA) and one Structural Adjustment Facility Commitment that was availed in 1988. Lending ranges from emergency cash to tackle balance of payment crises to precautionary lines to prevent a crunch. The institution attaches conditions to the loans — dispatched in tranches — to ensure countries enact reforms, usually requiring cuts to wasteful spending, more transparent budgets, rooting out corruption or raising tax revenues. Investors use IMF data on GDP and growth as the trigger to determine whether certain debt instruments that link payments to economic performance give them more - or sometimes less — money.

The World Bank lends at low rates to help countries build everything from railroads to flood barriers, creates frameworks needed for innovative financial tools, such as green bonds, and provides risk insurance. Having an IMF programme also assuages investors — both private and bilateral. Developed countries funding the institutions, including the US, have used them to ensure global financial stability and to encourage countries to adhere to fiscally responsible, open economic models.

Both institutions, at the behest of their biggest shareholder, the US, had backed countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and Jordan, where the US has strategic interests, said Mark Sobel, the US chairman of the Official Monetary and Financial Institutions Forum (OMFIF), a veteran Treasury Department official and former IMF board member. “If there’s economic instability abroad, it can hurt the US economy,” Sobel said. But the IMF often earns the ire of protesters for advocating painful unpopular reforms to balance budgets such as cutting fuel subsidies or raising tax revenues. Some Kenyans denounced the IMF during deadly protests last summer, while the Fund’s response to the 1997 Asian financial crisis was roundly panned. So what would happen in case of a US exit? “It would be a disaster,” said Kaan Nazli, emerging market debt portfolio manager at Neuberger Berman. A founder member, the United States holds the largest single share of each institution — just over 16pc for the IMF and just under that for the World Bank. This has given US policymakers strong influence over decision-making that global economic leaders have come to rely on. US withdrawal would also surprise experts and investors, as the institutions give Washington that influence at a relatively low cost. Stepping back, they say, would be a gift to China and others seeking to dislodge it as the global leader. Other countries could fill the financial gap; China has been keen for a larger role in global groups. It has pushed for a realignment of IMF shareholdings and to strengthen emerging market voices. China’s current share is just over 5pc. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 12*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Sugar, vegetable oils decline: World food commodity prices fall in January: FAO

Global food commodity prices fell in January, led by sharp declines in sugar and vegetable oils, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said. The FAO Food Price

Index, which tracks monthly changes in a basket of internationally traded food commodities, averaged 124.9 points in January against 127.0 in December. Despite the monthly decline, the index remained 6.2% higher than a year earlier but was still 22% below its March 2022 peak. Sugar prices fell 6.8% from the previous month and 18.5% on the year. The drop was largely attributed to improved global supply prospects, thanks in part to favourable weather in Brazil and India resuming sugar exports.

Vegetable oil prices declined 5.6% last month, as global palm and rapeseed oil prices dropped while soy and sunflower oil quotations remained stable. Despite the January fall, the index was still up 24.9% on the year. Meat prices also fell, shedding 1.7% in January. By contrast, cereal prices saw a slight uptick, climbing 0.3% from December, but remained 6.9% lower than in January 2024. While wheat export prices fell slightly, maize prices increased due to revised lower production and stock forecasts in the United States. Rice prices dropped 4.7%, reflecting ample export supplies.

Dairy prices rose 2.4% month-on-month and 20.4% year-on-year, led by a monthly surge in cheese quotations, which outweighed declines in butter and milk powder prices. In a separate report, the FAO trimmed its forecast for global cereal production in 2024 to 2.840 billion against a previously given 2.841 billion. The revision was due primarily to the cut in estimates for US maize production. The winter wheat planting season in the northern hemisphere concluded in January, with increased sowings in France, Germany and the United Kingdom, while Russia saw a decline due to weather conditions, FAO said. (*Business Recorder, February 8th, 2025, Page 3*)

