

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

April, 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

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

With the publication in hand, it's obvious that *Haal Ahwal* is being launched once again. However, after a gap of three years, it comes with some changes. The first most apparent is that, this time it's being published in English. The range of topics remain much the same, following the previous pattern of more coverage of Pakistan's domestic scene and sparingly international coverage. *Haal Ahwal* will now be on a monthly basis and not quarterly.

The publication covers a wide range of subjects, encompassing various aspects of agriculture and related fields. It delves into topics such as farmers, laborer, agricultural resources (including land, water, and inputs), seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, agricultural loans, agricultural machinery, and industrial production. News items on food and cash crops, fruits and vegetables, livestock, fisheries, and poultry are added. And then on more macro issues of neoliberal policies, trade, exports, imports, the corporate sector including agrochemical companies, food and fertilizer companies, corporate lobbies and foreign aid are also covered. Related issues such as environment, pollution, health and safety, climate change, and natural disasters, poverty, inflation, food security and people's and farmers resistance also have particular emphasis. All these topics will be covered more fully in the national context and where relevant to Pakistan, as part of international policies and politics. In addition, there is coverage of news on international financial institutions (IFIs) such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank,

Asian Development Bank; aid agencies such as the USAID and others as well as the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Though the layout of the news items has been changed quite a bit, we are retaining our take on the news items covered under Points to Ponder, which is given in the very beginning of the publication. The next section is based on excerpts of what the editorial team considers the most important news items in this period. This is followed by table of contents making it easier for readers to look for their topics of interest. And then we have the meat of the publication based on abbreviated news items included in each sub-section. As was the case for the Urdu *Haal Ahwal*, two major newspapers have been used for the news items included, namely the “Daily Dawn” and the “Business Recorder.” Please note, only the Sunday newspaper is used for news coverage from “The Daily News.”

At the end, we would like to add that comments and critique for making the resource more useful to our readers is very welcome.

1,000	1 Thousand	1 Thousand	ایک ہزار
10,000	10 Thousand	10 Thousand	دس ہزار
100,000	100 Thousand	1 Lac	ایک لاکھ
1,000,000	1 Million	10 Lac	دس لاکھ
10,000,000	10 Million	1 Crore	ایک کروڑ
100,000,000	100 Million	10 Crore	دس کروڑ
1,000,000,000	1 Billion	1 Arab	ایک ارب
10,000,000,000	10 Billion	10 Arab	دس ارب
100,000,000,000	100 Billion	1 Kharab	ایک کھرب

Glossary

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ADB: Asian Development Bank

AF: Additional Financing

AJA: Agriculture Journalists Association

AJK: Azad Jammu and Kashmir

AMP: Anjuman Mazareen Punjab

APTMA: All-Pakistan Textile Mills Association

ASH: Abbasi Shaheed Hospital

BISP: Benazir Income Support Programme

BNP-M: Balochistan National Party-Mengal

CCI: Council of Common Interests

CNRS: Centre for Scientific Research

CPP: Communist Party of Pakistan

DALFA: Dairy Agriculture Livestock Farmers Association

DET: Department of Economy and Tourism

DG: Director General

DPP: Department of Plant Protection

EAC: East African Community

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

ECC: Economic Coordination Committee

ECNEC: Executive Committee of the National Economic Council

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EFS: Export Facilitation Scheme

EU: European Union

EWR: Electronic Warehouse Receipt

EWR: Electronic Warehouse Reset System

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

FEA: Foreign Economic Assistance

GDA: Grand Democratic Alliance

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GHA: Grand Health Alliance

GLOFs: Glaciers Lakes Outburst Floods

GPI: Green Pakistan Initiative

HDL: High-Density Lipoprotein

HEC: Higher Education Commission

HP: Horse Power

HWA: Hari Welfare Association

ICIMOD: International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development

IEA: International Energy Agency

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IIF: InsuResilience Investment Fund

IIOJK: Indian Illegally Occupied
Jammu and Kashmir

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IOFs: Irrigation Operators for Future

IWMB: Islamabad Wildlife
Management Board

IWT: Indus Water Treaty

Ji: Jamaat-i-Islami

JPMC: Jinnah Postgraduate Medical
Centre

JSQM-B: Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz-
Bashir

JUI-F: Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl

KBA: Karachi Bar Association

KBT: Karachi Bachao Tehreek

KKH: Karakoram Highway

KMC: Karachi Metropolitan
Corporation

KP: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KPRAP: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural
Accessibility Project

KPTMA: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
Textile Mills Association

KU: Karachi University

LDL: Low-Density Lipoprotein

MENA: Middle East and North Africa

MNFSR: Ministry of National Food
Security and Research

NHA: National Highways Authority

NIR: Net International Reserves

NMGM: New Model Grain Market

NSMC: National Seismic Monitoring
Centre

NTDC: National Transmission &
Despatch Company

OPDs: Outpatient Departments

PBF: Pakistan Business Forum

PCDA: Pakistan Chemists and
Druggists Association

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners
Association

PDMA: Provincial Disaster
Management Authority

PDU: Pakistan Development Update

PFA: Punjab Food Authority

PIA: Pakistan International Airlines

PIDE: Pakistan Institute of
Development Economics

PKI: Pakistan Kissan Ittehad

PKRC: Pakistan Kissan Rabita
Committee

PML-N: Pakistan Muslim League-
Nawaz

PPP: Pakistan Peoples Party

PRGMEA: Pakistan Ready-Made
Garments Manufacturers & Exporters
Association

PSIM: Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine

PTI: Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf

QAT: Qaumi Awami Tehreek

QWP: Qaumi Watan Party

RDIF: Russian Direct Investment Fund

SAB: Sindh Abadgar Board

SBA: Stand-By Arrangement

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SIDA: Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority

SLA: Service Level Agreement

SMCL: SAFCO Microfinance Company Limited

SMEs: Small and Medium Enterprises

SPLA: Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association

STP: Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party

SUP: Sindh United Party

SWAT: Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation

SWLA: Sindh Women Lawyers Alliance

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UNCTAD: UN Trade and Development

US: United States

USMCA: United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WB: World Bank

WTO: World Trade Organisation

YDA: Young Doctors Association

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Leaders of nationalist parties and civil society groups have demanded the provincial government shelve corporate farming and new canals project forthwith and distribute lands among landless peasants instead of handing them over to any institution, individual [investor] or company.
- Tension is reportedly mounting between tenants of Proomnabad Farm near Dalmain Ganj village and administration over the wheat harvest lease amount.
- On the occasion of the ‘International Day of Peasant Struggles’, the Hari Welfare Association (HWA) has demanded immediate land reforms to distribute lands among landless farmers in Sindh.
- Of the existing landholdings of around 80pc of agricultural lands, only five per cent is under the control of peasant families in Sindh.
- The elite and feudal lords have occupied or purchased more lands as they continue to subjugate poor rural workers and sharecropping peasants.
- The government has not taken much measures to support millions of landless sharecropping peasants, who constitute around 80pc of the total agricultural workforce.
- Moreover, the HWA statement said for around 75 years, the Sindh Tenancy Act of 1950 has not been implemented; rather, in 2013 and in other years, the government changed certain provisions in the law to favour landlords.
- Water shortage in the country has been aggravating with each passing day.
- In a bid to settle the controversy surrounding new canals proposed on the Indus River, the Council of Common Interests convened, and decided that the project should not proceed until mutual understanding among provinces was achieved.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The Punjab government announced a package of Rs15bn for farmers amid reports of falling wheat prices at the time of harvesting, with growers holding rallies in different parts of the province.
- Under the Wheat Support Fund, 550,000 wheat farmers will be given direct financial support through the Kisan Card.
- Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee general secretary Farooq Tariq rejected the government’s package, saying the farmers needed Rs4,000 per maund wheat rate. “This Rs15bn package is aimed at benefiting the feudal lords and influential persons and not farmers”.

- The Punjab government said that it has given a “total package” of Rs110 billion to farmers, counting in total cost of almost all the initiatives it has taken for the growers in the province.
- The chief minister (Punjab) approved a relief package worth Rs25bn for the wheat farmers under the ‘Wheat Farmer Support Programme’.
- An agriculture internship programme worth Rs1.25bn has been launched for the guidance of wheat farmers in Punjab.”
- The Senate’s functional committee on problems of less developed areas at its meeting raised concerns regarding the disproportionate allocation of funds, with major chunk of the agricultural credits being granted to Punjab, which is not considered a less developed region.
- Agricultural loans worth Rs1,654.8 billion disbursed constituted 64.3 per cent of the 2025 budget.
- The outstanding agricultural loan portfolio reached Rs933.2bn by February 2025, showing a 15pc growth compared to the previous year.
- The number of outstanding agricultural borrowers stood at 2.85 million by the end of February 2025, marking a 4.9pc year-on-year growth.
- Details of region-wise distribution of loans from July 2024 to February 2025 showed that Punjab received Rs1,269bn (64.3pc of total disbursements); Sindh: Rs329.9bn (67.7pc); Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Rs39.8bn (49.6pc); and Balochistan and other regions Rs16.2bn.
- The government has, in principle, agreed to withdraw the 18 per cent sales tax imposed on the local sale of cotton, yarn, and grey cloth, provided the International Monetary Fund (IMF) permits it, to ensure a level-playing field for both local and imported cotton and its products.
- The Balochistan High Court has declared that agricultural income taxation falls under provincial jurisdiction and any consequences of delayed payments should be governed by provincial laws.
- Experts warned that unregulated use of chemical fertilisers was impacting soil productivity and called for formulation of a national soil protection policy focusing on climate resilience, conservation of natural resources and promotion of local agriculture.
- Agricultural land was not only vital for crop production but it also played a critical role in environmental balance, food security and biodiversity.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

- The committee fixed the rice production target at 9.17 million tonnes, to be cultivated over 3m hectares (around 7.4m acres) across the country.
- The committee also fixed targets for cotton at 10.18m bales over an area of 2.2m hectares.

- The target for sugarcane was set at 80.3m tonnes over an area of 1.1m hectares, and 9.7 m tonnes production target for maize over 1.5m hectares.
- Water availability in canals head will remain 60.502m acres feet during season.
- Expected allocations of institutional credit for agriculture had substantially increased to Rs2.572 trillion for 2024-25, 16pc higher than the last year's disbursement of 2.216tr.
- President of the Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), highlighted that seed companies have formed a cartel in the cotton industry, which is preventing farmers from receiving a fair price. He called for a reduction in the volume of imported cotton under the Export Facilitation Scheme. He stated that investors have deliberately reduced the cotton cultivation area.
- Country currently ranks as fifth-largest cotton producer and third-largest producer of cotton yarn globally.
- The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) at its recent meeting has cautioned the authorities concerned that the year 2024-25 is going to become one of worst years in more than two decades in terms of agricultural production as overall yield is showing a trend of sharp decline
- The agriculture experts have advised the cotton growers to complete cultivation of BT varieties during current month of April.
- Experts have strongly suggested continuation of hybrid maize which is abundantly being produced in country as per domestic & export requirements.
- Certain stakeholders in seed businesses have strongly opposed the introduction of genetically modified maize commercial cultivation, being an edible crop
- The arrival of the new crop has brought down grain rates from the previous level of Rs2,900-Rs3,700 to Rs2,200-Rs2,390 per 40 kg in various markets of Punjab and Sindh, and up to Rs2,450 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan.
- Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) President Khalid Mahmood Khokhar has strongly rejected Punjab government's Rs15b wheat support package and instead sought a guaranteed rate to protect farmers from financial losses.
- He claimed benefits were being given to international farmers through imports, while local growers had been ignored.
- Standing wheat crop over more than 78 acres, ripe for harvesting, was reduced to ashes in separate fire incidents reported from different areas in Gujranwala and Sheikhpura districts.
- Wheat fields on 85 acres across Narowal, Kasur and Gujranwala were ravaged by a series of fire incidents causing losses worth millions to farmers.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- Without targeted interventions, antibiotic use in livestock is projected to rise nearly 30 per cent by 2040.

TRADE

- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East widened by 9.75pc to \$9.349bn in the first eight months of 2024-25 compared to \$8.518bn a year ago.
- In FY24, the trade imbalance with the Middle East narrowed by 20.47pc to \$13.014bn from \$16.365bn over the preceding year.
- Exports to Middle East rose 3.56pc to \$2.095bn in July-February from \$2.023bn over the same period last year.
- At same time, Pakistan's imports from Middle East also saw an increase of 8.56pc to \$11.444 bn in July-February from \$10.541bn over same period last year.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries swelled 34.37pc to \$8.467bn during the first nine months of FY25 from \$6.301bn a year ago.
- Amid an 87 per cent plunge in maize exports during the January-March quarter of FY25, the Ministry of Food Security has issued directives to Department of Plant Protection (DPP) to enforce phytosanitary policies strictly.
- After suffering FY25's first contraction of 5.57 per cent in February, the merchandise exports grew a paltry 1.95 per cent year-on-year in March.
- The trade deficit in July-March FY25 increased by 4.50pc to \$17.89bn from \$17.13bn over the last year.
- Pakistan's exports to European countries grew 9.41 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year from a year ago.
- Pakistan's merchandise exports to North America grew 9.76 per cent to \$4.273 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year against \$3.893bn a year ago, mainly due to a surge in exports to the US.
- Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$5.17bn in FY23, down 23.28pc from \$6.74bn in the preceding year.
- Pakistan's raw food exports rose 1.62 per cent to \$5.75 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.66bn a year ago, mainly driven by a significant rise in sugar and basmati rice shipments.
- Pakistan is likely to buy more cotton and soybean from the United States (US) in an attempt to halve its bilateral trade surplus and escape tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump.
- Pakistan faces a 29% tariff due to a trade surplus, although that is subject to the 90-day pause Trump announced last week.
- Pakistan was mulling on an option to reduce the bilateral trade surplus to below \$2 billion from about \$4 billion in the financial year ended June.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Federal Minister for Commerce chaired a meeting with Fruit Juice Council and leading manufacturers, including representatives from Pepsico and Nestlé, to

discuss key challenges facing industry — particularly need to support formal sector against informal competition and address tariff-related concerns.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan rose by 14 percent during the first nine months of this fiscal year (FY25).
- Pakistan authorities have materialised only \$12.5 billion in foreign loans in the first nine months of 2024-25 against an annual \$19.2bn target by June 30.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- The World Bank slightly lowered its growth forecast for Pakistan to 2.7 per cent for the current fiscal year, citing continued economic stabilisation but persistent constraints from tight monetary and fiscal policies.

POLICY

- Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, a major initiative aimed at promoting mountain agriculture in the province, has decided to formulate a dedicated policy for mountain agriculture.
- The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of Cabinet has indicated the possibility of deregulating the entire sugar sector in order to avoid controversies and unjustified price hikes of the commodity in the country.
- Ministry for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has announced that railway hospitals and 14 schools across country will be outsourced due to their deteriorating conditions.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- The total value of public debt at present (Feb 25) is Rs75.3 trillion including Rs51 trillion domestic and Rs24.3 trillion external debt.
- 40pc of children were suffering from stunting, 28pc from wasting and 30pc having height below the average for their age.
- According to the National Nutrition Survey, 25pc of children face zinc deficiency and 30pc are iron deficient.
- Under the School Nutrition Programme, 20,000 children were pre and post screened and 10,786 students received free daily lunch boxes for two months.
- Inflationary pressures have receded notably as headline inflation reached a multi-decade low of 0.7 percent by March 2025.
- The poverty rate in Pakistan is estimated to stand at 42.4 percent in fiscal year 2025, with population growing at nearly 2 percent annually, this translates to 1.9m additional people falling into poverty this year, says the World Bank.

- With agriculture employing approximately half of the working poor, rural poverty is expected to rise slightly (0.2 percentage points), while real incomes for agricultural workers are projected to fall 0.7 percent in fiscal year 2025.

ENVIRONMENT

- A mysterious disease has claimed lives of more than 250 rare peacocks in Tharparkar’s rural areas, with hundreds more reportedly sick.
- World Health Organization and Pakistan’s Ministry of National Health Services have warned that climate change is worsening the impact of malaria across the country, where more than 2 million cases are reported annually.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- Pakistan faces average annual losses of over \$2 billion due to climate disasters, which exacerbate the already high poverty levels, according to the ADB.
- It said the ADB signed a \$500mn policy-based loan in 2024 for a programme to boost Pakistan’s capacity for disaster planning, preparedness, and response.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) brokered by WB is unlikely to be scrapped by India unilaterally under the garb of current tension between the two countries.

TRADE

- As major economies are set to impose sweeping new tariffs, the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has warned that the global trade system is entering a critical phase — threatening growth, investment and development progress, particularly for the most vulnerable economies.
- WTO chief said the US-China tariff war could reduce trade in goods between two economic giants by 80 percent, pulling down the rest of world economy.
- The United States announced its intention to impose tariffs of up to 3,521 per cent on solar panels from Southeast Asia, a move aimed at countering alleged Chinese subsidies and dumping in sector.
- Saudi Arabia’s non-oil exports reached an all-time high of 515 billion riyals (\$137.29 billion) in 2024.
- US President Donald Trump urged free transit for American commercial and military ships through the Panama and Suez canals, tasking his secretary of state with making progress “immediately.”

- Foreign ministers from the BRICS group of developing nations met to discuss a shared defense of the global trade system, coordinating their response to the barrage of new tariffs from US President Donald Trump.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Elon Musk’s cost-cutting team is finalising the dismantlement of the US Agency for International Development, ordering the firing of thousands of local workers and American diplomats and civil servants assigned to the agency overseas.
- President Donald Trump has effectively frozen foreign aid funding, moved to dismantle USAID and other programmes, and announced plans to leave WHO.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Saudi Arabia and Qatar are to settle Syria’s outstanding arrears of around \$15 million to World Bank.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- With food scarce in the besieged and conflict-stricken Gaza Strip, some desperate families have turned to eating sea turtles as a rare source of protein.
- After 18 months of devastating conflict and an Israeli blockade on aid since March 2, the United Nations has warned of a dire humanitarian situation for the 2.4 million inhabitants of the Palestinian territory.
- Hamas accused Israel of using “starvation as a weapon” against Gazans by blocking aid supplies.
- The UN’s World Food Programme warned it has depleted all its food stocks in war-ravaged Gaza, where the entry of humanitarian aid has been blocked by Israel since March 2.

ENVIRONMENT

- “Alarming” levels of microplastic have been found in major rivers across Europe according to scientists in 14 studies published simultaneously.
- The World Health Organisation chief acknowledged that US funding cuts had left the UN agency with a huge budget gap, forcing it to slash operations and lay off staff.
- The refusal of the US to pay its assessed contributions for 2024 and 2025 means we are facing a salary gap for the 2026-27 biennium of between \$560 and \$650 million.
- Snowfall in Asia’s Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range has reached a 23-year low, threatening nearly two billion people dependent on snowmelt for water.

NATIONAL NEWS

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

CPP opposes ‘anti-Sindh’ projects [P.1]

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Agriculture sector to be transformed on modern lines: PM [P.1]

PM vows to revive agriculture through innovation [P.1]

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Sida chief says aggravating water shortage harming agriculture sector [P.4]

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Thar coal: Fertilizer to be produced in Sindh under PPP mode [P.8]

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SAB estimates low production of most crops in Sindh this year [P. 10]

BT cotton: Cotton growers advised to complete cultivation this month [P. 10]

KP govt decides to legalise cannabis cultivation [P. 10]

Experts suggest continuation of hybrid maize in Pakistan [P. 10]

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Early arrivals find wheat market crashing [P. 11]

With harvest underway, growers fear further drop in wheat price [P. 11]

Food security at stake, warn wheat farmers [P. 11]

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Fire destroys wheat crop over 85 acres across Punjab [P. 12]

E-warehouse set-up for wheat farmers approved [P. 12]

Punjab growers threaten to cut wheat sowing next season [P. 12]

Wheat worries [P. 13]

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Exports to North America rise 10pc in July-February [P. 19]

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Textile exports rise 9.3pc in July-March [P. 20]

Food exports increase to \$5.75bn in July-March [P. 21]

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PM lauds 9.38pc textiles exports surge [P. 21]

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World Bank looks to new investments under public-private partnerships model [P. 26]
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Over 250 rare peacocks die from mysterious disease in Tharparkar [P. 32]

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Climate change fuels malaria spike in Pakistan: WHO [P. 34]

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'Pakistan faces \$2bn losses in climate disasters': ADB [P. 34]

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Heatwave spells in Sindh, South Punjab, Balochistan likely [P. 35]
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Freak hailstorm upends life in country's north [P. 35]
Intense hailstorm pummels capital as three die in Rawalpindi, Gujar Khan [P. 35]
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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

CPP opposes ‘anti-Sindh’ projects

Leaders of nationalist parties and civil society groups have demanded the provincial government shelve corporate farming and new canals project forthwith and distribute lands among landless peasants instead of handing them over to any institution, individual [investor] or company. They were speaking at a conference on ‘new canals and corporate farming’ organised by Sindh Hari Committee of Communist Party of Pakistan (CPP) at local press club. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 15*)

Pakistan to benefit from agri expertise of Belarus: PM

PM Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan would benefit from expertise of Belarus in agriculture sector by undertaking joint ventures in the country for the agriculture machinery presently being manufactured in Belarus. (*Business Recorder, April 14th, 2025, Page 1*)

Agriculture sector to be transformed on modern lines: PM

PM Shehbaz Sharif has reiterated government’s determination to transform country’s agriculture sector on modern lines, emphasising that sustainable development of this key sector of economy is inevitable. Speaking at a ceremony here to send off the first batch of 300 agricultural graduates on capacity-building visit to China the prime minister said that the government has allocated Rs3 billion for training of 1,000 young agricultural graduates to abreast themselves with modern scientific and technological advancements made by China in agriculture sector. (*Dawn, April 17th, 2025, Page 3*)

PM vows to revive agriculture through innovation

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif reaffirmed his government’s commitment to revitalising the country’s agriculture sector by promoting innovation, sustainable development, and the active involvement of young experts and key stakeholders to revive the agricultural economy. “Pakistan has fertile land, capable agricultural engineers, and hardworking farmers. Other than climate challenges, we have all the ingredients for success. Real growth and progress in this sector can only come through science-led strategies,” the prime minister said while chairing a high-level consultative meeting on agriculture sector. (*Dawn, April 20th, 2025, Page 3*)

Stand-off between tenants, Proomnabad Farm admin

Tension is reportedly mounting between tenants of Proomnabad Farm near Dalmain Ganj village and the administration over the wheat harvest lease amount. Since the Proomnabad Farm falls in Okara and Pakpattan, police teams of the two districts have been stationed at the farm for the last 24 hours. The situation stems from demands made by the farm administration, asking tenants to pay cash in installments or surrender eight maunds of wheat per acre, as per an “agreement.” Representatives of the Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP), however, refuted the official claim. Speaking to Dawn, they

asserted that no such agreement, written or verbal, existed. In response, the tenants staged a peaceful sit-in along the road connecting Adda Sukhpur and Shah Yaka. The tenants say the Proomnabad Farm spans over 5,334 acres, with 3,100 acres in possession of landless tenant families. Fazil Hussain, a local activist of Anjuamn Mazreen Punjab, said the tension escalated after the administration demanded crop share.

