

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

March, 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

ADC: American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee

AIT: Agriculture Income Tax

AMP: Anjuman Mazareen Punjab

APTAC: Agricultural Pesticides Technical Advisory Committee

BAS: British Antarctic Survey

BHUs: Basic Health Units

BII: British International Investment

BNP: Balochistan National Party

BSC: Baloch Students Council

BYC: Baloch Yakjehti Committee

CCA: Concerned Citizens Alliance

CCCPE: Committee on Cotton Crop Production Enhancement

CCI: Council of Common Interests

CCRI: Central Cotton Research Institute

CDA: Cholistan Development Authority

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

CPI: Consumer Price Index

DDC: Directorate of Drug Control

DHS: Department of Homeland Security

DPP: Department of Plant Protection

DRAP: Drug Regulatory Authority Pakistan

DRC: Danish Refugee Council

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

ECC: Economic Coordination Committee

ECNEC: Executive Committee of the National Economic Council

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EMR: Eastern Mediterranean Region

EU: European Union

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organisation

FBR: Federal Board of Revenue

FDI: Foreign direct investment

FEA: Foreign Economic Assistance

FEC: Federal Executive Council

FPCCI: Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry

GCF: Green Climate Fund

GLOFs: Glacial Lake Outbursts

GSFF: Global Shield Financing Facility

GST: General Sales Tax

HBWWF: Home-Based Women Workers Federation

HCBA: High Court Bar Association

HDBA: Hyderabad District Bar Association

HKP: Haqooq-e-Khalq Party

HRCP: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

IDA: International Development Association

IEP: Institution of Engineers Pakistan

IFC: International Finance Corporation

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IFZA: International Free Zones Authority

IMC: Inter-Ministerial Committee

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IMN: Islamic Movement in Nigeria

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IRSA: Indus River System Authority

ISO: Imamia Students Organisation

JSQM: Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz

JSSF: Jeay Sindh Students Federation

JUI-F: Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl

KBA: Karachi Bar Association

KKH: Karakoram Highway

KPC: Karachi Press Club

KPT: Karachi Port Trust

LLOFs: Landslide-Dammed Lake Outburst Floods

LSD: Lumpy Skin Disease

MNFS&R: Ministry of National Food Security & Research

MoF: Ministry of Finance

MoU: Memorandum of Understanding

MWM: Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen

NAB: National Accountability Bureau

NAFSA: National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority

NDMC: National Drought Monitoring Centre

NIGAB: National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology

NIR: Net International Reserves

NOC: No Objection Certificate

NSIDC: National Snow and Ice Data Center

PARC: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council

PASSCO: Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCAP: Punjab Clean Air Programme

PCDA: Pakistan Chemists and Druggists Association

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PCRWR: Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources

PDA: Pakistan Dairy Association

PDM: Provincial Disaster Management Authority

PFA: Punjab Food Authority

PFUJ: Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists

PFVA: Pakistan Fruit and Vegetables Association

PHI: Pre-Harvest Intervals

PKMKP: Pakistan Mazdoor Kissan Party

PKMT: Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek

PKRC: Pakistan Kissan Rabita Committee

PMA: Pakistan Medical Association

PMD: Pakistan Meteorological Department

PSA: Progressive Students Alliance

PSC: Progressive Students Collective

PSMA: Pakistan Sugar Mills Association

PUJ: Punjab Union of Journalists

QAT: Qaumi Awami Tehreek

QPC: Quetta Press Club

RAM: Resilient and Accessible Microfinance

RHCs: Rural Health Centres

RSF: Resilience and Sustainability Facility

SAI: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBA: Standby Arrangement

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SCA: Sindh Chamber of Agriculture

SEZ: Special Economic Zone

SHC: Sindh High Court

SIFC: Special Investment Facilitation Council

SLA: Staff Level Agreement

SMAP: Smog Mitigation Action Plan

STP: Sindh Taraqqi-pasand Party

SUP: Sindh United Party

TCP: Corporation of Pakistan

USAID: US Agency for International Development

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WASA: Water and Sanitation Agency

WHO: World Health Organisation

WMO: World Meteorological Organisation

WTO: World Trade Organisation

WWF: World Wide Fund for Nature

ZTBL: Zarai Taraqati Bank Ltd

NEWS EXCEPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- The Sindh government has approved cultivation of 22 new varieties of crops, including cotton, maize, mustard, rice, pulses and mangoes, which are designed to produce higher yields with reduced water consumption.
- Mr Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan, despite being an agricultural country, is spending \$4.5 billion importing oilseeds, and we must take measures to reduce this expenditure.
- KOPIA Pakistan Centre introduced aeroponic cultivation technology.
- Thousands of farming families in several districts of Punjab are being displaced from their lands, which are being handed over to ‘corporate mafias’.
- Saying no to corporate farming, demanded genuine and comprehensive agrarian reforms and equitable distribution of lands for agricultural progress. They suggested that state lands should be distributed among landless peasants, rural poor, women, youth, and small farmers.
- Pakistan Kissan Mazdoor Tehreek (PKMT) national coordinator Tariq Mehmood said that the government was implementing neo-liberal policies instead of protecting the interests of farmers, especially small and landless ones, resulting in mass destruction of the working class.
- Tariq Mehmood told reporters that “We’ll continue the struggle for food sovereignty while calling for just and equitable distribution of land,”
- The PKMT leader said imperialist countries, especially the United States, were pushing the situation further downwards.
- In the name of Green Initiatives, thousands of acres of land in Punjab and Sindh have been allocated for corporate agriculture.
- PKMT leader said another grim development for people suffering from hunger and landlessness was the federal government’s decision to abolish the minimum support price of wheat for 2024-2025 as IMF’s loan condition.
- Mr. Mehmood complained that genetically modified seeds were being promoted by seed giant companies for huge profits.
- Palijo criticised the Green Pakistan initiative, calling it a conspiracy to displace Sindhis under the guise of development. Corporate farming would lead to large scale land-grabbing and worsen poverty and unemployment.
- Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir inaugurated the ambitious Cholistan project to irrigate south Punjab lands on February 15 amid a public uproar in Sindh and strong reservations expressed by stakeholders of the smaller province.

- Awami Tehreek resolved to continue ongoing movement against construction of six new canals on Indus River and corporate farming with more protests and rallies planned across the province.
- Vasand Thari, said that former president Arif Alvi had signed Investment Board Amendment Bill 2023, paving the way for handing over 1.3 million acres of Sindh's land to foreign corporations.
- Pakistan has called for urgent transboundary water cooperation and a stronger focus on the water-climate-environment nexus at the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference.
- Irsa has warned that Punjab and Sindh are likely to face shortfall of up to 35 percent in the coming days.
- Since the country's both vital dams — Tarbela and Mangla — have hit dead level, Sindh is facing an acute shortage of irrigation water now when formal Kharif season is set to begin.
- WWF-Pakistan voiced serious concerns over the Cholistan Canals project, emphasising need for comprehensive socio-environmental impact assessments before undertaking large-scale irrigation initiatives.
- The Cholistan Canals project, part of the Green Pakistan Initiative, aims to irrigate 4.8 million acres (1.9 million hectares) of barren land by constructing six canals— two each in Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- The Punjab government will spend Rs 35 billion over the next two years to promote agricultural mechanization in the province.

Plan to provide soft loan to service providers for farm machinery

- The Punjab government is considering offering interest-free loans up to Rs50 million to service providers, importers, manufacturers, and farmers willing to purchase machinery.
- CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif formally launched 1,000 free tractors scheme for the wheat farmers under “CM Punjab Wheat Initiative Programme.
- Despite enabling legislation passed by all four provincial assemblies on AIT, ongoing review talks with IMF have yet to achieve final clarity on its implementation mechanism for effective collection, targeted to take effect from July 1, 2025.
- The Ministry of National Food Security and Research announced a complete ban on 12 toxic pesticides, which are excessively used despite their known harm to health and environment.
- Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will inaugurate the ‘Seed Potato Production and Aeroponics Complex’ established with the assistance of South Korea for indigenising seed potato production using advanced technology.

- According to PARC Chairman Dr. Ghulam Mohammad Ali, traditional potato cultivation yields only five tubers per plant whereas aeroponic systems can produce between 50 and 60 tubers per plant.
- Despite cultivating potatoes on approximately 850,000 acres, Pakistan remains heavily reliant on the importation of 6,000 to 12,000 tonnes of seed potatoes annually due to the compromised quality of locally produced seeds.
- The prime minister will also inaugurate the National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB) at NARC.
- NIGAB has developed GMOs of wheat, groundnut, potato and tomato against diseases, drought and salinity which await approval from the regulatory body for commercial utilisation at the farm level.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

- The removal of government support prices, along with low domestic rates, has affected current sowing season, causing wheat farmers to switch to more profitable vegetables and cash crops, such as mustard and pulses.
- The cropping season finalised in December 2024 and aggregate cereal production is estimated at a record level of 56.6 million tonnes.
- Production of wheat in 2024 is officially estimated at a record level of 31.4m tonnes, production of paddy crop is estimated at a record level of 15.2m tonnes, Production of maize is estimated at an average level of 9.5 million tonnes.
- About 10m people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity.
- Pakistan's cotton industry is facing an alarming crisis as national production plunges to the second-lowest level in the country's history, falling nearly 50 per cent short of the official target and 34pc below last year's output.
- According to PCGA figures, total cotton production stood at just 5.525 million bales. Punjab produced 2.718m bales and Sindh 2.807m bales—both showing a sharp decline from last year.
- According to a report by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association till February 28 witnessed a significant decline, signaling a serious threat to the sector.
- This year, the total quantity of cotton arriving at factories was recorded at 5.524 million bales, a 34.17% decrease compared to last year's 8.393 million bales.
- Sources indicate that cotton worth \$5 billion will be imported this year, adding an extra burden on Pakistan's economy.
- The committee formed by prime minister for revival of cotton crop recommended uniform tax policies for domestic and imported cotton, along with several other key suggestions.
- Including the lack of high-quality seeds, proper area zoning, insufficient research on GMO seeds, discriminatory tax policies, undocumented cotton production, and the need for better awareness campaigns.

- The Punjab Chief Minister has approved an incentive package of Rs 2.5 billion for early cotton cultivation in the province.
- Under this package, financial assistance of Rs. 25,000 will be provided for early cotton cultivation on 5 acres or more of owned land.
- All possible resources and means are being effectively utilized to achieve this target. So far, early cotton cultivation has been completed on more than 700,000 acres.
- Punjab has banned early sowing of paddy crop on the recommendation of an inquiry committee formed in the wake of farmers' complaints of poor yield leading to financial losses during the last crop year.
- The law prescribes Rs50,000 fine and/or six-month jail term for violation of any provision or rules made under the ordinance.
- With the Tarbela and Mangla dams rapidly approaching their dead levels, the Irsa warned Punjab and Sindh — the two major bread baskets — to brace for up to 35 per cent water shortages in the last leg of the current crop season.
- The minister was briefed about the current wheat stock position and was informed that as of March 6, Passco had 2.47 million tonnes of wheat in stock after disposing of 578,934 tonnes from April 1, 2024, to March 6, 2025. Besides, Passco procured 1.79 tonnes during the 2024 wheat crop season.
- The government is immediately halting the use of methyl bromide for the fumigation of rice consignments in Pakistan, enabling the importing countries to carry out the procedure themselves in line with international standards.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has said that Pakistan has formally accepted the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies.
- Pakistan's overall fish and fishery products exports during the first eight months of the fiscal year 2025 were 125,945 tonnes (\$263.5 million) as compared to 126,962 tonnes (\$262m) in the same period last fiscal.
- Overall fish exports in FY24 were 200,709 tonnes (\$410m) versus 214,542 tonnes (\$496.5m) in FY23.
- Dozens of cattle heads have died of a mysterious disease in Gaggo mandi and its suburbs in Vehari district during the past two days.