10.1 # Inflation

Japan to release emergency rice reserves to fight runaway inflation

The Japanese government said it will release a fifth of its emergency rice stockpile after hot weather, poor harvests and panic buying over a “megaquake” warning nearly doubled prices over a year. Japan has previously tapped into its reserves to cope with disasters, but this marked the first time since the stockpile was built in 1995 that it was doing so because of supply chain problems. Some supermarket shelves were emptied in August of rice following a week-long holiday, a series of typhoons and warnings of a looming major earthquake that has so far failed to materialise. The government had initially hoped prices would stabilise late last year once newly harvested rice arrived in stores, but inflation continued unabated, this time because some distributors were hoarding for fear of running out. Agriculture Minister Taku Eto told reporters the government will release 210,000 tonnes of rice from its stock of one million tonnes. (*Business Recorder, February 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Warming threatens to expand area of world too hot for humans

Extreme heat will reach dangerous levels — even for younger people — across an area equivalent to the size of the United States if Earth’s global warming hits two degrees

Celsius, scientists warned. Climate change is driving an increasing number of deadly heatwaves across the world, exposing a growing number of people to conditions that test the limits of human endurance. Last year, more than 1,300 people died at the Hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia where temperatures hit 51.8C (125 degrees Fahrenheit). For this study, published in the journal *Nature Reviews Earth and Environment*, researchers looked at global warming and the effects of searing heat on the human body. They found a significant increase in the area of world potentially exposed to unsafe temperatures, with people in North Africa and South Asia most at risk. They considered both dangerous and unsurvivable heat levels — where the body's core temperature increases to 42C within six hours.

The study concluded that between 1994 and 2023, heat and humidity reached unsafe levels for people aged under 60 in areas equivalent to about two percent of global land area. For more vulnerable older people, that rose to about 20 percent of land area. Lead author Tom Matthews said the research highlights “potentially deadly consequences” of the Earth’s average temperature rising 2C above pre-industrial levels. The Paris climate agreement, an internationally binding treaty, aims to limit warming to “well below” 2C and preferably to 1.5C. Last year was the first to exceed 1.5C on average. With warming of 2C, researchers found the amount of landmass that would become unsafe for younger adults would triple, to about six percent.

Over 60s would be at risk in about a third of the planet’s landmass. Europe has so far recorded the highest number of deaths from heatwaves, with more than 70,000 deaths in 2003, 60,000 in 2022 and more than 47,000 in 2023. Asia has also documented the heavy toll of rising temperatures, including several thousand deaths in India and Pakistan during heatwaves in 2015. Researchers said heat deaths in Africa were “chronically under-reported” but noted extreme heat in Nigeria in 2024. The World Health Organisation has calculated that heat kills at least half a million people every year but warns that the real figure could be up to 30 times higher. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2025, Page 10*)

January smashes heat record, surprises scientists

Last month was the hottest January on record, blitzing the previous high and stunning climate scientists who expected cooler La Nina conditions to finally start quelling a long-running heat streak. The Copernicus Climate Change Service said January was 1.75C hotter than pre-industrial times, extending a persistent run of historic highs over 2023 and 2024, as human-caused greenhouse gas emissions heat the planet. Climate scientists had expected this exceptional spell to subside after a warming El Nino event peaked in January 2024 and conditions gradually shifted to a cooling La Nina phase.

But the heat has lingered at record or near-record levels ever since, sparking debate among scientists about what other factors could be driving warming to the top end of expectations. Scientists warn that every fraction of a degree of warming increases the

intensity and frequency of extreme weather events like heatwaves, heavy rainfall and droughts. January was 0.09C hotter than the previous high of January 2024 — a “sizeable margin” in global temperature terms, said Julien Nicolas, a climate scientist from Copernicus. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2025, Page 10*)

HSBC delays net-zero emissions target by 20 years

HSBC is ditching its target of reaching net-zero carbon emissions across its business by 2030 because of slow change in the economy, the bank said, compounding fears from campaigners that world’s biggest lenders are rowing back on climate pledges. Europe’s biggest bank said it was now aiming to reach net-zero target 20 years later than planned, by 2050, and it only expects to record a 40% drop in emissions across its operations, business travel and supply chains this decade. It also announced an internal review of targets on emissions linked to its loans. (*Business Recorder, February 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

UN nature talks in ‘end game’ to break funding deadlock

Brazil spearheaded a last-ditch effort to break the deadlock at UN nature talks in Rome, as nations struggled against the clock to agree a deal over money to halt rapid global species loss. Rich and developing countries broadly agree over the scale of the crisis that threatens the ecosystems and wildlife that humans rely on for food, climate regulation and economic prosperity. But they are locked in a dispute over how to deliver funding, which caused a previous meeting in Cali, Colombia last year to end in disarray.