Meanwhile, local AMP leader Zakir Hussain said the sit-in was a peaceful protest aimed at “securing our rights”. He said tenants had cultivated wheat over 1,000 acres and others crops like maize, potatoes and fodder over the remaining land. He said tenants would not pay installments or share the harvest as they and their elders have been cultivating this land for the past 120-130 years. He appealed to CM Maryam Nawaz to intervene and mediate a peaceful solution. AMP activists said the harvesting had not been obstructed by the police. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 2*)

1.1 # Farmers

Farmers’ body demands land grant, enforcement of pro-Hari laws

On the occasion of the ‘International Day of Peasant Struggles’, the Hari Welfare Association (HWA) has demanded immediate land reforms to distribute lands among landless farmers in Sindh. It said in a statement issued that millions of acres of state land along the banks of the Indus River should be given to haris (farmers). It deplored that these lands were occupied by feudal and tribal elite across all rural districts of Sindh. Of the existing landholdings of around 80pc of agricultural lands, only five per cent is under the control of peasant families in Sindh.

HWA President Akram Khaskheli said in the statement that despite the 1970s land reforms, rural people of Sindh could never benefit from the agriculture economy and land resources. “Thus, debt bondage has increased steadily. Food sovereignty is the fundamental right of everyone, including sharecropping peasants and rural workers, but that is not possible without distributing agricultural lands among them,” he said. “Those who cultivate land for food and cotton do not have enough to eat and wear. In 2008, the [Sindh] government launched the Landless Hari Project, which provided a lease to people for only 15 years. But it was only a token project,” he added.

The elite and feudal lords have occupied or purchased more lands as they continue to subjugate poor rural workers and sharecropping peasants. Thus, rural poverty has not decreased but increased, according to Mr Khaskheli. The statement also said that schemes under the name of Benazir Bhutto have turned people into beggars and created a vicious habit of depending on state support. The HWA regretted that except for rosy laws, such as the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act of 2019, the government has not taken much measures to support millions of landless sharecropping peasants, who constitute around 80pc of the total agricultural workforce. It also added that all agriculture-related schemes aim to benefit the big landlords, whether it is the provision of tractors on easy instalments or subsidies on account of floods and rains.

However, sharecropping peasants receive nothing. Therefore, a large section of the rural population barely survives on meagre livelihood sources. Their children remain malnourished and they are compelled to send or take their children to work; thus, 6.4 million children are out of school in Sindh. HWA also regretted that it has been five years, and the government of Sindh has not yet withdrawn its application from the Supreme Court against the Sindh High Court's landmark pro-peasant judgement of 2019. This reveals the government's practical anti-peasant approach, quite against its verbal and written policies and laws. The government stands firm in going against the pro-peasant rights judgement of the court.

Moreover, the HWA statement said for around 75 years, the Sindh Tenancy Act of 1950 has not been implemented; rather, in 2013 and in other years, the government changed certain provisions in the law to favour landlords. The law governs the rights and relationships between landlords and tenants, including sharecroppers, in the rural areas of Sindh. However, practically, only landlords govern this relationship and enjoy all rights, and peasants remain poor and marginalised. The statement also said that peasant and rural women are unable to utilise provisions provided in the Sindh Women Agriculture Workers Act of 2019, and they do not know how to unionise and be able to access food and livelihood resources.

It said that Sindh has created many human rights institutions dealing with different groups of the population, such as the Sindh Human Rights Commission, Sindh Commission on the Status of Women and Sindh Child Protection Authority. However, human rights institutions have done no appreciable work for peasants and rural workers, largely because the government controls them; thus, they are unable to hold them accountable. The HWA urged the Sindh government to first distribute state agricultural land among the landless peasant men and women, which would bring real change and development in the rural areas of Sindh. (*Dawn, April 18th, 2025, Page 15*)

1.2 # Land

Battagram land dispute claims four lives

Four people were killed and five others injured when rival groups clashed over a land dispute in Cham Saidan area of the Battagram district. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 8*)

Two shot dead over land dispute

A noted writer and his manager were shot dead while three others wounded in Tando Mohammad Khan over a land dispute. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 15*)

1.3 # Water

Artificial glaciers boost water supply in Gilgit-Baltistan

At the foot of Pakistan's impossibly high mountains whitened by frost all year round, farmers grappling with a lack of water have created their own ice towers. Warmer winters as a result of climate change has reduced the snow fall and subsequent seasonal

snowmelt that feeds the valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan, a remote region home to K2, the world's second-highest peak. Farmers in the Skardu valley, at an altitude of up to 2,600 metres in the shadow of the Karakoram mountain range, searched online for help in how to irrigate their apple and apricot orchards. "We discovered artificial glaciers on YouTube," Ghulam Haider Hashmi disclosed. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 3*)

Sida chief says aggravating water shortage harming agriculture sector

Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority (Sida) Chairman Kabool Mohammad Khatian has said that water shortage in the country has been aggravating with each passing day. Attributing situation to climate change impacts, he said it was harming the agriculture sector. Khatian was speaking at the closing ceremony of a four-day training workshop on 'Irrigation operators for future programme framework' jointly organised by Sida and World Bank under the Sindh Water and Agriculture Transformation (Swat) project at his institution's secretariat. Jonathan Dennison, a World Bank consultant, said that the irrigation operators for future (IOFs) is a toolkit for addressing the issues related to water management and making it timely, equitable and reliable. He said that World Bank was working with Pakistan government and its institutions to improve irrigation system and increase agricultural production. (*Dawn, April 12th, 2025 Page 15*)

SHC extends stay on IRSA certificate for canal construction

Sindh High Court has extended the stay order against the IRSA-issued water availability certificate related to construction of new canals, while directing the federal government to submit a detailed response by April 29. During the hearing, the court emphasized that the issue of canal construction and water distribution is not a routine matter and must be handled with national consensus in mind. The court instructed both the federal and Sindh governments to ensure that national unity is preserved and not compromised. (*Business Recorder, April 19th, 2025, Page 5*)

CCI decides to 'shelve' canals project

In a bid to settle the controversy surrounding new canals proposed on the Indus River, the Council of Common Interests (CCI) convened, and decided that the project should not proceed until mutual understanding among provinces was achieved. The meeting came almost a week after the government and the PPP decided to postpone the project amid protests in Sindh and grievances expressed by the PPP — a coalition partner in the Centre — regarding the impact of the initiative on the lower riparian. In that meeting, it was decided that the CCI would convene to decide the matter. Initially, it had been slated for May 2, but the meeting was moved to April 28 at the PPP's request. According to the Prime Minister's Office, the CCI unanimously decided to halt the canals project till its fate was decided by the technical committee. (*Dawn, April 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finances

Punjab announces Rs15bn package for wheat farmers

The Punjab government announced a package of Rs15bn for farmers amid reports of falling wheat prices at the time of harvesting, with growers holding rallies in different parts of the province. Under the Wheat Support Fund, 550,000 wheat farmers will be given direct financial support through the Kisan Card. The government also announced an exemption for wheat farmers from paying irrigation/fixed tax during the current year. Under the package, free storage Electronic Warehouse Receipt (EWR) facility will be provided for four months to protect wheat from climate change effects and farmers from market pressure.

The government decided to implement the EWR system in the province. The farmers storing wheat under this system will get an electronic receipt. Within 24 hours, this receipt can be given to the bank to obtain a loan up to 70 per cent of the total cost (of wheat stored). It also decided to pay a markup against loans obtained from the Bank of Punjab up to Rs100bn to flour mills and green license holders for wheat purchase. The cabinet's approval will be sought for immediate and mandatory purchase of wheat by flour mills and green licence holders. Wheat storage up to 25 per cent of the total storage capacity has been made mandatory.

Punjab decided to contact the federal government for the export of wheat and wheat products. The Bank of Punjab will provide financing to the private sector for the renovation and construction of warehouses for wheat storage. The Punjab government will pay a markup of Rs5bn to provide storage facilities to the wheat farmers. The ban on transportation of wheat and flour at provincial and district borders has been lifted.

Meanwhile, Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee general secretary Farooq Tariq rejected the government's package, saying the farmers needed Rs4,000 per maund wheat rate. "This Rs15bn package is aimed at benefiting the feudal lords and influential persons and not farmers," Mr Tariq claimed. Farmers Itihad central chairman Khalid Hussain Baath has also rejected the package. "This is not a package for farmers, but for capitalists. The EWR system is designed to benefit of the wealthy, while it exploits small farmers," he said. "Five billion rupees are being handed over to capitalists in advance. The real beneficiaries of this package will be flour mills and green license holders, not the farmers," Baath said. (*Dawn, April 17th, 2025, Page 1*)

Farmers given Rs110bn package: Punjab govt

The Punjab government said that it has given a "total package" of Rs110 billion to farmers, counting in total cost of almost all the initiatives it has taken for the growers in the province. Last week, the Maryam Nawaz administration had announced a Rs15bn relief package for the wheat farmers given the reports of falling wheat prices at the time of harvesting, and growers holding rallies in different parts of the province. However

while presiding over a meeting, the chief minister (Punjab) approved a relief package worth Rs25bn for the wheat farmers under the ‘Wheat Farmer Support Programme’.

According to a statement issued by the government after the meeting, a record total package of Rs110bn has been given to the farmers. The government, however, did not explain how much amount has been allocated for the wheat cultivators as fresh grants. The government statement says the CM ordered to grant Rs5,000 per acre to each wheat farmer, allocating a total Rs25,000 for every five acres of wheat land. She also directed to carry out a mandatory amendment to law, making the flour mills purchase at least 25 per cent of total wheat produced this season in the province.

Meeting was informed that wheat farmers purchased agricultural inputs approximately worth Rs55bn through Kisan Card. They were given a subsidy of Rs10bn on 9,500 tractors, while some 1,000 tractors were given free of cost to wheat farmers at a cost of Rs2.5 billion. The farmers were also given a subsidy worth Rs8 billion for tube well solarisation, it was told. “The farmers are being given a subsidy of Rs 8bn on 5,000 super seeders,” the statement said. It said the farmer who grows the maximum wheat across the province will get an 85 horsepower (HP) tractor worth Rs4.5 million free of cost, while the first runner-up will get a 75 HP tractor worth Rs 4 million and the second runner-up will get a 60 HP tractor worth Rs3.5 million.

The meeting was told that the farmers growing maximum wheat in each district will get Rs1 million each, second position holders will get Rs800,000 and the third Rs500,000. “On whole, farmers will get Rs104m as a prize in wheat growing campaign. An agriculture internship programme worth Rs1.25bn has been launched for guidance of wheat farmers in Punjab.” As many as 1,000 interns will remain in field for facilitation and support of wheat farmers across province. (*Dawn, April 22nd, 2025, Page 2*)

Senate panel irked by grant of more agricultural credits to Punjab

The Senate’s functional committee on problems of less developed areas at its meeting raised concerns regarding the disproportionate allocation of funds, with major chunk of the agricultural credits being granted to Punjab, which is not considered a less developed region. The committee, headed by Senator Agha Shazaib Durrani, noted that the skewed distribution of funds neglected the needs of less developed areas, particularly in the tribal regions of Bajaur, South Waziristan and North Waziristan.

The committee received a detailed briefing on the distribution of agricultural credit through various schemes, including credit guarantee initiatives aimed at promoting rural finance for marginalised farmers, especially in the livestock and dairy sectors in less developed areas. The committee also reviewed the role of the banking sector in facilitating small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and corporate businesses in these regions. While the State Bank governor and the National Bank president presented various plans and schemes aimed at promoting agriculture and aiding farmers, the committee expressed dissatisfaction with the limited role played by the banking sector

in advancing agricultural development, particularly in less developed areas. It reviewed the latest figures related to agricultural credit disbursement for the fiscal year 2025. The senators were informed that agricultural loans worth Rs1,654.8bn disbursed constituted 64.3 per cent of the 2025 budget. The outstanding agricultural loan portfolio reached Rs933.2bn by February 2025, showing a 15pc growth compared to the previous year. The number of outstanding agricultural borrowers stood at 2.85 million by the end of February 2025, marking a 4.9pc year-on-year growth. Details of region-wise distribution of loans from July 2024 to February 2025 showed that Punjab received Rs1,269bn (64.3pc of total disbursements); Sindh: Rs329.9bn (67.7pc); Khyber Pakhtunkhwa: Rs39.8bn (49.6pc); and Balochistan and other regions Rs16.2bn. The committee also discussed the 'Kissan Package', under which Rs2.96bn in interest was waived off for flood-affected farmers. As part of the scheme, 102,663 farmers benefited across various provinces, including Punjab, Sindh, KP and Balochistan. (*Dawn*, April 30th, 2025, Page 3)

2.2 # Agricultural Tax

18pc sales tax on local cotton set to go

The government has, in principle, agreed to withdraw the 18 per cent sales tax imposed on the local sale of cotton, yarn, and grey cloth, provided the International Monetary Fund (IMF) permits it, to ensure a level-playing field for both local and imported cotton and its products. The committee of federal ministers and secretaries, formed on directive of PM Shehbaz Sharif following a request from the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA), All-Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma) and Pakistan Ready-Made Garments Manufacturers & Exporters Association (PRGMEA), met in Islamabad and agreed to withdraw the 18pc sales tax on the local sale of cotton, cotton yarn, and grey cloth. The final approval of this decision will be given by the prime minister in the next couple of days. Analysts believe that if implemented, this decision could raise local cotton prices by up to Rs1,000 per maund, reduce cotton imports, and save significant foreign exchange currently spent on importing cotton and yarn. It is also expected to curb the growing trend of undocumented cotton trade in the local market, helping to enhance government revenue. (*Dawn*, April 8th, 2025 Page 9)

BHC declares: Agri income levy falls under provincial jurisdiction

The Balochistan High Court has declared that agricultural income taxation falls under provincial jurisdiction and any consequences of delayed payments should be governed by provincial laws. The Acting Chief Justice of the Balochistan High Court has ruled in favor of the taxpayer, Khalid Hussain, in a legal dispute regarding the taxability of agricultural income under Section 111 and the exemption provided by Section 41 of the Income Tax Ordinance, 2001. (*Business Recorder*, April 22nd, 2025, Page 1)

2.3 # Fertilizer

Thar coal: Fertilizer to be produced in Sindh under PPP mode

Sindh Minister for Energy, Planning & Development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Special Assistant to CM for Public-Private Partnership Qasim Naveed Qamar, chaired a high-

level meeting. They announced that the Sindh govt, in collaboration with private sector, will produce fertilizer from Thar coal under a PPP model. This initiative aims to meet agricultural needs of not just Sindh but the entire country. Once completed, the project will provide affordable and high-quality fertilizer to farmers, eliminating shortages and boosting agricultural productivity. (*Business Recorder, April 12th, 2025, Page No. 5*)

Moot warns against unregulated use of chemical fertilisers

Experts at the 1st International Soil Science Conference that concluded in Sindh Agriculture University, Tandojam, warned that unregulated use of chemical fertilisers was impacting soil productivity and called for formulation of a national soil protection policy focusing on climate resilience, conservation of natural resources and promotion of local agriculture. They recommended that soil fertility and human health as well as integration of modern technologies, especially Artificial Intelligence into university curricula should be considered national priorities.

They said that agricultural land was not only vital for crop production but it also played a critical role in environmental balance, food security and biodiversity. They said that comprehensive national policies must be developed to ensure soil protection, advocated reducing excessive use of chemical fertilisers and promoting organic fertilisers, bio-saline techniques and biological measures. They recommended developing GIS-based soil maps and launching mobile laboratories, training programs, and awareness campaigns at district and union council levels. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

2.4 # Seed

Trusted R&D companies: Farmers advised to use certified, data-backed seeds

Experts in the seed sector have urged farmers to choose only reputable companies that invest in research and development, producing high-quality seeds better suited to changing weather conditions, helping farmers achieve higher yields and minimise losses. “Farmers in Pakistan, like many around the world, if they use seeds that lack proper genetic traits, can cause significant economic loss. Misleadingly, genetic seeds can lead to crop failure despite farmers invest heavily in fertilisers, irrigation, and labour. This reality underlines the importance of using certified, data-backed seeds from trusted R&D companies,” said the experts. Cost of seed constitutes only 5 percent of total production cost, especially in vegetable sector, but use of uncertified seed leads to losses of manifold. This was the crux of a discussion arranged by the Agriculture Journalists Association (AJA), Lahore, where Gerard Eysink, Regional Head Vegetable Seeds Syngenta, Sohail Maqbool, country head vegetable seeds Pakistan and Muhammad Shoaib Manager seeds and trait regulatory spoke at length about the topic. (*Business Recorder, April 28th, 2025, Page 4*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Targets set for Kharif crops amid drier forecast

The Federal Committee on Agriculture, under the Ministry of National Food Security and Research, has set production targets for key Kharif crops for the 2025-26 season. At its meeting, chaired by Food Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain, the committee fixed the rice production target at 9.17 million tonnes, to be cultivated over 3m hectares (around 7.4m acres) across the country. The meeting expressed concern over soil moisture deficiencies, warning that drier conditions expected in May could hinder Kharif sowing in northern Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and northern Balochistan. The committee recommended judicious use of available water resources across all regions, the ministry said in a statement.

The committee also fixed targets for cotton at 10.18m bales over an area of 2.2m hectares. Likewise, the target for sugarcane was set at 80.3m tonnes over an area of 1.1m hectares, and 9.7 m tonnes production target for maize over 1.5m hectares. The targets for other crops such as mung, mash and chilies were also fixed. Pondering over the availability of agricultural inputs for Kharif crops for 2025-26, the water availability in canals head will remain 60.502m acres feet during the season.

The representative from State Bank of Pakistan told the committee that expected allocations of institutional credit for agriculture had substantially increased to Rs2.572 trillion for 2024-25, 16pc higher than the last year's disbursement of 2.216tr. The National Fertiliser Development Cell informed the meeting that due to local production and available stocks, the supply position of urea will remain comfortable. DAP fertiliser will also remain at satisfactory levels. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 9*)

3.1 # Cash Crop

PBF urges govt to take urgent measures to save cotton

President of the Pakistan Business Forum (PBF), Khwaja Mahboob ur Rehman, has urged the Federal Ministry of National Food Security to take emergency measures to save cotton. He said that exploitation of local cotton should be stopped, and government may immediately eliminate GST on local cotton. President of PBF further emphasized that a comprehensive policy may be formulated to uplift the local cotton industry. He mentioned that cotton farmers are currently tied down by wrong policies. The target of at least 15 million bales of local production must be met annually. He questioned, "Why is there a ban on imported cotton seeds?"

The President also highlighted that seed companies have formed a cartel in the cotton industry, which is preventing farmers from receiving a fair price. He called for a reduction in the volume of imported cotton under the Export Facilitation Scheme. He stated that investors have deliberately reduced the cotton cultivation area. He suggested that if the government forms a fact-finding commission on this issue, the details will come to light. (*Business Recorder, April 7th, 2025 Page 5*)

MoU inked with China to increase cotton production

Two leading government-owned institutes from China and Pakistan have signed a MoU to enhance Pakistan's cotton production using advanced technological methods. Cotton is a vital cash crop for Pakistan. Country currently ranks as fifth-largest cotton producer and third-largest producer of cotton yarn globally. Cotton contributes 0.8% to Pakistan's GDP and accounts for a substantial 51% of nation's total foreign exchange earnings. The cotton industry has fuelled a robust textile sector, with over 1,000 ginning factories and approximately 400 textile mills across country. In Punjab, the country's leading cotton-producing province, only 2.7 million bales were harvested, marking a more than 36% decrease compared to last year. (*Business Recorder, April 7th, 2025 Page 12*)

SAB estimates low production of most crops in Sindh this year

The Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) at its recent meeting has cautioned the authorities concerned that the year 2024-25 is going to become one of worst years in more than two decades in terms of agricultural production as overall yield is showing a trend of sharp decline. Production of cotton, maize, paddy / rice, sugar cane, and most likely wheat as well, would be lower than last year's quantum, it estimated. The meeting attributed the trend to climate change phenomenon, very high temperatures coupled with excessive rains in certain periods, drought cycles, complexity and severity of pests and diseases attacks etc. (*Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 15*)

BT cotton: Cotton growers advised to complete cultivation this month

The agriculture experts have advised the cotton growers to complete cultivation of BT varieties during current month of April. A spokesman for Agriculture (Extension) Department said that cotton is a precious crop of Pakistan which plays a pivotal role in strengthening national economy by enhancing textile exports. Therefore, government through agriculture department is concentrating to increase land under cotton cultivation. In this regard, special incentives were also offered for cotton growers besides distributing agri appliances. (*Business Recorder, April 14th, 2025, Page 4*)

KP govt decides to legalise cannabis cultivation

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government decided to legalise cultivation of cannabis (hemp) in specific districts of the province, marking a significant step toward its regulated industrial and medical use. Under this initiative, cultivation would be permitted only through licensed growers, and a strict monitoring framework will be established. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 8*)

Experts suggest continuation of hybrid maize in Pakistan

Experts have strongly suggested continuation of hybrid maize which is abundantly being produced in the country as per domestic and export requirements. A group of experts gathered to discuss the impact of genetically modified maize crop on Pakistan. Among others, an expert Khan Faraz informed media that progress in maize production over the years have given Pakistan a distinction in achieving one of the biggest per acre

yield across South Asia. Certain stakeholders in seed businesses have strongly opposed the introduction of genetically modified maize commercial cultivation, being an edible crop. It is in the best interest of the consumers and farmers that the country continues with hybrid maize. (*Business Recorder, April 28th, 2025, Page 3*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Early arrivals find wheat market crashing

The lowest rates of fresh wheat crop have shocked farmers as well as traders in the open market and New Model Grain Market (NMGM) of Rahim Yar Khan. The wheat harvesting started in the different areas of the district, especially in the Katcha area, a week ago. (*Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 2*)

With harvest underway, growers fear further drop in wheat price

As the harvesting of wheat crop gains momentum in Punjab and Sindh, growers are fearing a further drop in market prices. Grain reaping season is in full swing in Sindh and South Punjab, where almost 50 per cent of the crop has been harvested. The arrival of the new crop has brought down grain rates from the previous level of Rs2,900-Rs3,700 to Rs2,200-Rs2,390 per 40 kg in various markets of Punjab and Sindh, and up to Rs2,450 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The apprehension that the rates will slip further when harvesting activity picks up in central Punjab is giving growers sleepless nights. They say they have been left at the mercy of private actors after the federal and provincial governments of Punjab and Sindh withdrew themselves from the market under an IMF condition. Punjab, which used to pick on an average 4.2 million tonnes of wheat from the growers, decided not to procure even a single grain last season, at the eleventh hour, though the government had been assuring farmers throughout that a purchase policy was being formulated.