TRADE

- The exports of merchandise contracted 5.57 per cent in February, marking the first negative trend in the current fiscal year.
- The country's exports increased by 8.17 per cent during the first eight months (July-February) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$22.022 billion compared to \$20.359bn during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24).

- Trade deficit widened by 6.33 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$15.780 billion compared to \$14.840 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.
- The country's imports increased by 7.40 per cent and stood at \$37.802 billion during the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$35.199 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.
- Exports witnessed an increase of 8.42 percent during July–February 2024–25 touching \$22.074 billion against \$20.359 billion in the same period last year.
- The country's imports during July–February 2024–25 also registered an increase of 7.60 per cent as it totalled \$37.875 billion against \$35.199 billion during the corresponding period of last year.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries swelled by 36.09pc to \$7.36bn during first eight months of FY25 from \$5.41bn in corresponding period last year.
- Exports to European countries grew 9.86 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from a year ago.
- The ECC of the Cabinet has reportedly not approved the proposal of export of live sheep/goats to Kuwait, a proposal originated from the SIFC.
- The textile and clothing exports grew 9.31 per cent year-on-year during the first eight months of the current fiscal year.
- Exports of non-textile products grew by a paltry 2.38 per cent to \$9.89 billion in the first eight months of FY25 against \$9.66bn a year ago.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- The PFA has sealed eight bottled water brand plants for being contaminated with dangerous levels of chemicals and bacteria unfit for human health.
- Seeking rationalisation of taxation system, Pakistan Dairy Association has informed government that high taxes and duties have resulted in elevated prices, which in turn are limiting consumption of packaged milk and dairy products.
- National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority's Board of Governors ordered to close 392 seed companies that failed to meet compliance standards.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- FDI plunged 45 per cent year-on-year to \$95 million in February.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Pakistan had requested a loan of \$2 billion from the IMF, which included the disbursement of the \$1 billion tranche under the EFF and an additional \$1 billion in climate financing.
- IMF Director of Communications said Pakistan will receive \$1.3 billion under Resilience and Sustainable Facility (RSF) in tranches over 28 months.

- The World Bank has approved \$102 million in financing for a project aimed at expanding access to microcredit and strengthening the resilience of Pakistan's microfinance sector, particularly against climate-related shocks.
- The World Bank has approved a \$300 million International Development Association (IDA) loan for the 'Punjab Clean Air Programme' (PCAP).

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- The federal government's total debt stock surged by over Rs 3 trillion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (FY25).
- The central government's total debt comprising both domestic and external liabilities climbed by 4.65 percent during the first seven months of FY25.
- The overall debt stock surged to Rs 72.123 trillion in January 2025, up from Rs 68.914 trillion in June 2024, showing an increase of Rs 3.209 trillion.
- The federal government's borrowings from the domestic market grew by Rs 3.08 trillion, reaching Rs 50.243 trillion in January 2025, up from Rs 47.160 trillion in June 2024.
- External debt, measured in rupee terms, saw a slight rise of Rs 126bn during the first seven months of FY25, bringing the total external debt to Rs 21.880 trillion by the end of January 2025 as against Rs 21.754 trillion in June 2024.
- Despite a growth of about 10 per cent in total public debt to Rs74.103 trillion by the end of December 2024, the government has claimed that debt indicators are improving and risks are decreasing.

ENVIRONMENT

- Despite efforts by the government, civil society and local communities to increase forest cover, 11,000 hectares of forests are lost every year across the country due to wildfires, climate change and the conversion of forest land into agricultural, commercial, and housing schemes.
- Pakistan ranked third most polluted country in the list of most polluted countries in 2024.
- Tens of millions of Pakistanis spent at least four months breathing toxic air pollution 20 times above safe levels, in the worst winter smog season for several years.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS RESOURCES

- Peruvian Agriculture Minister Angel Manero announced some \$24 billion in largely public-private projects to improve irrigation in the Andean nation, as the government looks to expand its farmlands by some one million hectares (3,860 square miles).

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- China announced tariffs on over \$2.6 billion worth of Canadian agricultural and food products.

TRADE

- US President Donald Trump's trade war with China will give Brazilian agricultural exporters an opportunity to take an even bigger share of the Chinese market at the expense of American farmers, but it could also fuel already high food inflation in Brazil.
- The United States has paused contributions to the World Trade Organization.
- China, South Korea and Japan agreed to strengthen free trade in the face of a raft of new tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- The European Union and South Africa vowed to deepen cooperation at a summit as both grapple with aid and trade threats from the new US administration.
- European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen also plans to mobilise a 4.7-billion-euro (\$5 billion) investment package in South Africa that includes funding for a transition to clean energy and to boost vaccine manufacturing.
- Wars and attacks on civilians are expected to drive 6.7 million people from their homes worldwide over the next two years.
- The “devastating” withdrawal of international aid by US, UK and Germany has already left millions of vulnerable people without essential support.
- The number of displaced people worldwide was currently 122.6 million.
- The UN said it was allocating \$110m from its emergency fund for life-saving assistance in several countries after “brutal” cuts in global humanitarian aid.
- The United Nations announced it was seeking nearly \$1 billion to provide life-saving aid this year for some 1.5 million Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Bangladesh.

- The United Arab Emirates has committed to a 10-year, \$1.4 trillion investment framework in the United States.
- A divided US Supreme Court handed a legal defeat to President Donald Trump rejecting his bid to freeze some \$2 billion in foreign aid payments.
- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States was cancelling 83 percent of programs at the US Agency for International Development.
- US President Donald Trump’s administration announced plans to effectively close the US international development agency USAID, formalizing widely-criticized plans to dramatically cut foreign aid spending.
- Prior to its closure, the agency managed an annual budget of close to \$43 billion, accounting for more than 40 percent of the world’s humanitarian aid.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- International Monetary Fund (IMF) chief Kristalina Georgieva pledged to support Sri Lanka’s economic recovery, praising the cash-strapped nation’s “remarkable turnaround” during online talks with its president.
- Sri Lanka’s secured a \$2.9 billion bailout loan from the IMF in 2023, almost a year after defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Global food commodity prices rose in February, driven by higher sugar, dairy, and vegetable oil prices, FAO said.
- One in two children aged under five in Yemen are acutely malnourished, UN said.
- The UN’s World Food Programme warned it had only two weeks’ worth of food left in Gaza, where “hundreds of thousands of people” are at risk of severe hunger and malnutrition.
- The number of children living in poverty in the UK reached a new record as the government faces a storm of criticism over plans to cut welfare payments.
- Almost 4.5 million children were living in low-income households in the year ending March 2024.

ENVIRONMENT

- Record greenhouse gas levels helped bring temperatures to an all-time high in 2024, accelerating glacier and sea ice loss, raising sea levels and edging the world closer to a key warming threshold, the UN weather body said.
- By 2030, Coca-Cola products will account for an estimated 1.33bn pounds (602,000 metric tons) of plastic waste entering world’s oceans and waterways each year.
- Coca-Cola ranks as world’s top branded plastic polluter, followed by PepsiCo, Nestle, Danone, and Altria, according to a 2024 study published in Science Advances.

- The company's plastic use is projected to exceed 4.13 million metric tons (9.12 billion pounds) annually by 2030.
- Number of people exposed to dangerously high levels of air pollution could be halved by 2040 with targeted policy action with economic benefits as high as \$2.4tr.
- 99pc of the world's population is exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution that exceed WHO air quality guideline levels.
- Eighty percent of people directly exposed to unsafe average annual PM2.5 concentrations live in low- and middle-income countries.
- Intensive fertiliser use, poor manure management and the burning of crop residue, especially in Asia, contribute significantly to PM2.5 concentrations.
- A Chinese research team has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that predicts liver cancer recurrence risk with 82.2 per cent accuracy.
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) said that 80 per cent of services that it supports in Afghanistan could shut down by June due to a funding shortage.
- Without urgent intervention, over 220 more facilities could close by June 2025, leaving an additional 1.8m Afghans without access to primary health care.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Global sea ice cover hit a historic low in February as the world endured exceptional heat, with temperatures near the North Pole soaring 11 degrees Celsius above average.
- About four billion people, or half of the world's population, experience severe water scarcity for at least part of the year.
- All 19 of the world's glacier regions experienced a net loss of mass in 2024 for the third consecutive year.
- This year's Arctic sea ice peak is the lowest in the 47-year satellite record.
- Karachi and Dhaka will be the only two cities in Asia-Pacific region among the 10 cities of the Global South that will receive eight million climate migrants by 2050 if the world warms by more than 1.5 centigrade above pre-industrial levels.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- Climate-related disasters have caused economic losses exceeding \$4.3 trillion and claimed lives of over two million people globally between 1970 and 2021.
- WMO says world just witnessed hottest 10 years on record, and 2024 is likely to be first calendar year to temporarily hit 1.5°C above pre-industrial era.
- The report showed that atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide are at the highest levels in the last 800,000 years.
- The largest three-year loss of glacier mass on record occurred in the past three years. Rate of sea level rise has doubled since satellite measurements began.

1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Pak-Tajik group to explore collaboration in agriculture sector [P.1]

Sindh govt approves 22 new crop varieties [P.1]

Farmers' access to climate-resilient crops stressed [P.1]

Shehbaz eyes agriculture revival to lift economy [P.2]

1.1 # Farmers

Farmers, civil society oppose corporate farming [P.2]

PKMT flays govt for 'not protecting interests of farmers' [P.3]

1.2 # Land

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Rivals in land row loot family, demolish house in Umerkot village [P.4]

Mardan land dispute claims four lives [P.4]

Five killed, seven injured as rival groups clash over land ownership [P.5]

Land irrigation dispute claims four lives in Dera [P.5]

Land dispute claims seven lives in Nasirabad [P.5]

1.3 # Water

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Cholistan project inaugurated but CCI remains indifferent to Sindh's objections [P.6]

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'PPP won't allow Centre to go ahead with canals project' [P.7]

Pakistan urges UN to unite nations over shared water crisis [P.7]

Punjab & Sindh There will be massive water shortfall: Irsa [P.7]

Looming water shortages threaten wheat, sugar crops in Sindh, Punjab [P.7]

PDMA issues drought alert for Cholistan [P.8]

Water shortage in Sindh hits 50pc mark, threatens Kharif crops [P.8]

Experts reject new canals, suggest alternatives to irrigate Cholistan [P.8]

'Preserving glaciers to avert water crisis need of the hour' [P.8]

'Recharge Pakistan' initiative to combat water challenges: PM [P.8]

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Punjab tells IRSA what caused water shortage [P.9]

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2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

Plan to provide soft loan to service providers for farm machinery [P.11]
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2.3 # Pesticides

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3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

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Indonesian diplomats, scientists underscore need for boosting oil palm cultivation

3.1 # Cash Crop

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Pak-Tajik group to explore collaboration in agriculture sector

The government has proposed to Tajikistan government a virtual meeting of Pakistan-Tajikistan Joint Working Group on Agriculture next month to explore collaboration between the two countries in the food and agriculture sectors. Tajikistan has expressed interest in importing sugar and other agricultural products from Pakistan, and these issues will be discussed during the proposed joint working group's meeting to enhance trade between two countries. There is significant potential for collaboration between Pakistan and Tajikistan in trade, energy, infrastructure and agriculture, though bilateral trade remained modest at \$23.46mn in 2022-2023. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 3*)

Sindh govt approves 22 new crop varieties

Agricultural scientists in Sindh have developed new crop varieties that offer higher yields and require less water for cultivation. The Sindh government has approved cultivation of 22 new varieties of crops, including cotton, maize, mustard, rice, pulses and mangoes, which are designed to produce higher yields with reduced water consumption. In this regard, the phase-II of the 36th meeting of the Provincial Seed Council was held under the chairmanship of Minister of Agriculture Sardar Mohammad Bakhsh Mahar. During the meeting, the characteristics of the new seeds were reviewed and approval was granted for the cultivation of newly-introduced varieties.