The rebooted COP16 talks in Rome are tasked with bridging those differences, against a backdrop of geopolitical tensions and global economic concerns. In a bid to unlock agreement on what should be final day of talks, Brazil put forward a new “compromise attempt” text on behalf of Brics country bloc that includes Russia, China and India. This sought to whittle down document under negotiation and clarify two main goals to be agreed — closing the multi-billion dollar biodiversity financing gap and deciding on institutions that will deliver that money. Brazil negotiator Patrick Luna said proposal was to ensure that while countries were embarking on a marathon global effort, “we are not running on a treadmill, we are advancing towards these goals”. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2025, Page 10*)

11.1 # Health

Argentina follows Trump, quits WHO

Argentina said it will pull out of World Health Organisation, following in the footsteps of the United States and citing similar complaints over the UN body’s management of the Covid-19 pandemic. President Javier Milei’s spokesman announced the decision two weeks after President Donald Trump, an ideological ally and hero of the Argentine leader, announced Washington’s planned exit from agency. WHO data shows Argentina contributed some \$8.75 million in membership fees to the organisation across 2022 and 2023 — 0.11 per cent of the total budget. It is slated to contribute \$8.25 million for the two-year 2024/25 cycle. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2025, Page 11*)

Riyadh reaffirms \$500m pledge to polio eradication initiative

Saudi Arabia reaffirmed its \$500 million pledge to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) by signing an agreement during the fourth Riyadh International Humanitarian Forum. These funds were initially pledged in April last at the first-ever World Economic Forum Special meeting held in Riyadh. The signing of the agreement will help the GPEI and its partners to reach 370 million children with polio vaccines each year and stop transmission of the virus for good, a press release of GPEI said. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 12*)

11.2 # Pollution

Crackdown on stubble burning in Thailand as pollution spikes

Thai government has ordered a crackdown on farmers flouting a ban on crop burning, as pollution in Bangkok spiked a week after toxic air forced hundreds of schools to close. Smoke from farmers burning crop stubble combines with vehicle and factory emissions to send air pollution in Bangkok and other cities soaring in the early months of the year. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2025, Page 11*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Almost all miss UN deadline for climate targets

Nearly all nations missed a UN deadline to submit new targets for slashing carbon emissions, including major economies under pressure to show leadership following the US retreat on climate change. Just 10 of nearly 200 countries required under the Paris Agreement to deliver fresh climate plans by February 10 did so on time, according to a UN database tracking the submissions. Under climate accord, each country is supposed to provide a steeper headline figure for cutting heat-trapping emissions by 2035, and a detailed blueprint for how to achieve this. Global emissions have been rising but need to almost halve by the end of the decade to limit global warming to safer levels agreed under the Paris deal. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 12*)

Green Climate Fund approves \$687m in investments

The Green Climate Fund (GCF), the world's largest fund helping developing countries deal with the impacts of climate change, said it had approved \$686.8 million in financing at a board meeting this week. The Seoul-based group said the investment would help draw in other financing partners and ultimately mobilise around \$1.5 billion for 11 projects across 42 countries, providing support to 115m people. Among them was a project to enhance forest resilience in Serbia and one to bolster climate resilience of vulnerable communities in Togo. Together, they take GCF's portfolio to nearly \$17bn, most of it in form of grants. (*Business Recorder, February 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

US shuns UN climate science meeting

Tense negotiations on the timing and content of the UN's next blockbuster assessment of global warming science opened in China, with US scientists reportedly absent. The meeting in Hangzhou comes on the heels of the hottest year on record and rising alarm

over the pace of warming. But it will be dominated by a battle over whether the next UN assessment will arrive in time for a crunch update on countries' progress in responding to climate change — with some leading emitters arguing against trying to meet that deadline. Donald Trump's withdrawal of United States from Paris Agreement on climate change will also cast a shadow, with media reports suggesting Washington will not send a delegation to the five-day meeting. The talks are supposed to agree whether the next landmark report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), set up in 1988 to inform policymakers, will arrive in time to inform a 2028 UN "stocktake" of responses to rising temperatures. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