Citing huge carryover stocks, built because of an ‘unwise’ import policy of the preceding interim setup, the Maryam Nawaz government had backed out of its promise. However, the federal government had to increase its procurement target from 1.4mt to 1.8mt, following protests by farmers and pressure to ensure a sufficient supply of wheat. Continuing down the path of wheat market deregulation — as per an IMF demand — all three governments have decided to stay out of the market this season as well. Sindh’s decision came after Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah announced that the province has a 1.3mt carryover grain stock and will also not procure wheat. The US Department of Agriculture has also forecast a staggering 13pc drop in Pakistan’s wheat output for 2025-26 at 27.5mt, from a record harvest of 31.5mt in the previous season. This is primarily due to a 7pc reduction in cultivation area and unusually dry weather conditions that have persisted since October 2024. (*Dawn, April 12th, 2025 Page 9*)

Food security at stake, warn wheat farmers

Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (PKI) President Khalid Mahmood Khokhar has strongly rejected the Punjab government’s Rs15 billion wheat support package and instead

sought a guaranteed rate to protect farmers from financial losses. Mr Khokhar expressed serious concerns over the current state of agriculture in the country, at a press conference in Multan. “Farmers are not getting their due payment for the wheat crop. We don’t need charity; we need fair compensation,” he said. He warned if conditions remained the same, many farmers might not sow wheat next year.

He claimed benefits were being given to international farmers through imports, while local growers had been ignored. He urged the prime minister and the army chief to take immediate notice of the situation and support the farming community. He concluded by announcing a meeting in Lahore in the coming days to discuss a planned march by farmers. Under the Wheat Support Fund, 550,000 wheat farmers will be given direct financial support through the Kisan Card. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 8*)

Four fire incidents: Wheat crop on more than 78 acres reduced to ashes

Standing wheat crop over more than 78 acres, ripe for harvesting, was reduced to ashes in separate fire incidents reported from different areas in Gujranwala and Sheikhupura districts, officials said, adding that timely response by Rescue 1122 firefighters, however, prevented heavy losses to the farmers. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 8*)

Fire destroys wheat crop over 85 acres across Punjab

Wheat fields on 85 acres across Narowal, Kasur and Gujranwala were ravaged by a series of fire incidents causing losses worth millions to farmers. Farmers blamed faulty machinery, high-voltage electric wires and negligence by authorities for the fires. In Narowal, fire incidents destroyed wheat crop on 56 acres at nine different locations in two days, leaving an estimated financial loss of Rs7.56 million. According to Rescue 1122, the control room received nine emergency calls, including three from Shakargarh tehsil. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 2*)

E-warehouse set-up for wheat farmers approved

The Punjab cabinet approved implementation of the Electronic Warehouse Reset System (EWR) to facilitate the farmers to store their wheat. The government will bear the storage costs. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz presided over the 25th provincial cabinet meeting. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 2*)

Punjab growers threaten to cut wheat sowing next season

The agricultural sector in Punjab has become a battleground for conflicting narratives, with farmers expressing deep distress while the provincial government touts its efforts to support them. Khalid Khokhar, President of the Pakistan Kisan Ittehad, held a press conference in Lahore, vehemently criticising government’s handling of the agricultural crisis. “The throat of farmers and cultivators has been strangled,” he declared, emphasising the farmers’ love for their country and questioning their ability to meet basic needs like their children’s education. He announced a protest measure, stating, “Next year we will cultivate less wheat in protest,” and rejecting Punjab government’s aid package, asserted, “We do not want the package, you have ruined agriculture.”

In a counter-response, Punjab Minister for Agriculture and Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani, alongside Information Minister Azma Bukhari, addressed a press conference. Mr Kirmani defended the government's actions, stating, "Politics is being played in the name of wheat," but insisted that the government is committed to supporting farmers. Mr Kirmani detailed the government's initiatives, including a record budget allocation for farmers, substantial subsidies on fertilisers, seeds, and tractors, and the disbursement of Rs52 billion in interest-free agricultural loans through the "Kissan Card." (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Wheat worries

Punjab's farmers are enraged. They are not getting what they call a fair price for their wheat harvest this year due to the government's decision to ditch its decades-old policy of fixing the minimum support price for the staple, besides stopping its grain procurement operations. This has left them at the mercy of the private sector, causing the 'price to crash' in the market. The Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, a body that represents a sizable number of growers from the province, has sounded a warning that farmers cultivating wheat may switch to other more profitable crops — causing food shortages — next year unless the government reverses its new policy. "Poor farmers are being strangulated [due to the wheat price policy shift] ... They are unable to meet their basic needs," a PKI leader said at a press conference.

At the heart of the problem is the government's unplanned, poorly coordinated withdrawal from the wheat market beginning last year to meet a key goal of the ongoing IMF programme. The sudden reversal of the policy that regulated the wheat supply chain since the 1960s has proved to be disruptive for the unprepared farmers. But this disruption is temporary, even if it takes a couple of years and market volatility to settle. Indeed, the country's wheat procurement and price support system has historically helped farmers get prices higher than international prices for their produce while ensuring more or less stable flour rates for urban consumers.

This has worked well for most stakeholders including big farmers, middlemen, flour millers, etc — at the expense of smallholders and the government, which had to bear massive costs to subsidise urban consumers and farmers. The system, which had become fiscally unsustainable due to its soaring subsidy budget and rampant corruption in its procurement operations among other factors, demanded that market forces be unleashed to correct the market's course. Given the sudden shift in policy the price shocks being felt by the farmers are not unexpected. But returning to the old system is not an option. Rather, the government must fully deregulate the wheat supply chain and allow market forces to work to avoid such shocks in future and unlock the export potential of wheat and wheat-based products. Government intervention should be restricted to helping small farmers access cheaper credit, quality inputs and new technology to boost their productivity and incomes. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 6*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Dairy

PM extends support for investments in value-added dairy sector

PM Shehbaz Sharif extended full support for investments aimed at enhancing value-added dairy sector, assuring a promising future for dairy entrepreneurs in the country. While talking to a delegation led by Jan Derck Van Karnebeek, Global CEO of Royal FrieslandCampina and Engro Pakistan, he emphasised that Pakistan is committed to collaborating with companies such as FrieslandCampina to develop dairy sector. “We will encourage initiatives that focus on improving the safety and nutritional value of milk to boost dairy product exports”. (*Business Recorder, April 30th, 2025, Page 3*)

4.2 # Fisheries

Gwadar fishermen seek govt help for industry’s survival

Local fishermen have warned that the industry and ice factories were fighting for their survival and blamed the government for neglecting the sector contributing billions to the economy. In a press conference at the Gwadar Press Club, representatives of the fishing industry said the livelihood of millions of workers is under threat. They said local fishermen pay hefty bills to the Quetta Electric Supply Company but receive low-voltage electricity only for a few hours each day. Additionally, they are forced to spend Rs500,000 to 600,000 every month to purchase water.

The fishermen demanded that just like Gwadar was declared a Free Zone, the fish industry should also be included in Free Zone and granted tax-free status. While they welcomed prime minister’s recent announcement of reduced electricity prices, they stressed urgent need to support Gwadar’s struggling fishing sector. They highlighted that despite Gwadar being declared a hub of CPEC, fish and ice factories were suffering due to what they called official indifference. They emphasised that the fishing industry generates billions in revenue and foreign exchange but receives no facilities in return.

In a coastal district where 80 per cent of the population relies on fishing, this neglect is especially harmful, they said. They accused the government of not fulfilling its promises. Currently, around 19 fish and ice factories operate in Gwadar, employing thousands of low-income workers who depend on them for survival. The owners decried electricity issues in Gwadar, saying prolonged power outages spoil their fish. They called for immediate inclusion of Gwadar’s fish and ice factories in the Free Zone and the provision of essential services. The fishermen also urged the Gwadar Development Authority and the Municipal Committee to install proper drainage systems and ensure uninterrupted electricity. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

Sindh tightens fishing regulations

In a decisive step towards marine conservation, provincial government has introduced major amendments to Sindh Fisheries Rules 1983, setting new restrictions on fishing gear and outlawing harmful practices in sensitive coastal waters. According to a

notification issued by the Livestock and Fisheries Department the revised regulations, scheduled to take effect on May 1, 2025, aim to combat over-fishing and protect the province's marine biodiversity. "The use of encircling nets, purse seine nets (locally known as "wire nets" or "ring nets"), and bottom trawls ("Guija," "Guijo," or "Guiji") is now prohibited within Sindh's creek areas and up to 12 nautical miles from the coastline. The ban also covers set bag nets ("Bulla"/"Bullo") and seine nets ("Katra") in these zones," it says. (*Business Recorder*, April 20th, 2025, Page 5)

4.3 # Livestock

Food and Agriculture Organisation for improving livestock productivity to cut antibiotic use

A new study led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations has emphasised the need for improving livestock productivity to achieve substantial reductions in global antibiotic use, which is rising. Without targeted interventions, antibiotic use in livestock is projected to rise nearly 30 per cent by 2040. However, the new research finds that strategic productivity gains in livestock systems could cut projected antibiotic use by half. The study, *The Future of Antibiotic Use in Livestock*, said that under a business-as-usual scenario, global livestock antibiotic use could rise to 143,481 tonnes by 2040, an overall increase of 30 per cent from 2019.

However, alternative scenarios indicate that antibiotic use could be reduced by up to 57 percent if livestock productivity is optimised. By improving animal health, management practices, and production efficiency, antibiotic use could be lowered to about 62,000 tonnes by 2040, demonstrating the potential of targeted interventions in achieving global reduction goals. "Enhancing livestock production efficiency is key to curbing antibiotic use," said Alejandro Acosta, Livestock Economist at FAO and lead author of the study. "By producing more animal-sourced food with the same or fewer animals, we can reduce the need for antibiotics on farmed animals while strengthening global food security," Acosta said. (*Dawn*, April 3rd, 2025 Page 5)

SMCL, AICL sign SLA on bundled livestock protection programme

SAFCO Microfinance Company Limited (SMCL) and Asia Insurance Company Limited have formally signed a Service Level Agreement (SLA) to roll out a bundled Livestock Protection and Social Benefit Program. This innovative insurance product is integrated with SMCL's livestock loan and climate-resilient products, designed to protect and uplift rural livelihoods across Pakistan. According to a Statement from SAFCO Microfinance this milestone initiative is made possible with technical assistance supported by the InsuResilience Investment Fund (IIF), managed by BlueOrchard, and the consultancy expertise of the Micro Insurance Centre at Milliman USA. (*Business Recorder*, April 20th, 2025, Page 3)

Sindh to establish Livestock Advisory Board

Provincial Minister for Livestock and Fisheries, Muhammad Ali Malkani, announced that the Government of Sindh is set to establish a Livestock Advisory Board in the near

future. The board will include representatives from sectors related to livestock, dairy, and meat, with the aim of promoting sector through collaboration with all stakeholders. He expressed these views while addressing the inaugural ceremony of Season 2025 at Surti Farm, organized by Dairy Agriculture Livestock Farmers Association (DALFA), held in Karachi. Minister said that Department of Livestock and Fisheries, Government of Sindh, is not only encouraging local farmers and livestock owners but is also actively working to resolve their issues. (*Business Recorder, April 21st, 2025, Page 10*)

5 # TRADE

Trade gap with Middle East widens

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East widened by 9.75 per cent to \$9.349 billion in the first eight months of 2024-25 compared to \$8.518bn a year ago, primarily driven by increased petroleum imports. The growing trade deficit raises concerns among decision-makers, mainly due to the rising influx of petroleum products. Meanwhile, export growth to select countries in region remains minimal, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY24, the trade imbalance with the Middle East narrowed by 20.47pc to \$13.014bn from \$16.365bn over the preceding year, mainly due to lower petroleum imports amid falling consumption owing to rising local prices.

Exports to Middle East rose 3.56pc to \$2.095bn in July-February from \$2.023bn 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 8.56pc to \$11.444 bn in July-February from \$10.541bn 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.

Exports to Saudi Arabia rose 10.59pc to \$489.44m in July-February from \$442.54m over the last year. In FY24, exports to Saudi Arabia rose 40.98pc to \$710.335m from \$503.851m in FY23. The imports from the kingdom saw a decline of 19.54pc to \$2.47bn against \$3.07bn in the same period last year. In FY24, imports from Saudi Arabia declined by 0.01pc to \$4.49bn against \$4.50bn in the preceding year.

Exports to the UAE increased 5.84pc to \$1.414bn in July-February from \$1.336bn over the last year. In FY24, exports to the UAE surged 41.15pc to \$2.082bn from \$1.475bn in FY23, primarily due to a significant rise in exports to Dubai. Pakistan's top export products to the UAE include rice, bovine carcasses, men's and boys' cotton ensembles, guavas and mangoes. In July-February, the imports from the UAE also rose 30.11pc to \$5.220bn from \$4.012bn over the previous year.

Exports to Bahrain declined by 27.79pc to \$34.21m in 8MFY25 from \$47.38m in the corresponding period last year. The imports from Bahrain increased 27.32pc to \$155.75m in 8MFY25 from \$122.33m. Exports to Kuwait saw a decline of 10.42pc to \$77.002m in 8MFY25 from \$85.953m over the previous year. However, imports

increased by 2.22pc to \$1.244bn from \$1.217bn. Pakistan's exports to Qatar fell 28.31pc to \$80.38m in 8MFY25 from \$112.118m. Imports stood at \$2.355bn against \$2.120bn over the last year, indicating an increase of 11.08pc. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 9*)

MoMA starts work on Karachi-Djibouti maritime trade corridor

The Ministry of Maritimes Affairs has started working on a new maritime trade corridor connecting Karachi Port to Djibouti, a key gateway to East Africa to enhance trade with the East African Community (EAC). East African Community, comprising countries such as Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Uganda is home to over 500 million people and has a collective gross domestic product (GDP) of approximately \$600 billion. (*Business Recorder, April 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trade gap with nine states widens 34pc to \$8.4bn

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries swelled 34.37 per cent to \$8.467 billion during the first nine months of FY25 from \$6.301bn a year ago. Due to recent regional political shifts, exports have surged to Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka. However, Pakistan's trade with these nations has faced significant setbacks in recent years, attributed to the challenges posed by unfavourable government policies. Despite this development, the trade gap with the regional countries widened mainly due to higher imports from China, India and Bangladesh during the months under review. In FY24, the trade deficit was \$9.506bn, up 49pc from \$6.382bn in the preceding year.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka saw a hefty growth in July-March FY25. Still, exports to other countries, especially China, continued to decline during the period, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. The value of Pakistan's exports to nine countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — rose 3.26pc to \$3.420bn in July-March FY25 from \$3.312bn over the same period last year.

Contrary to this, imports surged 23.65pc to \$11.887bn in 9MFY25 from \$9.613bn over the same period of the previous fiscal year. Further analysis showed that imports from China grew by 23.69pc to \$11.582bn in 9MFY25 from \$9.363bn over the same period last year. In FY24, imports from China stood at \$13.506bn, up by 39.78pc from \$9.662bn over the previous year. The bulk of imports in the region are sourced from China, followed partially by India and Bangladesh. Pakistan's exports to China dipped 12.36pc to \$1.878bn in 9MFY25 from \$2.143bn over same months in preceding FY.

Imports from India increased 12.72pc to \$176.31m in 9MFY25 from \$156.42m over the last year. In FY24, imports from India rose 8.866pc to \$206.89m — up from \$190.04m in the same period last year. Meanwhile, exports to India remained at \$0.41m in 9MFY25 against \$1.23m over the last year. Exports to India stood at \$3.669m in FY24 against \$0.329m in the same period the previous year.

Exports to Afghanistan increased 64.48pc to \$623.28m in 9MFY25 from \$378.92m last year. Imports stood at \$20.13m against \$6.44m in 9MFY24, a growth of 212pc. The Torkham border station remained closed for almost 27 days, disrupting the imports and exports to Afghanistan. Pakistan's main exports to Afghanistan include sugar in the current fiscal year. Pakistan exported over 700,000 tonnes of sugar in the past four months, mostly to Afghanistan.

No data is available as most trade with Iran is conducted via informal channels. However, Pakistan has opted for barter trade amid the thriving smuggling of Iranian petroleum products and LPG via a porous border of Balochistan. Exports to Bangladesh increased by 25pc to \$602.83m in 9MFY25 from \$482.25m. Imports grew 44.53pc to \$62.86m in 9MFY from \$43.49m over the last year. (*Dawn, April 23rd, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan closes airspace, suspends trade with India

In a fiery tit-for-tat move, Pakistan pulled the plug on trade, tore up bilateral deals, and shut down its airspace to India – retaliating hard after New Delhi unleashed a flurry of aggressive actions over a deadly strike in Pahalgam area of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). (*Business Recorder, April 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

5.1 # Export

Despite surplus, maize exports plunge 87pc

Amid an 87 per cent plunge in maize exports during the January-March quarter of FY25, the Ministry of Food Security has issued directives to Department of Plant Protection (DPP) to enforce phytosanitary policies strictly. The country exported 53,725 tonnes of maize to 12 countries during the quarter, compared to 419,432 tonnes to 34 countries in 2024. The country exported 147,057 tonnes of the commodity to 46 countries in the same quarter of 2023. The official data revealed that maize exports dropped to zero in 2025 for Bahrain, Bangladesh, Brunei Darussalam, China, France, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kenya, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Madagascar, Romania, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam. However, Afghanistan remained the largest importer of Pakistani maize, purchasing 35,949 tonnes, accounting for 66.91 per cent of total exports in Jan-March 2025. A senior official of the Food Security Ministry has expressed concerns that the drop in maize exports comes at a time when Pakistan had a surplus of six million tonnes after a total production of 9.6 million tonnes. (*Dawn, April 3rd, 2025 Page 5*)

Merchandise exports rise in March

After suffering FY25's first contraction of 5.57 per cent in February, the merchandise exports grew a paltry 1.95 per cent year-on-year in March, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said. The growth momentum in exports from Pakistan picked pace in July owing to improved orders and stability in the exchange rate. The increase in export proceeds decelerated to a single digit in October and continued slowing in the following months. 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 4.59pc in January. The exports reached \$2.62bn in March against \$2.56bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, exports increased 5.10pc. In the first nine months of FY25, export proceeds stood at \$24.69bn in July-March FY25 as against \$22.93bn over the corresponding months of last year, showing an increase of 6.33pc.

According to the PBS data, imports grew 6.33pc to \$42.58bn in July-March FY25 from \$40.05bn over the last year. Imports fell to \$4.74bn in March from \$4.85bn last year, a decline of 2.45pc. Month-on-month, imports decreased 1.11pc. The IMF revised its import forecast downward by \$3.3bn from \$60.5bn to \$57.2bn for FY25, converging with the government's projection of \$57.3bn. In FY24, imports fell 0.84pc to \$54.73bn compared to \$55.19bn in FY23. The trade deficit in July-March FY25 increased by 4.50pc to \$17.89bn from \$17.13bn over the last year. In March, the deficit decelerated by 7.83pc to \$2.12bn from \$2.29bn last year. The trade gap contracted to \$24.08bn in FY24 from \$27.47bn in the preceding year. (*Dawn, April 4th, 2025 Page 9*)

Exports to Europe rise 10pc in July-February

Pakistan's exports to European countries grew 9.41 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year from a year ago, mainly due to higher shipments to western and southern states. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$5.921 billion in July- February FY25 from \$5.412bn last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. The export resurgence was due to a slight increase in demand for Pakistani goods in western, eastern and northern Europe. The revival of export proceeds to these countries shows a rising trend for Pakistani textile and clothing products. 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. (*Dawn, April 10th, 2025 Page 9*)

Govt envisions \$100bn in exports over 8 years: minister

Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal pledged robust government support for Pakistan's exporters, envisioning a unified business front that could elevate national exports to \$100 billion over the next eight years. (*Business Recorder, April 12th, 2025 Page 8*)

Exports to North America rise 10pc in July-February

Pakistan's merchandise exports to North America grew 9.76 per cent to \$4.273 billion in the first eight months of the current fiscal year against \$3.893bn a year ago, mainly due to a surge in exports to the US. The United States accounted for 94pc of Pakistan's total exports to North America, with the remaining share going to other countries, particularly Canada. According to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan, the rise in exports to the region is primarily due to a surge in textile and clothing exports to the US. A decline in exports was noted in the past two years.

In FY24, Pakistan's exports to the region recorded a negative growth of 8.42pc to \$5.432bn from \$5.93bn over the same period last year. Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$5.17bn in FY23, down 23.28pc from \$6.74bn in the preceding year. The revival of exports to the region was mainly supported by a surge in demand for textiles and clothing following a slowdown in exports from Bangladesh and Vietnam in the current fiscal year.

The Trump administration has imposed a 29pc tariff on products from Pakistan, primarily targeting the textile sector. However, Pakistan's commerce ministry has not yet assessed the actual effect of these tariff lines on exports. Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$4.009bn in 8MFY25 from \$3.629bn over the corresponding months of last year, indicating a growth of 10.47pc. According to PBS data, Pakistan's exports to the US stood at \$5.442bn in FY24, which fell by 8.26pc from \$5.932bn over the previous fiscal year. Pakistan's exports to Canada recorded a paltry growth of 0.56pc to \$262.676m in 8MFY25 from \$264.156m over the corresponding months of last year. In FY24, Pakistan exports to Canada stood at \$389.164m against \$426.575m over the previous year, indicating a decline of 8.77pc.