Minister Mahar stated that the meeting approved 10 new crop varieties, including CKC1 and CKC221 for cotton besides CKC6, Ghori 2, HAF 3, and ICS 386. Additionally, partial approval for one year was granted for the cultivation of three new cotton varieties and four new rice varieties. Agriculture minister also mentioned that meeting approved new crop varieties such as Mazhar Gold, Sindh Rani, and Sarhan for maize while Neela Canola and Neela Toria Gold were approved for mustard. New varieties of mangoes from Mirpurkhas, sesame variety TS 3 and four new rice varieties, including KSK-434, Basmati 515 and Kainat were also approved. (*Dawn, March 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Farmers' access to climate-resilient crops stressed

Agricultural experts from various research institutions and progressive growers, have expressed concerns about escalating impacts of climate change, water scarcity and drought in Sindh while emphasising urgent need for farmers' access to climate-resilient and short-duration crop varieties, and efficient water-use technologies through collaborative research. They were speaking at a validation workshop organised by the Agricultural Research Sindh in collaboration with the FAO, SAU and Sindh agriculture extension department as part of Green Climate Fund (GCF) project, focused on validating agricultural data from climate-resilient demonstration plots established in Sanghar, Umerkot and Badin. (*Dawn, March 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

Shehbaz eyes agriculture revival to lift economy

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif vowed to revitalise the country's agriculture sector, achieve food self-sufficiency, and boost farm exports. In the next few years, an agricultural revolution can be brought to Pakistan if the federal government, in collaboration with provinces, provides reasonably priced inputs to farmers. The country needs a conducive environment to exploit the agri potential as we have fertile land, water resources, agricultural scientists and graduates, the prime minister said while inaugurating the Seed Potato Production and Aeroponics Complex at the National Agricultural Research Centre. He said the government is sending 1,000 fresh graduates to China for training to help the farming community enhance agricultural productivity.

Mr Shehbaz Sharif said Pakistan, despite being an agricultural country, is spending \$4.5 billion importing oilseeds, and we must take measures to reduce this expenditure. The prime minister highlighted the importance of agricultural machinery in enhancing productivity and stressed that public-private partnerships would be encouraged to manufacture this machinery locally. He thanked the Korean government for collaborating with Pakistan in the agricultural sector. He said the potato seed project will help ensure availability of quality seed to growers, thereby increasing production.

KOPIA Pakistan Centre introduced aeroponic cultivation technology. As a result, seed potato productivity has dramatically increased six-fold compared to conventional methods. Following this, the Pakistan government committed to investing \$2.5 million over five years, significantly expanding the scale of pilot cultivation. By the end of the project in 2028, Pakistan is expected to produce up to 160,000 tonnes of seed potatoes each year, laying a solid foundation for self-sufficiency. Nationwide distribution of high-quality, disease-free seed potatoes will further boost potato productivity, raise farmer income, and revitalise the rural economy. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 9*)

1.1 # Farmers

Farmers, civil society oppose corporate farming

Farmers' organisations, political parties and civil society representatives have decided to resist, what they call the government's move to displace peasants in the name of corporate farming. Representatives of PKRC, Anjuman Mazareen Punjab (AMP), PkMKP and Haqooq-e-Khalq Party (HKP) told a press conference, after a meeting, that corporate farming is being used as a pretext to snatch lands from peasants and small farmers. They said thousands of farming families in several districts of Punjab are being displaced from their lands, which are being handed over to 'corporate mafias'. They said notwithstanding the court orders acknowledging these lands as common property of peasants, the government, ignoring the peasants' ownership rights, is attempting to hand over their lands to corporate mafias for 30 to 50 years. But the peasants are resisting the move and refusing to vacate their lands despite the use of police force, particularly in Arifwala and Hasilpur, adding the government is now issuing notices to the farmers for sharecropping. They said local patwaris and tehsildars are demanding

payment of arrears worth billions of rupees from farmers, while police are being used to forcibly obtain their thumb impressions on ownership documents. Saying no to corporate farming, they demanded genuine and comprehensive agrarian reforms and equitable distribution of lands for agricultural progress. They suggested that state lands should be distributed among landless peasants, rural poor, women, youth, and small farmers.

They also demanded Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to restore the Peasants Committee with genuine representatives of peasants and small farmers to address their issues. They also opposed the six canals being carved out from the River Indus to facilitate the “corporate farming mafia” in Cholistan and called for focusing on providing water to the existing agricultural lands and communities. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 2*)

PKMT flays govt for ‘not protecting interests of farmers’

PKMT national coordinator Tariq Mehmood said that government was implementing neo-liberal policies instead of protecting the interests of farmers, especially small and landless ones, resulting in mass destruction of the working class. Tariq Mehmood told reporters here on the International Day of Landless Peasants that his organisation was committed to fighting for the rights of small and landless peasants and the working class. “We’ll continue the struggle for food sovereignty while calling for just and equitable distribution of land,” he said. Mr Mehmood rejected corporate control in food and agriculture and advocated for the “right to save and plant indigenous seeds.”

Accompanied by PKMT leaders Fayyaz Ahmed and Asif Khan, he said the organisation stood in solidarity with the working class and would expose feudal, capitalist and corporate land grabbing while promoting systems that empower local communities to control and manage land, forests, mountains, seas and other natural resources. “We mark this day in collaboration with other peasant and anti-imperialist movements, like Roots for Equity, Asian Peasant Coalition, People’s Coalition on Food Sovereignty, Pesticide Action Network Asia-Pacific and International League of Peoples’ Struggle, to highlight the struggles of small and landless peasants for food sovereignty and genuine agrarian reforms worldwide,” he said. Mr Mehmood also highlighted efforts to expose oppression and coercion of and exploitation by multinational corporations and imperialist countries representing them, as well as the governments of Third World countries. He said the world, especially Pakistan, was in the grip of a severe economic and environmental crisis, with millions of people, especially workers, suffering from extreme poverty, unemployment and hunger.

The PKMT leader said imperialist countries, especially the United States, were pushing the situation further downwards. He added that those countries were engaged in environmental destruction, and looting and occupying land, water, oceans, forests, minerals and other natural resources through war and militarisation. Mr Mehmood said that Pakistanis, particularly rural communities, were victims of those conditions. He said in Mansehra and other districts, people were being denied access to forests, while

in Peshawar, land was being taken from communities under the guise of development projects. “In the name of Green Initiatives, thousands of acres of land in Punjab and Sindh have been allocated for corporate agriculture. The path has already been paved for multinational corporations to take over the dairy and livestock sector, which includes banning open and fresh milk and promoting companies’ packaged milk,” he said. The PKMT leader said another grim development for the people suffering from hunger and landlessness was the federal government’s decision to abolish the minimum support price of wheat for 2024-2025 as the International Monetary Fund’s loan condition. This policy will be devastating for small and landless farmers, according to him.

Mr Mehmood said even previous year’s support prices set by government were insufficient to cover their cost of production, but handing over price determination to free market would ruin such growers. He also complained that genetically modified seeds were being promoted by seed giant companies for huge profits. “Huge corporations have been given thousands of acres of land to produce potatoes, displacing small and landless farmers who are now forced to work as low-wage labourers,” adding that potato seed on land is owned by corporations. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 15, Metro Peshawar*)

1.2 # Land

Three killed over Mansehra land dispute

Three people were killed and another sustained critical injuries when rival groups exchanged fire over a disputed piece of land in Bai Tarli Battle area. The confrontation erupted between Mohammad Raqib & his rival, Waheed Haroon over diversion of water from a stream on disputed land to agricultural fields. During exchange of fire, both men, along with two others, sustained critical injuries. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 8*)

Rivals in land row loot family, demolish house in Umerkot village

A group of Kapri community members bulldozed the concrete house of their rivals in a land dispute in Jeewan Shah village of Umerkot and, according to the victims, took away their gold jewellery, cash, animals and other valuables. The village is situated along Hakro Dhoro, a natural waterway. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Mardan land dispute claims four lives

Four persons, including three brothers, were killed and two others sustained serious injuries when rival groups exchanged fire in Qari Abad Qasim Toru Meera area over a land dispute. The police’s preliminary investigations revealed that the slain brothers along with other relatives were busy carrying out spray in their agricultural fields when their rivals opened indiscriminate fire over them. Police said that members of the rival groups had already fought with each other a year ago over a one-foot land as boundaries of their lands were adjacently located. The police said Zahir Shah group had offered Rs300,000 cash for the disputed one-foot land through members of a local jirga, but their rivals demanded Rs600,000, which was not acceptable to the former. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 8*)

Five killed, seven injured as rival groups clash over land ownership

Five persons, including two brothers, were killed and seven others injured in a clash between two rival groups in a property dispute in Allah Bachayo Rahimoon village, within the limits of the Khorwah police station of Badin district. Four of the dead belonged to the Rahimoon community and the fifth one to the Khaskheli community. Residents of the village told local reporters that the rival sides had quarreled over the ownership of a four-acre piece of agricultural land within the area a day earlier but without any violence. However, the two sides challenged each other as many people came well prepared for a fight and carried firearms, axes, clubs and other lethal objects. (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 15*)

Land irrigation dispute claims four lives in Dera

A clash over a land irrigation dispute in Bhagwani Shumali area of Paharpur tehsil here claimed four lives and left four others injured. The district police's spokesperson Syed Yaqoob Bukhari said the incident occurred when a longstanding feud between two groups over water usage escalated into a deadly exchange of gunfire. (*Dawn, March 26th, 2025, Page 8*)

Land dispute claims seven lives in Nasirabad

Armed men killed seven members of a family in Sohbatpur district of Nasirabad division over a land dispute. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 5*)

1.3 # Water

Irsa accused of facilitating theft of Sindh's water

Qaumi Awami Tehreek's president Ayaz Latif Palijo has warned that the construction of six 'strategic' canals on Indus River will exacerbate Sindh's water crisis and reduce the province to a desert, and accused Irsa of facilitating the massive water theft through the canals. Palijo said before gatherings of party workers and supporters in different places where his party's "Save the River" march made stopovers, from Mirpur Sakro to Makli, that acute water shortages plaguing Sindh would worsen if the new canals were built. He accused the provincial government of turning a blind eye to the looming crisis and noted that Wapda chairman had confirmed that Pakistan Peoples Party had approved the construction of the canals. He slammed the PPP for selling off Sindh's resources for the sake of power and criticised the federal government, parliament and judiciary for ignoring Sindh's grievances.

He raised concerns over alarming levels of depletion of Sindh's natural resources, drinking water, seawater intrusion and looming desertification. He called out institutions of Irsa, Wapda, CDWP and CCI for their alleged bias against Sindh, demanding that both federal and provincial governments stop the exploitation of the province. Palijo criticised the Green Pakistan initiative, calling it a conspiracy to displace Sindhis under the guise of development. Corporate farming would lead to large scale land-grabbing and worsen poverty and unemployment, he said.

The party dismissed the Green Initiative projects as anti-Sindh and a threat to the province's water security. They called for distribution of 50 acres each to landless farmers, including men and women, along with free seeds and fertilisers. They denounced illegal seizure of land in Kohistan and demanded that local farmers, especially women, be granted land ownership. They condemned forced eviction of indigenous communities from areas around Darawat Dam site and confiscation of their lands. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 15*)

Cholistan project inaugurated but CCI remains indifferent to Sindh's objections

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and Chief of Army Staff Gen Asim Munir inaugurated the ambitious Cholistan project to irrigate south Punjab lands on February 15 amid a public uproar in Sindh and strong reservations expressed by stakeholders of the smaller province. Summaries of Sindh regarding new water projects, including Cholistan canal, have been submitted in Council of CCI in 2023 and 2024 but a decision on them is still awaited. CCI is a forum that has exclusive jurisdiction to decide water disputes.