Iran shuts schools, offices in 10 provinces due to cold snap

Authorities in Iran ordered schools and offices in at least 10 provinces to close to conserve energy as the country weathers a severe cold snap, state media reported. Freezing temperatures have gripped the northern half of the country over the past few days, causing a spike in energy consumption. "All government offices and schools are closed, and remote learning has been arranged for students," the state news agency IRNA announced. (*Business Recorder, February 10th, 2025, Page 9*)

Hail, rain claim 29 lives in Afghanistan

Twenty-nine people died in two provinces in Afghanistan due to hail and heavy rain, officials said. "Twenty-one people were killed and six others were injured" because of hail in western Farah province, said Mohammad Israel Sayar, head of the province's Disaster Management Department. The victims are members of two families who had gone for a picnic. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2025, Page 11*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Over 30 missing after landslide in China

More than 30 people are missing after a landslide in China's southwestern Sichuan province, state broadcaster CCTV reported. Emergency response teams were on site searching for survivors, it added. Authorities have also allocated 30 million yuan (\$4.1 million) to support the disaster relief efforts. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 10*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Jailed far-right activist sparks rival rallies in London

Thousands of supporters of jailed far-right agitator Tommy Robinson marched in London demanding his release, with police deployed to keep them apart from a large counter-protest. Robinson, 42, is serving an 18-month jail term in London's Belmarsh prison, imposed in October after he admitted breaching a 2021 High Court injunction. Protestors organised under the name "Stop the Isolation" and "Unite the Kingdom" gathered outside Waterloo railway station before heading towards parliament. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2025, Page 10*)

Tens of thousands protest in Berlin against far right

Tens of thousands of demonstrators converged on Berlin to protest against Germany's conservatives' norm-shattering overtures toward the far right. Police said at least some 20,000 people had gathered just after the protest's 3:45 pm kick-off time outside the Bundestag, Germany's parliament building. But with demonstrators carrying placards and banners denouncing the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party arriving "from every direction", a police spokeswoman said that tally "could rise considerably". (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

250,000 attend rally against far right in Munich

Fresh protests against the extreme right drew massive crowds in Germany, including 250,000 people in Munich, authorities said, as the country heads for clutch elections. The latest rallies came after an estimated 160,000 people marched in Berlin last weekend to protest recent overtures by Germany's conservatives to the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) ahead of parliamentary elections on Feb 23.

Organisers of the largest protest, dubbed "Munich is multicolour", put the turnout at more than 320,000 people. With legislative elections two weeks away, demonstrators rallied under the slogan "democracy needs you", warning against any party working together with the AfD. Germany has long had an unwritten rule against working with the far right, dating back to the aftermath of the horrors wrought by the Nazis in World War II. But protesters say the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the frontrunner in the polls, breached that so-called "firewall" by seeking the AfD's support in parliament for an anti-immigration bill. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2025, Page 11*)

British farmers up ante over inheritance tax

Hundreds of UK farmers with tractors blocked streets around parliament hoping to force the Labour government to reverse a planned farm tax they insist will cost them dearly. "War on farmers" read the message on one of several Union Jack flags flapping in the wind as opposition politicians joined in the latest demonstration against the levy, due to start next year. Prime Minister Keir Starmer's administration recently announced that to find vital new revenue, some farms would no longer be exempt from inheritance tax, a long-standing measure designed to facilitate the family handover of farms. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 10*)

Arrest of Palestinian booksellers sparks protest in Jerusalem

Several people gathered outside a Jerusalem court to protest the arrest of two Palestinian booksellers in the city's east, occupied by Israel since 1967 and later annexed. The protesters shouted slogans denouncing Israel as a "fascist state" and held placards accusing the country of "cowardice". Mahmud and Ahmad Muna, who were arrested, were to appear in the court for an arraignment. Both work for the Educational Bookshop, a cultural institution in east Jerusalem. "Jerusalem District police officers have arrested two residents of east Jerusalem suspected of selling books containing incitement and

support for terrorism,” police said in a statement. During the operation, the police found books on “nationalist Palestinian themes”, statement said, police were asking the court for an extension of the booksellers’ detention. The Muna family’s lawyer, Nasser Odeh, said “hundreds of books” had been seized. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2025, Page 11*)