The imports from North America stood at \$1.663bn in 8MFY25 from \$1.285bn over the previous year, an increase of 29.41pc. Maximum imports were from the US, totalling \$1.875bn in FY24, down from \$2.216bn over the preceding year. The imports from South America stood at \$784.743m during 8MFY25 against \$297.631m over the previous year, showing an increase of 163.66pc. South America is the second biggest import destination in continent after North America. (*Dawn, April 13th, 2025 Page 9*)

Trump tariffs could pose '\$1.4bn risk to Pakistan exports'

The increase in trade tariffs on Pakistani products announced by US President Donald Trump later suspended temporarily could have a devastating impact on Pakistan's important exports and serves as a wake-up call for diversification, according to a state owned think tank. 'A storm may be brewing on Pakistan's trade horizon,' said the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (Pide), adding that 'proposed reciprocal tariffs by the United States could have a devastating impact on the country's export sector'. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 1*)

Textile exports rise 9.3pc in July-March

The textile and clothing exports grew 9.38 per cent during the first nine months of the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics data showed. The FY25 witnessed robust growth in textile exports before decelerating to single digits in the past two months. It increased by 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11pc in October, 10.81pc in Nov, 5.55pc in December, 15.85pc in January and February 9.31pc. In absolute terms, the textile and clothing exports rose 9.38pc to \$13.62bn in July-March FY25 from \$12.44bn a year ago. In March, the exports rose 9.97pc to \$1.43bn against \$1.30bn last year. (*Dawn, April 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Food exports increase to \$5.75bn in July-March

Pakistan's raw food exports rose 1.62 per cent to \$5.75 billion during the first nine months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.66bn a year ago, mainly driven by a significant rise in sugar and basmati rice shipments. Exports have increased for 20 straight months despite unparalleled food inflation in the country's history. Because of supply and demand imbalances, consumers nationwide pay more for food items, particularly sugar, meat, and poultry. In June 2024, the government announced a policy allowing the export of 150,000 tonnes of sugar, conditional upon maintaining stable retail prices. However, this target was significantly surpassed, with sugar exports reaching 757,779 tonnes by March. (*Dawn*, April 20th, 2025, Page 9)

'\$20m rice exports loss' blamed on transporters strike

The rice export sector was hit hard by the recently concluded nationwide strike by goods transporters. With export operations at a virtual standstill, rice shipments worth over \$20 million (approximately Rs6 billion) failed to leave country, sparking alarm among exporters and trade bodies. The transporters' strike, which began earlier this week and ended, disrupted movement of key export consignments across the country. Alongside agricultural produce like potatoes and onions, processed goods such as fruit pulp and juices were also affected. The rice export industry, a major contributor to the national economy, suffered significantly as a result. (*The News*, April 20th, 2025, Page 17)

PM lauds 9.38pc textiles exports surge

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif appreciated 9.3% increase in the exports of Pakistan's textile sector from July 2024 to March this year. "The textile sector's exports have reached a record high of \$13.613 billion, which is highly encouraging. The 6.27% increase in textile exports in March compared to the previous month reflects the positive direction of Pakistan's economic growth and government policies," the prime minister said. (*Business Recorder*, April 22nd, 2025, Page 12)

Commerce ministry for steps to revive maize exports amid sharp decline

The Ministry of Commerce has raised concerns over decline in maize exports and directed Department of Plant Protection (DPP) and others concerned to take immediate export facilitative interventions to help instant resumption of maize exports. In a letter, the ministry invites attention of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFSR) about the significant decline in Pakistan's maize exports to several key international markets, including Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, France, China, Somalia, and Madagascar, during the current fiscal year as compared to the previous year. (*Dawn*, April 27th, 2025, Page 2)

5.2 # Import

KPTMA concerned over surge in yarn imports under EFS

Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Textile Mills Association (KPTMA), Sikandar Kuli Khan Khattak has raised grave concerns over the alarming surge in yarn imports under

the Export Facilitation Scheme (EFS) and termed them a serious threat to the survival of domestic spinning industry, especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Khattak highlighted that yarn imports under the EFS have skyrocketed by an astonishing 350%, with imports of both Cotton and MMF yarn increasing from 7,800 metric tons in January 2024 to 28,306 metric tons in February 2025. This surge now accounts for over 30% of the total production of the domestic spinning industry. The repercussions are severe, as more than 40% of spinning mills have been forced to shut down, with many others scaling back operations due to the flood of cheaper imported yarn into the market. (*Business Recorder*, April 7th, 2025 Page 3)

Pakistan may buy more cotton, soybean from US

Pakistan is likely to buy more cotton and soybean from the United States (US) in an attempt to halve its bilateral trade surplus and escape tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, according to a Bloomberg report. Trump ignited a potentially ruinous trade war earlier this month, as he slapped sweeping 10% tariffs on imports from around the world and harsh additional levies on key trading partners. Pakistan faces a 29% tariff due to a trade surplus, although that is subject to the 90-day pause Trump announced last week.

Islamabad is yet to reveal its official policy to deal with the reciprocal tariff, but has announced to send a high-level delegation to the US to promote trade relations and hold talks on the tariff. Bloomberg reported that Pakistan was mulling on an option to reduce the bilateral trade surplus to below \$2 billion from about \$4 billion in the financial year ended June. Pakistan is already the second-largest buyer of US cotton by value after China and mainly sells garments and textiles to America, which is its largest export market. (*Business Recorder*, April 17th, 2025, Page 1)

Country may be 'forced' to import wheat: Khaqan

Former prime minister and head of Awam Pakistan Party Shahid Khaqan Abbasi warned that the country may be forced to import wheat in the coming year, if the current challenges including high input cost and low prices, faced by farmers were not urgently addressed. Addressing a press conference flanked by former finance minister Miftah Ismail, Abbasi strongly criticised the government over two major issues including the challenges faced by farmers and the lack of relief on petroleum products for the public.

The country's economy could not run if the economy of farmers was destroyed, said Abbasi, adding that farmers' expenses were increasing while the wheat price was going down. He pointed out that farmers also faced difficulties in 2023, and in 2024 the government announced it would not purchase wheat at Rs4,000 per 40kg. As a result, farmers were forced to sell at varying prices —some at Rs2,200 and others at Rs2,400 per 40kg. Abbasi added that with a steep rise in the prices of urea and electricity, farmers are now compelled to sell wheat at Rs2,100 per 40kg — despite their production cost being much higher. (*Business Recorder*, April 18th, 2025, Page 3)

Sit-in on highways: 250 containers of potatoes stuck at Sindh's entry point

A sit-in on the highways has caused 250 containers of potatoes to get stuck at Sindh's entry point. Exports are facing yet another challenge — just as the disruption caused by the goods transporters' strike had not yet been resolved, a new obstacle has emerged. The 250 containers of potatoes meant for export are stranded at the entry point of Sindh. Export orders for the Middle East and Far East countries are facing delays due to the protest. (*Business Recorder*, 23rd, 2025, Page 2)

Suspension of trade with India: Chemists seek alternative sources for raw materials import

Chemists and Druggists have called for finding alternative sources for pharmaceutical raw materials following the suspension of trade with India. Last year, Pakistan's pharmaceutical industry recorded \$305m in trade with India. Druggists said vaccines, biological products, and cancer medicines can now be imported from countries like China, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Europe. It noted that while Indian raw materials were cheaper, they were often of lower quality compared to alternatives available globally. Since tensions with India in 2019, efforts have been underway to reduce reliance on Indian pharmaceutical imports. (*Business Recorder*, April 27th, 2025, Page 5)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Tariff-related concerns: Jam vows support to fruit, juice sector

Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan chaired a meeting with the Fruit Juice Council and leading manufacturers, including representatives from Pepsico and Nestlé, to discuss key challenges facing the industry — particularly the need to support the formal sector against informal competition and address tariff-related concerns. The council members highlighted the growing threat posed by the informal sector, which undermines the formal industry's ability to meet global standards and expand export potential. They emphasised that without government support the formal sector would continue to face an uneven playing field.

Minister Jam Kamal Khan expressed full agreement with the council's concerns and stressed that empowering the formal industry is essential to increasing exports and aligning Pakistan's products with international standards. "Only by strengthening our formal industry can we meet global benchmarks and unlock export potential," he said. He also acknowledged the broader global challenges that pose risks to food security but noted that Pakistan remains one of the more sustainable nations capable of weathering these difficulties. (*Business Recorder*, April 8th, 2025 Page 2)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Premier hails \$2bn investment by Maersk

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stressed the need for establishing Pakistan as a reliable and effective economic corridor for transit trade in the region to ensure development of the national economy. During a meeting with Robert Maersk, the chairman of Board of

Directors of A.P. Moller-Maersk, the premier welcomed the global shipping company's \$2 billion investment in Pakistan. The PM directed the authorities concerned to form a technical working group to expedite the process of forming a partnership agreement in the maritime sector with the global shipping company.

He also directed the authorities to ensure that the memorandums signed with A.P. Moller-Maersk in the previous year should be transformed into agreements as soon as possible. PM directed the working group to submit recommendations within a month and said that it was high time to remove all barriers and bring the maritime sector on a par with global competitive standards. Prime minister, while mentioning the expected visit of the president of Azerbaijan, expressed satisfaction at mutual interest and high-level efforts to enhance bilateral trade to \$2 billion. (*Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 9*)

Pakistan, Belarus boost ties with key MoUs, workforce deal

Pakistan and Belarus agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation across various sectors, including agriculture, food security, industry, trade and defence. During a meeting between PM Shehbaz Sharif and Belarusian President Aleksandr Lukashenko, both sides signed several MoUs. Both sides also agreed to collaborate and expand cooperation in the manufacturing of agricultural machinery, electric buses, and in the area of food security. The two sides discussed matters relating to trade, investment and regional issues and expressed satisfaction over the recent progress on all aspects of the bilateral relations. (*Dawn, April 12th, 2025 Page 12*)

Jul-Mar FDI up 14pc to \$1.644bn YoY

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan rose by 14 percent during the first nine months of this fiscal year (FY25). According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the country fetched FDI amounting to \$1.644 billion in July-March of FY25 compared to \$1.442 billion in the same period of last fiscal year (FY24), showing an increase of \$202 million. During the period under review, FDI inflows were \$2.472 billion as against \$828 million outflow.

The SBP reported that the FDI saw a sharp decline of 91 percent on a month-on-month basis. In March 2025, the country received a net FDI inflow of \$25.7 million, compared with \$294.2 million in March 2024. The major chunk of FDI arrived from China, which has 41 percent share in overall FDI received this fiscal year. FDI from China surged by 107 percent to \$684.5 million in July-March FY25 from \$330.3 million in the same period of last fiscal year. Investments from Hong Kong also increased to \$175.9 million in July-March FY25, compared with \$153.8 million in the same period last year.

Sector wise analysis revealed that strong inflows into the financial services sector, reaching \$518.4 million during the first nine months of this fiscal year, up from \$464.8 million in FY24, have been a key driver of the overall FDI increase. The power sector also saw significant growth, attracting \$500 million in foreign investment compared to \$342.5 million in the previous year. (*Business Recorder, April 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

Japan to provide \$3m to UNHCR to support Afghan refugees

The government of Japan has decided to provide \$3 million to UNHCR to support Afghan refugees and host communities in Pakistan. In light of humanitarian challenges in host communities, the Japanese financial contribution, which comes from Japan's supplementary budget, will enhance UNHCR's efforts to provide critical assistance to both refugees and their host communities, addressing urgent needs in protection and documentation, gender-based violence, health, and livelihoods, across Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, April 19th, 2025, Page 8*)

Pakistan receives \$12.5bn in foreign loans

Pakistan authorities have materialised only \$12.5 billion in foreign loans in the first nine months of 2024-25 against an annual \$19.2bn target by June 30. While half of this portfolio was legacy rollovers from China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates — fresh loans and grant inflows amounted to \$5.51bn in nine months, almost 20pc lower than the comparable period of last fiscal year. In its monthly report on Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) released, the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) said that against its annual target of \$19.4bn, total FEA in July-March amounted to \$5.51bn compared to \$6.9bn in the same period last year with the annual target of \$17.6bn.

This does not include about \$1bn disbursed by the IMF in October as upfront payment under the \$7bn ongoing Extended Fund Facility (EFF) that is accounted for separately by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). However, \$1.2bn received a year back under the Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) had also seen similar accounting treatment. With three rollovers and fresh disbursements, the total external assistance in nine months amounted to \$12.46bn. This included \$3bn rollovers by Saudi Arabia, \$2bn by UAE and \$1bn by China. This does not include another \$2bn China rolled over last month, making its total rollover to \$3bn thus far. Pakistan has a total annual rollover portfolio of about \$12.7bn in safe deposits and loans from these three countries, leaving the country's net international reserves (NIR) at a deficit.

The foreign economic assistance recorded by the EAD showed inflows fell by about 20.2pc to about \$5.5bn in July-March, apparently because of delayed IMF bailout and subsequent \$1bn disbursements. Last year, these inflows amounted to \$7.9bn in these nine months, including IMF.

In March this year, the EAD reported monthly inflows at \$555 million, compared to \$365m in February and \$830m in January. The EAD said that out of \$5.5b, about \$3bn was received for budgetary support or programme loans and the remaining \$2.4bn for project financing. During the same period last year, EAD secured about \$2.2bn as project aid and \$4.7bn as programme loans. Of the total, inflows from multilaterals stood at \$2.83bn in 9MFY25 compared to \$2.7bn last year, while bilateral disbursements stood at \$358.5m against \$870m last year.

The EAD reported to have received about \$504m in loans from foreign commercial lenders (UAE-based) in nine months of the current year, showing a minor recovery from commercial banks who had stayed away from financing Pakistan last year. It may be noted that the government has budgeted \$3.8bn in financing from foreign commercial banks for the current year, showing a poor start, again due to the delayed IMF umbrella.

The government has also targeted \$1bn in international bonds for the current year. A projection for \$9bn inflow from China and Saudi Arabia was targeted for FY25. These projections include a \$5bn time deposit from Saudi Arabia and \$4bn China's SAFE deposit. These projections are critical for Pakistan to meet its external financing gap as part of the IMF programme. In addition, Pakistan also received \$1.455bn from overseas Pakistanis through Naya Pakistan Certificates compared to \$781m in the same period last year. ADB disbursed \$1.189bn in 9MFY25 compared to \$665m a year ago, and \$979m was received from the World Bank. (*Dawn, April 22nd, 2025, Page 9*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # World Bank

Flood rehabilitation: WB may approve \$150m more for Sindh govt

The World Bank is likely to approve additional financing of \$150 million to support the government of Sindh's efforts to rehabilitate critical infrastructure damaged during the 2022 floods and enhance capacity to respond to disasters. Official documents revealed that by scaling-up key activities, addressing financing gaps, and supporting institutional strengthening, the additional financing (AF) aims to increase project impact and improve its overall development effectiveness. The project directly supports Country Partnership Framework Outcome —“Increased Resilience to Floods and Other Climate Disasters”—by enhancing flood resilience through integrated risk management and strengthening disaster preparedness. (*Business Recorder, April 9th, 2025 Page 14*)

World Bank looks to new investments under public-private partnerships model

World Bank Group is looking into new investment opportunities through private-public partnerships in Pakistan besides supporting the expansion of modern digital metering systems across the power utilities in the country. Two related delegations of the World Bank and its commercial arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC), had detailed engagements with ministers of finance and power. The two sides also had a consensus on retaining National Transmission and Despatch Company, operator of the national grid, in the public sector instead of its privatisation. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 9*)

World Bank trims Pakistan's economic growth forecast to 2.7pc

The World Bank slightly lowered its growth forecast for Pakistan to 2.7 per cent for the current fiscal year, citing continued economic stabilisation but persistent constraints from tight monetary and fiscal policies. World Bank had earlier predicted Pakistan's economy to grow by 2.8pc during the current fiscal year in its Pakistan Development Update (PDU) released in October last year. In a statement issued the World Bank said

that growth would remain subject to many downside risks but forecast that the economic growth rate would improve to 3.1pc in the next fiscal year (FY26) and 3.4pc in FY27. It said Pakistan's economy was stabilising with easing inflation and improving financial conditions, as well as current accounts and primary fiscal surpluses. Amid continued tight macroeconomic policy, economic growth has been weak during the first half of the fiscal year. Agriculture saw limited growth, in part due to adverse weather and pest infestations. Industrial activity declined, impacted by higher input costs and taxes, and reduced government spending. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

World Bank okays \$108m more financing for rural access, tourism projects in KP

The World Bank (WB) has recently approved additional financing for Pakistan, amounting to \$108 million to execute two projects supporting access to social services, markets and jobs in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The international lender also greenlit \$78m in additional financing to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Rural Accessibility Project (KPRAP) along with \$30m to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Integrated Tourism Development Project (Kite). (*Dawn, April 30th, 2025, Page 9*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Agricultural Policy

KP govt to formulate dedicated mountain agri policy

Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur, a major initiative aimed at promoting mountain agriculture in the province, has decided to formulate a dedicated policy for mountain agriculture. The Chief Minister's Secretariat has formally sent an official letter along with a concept paper to the Agriculture Department with direction to finalize the draft of the proposed "KP Mountain Agriculture Policy" based on the concept paper, and present the same to the competent forum for approval within 45 days. The concept paper includes an executive summary and outlines key thematic areas such as agro-ecological zones, major crops, livestock, fisheries, and critical administrative challenges. It also contains recommendations and strategic directions for shaping the policy framework. It emphasizes the unique characteristics of mountain agriculture, taking into account local terrain, soil, climate conditions, value chain development, and access to markets. Special focus has also been placed on enhancing agricultural technology, research, and extension services in remote areas, which are considered vital components of the policy.

The concept paper highlights the significant potential for agriculture and livestock in the province's hilly regions. It stresses the need for an institutionalized policy approach to tap into this potential effectively. The role of women in the rural economy and the importance of community mobilization have also been highlighted as essential to the policy's success. Among the key recommendations are the establishment of a Mountain Agriculture Development Board and community seed banks, the revival of local cooperatives and relevant rural organizations, identification of water and soil

conservation projects, training of at least 50 new extension agents, implementation of a multi-level marketing strategy, and development of a robust monitoring and evaluation system to ensure policy effectiveness. (*Business Recorder*, April 19th, 2025, Page 2)

9.2 # Development Policy

11 projects worth Rs101bn get CDWP nod

CDWP cleared 11 development projects, mostly in Punjab, at an estimated cost of Rs101.053 billion. Presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, the meeting of the CDWP referred four projects worth Rs91bn to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (EcneC) for formal approval and cleared seven schemes worth Rs10.053bn. The projects belonged to higher education, information technology, housing and physical planning, transport and communications and tourism. Of the total Rs101.053bn, about Rs78bn worth of projects approved by the CDWP would be executed in Punjab. (*Dawn*, April 26th, 2025, Page 9)

9.3 # Neo – Liberal Policies

ECC hints at deregulating sugar sector

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of Cabinet has indicated the possibility of deregulating the entire sugar sector in order to avoid controversies and unjustified price hikes of the commodity in the country. The sugar issue was discussed at the ECC meeting on April 7, 2025. ECC deliberated on topics such as sugarcane, crop zoning, storage, and the import and export of sugar. It was emphasised that deregulation of the entire sector should be considered rather than resorting to piecemeal solutions, which could prove counterproductive. (*Business Recorder*, April 10th, 2025 Page 1)

Govt plans to outsource railway hospitals, schools

Ministry for Railways Muhammad Hanif Abbasi has announced that railway hospitals and 14 schools across country will be outsourced due to their deteriorating conditions. “Instead of providing relief to people, their doctors prescribe vaccines worth Rs50,000 to be purchased from outside.” The government has decided to outsource hospitals and schools “keeping in view their sorry state of affairs.” (*Dawn*, April 23rd, 2025, Page 5)

Fresh bids sought for second push to sell PIA

Months after its first attempt to sell off Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) stalled, the government invited fresh bids with more incentives for buyers. The investors can submit an expression of interest by June 3, with the bidding process expected to take place between October and December. The government is offering 51 to 100pc share capital, with management control of national flag carrier. (*Dawn*, April 25th, 2025, Page 1)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Public debt till Feb 25th totals Rs75.3trn

The total value of public debt at present (Feb 25) is Rs75.3 trillion including Rs51 trillion domestic and Rs24.3 trillion external debt. Minister for Finance and Revenue

Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb told the National Assembly that it is the “Total Public Debt” defined as debt owed by the government (including federal government and provincial governments) serviced out of consolidated funds and debts owed to the IMF.

The finance minister said that the total value of public debt till January-2025 stood at Rs74.4 trillion including Rs50.2 trillion domestic and Rs24.2 trillion external debt. While giving details about central government domestic debt till February-2025, he said that long term debt is Rs42.72 trillion, Rs39.43 trillion is permanent debt, Rs38.554 trillion federal government bonds, Rs5.93 trillion is government of Pakistan Ijara Sukuk, Rs32.558tr is Pakistan Investment Bonds, Rs399.4bn Price Bonds, Rs2.914tr unfunded debt and Rs2.835tr is Saving Schemes (Net of Prize Bonds) etc.

About the short term, the minister said that there is Rs8.23 trillion floating debt including Rs8.136 trillion Market Treasury Bills and Rs94.4 billion MTBs for Replenishment of Cash etc. About the central government external debt till February-2025, the finance minister said that there is Rs21.73 trillion long term debt, Rs288.6 billion short term debt and Rs2.3152 trillion is International Monetary Fund (IMF), etc.

About the breakup of grants and loans provided to different government entities during first six months of financial year 2024-25, the minister said that the government provided a total of Rs644.17 billion grants including Rs232.25 billion to Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), Rs22.59 billion to Higher Education Commission (HEC), Rs26.66 billion to Railways, Rs 3.14 billion to Pakistan Baitul Maal and Rs359.53 billion to others. About the loans, he said that the government provided Rs48.32 billion loan to National Highways Authority (NHA), Rs7.48 billion to National Transmission & Despatch Company (NTDC), Rs5.5 billion GENCO and Rs0.21 billion to others. (*Business Recorder, April 10th, 2025 Page 12*)

10.1 # Food

Tally of food poisoning patients crosses over 1,300 in Gujar Khan

The tally of people affected by food poisoning at a marriage ceremony in Dhoong village of Gujar Khan about two days ago crossed over 1,300. Kaleemullah Bhatti Advocate said this was not the only incident of food poisoning at a large scale in Gujar Khan, as according to him in October 2024 over 200 people had also suffered food poisoning at marriage ceremonies and restaurants while a boy lost his life and dozens others fell sick after eating a fast food (Shwarma) in Gujar Khan city. Mr Bhatti said action should be taken against marriage halls, food catering outlets as well as restaurants violating health and hygiene SOPs. (*Dawn, April 16th, 2025, Page 4*)

10.2 # Food Scarcity

‘40pc children suffering from stunting’

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) organised the 6th Annual All Pakistan Nutritionists Convention focusing on combating malnutrition. The convention was held at Alhamra

Hall where PFA Director General (DG) Asim Javed was chief guest. PFA DG expressed concern that 40pc of children were suffering from stunting, 28pc from wasting and 30pc having height below the average for their age. According to the National Nutrition Survey, 25pc of children face zinc deficiency and 30pc are iron deficient.