Three most contentious water projects questioned by Sindh, being lower riparian, to protect its permanent water interests are before CCI for a decision as the province finds them detrimental to water rights of its people. Among them is "Extension of irrigated agriculture smaller Cholistan by transferring water through link canals & water availability certificate" which is lying in CCI. Certificate is issued for April-Sept (Kharif) period.

The Greater Thal Canal (GTC) Phase-II is also disputed one. It takes off from Chashma-Jhelum (CJ) link canal over Indus river and its phase-II covers "Chaubara branch canal and its system of Mankera, Dhingana, Nurpur and Mahmood sub-branch, according to information available with Sindh government. Similarly, Jalalpur irrigation canal system is pending a decision in CCI since 2022. The Cholistan water project has been a bone of contention between Sindh and Punjab federal governments ever since Irsa gave its nod on Jan 17, 2024 on issuance of water availability certificate for controversial project. The CDWP had okayed it in October 2024. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

AT resolves to continue movement against canals, corporate farming

Awami Tehreek resolved to continue ongoing movement against construction of six new canals on Indus River and corporate farming with more protests and rallies planned across the province. The party's central committee, which met here with AT central president, Vasand Thari, in the chair, said that people of Sindh would not allow construction of canals on Indus River and would not let corporate farming companies to acquire millions of acres of land in the province. He criticised government and said Asif Zardari had approved six new canals, endorsed amendments to Irsa Act and gave a green light to corporate farming. He said that former president Arif Alvi had signed Investment Board Amendment Bill 2023, paving the way for handing over 1.3 million acres of Sindh's land to foreign corporations. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

‘PPP won’t allow Centre to go ahead with canals project’

Pakistan Peoples Party Sindh’s president, Nisar Ahmed Khuhro, reiterated that his party rejected the federal government’s plans for the construction of six new canals on Indus River and would never allow it to go ahead with the projects. He told local media persons during inauguration of a roundabout named ‘Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Chowk’ in memory of the slain party chairperson in Badin that it was PPP which had rejected the highly controversial Kalabagh Dam project and struck the last nail in its coffin. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Pakistan urges UN to unite nations over shared water crisis

Pakistan has called for urgent transboundary water cooperation and a stronger focus on the water-climate-environment nexus at the upcoming 2026 UN Water Conference, warning that climate change and population pressures are pushing the country towards water scarcity. Speaking at the conference’s organisational session in New York, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad stressed the need to accelerate global efforts to ensure clean water and sanitation for all — a challenge deeply personal for countries like Pakistan, which could become water-scarce by 2035. In 2021, Pakistan’s per capita water availability dropped to just 1,017 cubic metres per year, a dangerously low figure for a country of 240m people. Much of Pakistan’s water comes from Indus River Basin, heavily dependent on snowmelt and rainfall — both of which are becoming increasingly erratic due to climate change. Mr Ahmad highlighted the ‘Living Indus’ and ‘Recharge Pakistan’ programmes as national efforts to restore ecosystems, improve water quality, build flood resilience, and conserve biodiversity — offering solutions other developing countries could learn from. Pakistan’s proposal at the UN calls for water-sharing nations to work together and adopt integrated approaches that connect water management, climate action, and environmental sustainability. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 3*)

Punjab & Sindh There will be massive water shortfall: Irsa

Indus River System Authority (Irsa) has warned that Punjab and Sindh are likely to face shortfall of up to 35 percent in the coming days due to operating the reservoirs on run-of-the-river mode at around dead levels. (*Business Recorder, March 8th, 2025, Page 8*)

Looming water shortages threaten wheat, sugar crops in Sindh, Punjab

In line with the Indus River System Authority’s advisory-cum warning, the Mangla Dam hit its dead level — minimum operating level of 1,050 feet — which would hamper agriculture in Sindh and Punjab due to a shortage of irrigation water in the near future. On the other hand, Tarbela Dam also seems set to touch its dead level of 1,402 feet soon, as it recorded a storage level of 1,405.10. The water conservation level in Chashma Reservoir is also about to hit its dead level of 638.15 feet from the current 639.20 feet. At present, the water flowing in the canal is less than the standard one, which leads to less watering for the crops—wheat, sugarcane, and others in the fields. (*Dawn, March 16th, 2025, Page 9*)

PDMA issues drought alert for Cholistan

The Punjab Disaster Management Authority has issued to the district administration (Bahawalpur) an advisory alert regarding the looming drought-like conditions in the upcoming summer season in Cholistan. Bahawalpur district administration, CDA, Rescue 1122, civil defence, livestock, health and other related government departments have started measures to thwart the threat. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 2*)

Water shortage in Sindh hits 50pc mark, threatens Kharif crops

Since the country's both vital dams — Tarbela and Mangla — have hit dead level, Sindh is facing an acute shortage of irrigation water now when formal Kharif season is set to begin. At fag end of Rabi season, the shortage in Sindh had already worsened to 45pc for winter crops. Sindh reported an overall 50pc water shortage with Guddu Barrage recording 10.3pc and Sukkur Barrage 66.3pc. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 15*)

Experts reject new canals, suggest alternatives to irrigate Cholistan

Hydrology and water resources experts, rights activists and environmentalists have opposed the plan to build canals on the Indus River and suggested alternative solutions to ensure that Pakistan's agriculture sector gets modernised without trampling on farmers' rights and harming the natural flow of Indus and its ecology. They were speaking at a seminar, "The Water Crises and Six Canals Dispute: Need for Equitable and Effective Solutions", organised by the Concerned Citizens Alliance (CCA) at the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA). (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 13*)

'Preserving glaciers to avert water crisis need of the hour'

Participants of an awareness walk in Rawalpindi on World Water Day called for greater efforts to conserve water by protecting glaciers amid global warming. The special awareness walk was organised by the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) Rawalpindi. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 4*)

'Recharge Pakistan' initiative to combat water challenges: PM

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stated that the government's 'Recharge Pakistan' initiative is actively working to cope with the risks associated with climate-induced flooding and minimise the effects of drought by employing ecosystem-based adaptation strategies. In a message on World Water Day observed on March 22, he said "through our Living Indus initiative, we are implementing 25 priority interventions—from promoting nature-based agriculture and restoring the Indus delta to curbing industrial pollution and investing in green infrastructure." "On World Water Day 2025 under the theme 'Glacier Preservation', we are reminded of the critical role glaciers play in sustaining our planet's freshwater supplies and of the grave challenges we face in protecting this essential resource." (*Business Recorder, March 23rd, 2025, Page 1*)

IEP underscores need for depoliticising major water projects

Institution of Engineers Pakistan (IEP) commemorated World Water Day by hosting a seminar, during which Secretary General Engineer Amir Zamir Khan highlighted the

critical need to depoliticize major water projects and involve technical experts in decision-making processes to safeguard Pakistan's future. Engineer Amir Zamir Khan condemned the persistent political interference in water-related infrastructure. He pointed out that the development of canals has become a tool for political rivalry among various parties. "The Kachhi Canal is a glaring example of this, where political disputes have escalated to the point of armed conflict among the people," He also lamented the fate of Kalabagh Dam project, which he described as a victim of political agendas. "The Kalabagh Dam, a project vital for Pakistan's water security, has been rendered ineffective due to political bickering". (*Business Recorder, March 23rd, 2025, Page 5*)

Punjab tells IRSA what caused water shortage

The increasing Indus stem water losses and downstream Kotri water releases have exacerbated the water shortage situation, says the Punjab government. Punjab Irrigation Department has pinpointed unexpectedly high losses in Indus stem and increased downstream flows at Kotri which exacerbated the existing situation. "This has led to shortages that have exceeded the water deficit anticipated by the water regulator," it said. (*The News, March 23rd 2025, Page 12*)

Only drinking water available amid unprecedented shortage

With Kharif season starting in a few days, fears of an unprecedented water shortage are making it difficult for irrigation experts to plan water supplies for the entire season. "There is no water in dams, river flows have plunged and fewer snow deposits on mountains are not promising improved flows," an official told. This will have very serious repercussions for crop output, he said. As a consequence, a meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) decided to make only "drinking supplies" for one month, April, and then review the situation. This is a very rare event that water regulator has started water discharge parameters on a monthly basis, although past precedents are there for water allocations in three parts during a season. The meeting noted that because of no storage in any of the three storages, water discharges at rim-stations stood at 51pc shortfall and went beyond 60pc while reaching provincial canal heads. (*Dawn, March 27th, 2025, Page 1*)

WWF raises its concerns over proposed Cholistan canal project

WWF-Pakistan voiced serious concerns over the Cholistan Canals project, emphasising need for comprehensive socio-environmental impact assessments before undertaking large-scale irrigation initiatives. The organisation warns that upstream water diversions could accelerate saltwater intrusion in the Indus Delta, increase soil salinity, render fertile land barren, and displace small-scale farmers and fishing communities. The Cholistan Canals project, part of the Green Pakistan Initiative, aims to irrigate 4.8 million acres (1.9 million hectares) of barren land by constructing six canals— two each in Sindh, Balochistan, and Punjab. Five of these canals will draw water from the Indus River, while the sixth will be built along the Sutlej River to provide 4,120 cusecs of water to the Cholistan Desert. WWF-Pakistan Director General Hammad Naqi Khan

stressed importance of improving water governance and agricultural efficiency rather than pursuing expensive infrastructure projects. While project seeks to promote corporate farming in desert regions, WWF-Pakistan highlighted its potential risks, including depletion of water resources in already fertile areas. It warned that increased upstream diversions would harm Indus Delta, leading to seawater intrusion, ecosystem degradation, and loss of mangrove forests, which serve as natural coastal defences and breeding grounds for marine life. The resulting environmental changes could accelerate coastal erosion and increase communities' vulnerability to storms and natural disasters.

WWF-Pakistan recommended strengthening regulatory and policy oversight, asserting that large-scale projects like the Cholistan Canals should be reviewed and approved by Council of Common Interests. The organization reiterated that prioritizing conservation, efficiency, and climate resilience is essential to ensuring Pakistan's long-term water security and agricultural sustainability. (*Business Recorder, March 27th, 2025, Page 2*)

PDMA moves to address Cholistan water crisis

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA-Punjab) conducted a meeting to deal with possible drought in Cholistan. Cholistan Development Authority Managing Director Syed Tariq Mehmood Bukhari gave a briefing on the current water situation in their reservoirs. He said reservoirs were facing water shortage due to lack of rain last winter. "Water supply is being ensured in all areas through pipelines and bowsers," he said. PDMA DG Irfan Ali Kathia said that there was 38 per cent less rainfall in Punjab in the last four months and all arrangements should be completed in advance to deal with possible drought. He said that Cholistan administration should remain alert and all resources would be provided to the administration. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 1*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

Punjab to spend Rs35bn to promote agricultural mechanization

The Punjab government will spend Rs35bn over next two years to promote agricultural mechanization in the province. Under this programme, farmers and service providers will be offered interest-free agricultural loans of up to Rs50m through banks. The scheme intends to benefit small service providers who own two or three old agricultural machines, enabling them to acquire a new machine. Minister for Agriculture & Livestock, Punjab, Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani disclosed this while presiding over an important meeting at Agriculture House to finalize proposals projects for the agriculture sector in the Budget 2025-26.