News Makers: Munich (Germany):

Protesters hold up posters reading 'No arms exports' and 'Stop all wars' during an anti-war demonstration on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2025, Page 10*)

Thousands rally in Serbia as anger over corruption swells

Tens of thousands of students marched into the central Serbian city of Kragujevac, demanding justice after a deadly railway disaster, in one of the biggest shows of anger against the government. In the three months since 15 people were killed when a roof collapsed at a newly-renovated train station in Serbia’s second-biggest city of Novi Sad, mass demonstrations have grown into the biggest threat yet to President Aleksandar Vucic’s decade-long grip on power. Joined by teachers, farmers and other workers, the students have drawn support from wider public as many Serbians have blamed tragedy on corruption within the government. (*The News, February 16th, 2025, Page 10*)

News Makers: Istanbul (Turkey)

Members of the left wing nationalist Turkish Youth Union (TGB) shout slogans as one holds a placard that reads, "The DEM Party should be closed down and the PKK should be uprooted" during a protest against the new solution process to be carried out with the Kurdistan Workers’ Party. Pro-Kurdish Turkish lawmakers conveyed a message to Iraqi Kurdish leader Masoud Barzani, who heads the region's ruling Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and is a crucial powerbroker in Kurdish affairs, from Abdullah Ocalan, the jailed founder of the PKK, who is expected to decide on a long-awaited peace process with Turkiye. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2025, Page 10*)

Demo against far right draws thousands in Berlin

Tens of thousands of people joined a Berlin demonstration against the far right, a week before Germany votes in a hotly contested general election. Around 30,000 people took part in the protest, while organisers put the number at 38,000. Many carried placards with slogans denouncing far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD), which is expected to become the second-biggest party. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2025, Page 9*)

Hungarian judges rally for judicial independence

Thousands of Hungarian judges, court staff and supporters marched to the ministry of justice in Budapest, demanding judicial independence, freedom of expression for judges and better pay. The independence of Hungary’s courts has been a contentious issue, causing a rift between Prime Minister Viktor Orban’s nationalist government and the European Union. Judges began to express discontent in November when an agreement

was signed between the government and the three main judicial representative bodies that tied salary rises to broad-based reforms. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 10*)

Bulgaria`s anti-euro protesters storm EU mission building

Several thousand supporters of Bulgaria`s ultra-nationalist Revival party scuffled with police while trying to storm the building of a European Union mission during a protest against the country`s plans to adopt the euro next year. The anti-government protesters, chanting `Resignation` and `No to the Euro`, threw red paint, firecrackers and Molotov cocktails at the EU building in the capital Sofia, setting the front door on fire before the police pushed them away. Around 10 police officers sustained minor injuries and about six people were detained, a senior police official told media after the protest. The government condemned the attack on the EU buildings, saying in a statement that such attacks `are unacceptable and contradict the principles of the rule of law`. The protests began in front of the European Union country`s central bank, with protesters setting effigies of European Central Bank President Christine Lagarde and other officials on fire. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2025, Page 10*)

20 arrested after Denmark protest against arms supply to Israel

Danish police said they had arrested 20 people at a protest demanding maritime transport company Maersk to stop delivering military equipment to Israel. Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg was among the protesters who gathered at Maersk`s headquarters in Copenhagen. Police used batons and tear gas to disperse several protesters, according to photos published by local media. “We are here to demand that Maersk must stop all the transportation of weapons and weapon components to Israel,” Thunberg said in a video posted on social media. “They must terminate all contract and investment that supports the genocide and occupation of Palestine.”

Thunberg, the face of the “Fridays for Future” climate protest movement, has participated in several protests in support of Palestinians since the beginning of the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza. Maersk said the cargo did not contain “weapons or ammunition”. “These shipments contain military-related equipment and are derived from US policy under the US-Israeli security cooperation programme. The cargo has been screened and complies with applicable laws,” Maersk said in a message. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2025, Page 11*)

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.

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