He emphasized that establishment of PFA helped address food hygiene and safety challenges. The DG further shared that in the current year alone, 214,000kg of meat, 56,161 litres of oil and 312,562 liters of adulterated milk were disposed of. He said various nutrition programmes like the Healthy Kids Campaign, Healthy Women Campaign, and School Nutrition Programs were actively underway. Under the School Nutrition Programme, 20,000 children were pre and post screened and 10,786 students received free daily lunch boxes for two months. (*Dawn, April 29th, 2025, Page 2*)

10.3 # Inflation

SBP sees FY25 inflation of 5.5–7.5pc, real GDP growth of 2.5-3.5pc

Pakistan's macroeconomic conditions strengthened further in the first half of this fiscal year (FY25), with key indicators showing marked improvement. Headline inflation fell to a multi-year low by March 2025, the current account recorded a surplus bolstering foreign exchange reserve, and the fiscal deficit was contained to its lowest level in two decades, supported by a record surplus in the primary balance.

According to the “State of Pakistan's Economy”, Half Year Report FY25, released by State Bank of Pakistan the calibrated monetary policy stance, fiscal consolidation, benign global commodity prices together with approval of IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program mainly underpinned these favorable outcomes. In addition, the upgrade of the country's credit rating by international agencies was mentioned as recognition of the improving macroeconomic environment.

Report highlighted that inflationary pressures have receded notably as headline inflation reached a multi-decade low of 0.7 percent by March 2025. This steep disinflation was attributed to a confluence of factors, including tight monetary policy stance and fiscal consolidation that kept domestic demand in check, improved supply conditions, respite in energy price adjustments, and subdued international commodity prices.

The moderation in real GDP growth was attributed to lower production of important Kharif crops and contraction in industrial activity during H1-FY25. A broad-based decline in Kharif crops was seen to be caused by falling area under cultivation and lower yields. The report pointed to key role of agriculture policy uncertainty, last year's low crop prices, unfavorable weather conditions, and lower use of certified seeds and other inputs for this lackluster performance. Reuters adds: Pakistan's average inflation in the fiscal year ending June 2025 is expected to be in the range of 5.5-7.5%, while there is no change in the projection for real GDP growth of 2.5–3.5%, Pakistan's central bank said in its half-yearly economic report. (*Business Recorder, April 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.4 # Poverty

Poverty rate in country to stand at 42.4pc: WB

The poverty rate in Pakistan is estimated to stand at 42.4 percent in fiscal year 2025, with population growing at nearly 2 percent annually, this translates to 1.9 million additional people falling into poverty this year, says the World Bank. The bank in its “Poverty & Equity Brief”, noted that despite a stabilising economy and easing inflation, Pakistan’s 2.6 percent economic growth remains insufficient to reduce poverty. The poverty rate is estimated to stand at 42.4pc (US\$3.65/day 2017 PPP) in fiscal year 2025, virtually unchanged from last year. With population growing at nearly 2pc annually, this translates to 1.9m additional people falling into poverty this year. Consumption-based inequality, as measured by the Gini Index, has climbed nearly 2 points since fiscal year 2021, holding steady just below 32 over past year. However, actual inequality is likely higher since surveys typically under-represent wealthy households.

Additionally, external factors such as evolving global trade dynamics could influence pace of economic recovery and subsequent progress on poverty reduction. Following agricultural growth in fiscal year 2024, the sector now faces significant challenges. In first half (H1) of fiscal year 2025, weather conditions deteriorated with a 40 percent reduction in rainfall, along with pest attacks and shifting production choices. Crop yields are projected to decline, ranging from 29.6 percent for cotton to 1.2 percent for rice, limiting sectoral growth to fewer than 2 percent.

With agriculture employing approximately half of the working poor, rural poverty is expected to rise slightly (0.2 percentage points), while real incomes for agricultural workers are projected to fall 0.7 percent in fiscal year 2025. Food security concerns loom large, with an estimated 10 million people at risk of acute food insecurity in rural areas. Fiscal tightening has restricted development spending, undermining the construction industry that employs 17 percent of the poor in daily wage jobs.

Both industrial and service sectors showed weak growth in H1 fiscal year 2025, resulting in minimal real income increases for poor and vulnerable workers in construction (-1.4 percent) and low-productivity service jobs (0.7 percent). While nominal daily wages for low-skilled workers nearly doubled between fiscal year 2019 and Q1 of fiscal year 2025, real wages remained flat or declined slightly, indicating eroding purchasing power, despite inflation easing to 7 percent year-over-year in H1 fiscal year 2025.

External remittances surged by 33 percent in H1 fiscal year 2025, but the impact on the poorest remains limited as only 3.2 percent of lowest-income households receive remittances. However, for the vulnerable households just above the poverty line, remittances play an important role in preventing households from falling into poverty in the face of shocks. Rising emigration since 2020, particularly among low-skilled workers, may help extend remittance benefits to poorer households, as well. On the

social protection side, recent increases in the Benazir Income Support Program benefits above inflation rates, along with a planned expansion to 500,000 additional households by fiscal year-end, should support household consumption and help buffer the poor against short-term market shocks. (*Business Recorder*, 23rd, 2025, Page 1)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Maryam directs launching Punjab Air project

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has formally directed the launch of Punjab Air project. Chairing a meeting for a briefing on Pakistan's first provincial airline and Pakistan's first bullet train projects, she directed authorities to launch the Air Punjab and gave in-principle approval to start the Lahore-Rawalpindi bullet train project. She also directed them to immediately get four Airbuses on lease for the Air Punjab and said: "Initially, the Air Punjab will start domestic flights. After one year, it will be able to start foreign flights." (*The News*, April 27th, 2025, Page 1)

11.1 # Biodiversity

Over 250 rare peacocks die from mysterious disease in Tharparkar

A mysterious disease has claimed lives of more than 250 rare peacocks in Tharparkar's rural areas, with hundreds more reportedly sick, raising grave concerns among local residents about the survival of the region's prized bird population. Criticising the wildlife department for its alleged inaction, they expressed fears of further losses unless immediate measures are taken. Tharparkar is home to approximately 500,000 rare 'blue shoulder peacocks', a species protected within the Thar Desert Wildlife Sanctuary. Any threat to their population is seen as a serious blow to the district's natural heritage and biodiversity. (*Dawn*, April 28th, 2025, Page 15)

Call to protect marine biodiversity as pollution threatens ecosystem

Speakers at a three-day international conference, which opened at Karachi University (KU), underscored the need to protect the country's marine biodiversity, which they said faced a growing threat from pollution. The event — Marine Biodiversity, Socio-Environmental Aspects and Technology — was organised by KU's Department of Zoology at university's Chinese Teachers Memorial Auditorium. Speaking at inaugural session as the chief guest, provincial minister for energy, planning and development Syed Nasir Hussain Shah reaffirmed the government's commitment to protecting coastal areas and preserving mangrove forests. (*Dawn*, April 29th, 2025, Page 14)

11.2 # Health

70pc of young Pakistanis obese: study

Alarmingly high levels of obesity, low-density lipoprotein (LDL or "bad" cholesterol), and low levels of protective high-density lipoprotein (HDL or "good" cholesterol) are the leading causes of premature coronary atherosclerosis — early plaque formation in the arteries of young Pakistani men and women — driving a surge in heart attacks among the country's youth. These are the preliminary findings from the PAK-SEHAT

study, Pakistan's first-of-its-kind longitudinal cohort research led by renowned interventional cardiologist and Managing Director of a leading heart institute in Karachi, Prof Bashir Hanif.

Dubbed as a "Mini Framingham Heart Study" for Pakistan, the 10-year project is being conducted by the Getz Pharma with nearly Rs1.4 billion (US\$5 million) in funding. It aims to determine why heart attacks are now occurring in Pakistanis as young as their 30s and 40s — decades earlier than in the West, where such events are typically seen in the 60s and beyond. Presenting the initial findings at the Pakistan Society of Internal Medicine (PSIM) Conference in Karachi, Prof Bashir Hanif described the results as deeply troubling. He reported that 70 percent of participants are obese, with the rate rising to 80 percent among women. More than 70 percent have elevated LDL cholesterol, while half have alarmingly low levels of HDL. He warned that these risk levels are unprecedented in such a young population and signal a looming public health disaster. (*Business Recorder, April 20th, 2025, Page 5*)

Pakistan reports polio case from KP; tally at seven

Amid the ongoing vaccination drive across the country against poliovirus, a new polio case was confirmed from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health confirmed the poliovirus case from Torghar district of KP. It was this year's second case from the province and seventh case from across Pakistan. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 12*)

Sindh reports year's ninth rabies case amid vaccine shortage, rise in canine population

Amid government failure to address vaccine shortage and control canine population, the number of rabies cases recorded this year in the province rose to nine when a man affected by the deadly virus was brought to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC). Six of the nine patients hailed from the interior parts of Sindh. They added that the patient with a history of dog-bite was brought to the emergency department with hydrophobia — a clinical sign of human rabies. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 13*)

KP registers 8th mpox case in current year

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department has detected a new mpox case in Khyber tribal district, taking the total number of patients infected with zoonotic ailment in the province this year to eight. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 8*)

Tally rises to 8 after fresh polio case reported

While high transmission season has been started, Pakistan has reported a second polio case within a short span of three days, pushing the overall tally this year to eight. According to an official of the Regional Reference Laboratory for Polio Eradication at the National Institute of Health, the lab has confirmed a polio case from Bannu district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 12*)

Climate change fuels malaria spike in Pakistan: WHO

World Health Organization and Pakistan's Ministry of National Health Services have warned that climate change is worsening the impact of malaria across the country, where more than 2 million cases are reported annually. The warning was issued on World Malaria Day, as both WHO and Pakistan called on all stakeholders to urgently intensify efforts to contain growing threat to the country and the region. The catastrophic 2022 floods triggered 6.6 million additional cases over the 2022–2024 period — including a peak of 2.7 million cases in 2023, compared to 399,097 cases in 2021. As a result, the malaria burden in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region surged to an estimated 10.2 million cases in 2023 — a 137 per cent increase compared to 2015. Additionally, 7.8m insecticide-treated nets were distributed in 22 high-burden districts, contributing to a reduction in cases from 2.7m in 2023 to 2m last year. (*Dawn*, April 27th, 2025, Page 12)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Minister Musadik Malik sees serious climate threats to GB

Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Musadik Malik said that Gilgit-Baltistan is on the frontline of climate change as the region is witnessing increasing incidents of glacial melting and glaciers lakes outburst floods (GLOFs) events, which have caused significant destruction over the years. Senator Malik, accompanied by a high-level delegation from the UNDP and the Ministry of Climate Change, is currently visiting Baltistan to inspect initiatives under the GLOF-II Project and assess climate change impacts in the region. (*Dawn*, April 25th, 2025, Page 5)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

'Pakistan faces \$2bn losses in climate disasters': ADB

Pakistan faces average annual losses of over \$2 billion due to climate disasters, which exacerbate the already high poverty levels, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB). "As one of the region's most climate-vulnerable countries, Pakistan suffers average losses from disaster events exceeding \$2bn per year, with women and vulnerable groups disproportionately affected," said the Manila-based lending agency in its Annual Report 2024 released. It said the ADB signed a \$500 million policy-based loan in 2024 for a programme to boost Pakistan's capacity for disaster planning, preparedness, and response. The programme supported disaster risk mapping, modelling, and mobilising public and private financing for disaster risk reduction and climate resilience. It will also improve coordination for disaster monitoring and response and utilise ADB's contingent disaster financing facility for the first time in central and west Asia, providing rapid disbursements in the event of a disaster.

In Pakistan, ADB also committed an additional \$330m to expand reach of a grassroots social protection programme to benefit 9.3 million people, focusing particularly on poor women and their families. The new financing will improve the targeting of household poverty assistance, provide conditional cash transfers to educate children and

adolescents, and expand access to health services and better nutrition for women, teenage girls, and children in disaster-prone areas. The ADB said it committed \$24.3bn from its resources in 2024 and \$14.9bn in co-financing in collaboration with its partners to help Asia and the Pacific solve a range of complex development challenges. (*Dawn*, April 25th, 2025, Page 9)

13.1 # Heatwave

Heatwave spells in Sindh, South Punjab, Balochistan likely

The relentless heatwave spell gripping Sindh, southern Punjab, and parts of Balochistan is expected to persist until April 18; the Met Office issued another weather advisory, urging the public to take safety cautions. (*Business Recorder*, April 16th, 2025, Page 2)

Heatwave intensifies in Sindh as mercury surges to 49°C

The heatwave gripping most parts of the province for almost a week continued with maximum temperature surging to 49 degrees Celsius. The Met department's data showed that Shaheed Benazirabad (Nawabshah) became the hottest place in the country with temperature soaring to 49°C — 8.4°C high temperature from the city's average temperature in previous Aprils — from 47°C recorded a day earlier. (*Dawn*, April 18th, 2025, Page 13)

13.2 # Hailstorm

Freak hailstorm upends life in country's north

A freak hail and thunderstorm swept across parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the federal capital and claimed several lives across both provinces, damaging public and private property as well as standing crops. The rain also induced flash floods in KP, which also affected traffic, particularly on the main Peshawar-Torkham Road, where traffic remained suspended for up to five hours due to a swollen stream. The farmers feared that the damage due to rain and hail was going to affect the yield of wheat crops. (*Dawn*, April 17th, 2025, Page 1)

Intense hailstorm pummels capital as three die in Rawalpindi, Gujar Khan

At least three people were killed in Rawalpindi and Gujar Khan after an intense hailstorm, accompanied by heavy rain and gusty winds, battered the region. Two people died in the Sohawa area of Gujar Khan when a wall collapsed on individuals passing through a street in Sohawa Town. Four others in the same area were critically injured. (*Dawn*, April 17th, 2025, Page 4)

Six injured in lightning strike as rain, hailstorm lash KP

Six people were injured in lightning strike as rain and hailstorm lashed large parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) issued a flood advisory for River Kabul and its tributaries. Six people suffered injuries after the car they're travelling in was struck by lightning in Tangai area of Charsadda district amid downpour and hailstorm. (*Dawn*, April 19th, 2025, Page 8)

13.3 # Rainfall

Two sisters die as rains trigger landslides across GB

Two girls were killed when a wall collapsed due to intermittent rains across Gilgit-Baltistan, which also triggered landslides blocking the Karakoram Highway (KKH) and Baltistan Road at multiple points. Landslides, mudflows and rockfalls blocked the KKH at several locations in Kohistan and Diamer. (*Dawn, April 20th, 2025, Page 3*)

Windstorm, heavy rains kill man, partially damage 48 houses in AJK

Windstorms and heavy rain in different parts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) claimed a man's life and partially damaged 48 houses. Additionally, 12 houses were partially damaged in Muzaffarabad district, 20 in Sudhnoti district, 15 in Poonch district, and one in Kotli district. (*Dawn, April 20th, 2025, Page 4*)

Landslides continue in GB even as rains subside

Landslides continued to affect many areas of Gilgit – Baltistan, even as the weather improved after four days of intermittent rain and snowfall. With climate change making weather patterns erratic, the mountainous region received heavy rainfall and snowfall during months when the weather is relatively better. Landslides occurred in Chichala village in Deral valley of Diamer. The falling rocks damaged a home, livestock shelters, trees and other properties. Landslides also damaged many connecting roads in remote areas of the region. (*Dawn, April 23rd, 2025, Page 1*)

13.4 # Wildfire

Margalla Hills wildfire intensifies due to strong winds: IWMB

Strong winds intensified a wildfire sweeping through the Margalla Hills. “Gusts are fanning the flames, carrying embers into untouched areas and accelerating the fire's spread by fueling it with a continuous supply of oxygen,” said Islamabad Wildlife Management IWMB) spokesperson. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 4*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquake

Quake tremors hit Swat, Mingora

Earthquake tremors were felt in Swat and the neighboring areas of Mingora. The tremors struck in the early hours, sending people rushing to the streets, while others sought shelter in open areas. Fortunately, no casualties or property damage have been reported as of now. According to the Seismic Center, the earthquake measured 4.2 on the Richter scale and occurred at a depth of 64 kilometers. The epicenter was located in the Hindu Kush mountain range, an area known for its frequent seismic activity. (*Business Recorder, April 6th, 2025 Page 3*)

Capital, KP, Punjab hit by moderate earthquake

A 5.5 magnitude earthquake struck northwestern parts of Punjab, Peshawar and Islamabad. The Punjab Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) confirmed

that no casualties or property damage were reported. In KP, tremors were felt in Haripur, Abbottabad, Attock, Swat, Malakand, and Peshawar, according to the National Seismological Centre. The earthquake measured 5.5 on the Richter scale, according to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre. However, according to the United States Geological Survey, quake measured 5.0 on the Richter scale and had a depth of 39.2km. A PDMA spokesperson said the quake's epicentre was 60km northwest of Rawalpindi.

During a press conference at the National Press Club, centre's CEO Muhammad Shehbaz Leghari said they had predicted seismic activity between April 8 and 11, with an estimated magnitude of 4.8 on the Richter scale in "northern to southern parts" of the country, APP reported. Pakistan recorded around 20 low-intensity earthquakes in the first half of February — an average of more than one tremor each day. However, experts say such minor seismic activities "preempt" high-intensity earthquakes by constantly releasing accumulated energy within the tectonic plates. According to NSMC, the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region also felt minor quakes earlier in day. The border region experienced a 3.8-magnitude jolt, with a depth of 109km. Another 4.3-magnitude earthquake with a depth of 88km jolted the region. (*Dawn, April 13th, 2025 Page 1*)

Earthquake jolts Balochistan's Khuzdar

A 3.9-magnitude earthquake struck Khuzdar city and its surrounding areas prompting residents of the Kalat Division headquarters to leave their homes and seek shelter in open spaces. According to the local administration, no casualties or major damage were reported in any part of Khuzdar district. The seismological centre in Islamabad recorded the quake at a depth of 30 kilometres, with its epicenter located approximately 18km north of Khuzdar. (*Dawn, April 17th, 2025, Page 5*)

Various cities shaken by 5.9 magnitude quake

A powerful earthquake measuring 5.9 magnitude shook various cities across Pakistan, including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa causing alarm among residents. National Seismic Monitoring Centre reported that earthquake's tremors were felt in numerous cities including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sheikhpura, Abbottabad, Attock, Haripur, Mansehra, Peshawar, Nowshera, Mardan, Haripur, Swat, Chitral, Shangla, Malakand, Muzaffarabad and several other cities. According to the National Seismic Monitoring Centre in Islamabad, the epicenter of the earthquake was located in Afghanistan-Tajikistan border region, with a focal depth of 94 kilometers. (*Business Recorder, April 20th, 2025, Page 8*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Politicos flay steps to 'quell' Balochistan protests

Leaders of different political parties condemned restrictions placed by the government on sit-ins and protests, terming it an unconstitutional act as staging rallies is the right of everyone. While Akhtar Mengal's BNP-M is set to start its march on Quetta from Mastung, the government is taking administrative measures to handle the situation.

Despite the fact that both the government and BNP-M had failed to make a breakthrough in talks, backdoor efforts are underway through political and tribal quarters to defuse the situation, according to informed sources. At a press conference jointly addressed by the leaders of several political parties, the government was reminded that Constitution allows every citizen to hold rallies, organise marches and stage sit-ins for the acceptance of their demands. However, they regretted, the government instead of accepting the people's democratic and constitutional right had imposed restrictions on their movement and used force against them. (*Dawn, April 5th, 2025 Page 1*)

Lawyers in Gilgit-Baltistan go on strike till 16th

Legal fraternity in Gilgit-Baltistan has announced a boycott of all court proceedings and will hold protest demonstrations across the region until April 16, citing the non-fulfillment of their demands. For the past five months, lawyers in Gilgit-Baltistan have been protesting and boycotting court proceedings, except for emergency cases, due to the unmet demands. However, this time, lawyers have decided to not appear in courts even for emergency cases till April 16. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 3*)

PPP opponents continue protests against all 'anti-Sindh' initiatives

Under banner of the 'Save Indus Movement' -- intensified in recent weeks -- opponents of PPP and federal government held more rallies and demonstrations in different parts of Sindh to force authorities concerned to shelve controversial six canals project as well as corporate farming and other 'anti-Sindh' initiatives. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 15*)

Businesses protest killing of trader's grandson in Sukkur

Businesses remained closed in protest over killing of a trade leader's grandson in Sukkur, as tradesmen demand arrest of the murderer. President of the association's Karachi chapter Mehmood Hamid added, "In just 90 days, 226 citizens have been killed by dumpers in Karachi without justice; now Sukkur mourns same brutality." (*Business Recorder, April 6th, 2025 Page 3*)

Farmers plan countrywide rallies against corporate farming

Farmers have decided to launch a nationwide protest on April 13 against corporate farming being introduced under the Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI). According to a decision taken by a joint sitting by the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee, Anjuman Mazareen Punjab, Hari Jedojehad Committee, Crofter Foundation and others, rallies and conventions will be held in various towns and at public sector farms on April 13. The participants will demand an end to corporate farming and the eviction of peasants from the lands they have been cultivating for generations.