Meeting reviewed various proposals under transforming agriculture Punjab initiatives, including CM Punjab High-Tech Mechanization Bank Financing Program and other initiatives of the Chief Minister Punjab. Additionally, all agricultural machinery dealers in Punjab will be registered, and in the second phase of the Kissan Card programme, small and medium-scale farmers with up to 25 acres of land will be included. The per-

acre loan limit will be increased to Rs 40,000, and the processing fee per acre will be reduced to maximize farmers' participation. A total of Rs 75bn will be allocated for this scheme which will cover essential agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, and diesel. Meanwhile, under the CM Punjab Green Tractor Programme Phase-1, out of 9,500 farmers selected through balloting, 8,300 have already received tractors, while the remaining will be handed over by March 31. For Green Tractor Phase-2, 9,500 tractors with 60-85 horsepower will be provided to farmers in the next fiscal year. Meeting also reviewed proposals for phase-II of solarisation of agricultural tube-wells programme. The meeting was informed that the construction of four model agricultural malls in Punjab is nearing completion, with Sahiwal Mall set to be completed by April 15. Government has planned to build 10 more model agricultural malls in the next fiscal year's budget. (*Business Recorder, March 13th, 2025, Page 2*)

MoU for agri financing

Zarai Taraqati Bank Ltd (ZTBL) and HBL Zarai Services Ltd have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote financial inclusion and enhance agricultural services for farmers nationwide. This collaboration aims to facilitate the farming community in adopting innovative agricultural technologies and practices to improve farm productivity and livelihood of the rural populace. The president/CEO ZTBL shared that under PM Kissan Package, ZTBL has provided agri loans to small and subsistence farmers amounting to Rs37bn, including Rs12bn for farm mechanisation. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 9*)

2.2 # Agricultural Machinery & Technology

Plan to provide soft loan to service providers for farm machinery

Punjab government is considering offering interest-free loans up to Rs50m to service providers, importers, manufacturers, and farmers willing to purchase machinery. Under Chief Minister's High-Tech Financing Programme, a proposal is under consideration for providing interest-free loans worth Rs50m to service providers, importers, manufacturers and farmers willing to purchase machinery collectively, Punjab Agriculture Minister Ashiq Kirmani told. Additionally, agricultural extension and universities would also collaborate to provide practical training for machinery operators and farmers.

The minister said that during her recent visit to China, the chief minister took a keen interest in agricultural mechanisation. He said that Pakistan's agricultural mechanisation stands at only 35 percent compared to 70pc in Europe. To promote agricultural mechanisation in the province, under Green Pakistan Initiative, agri-rental services at tehsil level are also being launched. Agriculture Secretary Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said that achieving crop production targets is impossible without the use of modern agricultural machinery and under the High-Tech Financing Programme, 25 types of agricultural machinery would be made available for rent through service providers to promote mechanization in the province. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 2*)

Punjab CM launches free tractor scheme

Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif formally launched 1,000 free tractors scheme for the wheat farmers under “CM Punjab Wheat Initiative Programme.” The chief minister held a digital balloting for the “wheat cultivation prize scheme” by pressing a button of free tractors programme for the farmers. The CM was informed in a briefing that 57733 farmers with more than 12.5 acres of land applied for the free tractor scheme in “Wheat Cultivation” drive. After undergoing scrutiny and verification process, 21496 farmers were found eligible to apply for the balloting process. About 55 horsepower tractors will be given free of cost to 1000 successful farmers in the balloting process. All the farmers will be provided tractors within three months. It was further apprised in the briefing that wheat was cultivated on 560,000 acres of land in Punjab. (*Business Recorder, March 26th, 2025, Page 82*)

2.3 # Agricultural Tax

IMF holds talks on agri income tax

IMF mission and Pakistani authorities held discussions on agricultural income tax. Sources in the Finance Ministry revealed that the Fund mission held a special session with provincial governments, Ministry of Finance and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) officials on agriculture income tax. (*Business Recorder, March 11th, 2025, Page 1*)

Farm tax collection plan still unclear amid IMF review

Despite enabling legislation passed by all the four provincial assemblies on agriculture income tax (AIT), ongoing review talks with the IMF have yet to achieve final clarity on its implementation mechanism for effective collection, targeted to take effect from July 1, 2025. The sources revealed that despite commitments for enhanced data sharing, the federal and provincial governments had yet to exchange negative and positive lists for general sales tax (GST), a matter of concern for the IMF. AIT remains a central theme of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).

Punjab had made initial progress in potential AIT implementation due to its largely digitised land records. However, the province left tax rates outside the AIT law passed last year. Meanwhile, Sindh informed the IMF mission that its assembly had passed the AIT law despite political challenges, but the province was not yet prepared for collection. Sindh requested IMF guidance on a way forward, which could then be discussed with other provinces for uniformity. At present, Punjab and Sindh have exempted agricultural land holdings below 12.5 acres and 25 acres, respectively, from AIT. The two provinces would need to align their exemption thresholds with IMF involvement and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) support. However, there is still ambiguity regarding the extent to which the FBR can assist provincial tax authorities.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa representatives reported that 75-80 per cent of agriculture in the province falls outside AIT coverage due to smaller land holdings, with few landowners meeting the 12.5-acre threshold set by Punjab. Additionally, agricultural incomes below

Rs600,000 remain exempt from taxation. Similarly, Balochistan indicated that taxable agricultural incomes in the province are negligible. Overall, all the four provinces highlighted their limited technical capacity to implement AIT effectively. Given that the FBR itself has struggled to ensure full tax compliance in relatively well-documented urban sectors, provincial tax agencies — still in their nascent stages — are unlikely to achieve effective enforcement in remote rural areas. As a result of these discussions, it emerged that IMF may need to provide a broad policy framework with FBR support. The sources, however, said IMF's overarching stance is to align AIT with taxation on other income sources. A working paper suggested AIT exemption for annual incomes up to Rs600,000 and a 15pc tax rate for incomes between Rs600,000 and Rs1.2m.

For annual incomes between Rs1.2m and Rs1.6m, a fixed tax of Rs90,000 plus 20pc of the income exceeding Rs1.2m would apply. Incomes between Rs1.6m and Rs3.2m would be taxed at a fixed rate of Rs170,000 plus 30pc on income exceeding Rs1.6m. Higher income brackets would see further increases, with incomes between Rs3.2m and Rs5.6m subject to a fixed tax of Rs650,000 plus 40pc on amounts exceeding Rs3.2m. Under the \$7bn EFF agreed upon in July last year, Pakistan committed to improving information sharing between the FBR and provincial revenue authorities on a weekly basis. The provincial tax reforms include aligning AIT regimes with federal personal and corporate income taxes by October 2024, with implementation set for January 1, 2025, and collection beginning in July 2025. Additionally, GST on services is set to transition from a positive list to a negative list.

The FBR is expected to ensure that all requested information under memorandums of understanding (MoUs) with provincial revenue authorities — including details on AIT and GST service credit claims — is shared in a timely manner, with delays not exceeding one week. The provinces agreed to transition the services GST from a positive list to a negative list approach, effective from the start of FY26. This strategic shift aims to enhance transparency and minimise loopholes by ensuring that all services are taxable unless explicitly exempted. (*Dawn, March 13th 2025, Page 1*)

Agriculture tax

The changes in the provincial agriculture income tax laws aimed at aligning their rates with the federal corporate and personal tax regime was the easier part. The harder part is the effective collection of the tax. This is the part that the visiting IMF mission, which is scrutinising the progress on the benchmark targets of its funding programme, has been discussing with the centre and provinces. The collection of agriculture income tax under the new legislations is scheduled to start from July. But none of the provincial governments appear to have the capacity or apparatus needed to effectively levy the new rates. Perhaps the issue is politically too explosive for them, especially Punjab and Sindh, that together contribute more than 90pc of the country's farm output, to implement the tax anytime soon. This is despite fact that effective taxation of agriculture income is a core condition of IMF bailout and part of the overall tax system reforms.

The provinces will take steps to increase their own tax collection efforts ... [on] agriculture income tax`, says the loan agreement. How important farm tax collection is for the IMF can be gauged from the fact that the Fund's review mission has spent nearly two days engaging individually with the provinces and holding a joint technical workshop to explore the way forward for an effective and uniform collection of this levy. Seemingly, all the provinces are in the same boat as far as their preparedness for agriculture income tax collection is concerned. This is not surprising given the fact that none of the provinces have ever prepared themselves for this task because it involves strong resistance from the growers' lobby in the assemblies. Neither PML-N nor the PPP would risk losing their support by enforcing the law in the near future. Moreover, the effective enforcement of the tax requires capacity building of revenue officials to assess farm incomes that vary from region to region and crop to crop, digitisation of the land record, etc. Its collection will also be a challenge because a large portion of the agriculture market in the country functions outside the documented economy, and transactions are conducted in cash. While it is important for the IMF to continue to insist on early enforcement, it must also help develop a comprehensive framework for implementation. (*Dawn, March 14th, 2025, Page 6*)

Retrospective application from Jan 1: Agri tax will be levied from July 1

The agricultural income tax will be applicable retrospectively from January 1, 2025, as all the provinces have legislated and notified their respective laws. It was agreed that each province amends their agricultural income tax legislation and regime to fully align it with the federal personal income tax regime for small farmers and the federal corporate income tax regime for commercial agriculture, so that taxation can commence from January 1, 2025. According to the experts, the laws would be applicable retrospectively for collection of the agricultural income tax by all provinces with effect from January 1, 2025. All provinces have different dates for the enactment of their respective Agricultural Income Tax Acts, but the effective date for collection is the same with retrospective effect (January 1, 2025). The four provincial governments of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh and Balochistan will begin agricultural income tax collection from 1st July 2025 with retrospective effect from January 1, 2025.

Under the Sindh Agricultural Income Tax Act 2025, the Provincial Assembly of Sindh passed the law on February 3, 2025 and assented by the Governor of Sindh on February 11, 2025. Sindh Agricultural Income Tax Act 2025 would have effective date of January 1, 2025. In case of Sindh, six slabs of Agricultural Income Tax have been provided in the Act with zero percent agricultural income tax where taxable income does not exceed Rs 600,000. Where total income exceeds Rs 600,000, but does not exceed Rs 1,200,000, the rate of agricultural income tax would be 15 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 600,000. Where total income exceeds Rs1,200,000, but does not exceed Rs1,600,000, the rate of agricultural income tax would be Rs 90,000 plus 20 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 1,200,000. The highest slab revealed that where total income exceeds Rs

5,600,000, the rate of agricultural income tax would be Rs 1,610,000 plus 45 percent of the amount exceeding Rs 5,600,000. A super tax would also be imposed on high income earners at specified rates and payable by the owner on agricultural income for respective agricultural income year commencing from January 1, 2025.

Provincial Assembly of Punjab passed the law on November 14, 2024 and assented by the Governor of Punjab on November 27, 2024. Punjab Agricultural Income Tax (Amendment) Act 2025 would come into force on January 1, 2024. The Act, amending the 1997 law, omitted exemptions given on farm income, while also taxing income from the livestock sector. In case of default in tax payment, Rs10,000 fine will be imposed on income less than Rs1.2m, Rs20,000 on income less than Rs40 million and Rs50,000 on income above Rs40m. A super tax shall be levied at the rates specified in the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 for high income earners from agricultural income in Punjab.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly passed the law on January 27, 2025 and assented by the Governor of KP on February 7, 2025. KP Agricultural Income Tax Act 2005 would have effective date of January 1, 2025. The said Act has specified separate slabs for rate of tax on total agricultural income for small farmers and corporate farming.