They will also seek a ban on construction of controversial canals in southern Punjab, and will demand all public sector agricultural lands distributed among the peasants, withdrawal of notices to tenants for payment of outstanding dues worth millions of rupees, and that wheat purchase price should be fixed at Rs4,000 per 40kg during the ongoing harvesting season. Farmers and activists fear that the transition to large-scale

agribusinesses may threaten small landowners, displace peasants of state lands and limit their access to crucial agricultural resources. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 3*)

Opposition parties stage rally against canals project

Opposition parties in Sindh, along with members of the legal fraternity, staged a sit-in outside the Karachi Press Club in protest against the proposed construction of six new canals on the Indus River. From the joint platform of the Save Indus River Movement, the Grand Democratic Alliance (GDA), Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and members of the Karachi Bar Association (KBA) took out a rally from Empress Market which concluded at the KPC where party leaders addressed the participants. The speakers termed the canals project a conspiracy against Sindh and held the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) responsible for it. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 13*)

JUI-F holds sit-ins on Sindh's seven barrages, bridges against controversial canals

Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) organised big rallies in different towns of Sindh and held sit-ins at Sukkur Barrage, Larkana-Khairpur Bridge, Kotri Barrage and several other such places to declare the federal plan of drawing six canals from the Indus unacceptable. It asked the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) — the key component of the ruling coalition at the Centre — to stand with the masses by parting ways with the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 15*)

Strike observed in many areas of Balochistan on BNP-M call

A shutter down strike was observed in different areas of Balochistan on the call of Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) President Sardar Akhtar Mengal against the provincial government for blocking roads to restrict marchers' entry to Quetta from Lakpass, and the arrest of BYC leader Dr Mahrang Baloch and other female activists. The protesters, who had planned a long march from Wadh to Quetta, were holding a sit-in near the Lakpass area for the last 11 days where the authorities had deployed heavy security and closed the tunnel linking Quetta with Kalat and Rakhshan divisions. The Quetta-Karachi and Quetta-Taftan highways remained closed as the party workers staged sit-in at various places. Traffic has been suspended for past one week due to the BNP sit-in near Lakpass. (*Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 5*)

Chilas dam protesters threaten to intensify agitation

People affected by construction of Diamer-Bhasha Dam blocked Karakoram Highway at Bab-i-Chilas for traffic, except ambulances, as the Huqooq Do, Dam Banao sit-in against Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) entered 52nd day. The standoff between the locals and government continued despite several rounds of negotiations for compensation of land ownership and businesses affected by the construction of the dam as well as some other demands of the locals remained unmet. (*Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 5*)

Traders shut markets to show solidarity with Palestinians

A shutter-down strike was observed across the metropolis on the call of traders in connection with the global strike call given by Hamas to show solidarity with Palestinians and denounce the genocide by Israel. Almost all major markets were closed in Saddar, old city areas, Tariq Road, Clifton, and other areas. A visit to the major markets in Saddar showed that a few shops were open, while major markets were closed. Outside some shops, only guards were seen, while the commercial centres were closed. (Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 13)

Train operations disrupted due to PSM workers' protest

Railway operations in Karachi were suspended with trains getting delayed by several hours when dismissed workers of the Pakistan Steel Mills staged a sit-in at the Pipri Railway Station at Bin Qasim. The PSM workers were airing their grievance with the government and demanded the reinstatement of over 6,000 employees. They said that if their demands are not heard and fulfilled, they will also take to streets and even block highway. Having completely blocked both tracks of Pipri Railway Station, they have already brought to a halt all intercity train operations. (Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 13)

Pasni protesters demand arrest of teenager's killer

People of Pasni continued their protest on a second consecutive day against the mysterious killing of a Grade 9 student whose body was found some days ago in the town a day after he had gone missing. Family members, activists of civil society and workers of different political parties and locals staged a rally in the town carrying pictures of the 14-year-old deceased, Sahil Gulab, demanding immediate arrest of the killers. Led by the boy's mother, the protesters marched on different roads of the coastal town and chanted slogans against the government. "Our protest will continue till we will get justice," she said, adding that the murderers should be arrested without delay. (Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 5)

SPLA announces province-wide protest

The SPLA has announced a protest movement to address the issues faced by college teachers. The sit-ins will be held on April 15 in Sukkur, April 17 in Hyderabad and April 22 in Karachi. The SPLA's central president, Munawar Abbas and secretary general, Ghulam Mustafa Kaka, along with other leaders, stated that college teachers in Sindh are being consistently ignored, leading to their disappointment with Sindh government. They pointed out that while teachers from primary to university levels have been upgraded, college teachers have not been given any importance. In charter of protest movement, SPLA leaders have included 14 demands. These demands include granting college teachers in Sindh a five-tier formula similar to that of KP, providing promotion opportunities and issuing health cards for college education staff. (Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 14)

SUP holds rallies in Sehwan, Johi against 'anti-Sindh' federal plans

The SUP organised two rallies in Sehwan and Jahi as part of its sustained campaign against federal government's plan to draw six new canals from Indus to irrigate millions

of acres in Cholistan and other parts of Punjab. Campaign titled ‘Save the Indus Movement’ has drummed up support from all Sindh-based anti-PPP political parties and nationalist groups, as well as JUI-F. SUP activists riding a number of motorbikes, cars and other vehicles took part in rally taken out in Sehwan. They were holding party flags and waving placards inscribed with slogans against canals project, corporate farming, Green Pakistan Initiative and other controversial federal plans. Many of four-wheelers had banners with same slogans wrapped around them. (*Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 15*)

Mob attacks on fast-food chain in Sindh continue as miscreants torch outlet

Mob attacks on outlets of a global fast-food chain continued in different parts of Sindh as miscreants attacked a restaurant in Mirpurkhas and set it on fire. In Karachi, the Gadap City police said that over a 100 activists of a religious party attempted to ransack another outlet of the fast-food chain on M-9 motorway, but the police thwarted their plan. The officials said that 20 suspects were arrested in Mirpurkhas while nine apprehended by police in the metropolis and separate FIRs had been lodged against miscreants. They said that hundreds of people gathered in front of the fast-food outlet on Hyderabad Road in Mirpurkhas and held a demonstration against Israeli aggression in Gaza. Some of the protesters entered the outlet, ransacked the furniture and set it on fire. A heavy contingent of police arrived at the scene, but the protesters started pelting stones, causing injuries to some policemen. Later, a case was registered with the Town police station on behalf of state. (*Dawn, April 10th, 2025 Page 13*)

Highways blocked for 14 days amid BNP-M protest

The road link between Quetta and Karachi, as well as Quetta and Taftan, could not be restored despite the passage of 14 days, as both the highways remain closed due to a protest sit-in staged by the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) demanding the release of Baloch Yakjehti Committee chief organizer Dr Mahrang Baloch, along with other female activists. (*Dawn, April 11th, 2025 Page 5*)

19 held after angry mobs set 10 trucks on fire in North Karachi

A total of 10 dumper trucks and water tankers were set on fire by angry mobs near Power House Chowrangi and 4-K Chowrangi after a truck driver hit a motorcyclist, injuring him in North Karachi. Taking prompt action, the police conducted raids and arrested 19 suspects and alleged arsonists with the help of CCTV footage. The suspects have been booked under terror and other charges. The city has lately witnessed a rise in traffic accidents — especially involving dumpers and water tankers — which killed nearly 500 people and injured 4,879 were in 2024, according to hospital data. (*Dawn, April 11th, 2025 Page 13*)

Two more fast food outlets come under mob attack in Sindh

Mob attacks on branches of an international fast food chain persisted in Sindh as two of its outlets were attacked in Larkana and Karachi by large groups of religious activists. The Larkana police registered an FIR against 60 suspects and claimed to have arrested

eight of them. In Karachi, the law enforcers detained 10 suspects. Korangi SSP Mohammed Tariq Nawaz said around 40-60 suspects stormed the restaurant in the Korangi Industrial Area and tried to ransack it. He said that the police took swift action, resorted to a baton charge against the suspects and detained 10 of them. However, other suspects others managed to flee. (*Dawn, April 11th, 2025 Page 13*)

Protest after journalist found murdered

Spontaneous reaction was witnessed from journalists and other media personnel across Khairpur district after the body of a journalist with torture marks was found dumped in fields within the limits of the Thari Mirwah police station. The victim, Allah Dino Shar, was associated with Hum News channel. Groups of enraged media workers took out rallies in Kumb, Gambat, Mehrabpur, Setharja, Ranipur, Pir-Jo-Goth, Nara, Kot Diji and other towns and held demonstrations outside their respective press clubs. They demanded immediate arrest of the killers and a fair investigation into the murder. The police said a team of experts had been constituted to ascertain the motive behind the murder. They said three suspects were picked up for interrogation. (*Dawn, April 11th, 2025 Page 15*)

Tank women take to streets against power outages

Women in Tank took to the streets to protest against the relentless and excessive electric loadshedding. Dressed in traditional shuttlecock burqas, the women marked their presence in a rare public demonstration, voicing their frustration over the worsening power crisis. The city of Tank is currently in the grip of a severe energy crisis, as electric outages have now exceeded 20 hours a day. The prolonged and unannounced loadshedding has paralysed daily life, pushing citizens to the edge of desperation. With scorching heat and little to no electricity, residents are suffering immensely. Women are struggling to manage household chores, and businesses have come to a near standstill. (*Dawn, April 12th, 2025 Page 8*)

Nationwide protests held against corporate farming, new canals

Nationwide protests were held against corporate farming, construction of six canals, lack of wheat support price, and privatisation of Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation. The protests were organised by the Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee (PKRC) in 30 towns and cities, including Islamabad, Lahore, Bahawalpur, Rajanpur, Jhang, Kacha Khu (Khanewal), Bhakkar, Jatoi, Shikarpur, Larkana, Sukkur, Badin, Mardan, Dir, Malakand and Lakki Marwat. The PKRC had launched a campaign against corporate farming, construction of controversial canals, and government's refusal to fix a minimum support price for wheat. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 3*)

BYC hold rallies across Balochistan against Mahrang's arrest

Protest rallies were taken out by Baloch Yakjehti Committee workers and supporters in different areas of Balochistan against the arrest of Dr Mahrang Baloch, Beebu Baloch and other leaders. The call for demonstrations and rallies in 20 towns and cities

including Quetta was given by BYC leadership. However, a rally could not be taken out in Quetta where the local administration had deployed a heavy contingent of police which did not allow the BYC workers to come on the road.

Rallies were taken out in Pansi, Turbat, Gwadar, Noshki, Kalat, Mastung, Khuzdar, Hub, Bela, Dalbandin, Sibi, Kharan, Jiwhani and other areas. The participants of the rallies marched on various streets carrying placards and banners inscribed with their demands. They chanted slogans against the government and demanded release of Dr Mahrang and other arrested workers and leaders of the BYC. Meanwhile, the protest sit-in of Balochistan National Party-Mengal against the arrest of BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang and others entered its 16th day. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

JUI-F holds big rally in Karachi to condemn Israeli brutalities

At a big rally in Karachi to condemn Israeli brutalities in Gaza, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman warned that if anyone attempted to recognise Israel or establish political or economic ties with the illegitimate Zionist country, they would face dire consequences. The JUI-F chief announced a “million march” in Lahore on April 27 to show solidarity with the people of Palestine. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 13*)

JI ‘Gaza Solidarity March’ in Karachi asks rulers for more than lip service

The Jamaat-i-Islami staged a massive rally on Shareef Faisal and announced that a countrywide strike would be observed on April 22 to show solidarity with the people of Gaza and condemn the Israeli brutalities. The JI asked Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to do more than “mere lip service” to help the oppressed Palestinians. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 13*)

March held in Shahdadtown over surge in crime against women

Sindh Women Lawyers Alliance (SWLA) held a protest march from Koto Moto Chowk to the Shahdadtown Press Club over unabated incidents of murder, domestic violence and discrimination against women in the city. The family of a primary teacher, Sadaf Hasilo, who was killed allegedly by her fiancé while she was on her way to her workplace a few days back, also joined in the rally. The protesters demanded a fair investigation into the death of a woman police constable, Mahwish Jarwar, whose body was found hanging from the ceiling of her room recently. They also demanded that killer of Sadaf Hasilo should be arrested and brought to justice. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

Villagers protest against police

Women residents of Suleman Sarki village located in Jacobabad district held a demonstration outside the Jacobabad Press Club after arrest of two suspected offenders and demanded their release. They told local reporters that a raiding team from the Abad police station raided the home of Nawaz Sarki and took away his two sons, 24-year-old Qasim and 35-year-old Sajid, two days ago claiming that their father was wanted in a rape case. They said that after keeping the youths at some undisclosed place for two

days, the police booked them in a false criminal case. They claimed that the raid was actually carried out at the behest of their rivals led by Dr Irshad Sarki. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

GB lawyers vow to continue protest till acceptance of demands

Lawyers in Gilgit-Baltistan continued their protest boycotting court proceedings to press the government to fulfil their demands. Protest rallies were held in Gilgit, Astore, Skardu and Ghanche. The GB Bar Council, Supreme Appellate Court Bar Association, High Court Bar Association and district bar associations have jointly given the protest call. The lawyers are on a strike, boycotting all court proceedings till April 16. For the past five months, the lawyers in the region have been frequently protesting and boycotting court proceedings, except for emergency cases, due to the unmet demands. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 4*)

Abbasi Shaheed doctors protest against pay disparity

The Abbasi Shaheed Hospital (ASH), the third major public sector tertiary care hospital in the city, saw a major demonstration by house officers who demanded `equal pay for equal work. The protest continued for over three hours in front of the administration building and ended after the officials assured them of a meeting with the city mayor within two days. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 14*)

QAT march in Thatta opposes canals project as ‘death warrant’ for Sindh

Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT) chief Ayaz Latif Palijo led an impressive march against federal government’s controversial canals project. Several hundred QAT activists and supporters held the march from Darya Wari Mori to Buhara town raising slogans against the project, federal authorities, Sindh government and Pakistan Peoples Party. They were waving party flags and carrying placards and banners inscribed with slogans against federal government’s policies. Speaking to them in Buhara, where the marchers held a sit-in, Ayaz Latif Palijo strongly condemned federal government’s plans to draw six strategic canals and introduce corporate farming. He said that all such initiatives and projects were extremely harmful to Sindh. He pointed out that the entire Sindh had erupted in protest against these projects, and warned that the resistance would escalate further if the federal government did not heed the voice of the masses. He stressed that the canals project must be scrapped immediately. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 15*)

Farmers hold protests across Punjab against low wheat prices

Wheat farmers across Punjab are protesting against what they say are unjust wheat support prices and poor government procurement policies. From Sheikhpura to Dera Ghazi Khan, demonstrations, sit-ins and clashes with police have erupted as farmers demand fair compensation for their produce. Farmers’ organisations and opposition parties, including Jamaat-i-Islami and Kissan Ittehad, have joined the protests. As wheat harvesting has begun across thousands of acres in Sheikhpura, farmers are complaining about low market rates ranging from Rs2,200 to Rs2,500 per 40kg. While the crop is

healthy and timely, farmers say they are left with little to no savings after spending heavily on fertilisers, seeds and pesticides. (*Dawn, April 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

Parachinar traders go on strike against road closure

The traders of Parachinar observed a shutter down strike against closure of Thall-Parachinar Road for more than six months. The protest call was given by Parachinar Traders Union and all bazaars and markets of Parachinar city and its outskirts remained closed throughout the day. (*Dawn, April 16th, 2025, Page 8*)

QAT launches six-day march

The Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT) started a six-day march against new canals from Bhitsah under the leadership of its president, Ayaz Latif Palijo. Speaking to the media, Palijo said the canal issue concerned the entire country and everyone should raise his voice against it. Terming it a question of the progress and existence of the country, he stated that the people of Sindh only wanted development, education and peace, therefore, no new experiment should be resorted. (*Dawn, April 16th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lahore police use water cannons to disperse young doctors

The police used water cannons to disperse the protesting young doctors on the Mall Road, leaving two of the protesters, including president of Young Doctors Association Punjab, fainted. The situation got tense and a clash started between police and the employees of the public hospitals when the latter, under the leadership of YDA Punjab President Dr Shoaib Niazi, moved from the Charing Cross to reach the CM Secretariat. The YDA had announced to move from the Charing Cross and stage a sit-in outside the CM Secretariat to intensify the agitation against the outsourcing of the public hospitals. Following the announcement, the employees, including young doctors, nurses and paramedics, gathered in a large number and then marched towards the CM Secretariat. (*Dawn, April 19th, 2025, Page 2*)

QWP to stage protests, move court against minerals bill

The QWP has threatened to stage street protests and move the court of law against the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mines and Minerals Bill, 2025. "We will not allow anyone to plunder resources of our province. The minerals bill is an attack on 18th Constitutional Amendment, so we will resist it with full force," QWP central chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao told a news conference at Watan Kor. (*Dawn, April 19th, 2025, Page 8*)

Lawyers start indefinite dharna in Khairpur against canals project

Several thousand people, mainly lawyers, travelled to Babarloi town of Khairpur district from across Sindh in response to Karachi Bar Association's call for an indefinite sit-in against federal government's controversial canals project. The call was backed by the Sindh High Court Bar Association. The sit-in was started at Babarloi Bypass. Apart from lawyers, those who already arrived at the venue or were on the way included leaders, workers and supporters of various Sindhi nationalist groups and civil society organisations. (*Dawn, April 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Opposition parties, nationalists hold rallies in Larkana

A host of opposition political and nationalist parties registered their protest against federal government's six canals project at different rallies and demonstrations held in the city. Activists of the Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party (STP) led by its district president Ahmed Nawaz Brohi, Sadik Lashari and others held a demonstration at the main gate of Jinnah Bagh. Waving party flags and placards, they chanted slogans against the project. (*Dawn, April 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Growers protest in Tando Mohammad Khan

A large number of growers and their supporters staged a rally under the aegis of Sindh Abadgar Ittehad in Tando Mohammad Khan town as part of the ongoing protest against controversial canals project on Indus River. The SAI president, Nawab Zubair Talpur, local grower leader Pir Ashfaq Jan Sirhindi and former MPA Mir Ali Nawaz Talpur, who led the protest, said in their speeches before the rally's participants, when they staged a sit-in at Al Fatah chowk, that construction of canals on Indus was a matter of life and death for Sindhis. They said that 70m peoples' source of livelihood was directly dependent on the river and they would never allow construction of canals.

Pakistan Peoples Party was not sincere with people of Sindh over the canals project as the ruling party had not yet announced quitting the government and withdrawing its support from federal government and that was why work on the canals continued, they said. They said that people from entire Sindh would participate in the sit-in at Baberloo bridge on the Indus staged by lawyers and political activists. The federal government should shelve the canals project, if this project was not cancelled it would lead to ouster of the government, they warned. They said that powers that be would have to withdraw this project in the larger interest of agrarian economy of Sindh and Pakistan. (*Dawn, April 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Commuters protest against removal of Jungshahi railway stop

The Pakistan Railways' abrupt decision to remove the Ghaus Bahauddin Zikria Express stop at Jungshahi Railway Station has triggered widespread anger in Thatta and Sujawal districts. Local residents, civil society members, traders, and activists have condemned the move, calling it unjust and damaging to the region's connectivity. For years, Jungshahi Station has served as a crucial link for South Sindh, connecting commuters to cities like Multan. The cancellation of the train stop has drawn sharp criticism, with locals blaming the absence of a reservation quota and ticketing facility at the station. They argue this led to a misleading impression of low passenger traffic, resulting in the stop's removal. Residents now face the added burden of travelling to Karachi or Hyderabad to buy tickets, which they say unfairly, undermines the station's viability. (*Business Recorder, April 19th, 2025, Page 5*)

Big rally staged on highway against canals project

A big protest rally against the canals project was organised by the Sindh River Bachao Tehreek Committee, starting from Poonam Chowk to Wadhu Wah, culminating in a sit-in on the National Highway leading to Sukkur. Thousands of participants, who included a significant number of women, marched through Naseem Nagar Chowk to the highway, where they staged a sit-in on both sides and chanted slogans. Members of various parties, which are part of the Sindh River Protection Committee, carried banners and placards opposing the canals project. Political parties participating in the anti-canals rally included the Grand Democratic Alliance, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, Jamaat-e-Islami, Qaumi Awami Tehreek, and Awami Tehreek.

Separately, members of the transgender community also held a rally against the canals project, marching from the Old Campus to the Hyderabad Press Club. A large number of transgender individuals from Hyderabad participated in the rally, raising slogans against the canals project. (*The News, April 20th, 2025, Page 13*)

JI chides govt for inaction on Palestinians' plight

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) chief Hafiz Naeemur Rehman called for a nationwide shutter-down strike on April 26 to express solidarity with the people of Gaza, demanding that the government facilitate the democratic and legitimate Palestinian resistance force, Hamas, to open an office in Pakistan. He made the announcement while addressing a 'Gaza Million March' here at Zero Point. A large number of people including women and children, participated in the demonstration. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 1*)

Christian municipal workers in Karachi protest against non-payment of dues on Easter

As Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab extended Easter greetings to Christian community, dozens of Christian workers of the Karachi Metropolitan Corporation (KMC) staged a protest outside the Karachi Press Club, condemning the non-payment of salaries and pensions even on the occasion of their religious festival. A special Easter prayer service was also held at the protest site to observe the religious significance of the day. The protest was organised by the Municipal Workers Trade Unions Alliance, which accused the Sindh finance department of deliberately delaying salary and pension payments despite clear legal and administrative obligations. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 14*)

Total shutdown in most parts of Sindh as people take to streets against canals

The routine life came to a standstill in Sindh's cities and towns, barring Karachi and parts of Hyderabad, in response to a strike call given by the Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz-Bashir (JSQM-B). The call was given by the party to show that Sindh rejects the federal plan to draw six more canals from the Indus River to irrigate millions of acres in Chilian and other areas of Punjab. While a complete strike was observed in all other cities and towns, a partial shutdown was witnessed in Hyderabad district. Karachi remained unaffected. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 15*)

Doctors, paramedics lock Lahore OPDs during protest

The young doctors and paramedics observed a strike at outpatient departments (OPDs) of the government hospitals in Lahore and some other parts of Punjab on the 15th day of their agitation against outsourcing of the state-run health facilities. The complete strike was witnessed at the Punjab Institute of Cardiology, Lahore General Hospital, Jinnah Hospital and Sir Ganga Ram Hospital while a partial strike was reported in other teaching hospitals of the province. The most deteriorating healthcare situation was witnessed at LGH where the young doctors and paramedics locked all rooms of OPD.

Rahim Yar Khan: Doctors, nurses and paramedical staff of Shaikh Zayed Medical College Hospital observed a strike against the proposed privatisation and outsourcing of hospitals, rural health centres and basic health units in the district. The protest was held under the banner of the Greater Health Alliance. Dozens of protesters gathered outside the OPD and locked its doors. They later staged a rally from the OPD to the hospital's main gate. (*Dawn, April 22nd, 2025, Page 2*)

Rawalpindi health workers' protest against hospitals outsourcing mars anti-polio campaign

As the district launched its week-long polio vaccination drive health workers in at least three tehsils – Kahuta, Kallar Syedan, and Gujar Khan – refused to participate in the campaign to protest decision to outsource public-sector hospitals. According to Young Doctors Association's office-bearer Dr Aarif Aziz, notification for the outsourcing of the Jinnah Hospital Lahore had been issued while there was a plan to outsource different departments of Mayo Hospital Lahore. (*Dawn, April 22nd, 2025, Page 4*)

Students march against canals project

Student activists and members of civil society converged at Teen Talwar in Clifton and marched towards Fawara Chowk, where they staged a brief sit-in to lodge their protest against the controversial canals project. The protest was organised by the Save Indus Students Alliance and KBT. The protesters were carrying placards and chanting slogans decrying the existing water woes in the province. (*Dawn, April 23rd, 2025, Page 13*)

Sindh protests take a toll on national supply chain

The national fertiliser supply chain is facing severe disruptions as ongoing sit-ins and road blockades in Sindh have choked critical transport routes, stranding thousands of trucks and halting industrial operations. The blockades have been holding up traffic for a week now, particularly in the Sukkur-Larkana division, leading to alarm among government officials and stakeholders in the business community. The disruption comes at a critical moment in the agricultural calendar. The Kharif season, which includes crops like cotton, sugarcane, and rice, depends heavily on timely access to urea. Delays in distribution may cause lower yields, higher food prices, and added financial pressure on farmers, whose economics have already deteriorated over the past year. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

Protesters in Islamabad denounce Indian accusations, war-mongering

People staged a protest in front of the Indian High Commission in the federal capital, denouncing “false accusations and war-mongering”. Earlier, people from civil society and various walks of life assembled in front of the Foreign Office, located on Constitution Avenue, around 4pm to protest against India over “water aggression”. Law enforcers and officials from the capital administration reached the scene to maintain law and order. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 4*)

Strike observed in Naudero, Jhuddo as protests against canals continue

A complete shutdown was observed in Naudero town of Larkana district and Jhuddo town of Mirpurkhas district as protests against controversial canals continued in different parts of Sindh. The strike in Naudero was observed on a call given by the Pakistan Peoples Party-Shaheed Bhutto (PPP-SB). All business and trade centers, markets and shops remained closed while police remained deployed at sensitive spots to meet any eventuality. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 15*)

Chemists support nationwide strike against Israeli terrorism in Gaza

The Pakistan Chemists and Druggists Association (PCDA) has announced its support for a one-day nationwide strike in all business centres and markets against Israeli atrocities and terrorism in Palestine. The pharmacy chains, pharmacies and chemists’ business centres located in front of hospitals will remain closed until 12 noon. According to the decisions taken in the meeting, the association stands with the country’s business community in today’s strike.

All Pakistan Private Schools Management Association North Punjab announced that private educational institutions will remain closed to express solidarity with the oppressed Muslims of Gaza. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 4*)

Young doctors’ body boycotts Islamabad OPDs over proposed outsourcing of hospitals

On the call of YDA Punjab, the young doctors boycotted the OPD of three government-run hospitals of the garrison city against Punjab government’s plan to outsource public sector hospitals in the province. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 4*)

Dasu Dam-hit families demonstrate to demand land payments

The families, whose land was acquired by authorities for the Dasu hydropower project in Upper Kohistan district, took to the streets, demanding an immediate release of payments under the Enhanced Self-Managed Relocation Package for themselves. “Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a committee to address the longstanding issues of over 500 families affected by the Diamer-Basha Dam. We also demand the formation of a similar committee without further delay,” Gul Badshah told protesters on the Karakoram Highway in the Dasu area. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 8*)

Rickshaw owners protest ban on three-wheelers on Karachi's 11 major roads

The city administration has faced strong criticism over a complete ban on operation of rickshaws on the city's two major thoroughfares and partial ban on nine other roads amid severe shortage of public transportation facilities in the metropolis. The Karachi commissioner has imposed a complete ban on operation of all types of rickshaws on I.I. Chundrigar Road and Sharea Faisal for a period of two months. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 13*)

Protest

Hundreds of stone transporters staged a protest and blocked Sargodha Faisalabad Road against the administration's ban on the daytime entry of dumpers. Transport operators' union president Chaudhry Babar Akram Dhunda addressed the protesters, saying that the protest would continue until their legitimate demands were met. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 2*)

Pindi, Islamabad traders observe shutdown over Gaza genocide

Responding to a countrywide strike call issued by traders associations across the country, the Islamabad and Rawalpindi businessmen kept their shutters down, observing a complete strike to express solidarity with Palestine. In the federal capital, business activities remained suspended in major markets, but the strike was not visible in neighbourhood markets – such as Bhara Kahu, Sitara Market in G-7, and Margalla Town – and the intercity transport service too remained operational. However, most of the shops and business activities in the major markets, including Super Market and Jinnah Super, were largely closed.

Strike in Attock

On the appeal of the Central Traders Association of Pakistan and the Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan, a strike was observed in all six tehsils of Attock, similar to other parts of the country, in protest against Israeli atrocities in Gaza and to express solidarity with the Palestinians. Markets, shopping centres, vegetable and fruit markets, and other business hubs remained closed. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 4*)

Strike across Balochistan in support of Palestinians

A complete shutter-down strike was observed in the provincial capital and other towns and cities of Balochistan on the call of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) to protest against Israel's aggression in Palestine. Markets, businesses and even private banks remained closed in Quetta and other areas of the province to express solidarity with the people of Palestine. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 5*)

Anti-India rallies across GB slam Indus treaty suspension

Protest rallies and demonstrations against India continued on a second consecutive day across Gilgit-Baltistan, denouncing the announcement by the Modi government to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty. The rallies organised by religious parties, civil society

organisations, and political parties took place in various cities, including Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Diamer, Ghizer, Astore, Ghanche, Shigar, Kharmang and Nagar. They also carried placards inscribed with slogans such as “GB will never allow illegal occupation of water”. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 12*)

Life in Karachi, other Sindh cities comes to standstill on JI strike call

A countrywide shutter-down strike called by Jamaat-i-Islami to show solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemn Israeli brutalities received an overwhelming response from across Sindh. Major cities, including business capital of Karachi, witnessed a near-complete halt to commercial & daily activities. Strike call saw widespread participation from traders, transporters, and general public. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 13*)

No let-up in protests in Sindh against canals

Protests against controversial canals on Indus River continued in several Sindh towns alongside JI's strike with lawyers' sit-in at Babarloi, Khairpur district, in full swing on the ninth consecutive day. Activists of Awami Tehreek and Sindhiyani Tehreek, who were profusely participating in the lawyers' protest staged a rally at the sit-in venue against canals and corporate farming, demanding justice for indigenous farmers and river water.

The Lawyers' Alliance and the All Parties Movement continued their sit-in at Goala More (turning) on the Indus Highway in Kandhkot on the sixth consecutive day against the controversial canals. Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf held a rally, which started from Mehar town and reached Dadu after passing through Khairpur Nathan Shah town, against the controversial canals. (*Dawn, April 27th, 2025, Page 15*)

Traders protest colleague's kidnapping in Dera Murad Jamali

Locals staged a sit-in in Dera Murad Jamali against the kidnapping of a Hindu trader, Sital Das, who was abducted by armed men from Mangoli area of Nasirabad district. The traders gathered at the DC Chowk and blocked the Sibi-Sukkur National Highway, suspending traffic between Sindh and Balochistan. They set up a sit-in camp and demanded the immediate recovery of abducted trader. (*Dawn, April 28th, 2025, Page 5*)

Violence ensues as police attempt to move protesters from roads in Karachi, Kandhkot

Over a dozen people received injuries when police attempted to dislodge camps set up by lawyers in protest against the canals project in Karachi and Kandhkot. Lawyers are staging sit-ins at Babarloi in Khairpur and Gulshan-i-Hadeed in Karachi for the past several days against the plan to construct six canals on the Indus River. The protests have caused many problems for road users and transporters as thousands of vehicles have been stuck for days in several areas of the province due to closure of roads. (*Dawn, April 28th, 2025, Page 13*)

Police, Grand Health Alliance activists clash over entry to ‘high security zone’ in Lahore

The police and employees of the government hospitals clashed on The Mall when the former tried to stop the latter from entering the high security zone where the international cricket players and other VIP guests were staying. The clash left some protesters as well as the policemen injured. The protesters, including the young doctors, had announced to take out the rally under the banner of the Grand Health Alliance and stage a sit-in outside the Chief Minister House. (*Dawn, April 29th, 2025, Page 2*)

Motorway blocked against power cuts

Residents of Doranpur village closed the Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway to protest prolonged power cuts in the area. The closure of the main highway caused inconvenience to motorists, who were made to return from the Peshawar interchange due to the closure of the road. The residents were protesting against what they claimed more than 18 hours of loadshedding. (*Dawn, April 29th, 2025, Page 8*)

Goods transporters’ rally against roadblocks across Sindh causes traffic mess in Karachi

A rally, organised by goods transporters in protest over province-wide roadblocks by canals protesters and subsequent measures taken by the traffic police, led to a severe traffic congestion on key roads in the city’s business district, piling miseries on commuters and motorists. However, Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon managed to convince the transporters to end their sit-in being held on Mai Kolachi Road, where the traffic police had placed containers to stop the protesters from marching towards the Chief Minister House. (*Dawn, April 29th, 2025, Page 13*)

Young doctors shut down operation theatres of various hospitals in Punjab

The young doctors shut down operation theatres of many government hospitals across Punjab after the police uprooted the protest camp of employees of the state-run health facilities and lodged an FIR against 200-300 protesters, allegedly for attacking police and injuring some of the personnel. The FIR registered with the Civil Lines police station on the complaint of a sub-inspector against the protesters contains serious charges. (*Dawn, April 30th, 2025, Page 2*)

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

India puts Indus Water Treaty in abeyance

India unveiled a raft of punitive diplomatic measures against Pakistan, accusing Islamabad of supporting “cross-border terrorism” after a deadly attack on civilians in IIOJK. These measures include suspension of a key water-sharing treaty, the shutting of the main land border crossing between the neighbours and a raft of diplomatic staff reductions, including withdrawing several Indian staff from Islamabad and ordering Pakistanis home. “The Indus Waters Treaty of 1960 will be held in abeyance with immediate effect, until Pakistan credibly and irrevocably abjures its support for cross-border terrorism”, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri told reporters in New Delhi. The 1960 Indus Water Treaty gave India and Pakistan three Himalayan rivers each and the right to hydropower and irrigation resources. It established the India-Pakistan Indus Commission, which is supposed to resolve any problems that arise. (*Business Recorder, April 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

‘India can’t scarp IWT unilaterally’

The Indus Water Treaty (IWT) brokered by World Bank (WB) is unlikely to be scrapped by India unilaterally under the garb of current tension between the two countries. Commenting on unconfirmed reports that New Delhi can cancel Indus Water Treaty unilaterally sources told that these are just speculations, adding that neither Pakistan nor India can cancel the pact, brokered the World Bank. The Indus Water Treaty was a water-distribution treaty between India and Pakistan arranged and negotiated by the WB, to use the water available in the Indus River and its tributaries.

It was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and then Pakistani President Field Marshal Ayub Khan. The Treaty gives control over the waters of the three “Eastern Rivers” – the Beas, Ravi and Sutlej located in India with a mean annual flow of 41 billion m³ (33 million acre ft) to India, while control over the waters of the three “Western Rivers” – the Indus, Chenab and Jhelum located in India with a mean annual flow of 99 billion m³ to Pakistan. India got about 30% of the total water carried by the Indus Rivers System located in India while Pakistan got the remaining 70%. (*Business Recorder, April 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

3.1 # Food Crop

Removal of support price increased availability of wheat: FAO

The removal of the official purchases of wheat at the minimum support price since 2024 has contributed to increased market availability, as farmers, unable to sell to the government, released greater volumes into the open market, exerting additional downward pressure on prices. The Food Price Monitoring and Analysis of FAO says the retail wheat flour prices followed mixed trends in March and were significantly lower year-on-year, mostly weighed down by abundant market supplies from the record 2024 production. The report says global wheat export prices also decreased in March 2025. Similar to maize, uncertainty over rising global trade tensions weighed on market sentiments, along with reduced import demand from China.

In addition to the uncertainty surrounding tariff revisions of United States, a preliminary forecast for 2025-26 indicating an expansion in wheat area in Canada contributed to a 3 per cent decline in the Canadian quotations. Signs of improving crop conditions in the US were also behind a 3 per cent decline in the benchmark US values. As competitors in Asian markets, the declines in North American prices also put pressure on the Australian prices, which dropped by 3 per cent in March, report says. Declines in world prices of grains were further driven by the arrival of the seasonal Southern Hemisphere supplies, weaker global import demand and diminished concerns over crop production concerns in some major exporters. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 3*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

5 # TRADE

US imposes 29pc tariff on Pakistan

US President Donald Trump has imposed 29 percent reciprocal tariff on Pakistan, besides over 185 countries and territories, saying that Islamabad charges 58 percent tariff on goods imported from the United States. As per details, President Donald Trump has unveiled plans for sweeping new import taxes on all goods entering the US, in a watershed moment for global trade. As per new US trade policy, the United States will impose 26 percent on India, 34 percent on China, 20 percent on European Union, 10 percent tariff on Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Afghanistan.

Donald Trump said that his country will impose 37 percent tariff on Bangladesh, 24 percent on Japan, 17 percent on Israel and 10 percent on the United Kingdom, adding and 25 percent additional tax will be imposed on the import of vehicles. Canada and Mexico remain subject to a 25% tariff, with exemptions for goods under the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA). “The tariffs will not be fully reciprocal. I could have done that, I guess. But it would have been tough for a lot of countries,” Trump said. (*Business Recorder, April 4th, 2025 Page 1*)

China hits back hard with 34pc tariff on US goods

China announced additional tariffs of 34 per cent on US goods, striking back at US President Donald Trump and escalating a trade war that has fed fears of a recession and triggered a global stock market rout that showed no sign of slowing. In the standoff between the world's two biggest economies, Beijing also announced controls on exports of some rare earths, while Trump doubled down as well, vowing not to change course. China added 11 US bodies to the “unreliable entity” list, which allows Beijing to take punitive actions against foreign entities, including firms linked to arms sales to Taiwan, which China claims as part of its territory.

Other impacted nations like Canada have also readied retaliation in a mounting trade war after Trump raised US tariff barriers to their highest level in more than a century, leading to a plunge in world financial markets. Countries and companies alike weighed their options and the EU readied for talks with US officials. Potential responses could include retaliatory tariffs or other measures that could escalate a trade war that has raised fears of recession. Investment bank J.P. Morgan said it now sees a 60pc chance of the global economy entering recession by year-end, up from 40pc previously. (*Dawn, April 5th 2025 Page 12*)

Trade tensions threaten poor nations: UN

As major economies are set to impose sweeping new tariffs, the UN Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has warned that the global trade system is entering a critical phase — threatening growth, investment and development progress, particularly for the most vulnerable economies. UNCTAD warns that global economic growth could decline further, and in a low-growth, high-debt global economy, higher tariffs risk weakening investment and trade flows — adding uncertainty to an already fragile context. This should erode confidence, slow investment, and threaten development gains, particularly in the most vulnerable economies, UNCTAD says.

Economies with minimal responsibility for global trade imbalances are facing severe penalties — despite being the least equipped to absorb new shocks. Dialogue — not escalation — is only path forward. The need for trade reform is clear. Trade imbalances, concentrated gains and outdated rules must be addressed — without affecting those least responsible. Just 10 of the nearly 200 US trade partners account for almost 90pc of its trade deficit. Yet, for example, least developed countries and Small Island developing states — responsible for just 1.6pc and 0.4pc of deficit, respectively — are being affected. They will neither help balance trade deficit nor generate significant revenue. Many low-income economies now face a “perfect storm” of worsening external conditions, unsustainable debt levels, and slowing domestic growth. While the need for trade reform is clear, UNCTAD stresses that solution must come through dialogue and negotiation. Trade imbalances, concentrated gains, and outdated rules must be addressed — without sacrificing those least responsible. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 9*)

Over 50 countries contacted White House to start trade talks, says Trump's adviser

More than 50 countries have reached out to the White House to begin trade talks, a top economic adviser to US President Donald Trump said as US officials sought to defend sweeping new tariffs that have unleashed global turmoil. During an interview on *ABC News*' 'This Week,' US National Economic Council Director Kevin Hassett denied that the tariffs were part of a strategy by Trump to crash financial markets to pressure the US Federal Reserve to cut interest rates. He said there would be no "political coercion" of the central bank. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 12*)

US tariffs will 'inflict serious harm' on poor nations, China tells WTO

China's Commerce Minister Wang Wentao told head of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) that US tariffs will "inflict serious harm" on poor nations. Washington and Beijing have been trading salvos of increasingly higher tariffs this month, raising fears of an intensifying trade war between the world's two largest economies that has sent global markets into a tailspin. Economists warn that disruption in trade between the tightly integrated US and Chinese economies will increase prices for consumers and could spark a global recession. (*Dawn, April 13th, 2025 Page 12*)

Tariff war could cut US-China goods trade by 80pc: WTO chief

WTO chief said the US-China tariff war could reduce trade in goods between the two economic giants by 80 percent, pulling down the rest of the world economy. President Donald Trump raised tariffs on China to 125 percent as the world's two largest economies fought over retaliatory levies. (*Business Recorder, April 14th, 2025, Page 9*)

Afghanistan's exports hit \$100m mark

Afghanistan exported goods worth 100.1m US dollars and imported goods worth 1003.1 million during the past one month, the National Statistics and Information Authority said. In a statement, NSIA wrote Afghanistan made trade transactions worth \$1103.2m with a number of countries last month of 1403 solar year. It said value of Afghanistan's imports from January 20 to February 18 reached \$1,076.2m, but from January 19 to March 20, there was a decrease of \$73.1m. According to the statement, total value of Afghanistan's exports reached \$144.2m from January 20 to February 18, but from January 19 to March 20, there was a decrease of \$44.1m. Afghanistan made exports to India, Pakistan and UAE and most of the goods were imported from Iran, China and Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, April 20th, 2025, Page 8*)

US to impose 3,500pc duties on solar panels from Southeast Asia

The United States announced its intention to impose tariffs of up to 3,521 per cent on solar panels from Southeast Asia, a move aimed at countering alleged Chinese subsidies and dumping in sector. Tariffs on companies from Cambodia, Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam will still need to be ratified at a meeting of International Trade Commission in June. The decision unveiled comes after anti-dumping and countervailing duty investigations filed around a year ago by several US and other solar manufacturers. (*Dawn, April 23rd, 2025, Page 12*)

Saudi Arabia reports record non-oil exports of \$137bn in 2024

Saudi Arabia's non-oil exports reached an all-time high of 515 billion riyals (\$137.29 billion) in 2024, the state news agency said, as the kingdom continues its push to diversify its economy away from oil dependence. The world's leading oil exporter is investing billions of dollars to achieve its Vision 2030 plan, which focuses on reducing its reliance on oil and spending more on infrastructure to boost industries like tourism, sports and manufacturing.

Saudi Arabia is also working to attract more outside investment to ensure its ambitious plans stay on track. Non-oil exports rose 13% year-on-year, and over 113% since the launch of Saudi vision 2030, state news agency SPA added. Saudi Arabia announced its 2024 annual report for the kingdom's 2030 Vision plan, which saw the kingdom attract foreign direct investment worth 77.6 billion riyals (\$20.69 billion). (*Business Recorder, April 27th, 2025, Page 8*)

Panama, Suez canals: Trump urges 'free' transit for US ships

US President Donald Trump urged free transit for American commercial and military ships through the Panama and Suez canals, tasking his secretary of state with making progress "immediately." Trump has for months been calling for the United States to take control of the Panama Canal but his social media post also shifted focus onto the vital Suez route. "American Ships, both Military and Commercial, should be allowed to travel, free of charge, through the Panama and Suez Canals!" he wrote on his Truth Social platform. (*Business Recorder, April 28th, 2025, Page 1*)

BRICS nations discuss shared response to Trump trade policies

Foreign ministers from the BRICS group of developing nations met to discuss a shared defense of the global trade system, coordinating their response to the barrage of new tariffs from US President Donald Trump. The meeting in Rio de Janeiro is expected to produce a joint statement criticizing "unilateral measures" on trade from the group formed by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa and recently expanded to include six more nations. (*Business Recorder, April 29th, 2025, Page 5*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Dubai's venture-capital-backed FDI soars 39pc in 2024

Dubai's position on the global investment map has never been more pronounced. In 2024, the emirate experienced unprecedented momentum in venture-capital-backed foreign direct investment (FDI), emerging as a central player in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region's evolving tech and startup ecosystem. According to Dubai's Department of Economy and Tourism's (DET) FDI Monitor, venture-capital-backed FDI surged by 39% in 2024, a strong indicator of international investor

confidence and Dubai's maturing innovation infrastructure. The number of venture capital funding deals in Dubai-based startups rose from 79 in 2023 to 110 in 2024, reflecting a broader trend of diversification and risk appetite among global investors. This shift was fueled by a combination of factors: a business-friendly regulatory environment, supportive government policies, and a rapidly growing digital economy. (*Business Recorder*, April 14th, 2025, Page 2)

Russia and Qatar sign 2bn euro investment deal

Russia and Qatar signed an agreement under which each country will pay an extra 1 billion euros (\$1.14 billion) into a joint investment fund, a Russian official said. "This is an agreement to expand our investment platform with Qatar by the amount of about two billion euros, one billion euros from each side. This will allow us to invest more, to attract more Qatari investment money into various projects in Russia," said Kirill Dmitriev, head of the Russian Direct Investment Fund (RDIF). RDIF said in a statement that the deal with the Qatar Investment Authority, the Gulf state's sovereign wealth fund, will focus on investment in technology, healthcare, minerals and other sectors of mutual interest. The two funds launched a \$4 billion joint venture in 2014. (*Business Recorder*, April 18th, 2025, Page 5)

7.1 # America

All local workers, US diplomats to be fired from USAID

Elon Musk's cost-cutting team is finalising the dismantlement of the US Agency for International Development, ordering the firing of thousands of local workers and American diplomats and civil servants assigned to the agency overseas, two former top USAID officials and a source with knowledge of the situation have said. Congress was notified that almost all of USAID's own employees are being fired by September, all of its overseas offices shut, and some functions absorbed into the State Department.

The latest move by Musk's Department of Government Efficiency effectively will eliminate what is left of the agency's workforce. This is definitely the final closing out, said one of the former senior USAID officials. President Donald Trump and Musk, his hand-picked adviser to oversee government cost-cutting, in February began the process of shuttering USAID and merging its operations into the State Department to ensure they conformed with Trump's "America First" policies. The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. USAID maintains missions in more than 60 countries, with most of its funds going to humanitarian aid and health programmes. (*Dawn*, April 3rd, 2025 Page 12)

US aid cuts strain response to health crises worldwide

The United States slashing foreign aid risks piling pressure on already acute humanitarian crises across the globe, a World Health Organisation official said, also warning against withdrawing from the UN agency. Since taking office in January, President Donald Trump has effectively frozen foreign aid funding, moved to dismantle

USAID and other programmes, and announced plans to leave WHO. Washington, which had long been the WHO's biggest donor, did not pay its 2024 dues, and it remains unclear if the United States will meet its membership obligations for 2025. The agency, already facing a gaping deficit this year, has proposed shrinking its budget by a fifth, likely reducing its reach and workforce, according to an earlier report citing an internal email. (*Dawn, April 21st, 2025, Page 11*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

Saudi Arabia plans to pay off Syria's World Bank debts

Saudi Arabia plans to pay off Syria's debts to the World Bank, three people familiar with the matter said, paving the way for the approval of millions of dollars in grants for reconstruction and to support the country's paralysed public sector. The plans, which have not been previously reported, would be the first known instance of Saudi Arabia providing financing for Syria since Islamist-led rebels toppled former leader Bashar al-Assad last year. It may also be a sign that crucial Gulf Arab support for Syria is beginning to materialize after previous plans, including an initiative by Doha to fund salaries, were held up by uncertainty over US sanctions. Last month, Qatar announced a plan to provide Syria with gas via Jordan to improve the nation's meagre electricity supply, a move that sources told Reuters had Washington's nod of approval.