Balochistan Tax on Land and Agricultural Income (Amendment) Act 2024 was passed by the provincial assembly of Balochistan on February 3, 2025. The Balochistan Tax on Land and Agricultural Income (Amendment) Act 2024 would have come into force from January 1, 2025. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

2.3 # Pesticides

Govt imposes ban on use of 12 toxic pesticides

In a significant step towards environmental sustainability and compliance with international agreements, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research announced a complete ban on 12 toxic pesticides, which are excessively used despite their known harm to health and environment. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting, chaired by National Food Security Secretary Waseem Ajmal Chaudhary, during which key stakeholders and experts engaged in an in-depth discussion on the growing reliance on Methyl Bromide (MB) and its implications. These pesticides — previously used for pest control in major crops such as wheat, cotton, rice and vegetables — have been linked to severe environmental degradation, contamination of water sources, and adverse health effects among farmers and consumers. Their continued use has been a source of concern for both local experts and international regulatory bodies. Methyl Bromide usage in Pakistan has surged in recent years, particularly in imported commodities such as lentils, canola, soybeans, betel nuts, and cotton. Experts at meeting expressed deep concerns regarding its environmental and health impacts, emphasising the urgent need for regulatory intervention. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 3*)

APTAC proposes ban on 12 active ingredients of pesticides

The recent 62nd of Agricultural Pesticides Technical Advisory Committee (APTAC) meeting proposed a ban on 12 active ingredients of pesticides as a solution to the pesticide's residue problem in rice, some of which are already not registered for rice cultivation use. A blanket ban may harm agriculture without solving the issue. Regulate, Don't Ban: Prohibiting certain pesticides without viable alternatives can disrupt farming. A structured monitoring and compliance system is a better approach. Enforce Pre-Harvest Intervals (PHI): Ensuring the right time gap between pesticide application and harvest minimizes residues and is in operation in many rice exporting countries. Upgrade Testing & Training: Expanding residue testing labs and training farmers on safe pesticide use is crucial and can go a long way in mitigating the issue. (*Business Recorder, March 17th, 2025, Page 4*)

2.4 # Seed

PM to inaugurate seed potato production complex today

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will inaugurate the 'Seed Potato Production and Aeroponics Complex' established with the assistance of South Korea for indigenising seed potato production using advanced technology. The complex at the National Agricultural Research Centre Islamabad is a flagship partnership between the Korea Partnership for Innovation of Agriculture (KOPIA) and PARC for certified seed potato production by applying advanced aeroponics technology. The partnership between KOPIA and PARC seeks to transform seed potato production in Pakistan by improving efficiency, minimising post-harvest losses and introducing on-farm processing, enhancing human capital and generating substantial employment opportunities.

According to PARC Chairman traditional potato cultivation yields only five tubers per plant whereas aeroponic systems can produce between 50 and 60 tubers per plant. These cutting-edge technologies will not only help meet the local consumption of seed potato but will also curtail heavy import bill. Despite cultivating potatoes on approximately 850,000 acres, Pakistan remains heavily reliant on the importation of 6,000 to 12,000 tonnes of seed potatoes annually due to the compromised quality of locally produced seeds. This dependency places a financial strain on the country as farmers struggle to afford high-quality imported seeds, resulting in suboptimal yields.

The objective is to supply 160,000 tonnes of certified seed potatoes annually, starting in the fifth year of production cycle. The project's infrastructure includes construction of four aeroponic greenhouses and 35 screen-houses as well as the establishment of a cold storage facility and a 100KW solar power system, all provided by KOPIA to meet the target production goals.

The prime minister will also inaugurate the National Institute for Genomics and Advanced Biotechnology (NIGAB) at NARC. It is an exclusive national institute dedicated to undertake agricultural research in all the three domains of life - plants,

animals and microbes. It is a complex of biotechnology with 28 state-of-the-art labs each designated for a specified area along with glasshouses and containment facilities. NIGAB has developed GMOs of wheat, groundnut, potato and tomato against diseases, drought and salinity which await approval from the regulatory body for commercial utilisation at the farm level. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 4*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

'Insecure' wheat growers switching to other cash crops

The removal of government support prices, along with low domestic rates, has affected current sowing season, causing wheat farmers to switch to more profitable vegetables and cash crops, such as mustard and pulses. The Country Brief on Pakistan, published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), says the area planted declined year-on-year since government removed the minimum support price in May 2024. The FAO report made available says that wheat production in 2025 will depend on the performance of the rainy season until April.

The cropping season finalised in December 2024 and aggregate cereal production is estimated at a record level of 56.6 million tonnes. Production of wheat in 2024 is officially estimated at a record level of 31.4m tonnes, reflecting large sowings and excellent yields, supported by an adequate supply of irrigation water and widespread use of high-yielding seed varieties. Similarly, production of paddy crop is estimated at a record level of 15.2 million tonnes, primarily due to an increase in sowings, driven by high prices at planting time. Production of maize is estimated at an average level of 9.5 million tonnes.

According to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, about 10m people are projected to face high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 [Crisis] and above) between April and July 2025, down from the 11 million people during the November 2024 to March 2025 period. The improvement is attributed to increased household wheat stocks after the record 2024 output and the significant year-on-year decline in wheat flour prices, which, together with the start of the 2025 wheat harvest in April 2025, are expected to enhance households' food access. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 9*)

Wheat, sugar and rice stocks ECC directs ministries to submit monthly updates

The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet has directed Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNFS&R) and Ministry of Industries & Production (MoI&P) to submit reports on stock reserves of wheat, sugar and rice and other essential commodities to the ECC at the beginning of every month. The ECC also directed that MNFS&R should devise strategy to incentivise farmers to keep growing vegetable crops such as onion, potato and tomato for which prices were falling consistently. (*Business Recorder, March 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

Indonesian diplomats, scientists underscore need for boosting oil palm cultivation

Indonesian diplomats and Pakistani scientists have underscored the urgent need to boost local oil palm cultivation to reduce the country's heavy reliance on imported edible oil. With Pakistan currently importing 92% of its edible oil, costing approximately \$4-5 billion annually, the experts emphasized that cultivating at least 60,000 acres of oil palm could attract an estimated investment of \$30 million and significantly cut the import bill. The delegation reviewed the progress of the SAU-DALDA Oil Palm Pilot Project experimental plantation at university's Latif Experimental Farm. (*Business Recorder*, March 24th, 2025, Page 5)

3.1 # Cash Crop

Plunging lint output to hit textile industry

Pakistan's cotton industry is facing an alarming crisis as national production plunges to second-lowest level in country's history, falling nearly 50pc short of official target and 34pc below last year's output, reveals Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association final report for crop season 2024-25 released. Interestingly, despite this sharp production decline, approximately 365,000 bales of unsold cotton are stockpiled in ginning factories, sparking fears of an unprecedented reduction in cotton cultivation for upcoming season.

For the first time, Sindh has surpassed Punjab in cotton production, a development attributed to record sugarcane cultivation in Punjab replacing cotton, combined with unfavourable weather conditions. According to PCGA figures, total cotton production stood at just 5.525 million bales. Punjab produced 2.718m bales and Sindh 2.807m bales—both showing a sharp decline from last year. Pakistan imported 2m bales of cotton and around 1.25m bales of yarn in 7MFY25. Additionally, reports confirm that another 600,000 to 700,000 bales have entered the country from Afghanistan, further saturating the market with tax-free cotton.

The unchecked expansion of sugarcane cultivation, driven by government-backed incentives, has further worsened the situation. Despite a 15 to 20pc drop in per acre yield due to adverse weather, millers exported a record 758,000 tonnes of sugar from July to January 2024-25. This boosted sugar prices from Rs12,200 to Rs15,500 per 100 kg bag in the local market and pushed cane purchase prices from Rs400 to Rs575 per 40 kg, making it more profitable than cotton. As a result, farmers have abandoned cotton fields for sugarcane sowing, deepening the crisis. (*Dawn*, March 4th, 2025, Page 9)

PCGA report reveals sharp decline in cotton production

The crisis in cotton production in Pakistan has been under continuous pressure for several years, affecting not only the national economy but also exports, textile industry, and millions associated with agriculture. According to a report by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) till February 28 witnessed a significant decline, signaling a serious threat to the sector. Sajid Mahmood, Head Transfer of Technology at Central Cotton Research Institute Multan while commenting on the report released said that this

year, the total quantity of cotton arriving at factories was recorded at 5.524 million bales, a 34.17% decrease compared to last year's 8.393 million bales.

Key reasons for this sharp decline include climate change, reduced cultivation area, water scarcity, rising prices of agricultural inputs, and the absence of appropriate policies. This shortfall has not only created a raw material shortage for the domestic textile industry but is also expected to lead to historic increases in cotton imports. Sources indicate that cotton worth \$5 billion will be imported this year, adding an extra burden on Pakistan's economy.

Punjab, Pakistan's largest cotton-producing province, experienced a drastic decline this year. Last year, Punjab's cotton production was 4.778 million bales, which dropped to 2.477 million bales this year, marking a 48.16% decrease. These statistics highlight the worsening challenges in cotton cultivation in the province. Sindh also saw reduced production, though the situation remains comparatively better than Punjab. Sindh's output fell from 3.614 million bales last year to 3.046 million bales this year, a 15.71% decline. Balochistan's production remained stable, with no major fluctuations observed. (*Business Recorder, March 4th, 2025, Page 12*)

PM Shehbaz forms committee for cotton crop revival

Taking notice of the dwindling cotton production, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed a 15-member committee tasked with recommending measures in 30 days for the revival of the crop. Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has been nominated as convener of the committee, which will take stock of the cotton crop situation and propose policy and administrative interventions for crop revival. It will also submit recommendations for proper grading and standardisation of cotton bales in line with international standards, especially contamination parameters. The body will also submit technical proposals to enhance cotton yield nationwide. The germination rate dropped to 30-40 per cent, much lower than the required 70pc to 75pc for certified seeds. To address the seed germination issue, the prime minister has already directed the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority to meet with stakeholders, including the Seed Association of Pakistan, to discuss ways to ensure the availability of certified cotton seeds to farmers. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 9*)

'Discriminatory tax policy hit lint production'

The committee formed by prime minister for revival of cotton crop recommended uniform tax policies for domestic and imported cotton, along with several other key suggestions. Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain chaired the first meeting of the 15-member Committee on Cotton Crop Production Enhancement. While making a detailed presentation on the factors that halved lint production in current fiscal year, Pakistan Central Cotton Committee Vice-Chairman pointed out a discriminatory 18 per cent sales tax reduced the competitiveness of local

cotton and discouraged growers. Dr Yusuf Zafar and other stakeholders raised several pressing issues, including the lack of high-quality seeds, proper area zoning, insufficient research on GMO seeds, discriminatory tax policies, undocumented cotton production, and the need for better awareness campaigns. The meeting participants emphasised promoting those crops that allow early cotton sowing, like onions and mustard.

Cotton competes with rice, sugarcane, and other crops for land, water, and farm resources in areas where all these crops can technically be cultivated. It faces significant indirect competition from sugarcane, an annual crop that occupies the land year-round. Under a drive to revive crop in the next season, the agricultural departments of Punjab and Sindh have launched a campaign for early sowing. In this regard, one million acres in Punjab and 600,000 acres in Sindh have been earmarked for early sowing of the triple genes cotton varieties during February and March. (*Dawn, March 12th, 2025, Page 9*)

CCCPE body for measures to arrest cotton output slide

Committee on Cotton Crop Production Enhancement (CCCPE) called for concrete measures for enhancement of declining cotton production in the country, which has witnessed a 34 percent decline in the current year compared to last year. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 4*)

2024 season: Sindh outperforms Punjab in per-acre cotton yield

Sindh has outperformed Punjab in per-acre cotton yield during the 2024 season, while Punjab has faced a sharp decline in overall production. Sajid Mahmood, Head of Technology Transfer at the Central Cotton Research Institute (CCRI), Multan, revealed that Sindh has outperformed Punjab in per-acre cotton yield during the 2024 season, while Punjab has faced a sharp decline in overall production. As per the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) report, the total cotton arrivals at factories in 2024 stood at 5,524,593 bales, reflecting a 34.17% decrease compared to 8,393,090 bales in the previous year. In Punjab, production dropped to 2,717,622 bales, marking a 36.49% decline from 4,278,312 bales last year. Meanwhile, Sindh's total production stood at 2,806,971 bales, a 31.77% decrease from 4,114,778 bales recorded in the preceding year. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 12*)

Cotton growers seek concessions as water shortages hit crop

The cotton crop is facing significant challenges due to severe water shortages in dams and the unavailability of certified seeds. This situation has cast doubts on the prospects of the new crop, causing a slowdown in the cotton trade. Farmers' organisations are calling for the government to prioritise water supply to existing cultivated lands to stabilise the agricultural economy instead of focusing on developing new lands. The country's two major dams have almost run out of water, leading to a shortage of canal water in several districts of Sindh, including Sanghar, Mirpur Khas, Umerkot, Tando Allahyar, Matiari and Badin. This water scarcity is expected to delay the arrival of the new cotton crop, potentially causing a surge in domestic cotton prices.

Furthermore, adverse weather conditions across the country have significantly affected the germination rate of cotton seeds, which has dropped to 40 to 50 per cent. This was far below the required 75pc for certified seeds. As a result, farmers were now using non-certified seeds, raising concerns about reduced cotton yield per acre. The EFS, which allows the import of tax-free cotton and cotton yarn, has severely impacted the domestic textile (spinning) and cotton ginning sectors. Experts fear that more spinning mills and ginning factories may become inactive during 2025-26 if the anomaly is not addressed. Recently, a review meeting chaired by Secretary Agriculture was held on this issue. The meeting was briefed on progress of early cotton sowing on one million acres. Financial assistance worth Rs25,000 is being offered to the growers who complete early cotton sowing on five acres or more by March 31. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 3*)

CM approves Rs2.5bn for early cotton cultivation

The Punjab Chief Minister has approved an incentive package of Rs 2.5 billion for early cotton cultivation in the province. Secretary Agriculture Punjab, Iftikhar Ali Sahoo, said while presiding over a review meeting on early cotton cultivation in the province. Under this package, financial assistance of Rs. 25,000 will be provided for early cotton cultivation on 5 acres or more of owned land. The financial assistance will be provided only through the Kisan Card. He further stated that the target for early cotton cultivation in Punjab has been set at 1 million acres. All possible resources and means are being effectively utilized to achieve this target. So far, early cotton cultivation has been completed on more than 700,000 acres. The target for early cotton cultivation will be achieved within the stipulated time. (*Business Recorder, March 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Farmers oppose Punjab government's rice cultivation ban

Muhammad Hussain, provincial president of the Kisaan Ittehad-Khalid Bath group, strongly condemned the Punjab government's decision to prohibit growers from sowing rice before May 20. He criticised the government for failing to protect farmers' rights regarding crop support prices in the open market and now forcing them to delay rice cultivation. Mr Hussain said that growers had already bought rice seeds and were now being pressured by the agriculture department not to sow them. He said that government was pushing farmers to cultivate cotton in regions like Sahiwal and Okara, which are better suited for potato crops. He said that sowing cotton would prevent growers from harvesting three crops a year, which would lead to significant financial losses. He added that both Passco and the Punjab Food Department had stopped purchasing wheat, while the government had withdrawn the wheat support price, creating uncertainty for farmers regarding double crop production. He said that forcing growers to cultivate cotton in unsuitable regions would push them into debt. Mr Hussain said that farmers were already struggling with rising costs of seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers. He questioned how they could be compelled to follow a crop pattern that was not economically viable. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 8*)

Punjab notifies ban on early paddy sowing

Punjab has banned early sowing of paddy crop on the recommendation of an inquiry committee formed in the wake of farmers' complaints of poor yield leading to financial losses during the last crop year. An official notification issued says the ban has been imposed under the Punjab Agriculture Pests Ordinance 1959 and warns of a strict action against the occupiers of land cultivating paddy nurseries before May 20, 2025. The law prescribes Rs50,000 fine and/or six-month jail term for violation of any provision or rules made under the ordinance. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 2*)

PHC seeks govt response to plea for probe into `wheat procurement scam`

Peshawar High Court issued notice to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government to seek its response to a plea seeking probe by NAB into allegations of corruption in wheat procurement by provincial government last year. A bench issued order after preliminary hearing of a petition filed by former federal minister Nawabzada Khawaja Mohammad Khan Hoti, who also challenged formation of a three-member anti-corruption committee by the government and requested the court to declare it illegal. The petitioner alleged that Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur and Food Minister Zahir Shah Toru were directly involved in 'wheat procurement scam' and they were using that anti-corruption committee for their protection from accountability. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 8*)

Wheat crop at risk as dams nearly dry

With the Tarbela and Mangla dams rapidly approaching their dead levels, the Indus River System Authority (Irsa) warned Punjab and Sindh — the two major bread baskets — to brace for up to 35 per cent water shortages in the last leg of the current crop season. In a letter to irrigation secretaries, the water regulator told the four provinces that both reservoirs were close to their dead levels. (*Dawn, March 8th, 2025, Page 1*)

Passco asked to expedite wheat sales ahead of new harvest

Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain has directed the Passco to expedite the sale of wheat stocks before the arrival of the new harvest, ensuring market stability and preventing financial losses. The minister was briefed about the current wheat stock position and was informed that as of March 6, Passco had 2.47 million tonnes of wheat in stock after disposing of 578,934 tonnes from April 1, 2024, to March 6, 2025. Besides, Passco procured 1.79 tonnes during the 2024 wheat crop season. (*Dawn, March 10th, 2025 Page 3*)

Govt to stop use of methyl bromide for rice fumigation

The government is immediately halting the use of methyl bromide for the fumigation of rice consignments in Pakistan, enabling importing countries to carry out procedure themselves in line with international standards. The decision came at a meeting held by the ministry of national food security and research to address the issue of interceptions in export of Pakistani rice to Europe. Meeting was attended by all stakeholders including representatives of provinces, private companies and multinational corporations.

The policy decision is expected to directly benefit Pakistani rice exporters as fumigation costs will be eliminated, which will lower the export price of the grain, making the product more competitive in global markets, said a ministry press release. Methyl bromide is a broad spectrum fumigant used in several countries for combating soil-borne pests as well as in post-harvest, pre-shipment and quarantine treatments. Despite its biological effectiveness, the fumigant has been identified as one of the major ozone depleting substance, and its phase-out is needed in all those countries where it is still used. (*Dawn, March 11th, 2025, Page 1*)

Opposition demands clarity on wheat procurement

Opposition members in Punjab Assembly expressed serious concern over government's failure to announce wheat procurement policy for ongoing crop season as government said the same would be announced before harvesting next month. Opposition MPA Waqas Mann said that wheat harvesting is about to begin but no procurement policy has been announced. Mann demanded the government clarify whether it will purchase wheat from farmers or not. He said harvesting will begin in south Punjab next month. Parliamentary Affairs Minister Mujtaba Shuja assured the House that the government's policy will be announced before wheat harvesting begins next month. (*Dawn, March 21st, 2025 Page 2*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Initiatives to strengthen livestock, fisheries sectors discussed

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has emphasised the need for implementing initiatives that strengthen the poultry, fisheries and livestock industries, thereby stabilising the economy and fostering prosperity in related businesses. He said this during a meeting with Livestock and Fisheries Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani, who called on him at the CM House to discuss strategies for modernising and improving these sectors through advanced technology, said a press release issued from CM House.

During the meeting, the minister informed the CM that steps were being taken to enhance the livestock and fisheries sectors. The CM instructed the minister to provide proper guidance to those involved in these industries. Mr Shah directed officials to implement modern fish farming practices in the province and ensure that fishermen have access to necessary facilities. He stressed the importance of promoting fish farming in coastal areas and urged the adoption of modern techniques to increase fish exports. The CM highlighted the need to upgrade fishing harbours with modern amenities to enhance exports and called for environmentally sustainable fishing practices to protect marine ecosystems. (*Dawn, March 12th, 2025, Page 14*)

4.1 # Fisheries

15 fall unconscious after gas leak at Karachi Fisheries company

A gas leakage at the cold storage of a private firm in the Fisheries area left 15 people unconscious. DIG-South Syed Asad Raza said that the incident occurred at the Sindh-

Balochistan Fish Storage Company. The DIG explained that ammonia gas was used for cold storage. The leakage was quickly controlled and none of the victims were in critical condition. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 13*)

Pakistan ratifies fisheries agreement

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) has said that Pakistan has formally accepted the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies. Pakistan's Ambassador to the WTO Ali Sarfaraz Hussain presented the instrument of acceptance to WTO Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala. The WTO DG said Pakistan's formal acceptance of the agreement marks a vital step toward ensuring the long-term sustainability of global marine resources, while safeguarding the livelihoods and food security of the millions of people who depend on healthy fisheries. The agreement prohibits subsidies for illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, overfished stocks, and fishing on the unregulated high seas. Members also agreed at MC12 to continue negotiations on outstanding issues and to adopt additional provisions that would further enhance the disciplines of the agreement. (*Dawn, March 21st, 2025 Page 9*)

Fish harbour to get facelift before EU audit next month

Karachi Fish Harbour is set to get a major facelift before an audit by the European Union (EU) in the first week of April. The audit by the Director for Health and Food, Audits and Analysis of European Commission will evaluate the facilities of exporters sending fishery products to EU countries. Pakistan's overall fish and fishery products exports during the first eight months of the fiscal year 2025 were 125,945 tonnes (\$263.5 million) as compared to 126,962 tonnes (\$262m) in the same period last fiscal. Overall fish exports in FY24 were 200,709 tonnes (\$410m) versus 214,542 tonnes (\$496.5m) in FY23. Pakistani exporters get \$3 for a kg of squids exported to China. However, the same fetches \$6 in the European market. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 9*)

4.2 # Livestock

Mysterious disease claims lives of 'dozens of' cattle heads

Dozens of cattle heads have died of a mysterious disease in Gaggo mandi and its suburbs in Vehari district during the past two days. About 50 buffaloes, cows and their calves have died of this mysterious disease in a number of villages, including 367/EB, 369/EB, and Gaggo town. The farmers and owners of the livestock in the area have expressed concern over the deaths of animals, demanding that the livestock department should take immediate notice of the situation and send special teams to these villages for diagnosing the disease and suggesting the treatment. Local sources says that taking notice of the situation, livestock Deputy Director Dr Mohsin Bhatti visited the affected villages, inspected cattle heads, collected samples from the dead animals and sent them for laboratory tests to ascertain the cause of their death. According to Dr Bhatti, the affected animals would be vaccinated and provided medicines after the diagnosis of the disease. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 8*)

Punjab livestock dept issues alert about lumpy skin disease

Secretary of Punjab Livestock and Dairy Development issued an alert regarding the re-emergence of Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD), a viral infection affecting cattle in central and south Punjab. The secretary said department had indigenously developed a vaccine to counter LSD and “we are not worried but there is a need to adopt precautions measures in this regard.” This came out in a handout sent by the department to local divisional directorate of livestock department, Sahiwal. Data says in year 2022 alone, LSD affected over 62,000 animals in Punjab, resulting in the death of 4,656 cattle and significant financial setbacks for farmers. (*Dawn, March 31st, 2025, Page 8*)

5 # TRADE

Stakeholders oppose agri-trade authority

The All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetables Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) has expressed serious concerns over the proposed formation of the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority (NAFSA). In a letter to the Ministry of Food Security, PFVA Chairman Aslam Pakhali termed move unnecessary and unwarranted, saying the new authority will further burden the horticulture sector instead of facilitating it. PFVA, which claims to be the sole representative body of the horticulture sector, has raised strong objections to the proposed bill for NAFSA’s establishment. He asserted that before forming a new authority, government must thoroughly assess shortcomings of the existing Department of Plant Protection (DPP). (*Dawn, March 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Exports shrink 5.5pc in February

The exports of merchandise contracted 5.57 per cent in February, marking the first negative trend in the current fiscal year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics said. Growth in export proceeds fell to a single digit in October 2024 and the pace progressively slowed in the following months, eventually leading to a negative trend in February. The slowdown in export proceeds may worry economic policymakers. Analysts believe that exports often fall from November to January owing to seasonal changes. The growth momentum in exports from Pakistan picked pace in July 2024 owing to improved orders and stability in the exchange rate. Demand from North America and European countries was anticipated to pick up pace from January onwards.