Syria has around \$15 million in arrears to the World Bank which must be paid off before the international financial institution can approve grants and provide other forms of assistance. It is unclear whether the Syrian delegation will meet with any US officials. Tough US sanctions imposed during Assad's rule remain in place. In January, the US issued a six-month exemption for some sanctions to encourage humanitarian aid, but this has had limited effect. Last month the US gave Syria a list of conditions to fulfil in exchange for partial sanctions relief but the administration of US President Donald Trump has otherwise engaged little with the country's new rulers. That is in part due to differing views in Washington on how to approach Syria. Some White House officials have been keen to take a more hard line stance, pointing to the new Syrian leadership's former ties to Al-Qaeda as reason to keep engagement to a minimum, according to diplomats and US sources. (*Business Recorder, April 15th, 2025, Page 5*)

Saudi Arabia, Qatar to settle Syria's World Bank debt

Saudi Arabia and Qatar are to settle Syria's outstanding arrears of around \$15 million to World Bank, both countries said in a joint statement, paving the way for the approval of millions of dollars in grants for reconstruction and to support the country's paralysed public sector. The plans would be the first known instance of Saudi Arabia providing financing for Syria since rebels toppled Bashar al-Assad last year. "This commitment will pave the way for the World Bank Group to resume support and operations in Syria after a suspension of more than fourteen years," Riyadh and Doha said in the statement. "It will also unlock Syria's access to financial support in the near term for the development of critical sectors." (*Dawn, April 28th, 2025, Page 11*)

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Around 1.6bn lack access to social protection: World Bank study

A new World Bank report says three out of four people in low- and middle-income countries now live in households that either benefit from social protection transfers or have access to social protection through contributions. Over the past decade, low- and middle-income countries have expanded social protection to cover a record 4.7 billion people, accomplishing that has been no easy feat, however, despite the record increases in coverage, 1.6bn people in low- and middle-income countries still have no access to social protection, reveals the ‘State of Social Protection Report 2025’ released by the World Bank.

Extending the shield of social protection to cover the two billion people who are either lacking coverage or inadequately covered will undoubtedly require increasing the financing envelope, particularly in poorer countries, via either increased domestic revenues or external financing. This implies that social protection financing needs are central to fiscal policy reforms, it says. For an additional 400 million people, the benefits these programmes provide are so meagre that they may not help recipients escape poverty or cushion blow of unexpected shocks, protracted political and socioeconomic crises, or long-term economic and life cycle transitions.

The report estimated that despite significant progress, access to social protection remains an aspiration rather than a reality for far too many people, and at current growth rate, it will take 18 years for those living in extreme poverty to be fully covered by social protection programmes and another 20 years for the poorest 20pc of households in low- and middle-income countries to be covered. The situation is particularly dire in low-income countries where despite substantial increases in coverage, social protection systems reach only one in four people, on average. Even in lower middle-income countries, social protection systems fail to reach more than half the population, the report warns. (*Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 12*)

10.1 # Food

Gaza families turn to turtle meat out of desperation

With food scarce in the besieged and conflict-stricken Gaza Strip, some desperate families have turned to eating sea turtles as a rare source of protein. Once the shell has been removed, the meat is cut up, boiled and cooked in a mix of onion, pepper, tomato and spices. “The children were afraid of the turtle, and we told them it tasted as delicious as veal,” said Majida Qanan, keeping an eye on the chunks of red meat simmering in a pot over a wood fire. After 18 months of devastating conflict and an Israeli blockade on aid since March 2, the United Nations has warned of a dire humanitarian situation for the 2.4 million inhabitants of the Palestinian territory. The heads of 12 major aid

organisations warned that “famine is not just a risk, but likely rapidly unfolding in almost all parts” of the territory. Sea turtles are internationally protected as an endangered species, but those caught in Gaza fishermen’s nets are used for food. Hamas accused Israel of using “starvation as a weapon” against Gazans by blocking aid supplies. (*Dawn, April 20th, 2025, Page 11*)

World Food Programme runs short of food stocks in Gaza

The UN’s World Food Programme warned it has depleted all its food stocks in war-ravaged Gaza, where the entry of humanitarian aid has been blocked by Israel since March 2. “Today, WFP delivered its last remaining food stocks to hot meals kitchens in the Gaza Strip. These kitchens are expected to fully run out of food in the coming days,” WFP, one of the main providers of food assistance in Gaza, said in a statement. After 18 months of war, the UN’s humanitarian agency OCHA said the situation in Gaza “is probably the worst” now. Israel blocked the entry of all aid into the Palestinian territory of around 2.4 million people days before it resumed its aerial and ground offensive this year. (*Dawn, April 26th, 2025, Page 12*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Global coral bleaching crisis worsens after hottest year

More than four-fifths of the world’s coral reef areas have been affected by devastating mass bleaching spurred by record-high ocean temperatures, turning many once-colourful reefs a ghostly pale hue, scientific authorities said. Bleaching is triggered by anomalies in water temperature that cause corals to expel the colorful algae living in their tissues. Without the algae’s help in delivering nutrients to the corals, the corals cannot survive.

The world’s fourth mass bleaching event, which scientists declared one year ago, has shown few signs of slowing down, according to the International Coral Reef Initiative and data from the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration which track reef health. Instead, it has grown to be the most widespread on record, with 84pc of reef areas — from the Indian Ocean to the Atlantic to the Pacific — subjected to intense heat stress for a duration expected to cause bleaching as of March 2025. Last year was the hottest on record and first to reach over 1.5 degrees Celsius warmer than pre-industrial times, contributing to unprecedented ocean temperatures and triple previous record number of marine heatwaves around the world. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 10*)

11.1 # Pollution

Microplastic pollution in Europe’s great rivers alarms scientists

“Alarming” levels of microplastic have been found in major rivers across Europe according to scientists in 14 studies published simultaneously. “The pollution is present in all European rivers” studied, said French scientist Jean-Francois Ghiglione, who coordinated the large-scale operation across nine major rivers from the Thames to the Tiber. “Alarming” pollution of on average “three microplastics per cubic metre of

water” was observed in all of them, according to the results published in the journal of Environmental Science and Pollution Research. This is far from the 40 microplastics per cubic metre recorded in the world’s 10 most polluted rivers — the Yellow River, Yangtze, Mekong, Ganges, Nile, Niger, Indus, Amur, Pearl and Hai — which irrigate countries where most plastic is produced or plastic waste is processed. But this does not take into account the volume of water flowing.

3,000 particles per second

On the Rhone in Valence, France, the fast flow means there are “3,000 plastic particles every second”, said Ghiglione. The Seine in Paris has around 900 per second. “The mass of microplastics invisible to the naked eye is more significant than that of the visible ones,” said Ghiglione — a result that “surprised” researchers. This was confirmed by analytical advances made during the studies, which began in 2019. “Large microplastics float and are collected at the surface, while invisible ones are distributed throughout the water column and are ingested by many animals and organisms,” said Ghiglione, head of research in marine microbial ecotoxicology at French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS). Samples were collected from the mouths of the rivers Elbe, Ebro, Garonne, Loire, Rhone, Rhine, Seine, Thames and the Tiber by some 40 chemists, biologists and physicists from 19 research laboratories. The researchers then made their way upstream until they reached the first major city on each of the waterways. (*Dawn, April 8th, 2025 Page 10*)

11.2 # Health

WHO members reach accord ‘in principle’ over tackling future pandemics

WHO members reached agreement over how to tackle future pandemics after three years of discussions, the co-chair of the negotiating body. “We have an accord in principle” and the final version will have to be okayed by the various member states, Anne-Claire Amprou, who is also French ambassador for world health, said. Amprou said delegates would meet in Geneva to put the finishing touches to a landmark text on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response and give it their definitive seal of agreement. The text will then require the final seal of approval from all World Health Organization members at the World Health Assembly in Geneva at the end of May. (*Business Recorder, April 13th, 2025 Page 8*)

WHO to lay off staff

The World Health Organisation chief acknowledged that US funding cuts had left the UN agency with a huge budget gap, forcing it to slash operations and lay off staff. “The sudden drop in income has left us with a large salary gap and no choice but to reduce the scale of our work and workforce,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told member states, according to a transcript of his opening remarks. The United Nations health agency has been bracing for the planned full withdrawal of the United States — traditionally its largest donor by far — next January. US President Donald Trump’s

administration has meanwhile also refused to pay agreed membership fees — called assessed contributions — for 2024 and 2025, even as it has frozen virtually all US foreign aid, including vast assistance to health projects worldwide. A number of other countries have also been reducing their foreign aid spending. Faced with this situation, WHO has been reflecting on a new organisational structure, which Tedros presented to staff and member states. “The refusal of the US to pay its assessed contributions for 2024 and 2025 means we are facing a salary gap for the 2026-27 biennium of between \$560 and \$650 million,” he acknowledged. (*Dawn, April 23rd, 2025, Page 11*)

Gaza healthcare faces collapse as Israel steps up Gaza strikes

The Israeli military launched one of the biggest waves of strikes in Gaza for weeks, residents said, and health officials issued a new warning that healthcare faced total collapse from Israel’s blockade of all supplies. Gaza’s health ministry said a UN-backed polio vaccination campaign meant to target over 600,000 children had been suspended, putting the enclave at risk of the revival of a crippling disease that once had been all-but eradicated. In diplomacy to end the conflict, a Hamas delegation was expected to arrive in Cairo for talks. Two sources familiar with mediation effort said the delegation would discuss a new offer which would include a truce for 5 to 7 years following the release of all hostages and an end to fighting. (*Business Recorder, 23rd, 2025, Page 5*)

11.3 # Climate Change

Two billion at risk as Himalayan snow hits 23-year low

Snowfall in Asia’s Hindu Kush-Himalayan mountain range has reached a 23-year low, threatening nearly two billion people dependent on snowmelt for water, scientists warned in a report. The Hindu Kush-Himalayan range, which stretches from Afghanistan to Myanmar, holds the largest reserves of ice and snow outside the Arctic and Antarctica and is a vital source of fresh water for about two billion people. Researchers found “a significant decline in seasonal snow across the Hindu Kush-Himalaya region, with snow persistence (the time snow remains on the ground) 23.6 per cent below normal — the lowest in 23 years,” the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) said.

The inter-governmental ICIMOD organisation is made up of member countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar, Nepal and Pakistan. It urged countries that rely on the 12 major river basins in the region to develop “improved water management, stronger drought preparedness, better early warning systems, and greater regional cooperation”. Asia is the region most affected by climate-related disasters, according to the UN’s World Meteorological Organisation, which reported last month that five of the past six years have seen the most rapid glacier retreat on record. (*Dawn, April 22nd, 2025, Page 12*)

US opposes ‘dangerous’ anti-fossil fuel policies at global summit

An international summit on the future of energy security opened in London with stark opposition from Washington, which called policies to phase out fossil fuels “harmful and dangerous”. Profound differences emerged at the two-day International Energy Agency (IEA) meeting over the role of renewables in satisfying the world’s thirst for energy. The meeting takes place amid global economic turmoil sparked by wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, and uncertainty surrounding US President Donald Trump’s tariffs. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

Report highlights risks of using forests to meet climate targets

Major economies are overstating how much carbon their forests can absorb in a climate accounting fudge that could allow them to use even more fossil fuels. The assessment singled out Brazil and Australia, and warned a lack of rules around accounting for forests and other land-based carbon sinks meant countries could “game the system” when reporting their national greenhouse gas emissions. Scientists are still unclear about how carbon sinks might behave as the planet warms in future, and exactly how much heat-trapping carbon dioxide they might soak up from the atmosphere. But that has not stopped countries from making their own assumptions and using those numbers in their national climate plans, which are due to be finalised to 2035 before the next UN climate talks in Brazil in November.

Climate Analytics, a policy institute that independently assesses these plans, said overly optimistic assumptions about how much CO₂ forests might draw down was “masking the scale and pace of the fossil fuel emissions cuts needed”. This concealed the true effort needed to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, the ambition set out in the 2015 Paris climate agreement. In the latest versions of its climate plan, Australia had leaned so heavily on forests to reduce its carbon footprint that it would amount to scaling back real cuts to emissions by 10 per cent, Climate Analytics said. Brazil, meanwhile, has announced its own pledge to cut emissions by 59pc to 67pc below 2005 levels by 2035, but has not defined the extent to which forests will help meet this goal. (*Dawn, April 25th, 2025, Page 11*)

11.4 # Climate Disasters

Over 100 killed after rains hit India, Nepal

More than 100 people have died after unseasonably heavy rain lashed parts of India and Nepal, as the weather department predicted more rain for the region. In Bihar, at least 82 people have died in rain-related incidents over the last two days, the eastern state’s disaster management department said. In India’s most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, meanwhile, authorities said 18 people had died due to lightning and storm-related incidents. In neighbouring Nepal, lightning strikes and heavy rain killed at least eight people, National Disaster Authority officials said. (*Dawn, April 12th, 2025 Page 12*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquake

UN seeks help for Myanmar; quake toll over 3,350

The United Nations called for the world to rally behind quake-hit Myanmar as the death toll rose to 3,354, while a former USAID official said a US aid team had received notice they were losing their jobs after arriving in the disaster zone. In addition to those killed by the March 28 earthquake, 4,850 people were injured and another 220 are missing. During a visit to Myanmar's second-biggest city, Mandalay, which was near the epicentre of the 7.7 magnitude quake, United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher appealed for international support.

Myanmar's neighbours, such as China, India and Southeast Asian nations, are among those that dispatched relief supplies and rescuers to aid the recovery effort in quake-hit areas that are home to about 28 million people over the past week. The United States, which was until recently the world's top humanitarian donor, had pledged at least \$9 million to Myanmar to support earthquake-affected communities, but current and former US officials say the dismantling of its foreign aid programme has affected its response. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 12*)

Powerful quake rocks Istanbul

A 6.2-magnitude earthquake hit the Sea of Marmara near Istanbul, with the impact felt across Turkiye's largest city where people rushed onto the streets. There were no immediate reports of injuries or damage but the quake was followed by at least eight others, Turkiye's AFAD disaster management agency said. It was followed by eight others with magnitudes of 3.5 to 5.9. As buildings shook, people rushed onto the streets where crowds of worried-looking people stared at their mobile phones for information or made calls. (*Dawn, April 24th, 2025, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters rally across Spain against housing crisis, tourist flats

Hundreds of thousands marched across 40 Spanish cities to protest against soaring rents and a lack of affordable homes in a country that enjoys Europe's fastest economic growth and yet suffers from a severe housing shortage exacerbated by a tourism boom. Spain's centre-left government has struggled to find a balance between attracting tourists and migrants to fill job gaps and keeping rents affordable for average citizens, as short-term rentals have mushroomed in major cities and coastal destinations alike. "No matter who governs, we must defend housing rights," activists shouted as they rattled keychains in Madrid, where more than 150,000 protesters marched through the capital's centre, according to the local tenants' union. (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 10*)

Trump's policies trigger protests in US, Europe

Thousands streamed into downtown Washington as protests got underway against efforts by President Donald Trump and his billionaire ally Elon Musk to overhaul

government and expand presidential authority. Organisers said more than 20,000 people attended the rally at Washington's National Mall. Over 1,200 demonstrations were planned across the United States in what organisers expect to be the largest single day of protest which will give Trump's opponents an opportunity to demonstrate their displeasure en masse in response to a raft of executive orders. Some 150 activist groups have signed up to participate, according to the event's website. Protests were planned in all 50 states plus Canada and Mexico.

Hours before protests kicked off in United States, hundreds of anti-Trump Americans living in Europe gathered in Berlin, Frankfurt, Paris and London to voice opposition to the sweeping makeover of US foreign and domestic policies. About 200 people, mostly American, gathered on Paris's Place de la Republique, listening to speeches and waving banners ranging from "Resist Tyrant", "Rule of Law" to "Feminists for Freedom not fascism" and "Save Democracy". (*Dawn, April 6th, 2025 Page 12*)

Portuguese protest economic hardship ahead of election

Thousands of people demonstrated in several Portuguese cities demanding higher wages, ahead of a snap legislative election next month. (*The News, April 6th, 2025 Page 10*)

'Hands Off!' Anti-Trump Americans flood Washington

When Liz Gabbitas joined thousands of fellow protesters in the US capital, she thought her message to the Trump administration would be best delivered through her homemade sign: a cardboard guillotine. The 34-year-old librarian made clear she does not advocate violence, but nevertheless insisted that her one-metre (three-foot) sign, complete with tin foil blade, "communicated the visual language" of revolutionary fervor she longs for less than three months into Donald Trump's presidency. (*Dawn, April 7th, 2025 Page 11*)

Thousands rally in Morocco at pro-Palestinian protest

Tens of thousands of people demonstrated in Morocco's capital against the conflict in the Gaza Strip where Israel has resumed its anti-Hamas offensive after a two-month ceasefire. The largest pro-Palestinian protest in the capital Rabat for several months was called by the Islamist-dominated coalition the Justice and Development party. Protesters were accompanied by chanting and the beating of drums as they marched down the city's Mohammed V Avenue near parliament. They waved flags including one bearing the image of slain Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar. Children carried white shrouds stained in red to symbolise the thousands of young victims killed in the Palestinian territory during a year and a half of war. Israel's military resumed its offensive in Gaza on March 18, and since then, more than 1,330 people have been killed in the territory, according to Hamas-run territory's health ministry. (*Business Recorder, April 7th, 2025 Page 12*)

News Makers: Budapest (Hungary)

Protesters take part in a rally on Erzsebet Bridge against the Hungarian government's efforts to restrict freedom of assembly and expand its surveillance powers. Lawmakers

passed legislation on March 18 aimed at banning the annual Pride march and other demonstrations, enabling the use of facial recognition tools to identify participants of banned demonstrations. (*Dawn, April 9th, 2025 Page 10*)

News Makers: Brasilia (Brazil)

Brazil's indigenous people attend the "Our future is not for sale!" march within the Free Land Camp. Some 8,000 Indigenous people from all over the country, South America, and Oceania are in Brasilia for a week of demonstrations to demand that their leaders have 'equal voice and power with hands of state at the COP30 climate change conference in Brazil next November. (*Dawn, April 10th, 2025 Page 10*)

Greenpeace UK head arrested over protest at US embassy

British police have arrested the UK head of Greenpeace, alongside five other activists, after they poured 300 litres of blood-red dye into a pond at the US embassy in protest against the US sale of arms to Israel. Will McCallum, the environmental campaign group's UK head, and the others, disguised as delivery riders on bicycles with trailers, Greenpeace said, tipped the dye into the high-security embassy's semi-circular pond. (*Dawn, April 11th, 2025 Page 10*)

Three dead, 118 arrested in India protests over Muslim land bill

India deployed troops to quell deadly protests that have erupted in the state of West Bengal over legislation to change how Muslim-owned properties are managed. Police fired tear gas at the thousands of demonstrators who gathered in the state's Murshidabad district. Three people, including a child, were killed, police said. "So far, 118 people have been arrested in connection with the violence," said Jawed Shamim, a senior police official in the state, adding that at least 15 police officers were injured. The state's high court ordered federal troops to deploy. The Waqf amendment bill that set off the protests was passed earlier this month after heated debate. (*Dawn, April 13th, 2025 Page 12*)

Bernie's 'fighting oligarchy' rallies draw huge crowds

Bernie Sanders is emerging as one of the most vocal opponents to US President Donald Trump, with the 83-year-old senator drawing tens of thousands of people to his "fighting oligarchy" rallies around the country. Supporters packed the Gloria Molina Grand Park in Los Angeles as guests including politicians, union representatives and musical acts took to the stage before speeches by Sanders and Democrat representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "There are some 36,000 of you, the largest rally that we have ever had," Sanders told the cheering crowd. (*Dawn, April 14th, 2025, Page 11*)

Protests against Muslim land law turn violent in India

Protesters angered by a new law on land use they say discriminates against Muslims set fire to police vehicles in Kolkata, capital of India's West Bengal State after a weekend of violence claimed three lives. The unrest began in Murshidabad district, where protesters set fire to shopping malls, attacked a home and stabbed two people, police said, forcing authorities to suspend internet services in area. (*Dawn, April 15th, 2025, Page 10*)

Trans rights supporters rally outside UK parliament after court ruling

Thousands of people rallied in central London in support of trans rights, after a landmark court ruling on the definition of a “woman”. Britain’s Supreme Court ruled that the legal definition of a “woman” is based on a person’s sex at birth, with potentially far-reaching consequences for how single-sex spaces and services are run. At a protest in Parliament Square, activists, protesters, trade unions and community groups waved flags and held up banners with slogans such as “trans women are women!” and “trans rights are human rights”. (*Dawn, April 20th, 2025, Page 10*)

Deportations, govt firings and wars in Gaza, Ukraine: Thousands of protesters rally against Trump across US

Thousands of protesters rallied in Washington and other cities across the US to voice their opposition to President Donald Trump’s policies on deportations, government firings, and the wars in Gaza and Ukraine. Outside the White House, protesters carried banners that read “Workers should have the power,” “No kingship,” “Stop arming Israel” and “Due process,” media footage showed. Some demonstrators chanted in support of migrants whom Trump administration has deported or has been attempting to deport while expressing solidarity with people fired by the federal government and with universities whose funding is threatened by Trump. (*Business Recorder, April 21st, 2025, Page 1*)

Just Stop Oil activist group holds final march

British environmental activist group Just Stop Oil held its final demonstration in London, ending three years of high-profile climate protest stunts as they moved their focus away from civil disobedience. Several hundred supporters walked peacefully through the centre of the British capital, from parliament to the headquarters of oil and gas giant Shell, where they removed their familiar high-vis orange vests. The group announced in March it would halt its headline-grabbing protests, arguing it had accomplished its initial aim of stopping Britain approving new oil and gas projects. More than 3,000 Just Stop Oil protesters have been arrested since it was founded in 2022 and 11 of them are currently in jail, including 58-year-old co-founder Roger Hallam. Five more are due to be sentenced in May. (*Business Recorder, April 27th, 2025, Page 8*)

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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