The exports grew 11.83pc in July, followed by 16pc in August, 13.52pc in September, 10.64pc in October, 8.98pc in November, 0.67pc in December and 4.59pc in January. The exports reached \$2.44bn in February against \$2.58bn in the corresponding month last year. On a month-on-month basis, exports drastically decreased by 17.35pc. In the first eight months of FY25, export proceeds stood at \$22.02bn against \$20.36bn over the corresponding months of last year, an increase of 8.17pc. According to the PBS data, imports grew 7.40pc to \$37.81bn in July-February FY25 from \$35.19bn over the last year. Imports surged to \$4.74bn in February from \$4.31bn last year, an increase of 10.03pc. Month-on-month, imports decreased 9.89pc. 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-February FY25 increased by 6.33pc to \$15.78bn from \$14.84bn over the last year. In February, the deficit increased by 33.43pc to \$2.29bn from \$1.72bn last year. The trade gap contracted to \$24.08bn in FY24 from \$27.47bn in preceding year. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Jul-Feb exports up 8.17pc to \$22.022bn YoY

The country's exports increased by 8.17 per cent during the first eight months (July-February) of current fiscal year 2024-25 and stood at \$22.022 billion compared to \$20.359 billion during the same period of last fiscal year (2023-24). Trade deficit widened by 6.33 per cent during the first eight months (July-February) of the current fiscal year compared to the same period of last fiscal year and widened by 33.43 per cent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in February 2025 when compared to the same month of last fiscal year, revealed the trade data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The data showed that trade deficit widened by 6.33 per cent during the first eight months of the current fiscal year and stood at \$15.780 billion compared to \$14.840 billion during the same period of last fiscal year.

The country's imports increased by 7.40 per cent and stood at \$37.802 billion during the first eight months of the current fiscal year 2024-25 compared to \$35.199 billion during the same period of last fiscal year. Pakistan's trade deficit in January 2025 widened by 33.43 per cent YoY to \$2.299 billion as compared to a deficit of \$1.723 billion recorded in the same month last year, according to data released by the PBS. Imports registered 10.03 per cent growth and stood at \$4.738 billion in February 2025 when compared to \$4.306bn during same month of last fiscal year. Exports registered 5.57 per cent decline and stood at \$2.439 billion in February when compared to \$2.583 billion during the same month of last fiscal year.

On a monthly basis, trade deficit widened by 0.35pc and stood at \$2.299bn in February 2025 compared to a deficit of \$2.307bn recorded in January 2025. Exports in February 2025 dropped by 17.35pc to \$2.439bn compared to \$2.951bn in January 2025. Imports declined by 9.89 per cent in February 2025 and stood at \$4.738 billion compared to \$5.258 billion in December 2024. (*Business Recorder, March 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

Jul-Feb exports up 8.42pc to \$22.074bn YoY

Exports witnessed an increase of 8.42 percent during July–February 2024–25 touching \$22.074 billion against \$20.359 billion in the same period last year, according to advance releases on external trade statistics for January 2025 by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The country's imports during July–February 2024–25 also registered an increase of 7.60 per cent as it totalled \$37.875 billion against \$35.199 billion during the corresponding period of last year. Country's exports in February 2025 witnessed a reduction of 15.59 per cent as it totalled \$2.491 billion compared to \$2.951 billion in January 2025 and reflected a decrease of 3.56 percent as compared to \$2.583 billion in

February 2024. The country's imports in February 2025 recorded a reduction of 8.52 per cent as it totalled \$4.810 billion against \$5.258 billion in January 2025; however, compared with the same period of the last year, it registered an increase of 11.70 per cent as it was valued \$4.306 billion in February 2024. Based on the provisional figures of imports and exports, the trade deficit in February 2025 was recorded at \$2.319 billion. The balance of trade figures cumulative from July–February 2024–2025 was recorded at \$15.801 billion. (*Business Recorder, March 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

NA informed: Trade deficit declines in FY24

Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan informed the National Assembly that Pakistan's trade deficit has declined from USD 27.47 billion in FY23 to USD 24.11 billion in FY24, attributed to decreasing imports and rising exports. Responding to questions during the National Assembly's question hour, he said that Pakistan's trade deficit slightly widened to USD 10.4 billion in the first two quarters of FY2024-25 (July–December), compared to USD 10.3 billion during the same period of the previous fiscal year. He attributed the rise in imports to the ongoing economic recovery, with both the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) revising Pakistan's growth projections upward for FY25 to 3.0% and 3.2%, respectively. The uptick in imports reflects revived industrial activity, with several key sectors experiencing growth. (*Business Recorder, March 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trade gap with nine countries widens 36pc

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries swelled by 36.09 per cent to \$7.36 billion during the first eight months of FY25 from \$5.41bn in the corresponding period last year. Recent regional political shifts have spurred exports 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 governmental policies. However, the trade gap with the regional countries widened mainly due to higher imports from China, India and Bangladesh during the months under review.

Pakistan's exports to Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka surged in July–February 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 6.64pc to \$3.100bn in 8MFY25 from \$2.907bn over the same period last year. Pakistan's total exports reached to \$22.07bn in 8MFY25, up 8.42pc from \$20.36bn over the corresponding months last year. Pakistan's share in total exports to the regional countries is just around 14.04pc.

Contrary to this, imports surged 25.80pc to \$10.46bn in 8MFY25 from \$8.32bn over the same period of the previous fiscal year. Further analysis showed that imports from China grew by 25.87pc to \$10.18bn in 8MFY25 from \$8.09bn over the same period last

year. The bulk of imports in the region are sourced from China, followed partially by India and Bangladesh. Pakistan's exports to China dipped 10.55pc to \$1.69bn in 8MFY25 from \$1.89bn over the same months in the preceding fiscal year. Imports from India increased 13.63pc to \$157.73m in 8MFY25 from \$138.62m 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 8MFY25 against \$0.23m over the last year. Exports to Afghanistan increased 84.25pc to \$592.84m in 8MFY25 from \$321.75m last year. Imports stood at \$18.21m against \$5.47m in 8MFY24. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

US adds firms including from Pakistan to export blacklist

The United States added six subsidiaries of Inspur Group, China's leading cloud computing and big data service provider, and dozens of other Chinese entities to its export restriction list. The Inspur units were listed for contributing to the development of supercomputers for the Chinese military, the Commerce Department said in a posting. Five of the subsidiaries are based in China and one in Taiwan. Inspur Group itself was placed on the list in 2023. The Inspur units are among about 80 companies and institutes added to the export control list. Over 50 are based in China. Others are in Taiwan, Iran, Pakistan, South Africa and the United Arab Emirates. The listings are intended to restrict China's ability to develop high-performance computing capabilities, quantum technologies and advanced AI, and impede China's development of its hypersonic weapons program. (*Business Recorder, March 27th, 2025, Page 1*)

5.1 # Export

'Substandard' rice consignments from Pakistan intercepted in EU

Controversy over rice export disruptions to European countries dominated discussions during a National Assembly panel's meeting. The meeting was discussing a calling attention notice moved by MNA Sharmila Faruqui, which disclosed that the European Union (EU) had intercepted 104 consignments of 'substandard' rice from Pakistan in 2024, which resulted into a significant financial loss to the national exchequer. During meeting of the Standing Committee on Commerce reviewed various alerts issued by EU after it found excess pesticide residues in rice exports. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 4*)

Exports to Europe up 10pc to \$5.3bn

Exports to European countries grew 9.86 per cent in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from a year ago mainly due to higher shipments to western states. In absolute terms, Pakistan's exports to the European Union (EU) reached \$5.345 billion in July-January FY25 from \$4.865bn 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. 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, March 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Export of live sheep/goats to Kuwait: SIFC proposal fails to win ECC approval

Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of Cabinet has reportedly not approved the proposal of export of live sheep/goats to Kuwait, a proposal originated from the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), despite arguments by Minister for National Food Security and Research in favour of the proposal. On February 20, 2025, Ministry of National Food Security and Research briefed the forum that the ECC decided to ban commercial export of live animals in its meeting held on July 30, 2013 which was ratified by the Cabinet on July 1, 2013. (*Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2025, Page 1*)

Millat Tractors celebrates historic export milestone

Another marvellous milestone was accomplished by Millat Tractors Ltd by exporting 2,500 tractor units from Pakistan around the globe as in May 2024. MTL has made history by being the first Pakistani tractor manufacturing company to have exported tractors, engines and components worth \$17 million during 2023-24. This marks an unprecedented growth and a phenomenal rise of 51 percent compared to its last year exports. This in itself is a testament of company's pursuit for excellence, high quality standards & remarkable performance which has culminated into worldwide trust in its products. (*Business Recorder, March 7th, 2025, Page 3*)

Kenya reduces Customs valuation for Pak rice by 25pc

In a significant development for rice exports, Kenya has revised the Customs valuation of Pakistani rice downward by 25 percent, a move expected to enhance the export of Pakistani rice to the Kenyan market. This adjustment allows Pakistani exporters to export rice to Kenya at a new price of \$460 per metric ton, down from the previous valuation of \$615 per metric ton, showing a sharp decline of \$155 per metric ton. Kenya is one of the largest importers of Pakistani Non-Basmati rice, while Pakistan is a major buyer of Kenyan tea. However, a pricing discrepancy had impacted Pakistani rice exports. (*Business Recorder, March 8th, 2025, Page 1*)

Sugar legally exported to Afghanistan first time: Aurangzeb

Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said that the effective monitoring of sugar mills during current season resulted in enhanced sales tax collection of Rs24 billion in first two months of 2025 against Rs15 billion in the same period of 2024, reflecting an extraordinary increase of 54 per cent. In a televised speech flanked by Federal Minister for Information Attaullah Tarar, the finance minister highlighted sugar reserves are sufficient to meet domestic needs, dismissing concerns about smuggling of the commodity to Afghanistan. Due to stringent measures against cross-border smuggling, sugar has been legally exported instead of being smuggled to Afghanistan, he said. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

26,250 tonnes of rice from Pakistan reaches Bangladesh port

Bangladesh has received 26,250 tonnes of atop rice purchased from Pakistan under government-to-government (G-to-G) deal, with the final consignment reaching the

destination. This is the first-ever purchase of rice under G-to-G deal between the two countries since the creation of Bangladesh in 1971. Atap rice is “unpolished rice,” and it is a traditional type of rice that undergoes minimal processing, allowing it to keep its natural nutrients and bran. It is the last phase of 50,000 tonnes of rice supplied by Pakistan under a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and Directorate of Food, Bangladesh, on January 31 this year. (*The News, March 16th, 2025, Page 12*)

Textile exports post paltry growth

The textile and clothing exports grew 9.31 per cent year-on-year during the first eight months of the current fiscal year, showed data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. From the start of the FY25, the textile exports maintained a rising trend with robust growth of 13pc in August, 17.92pc in September, 13.11pc in October, 10.81pc in November, 5.55pc in December and 15.85pc in January. However, the exports posted a paltry growth of 0.44pc to \$1.41bn in February against \$1.40bn in the same month last year. In absolute terms, textile and clothing exports rose 9.31pc to \$12.18bn during July-February FY25 from \$11.14bn a year ago. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Domestic prices surge on rising food exports

Pakistan’s raw food exports rose 4.17 per cent to \$5.17 billion during the first eight months of the current fiscal year compared to \$4.96bn in the corresponding period last year, mainly driven by a significant rise in sugar and rice shipments. The exports have risen for 19 consecutive months despite unprecedented food inflation in the country’s history. Consumers nationwide are paying higher prices for food items, especially sugar, because of supply and demand gaps.

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 February. According to data from PBS, the monthly export figures were as follows: 39,158 tonnes in July, 46,990 tonnes in August, 51,452 tonnes in September, 49,643 tonnes in October, 166,283 tonnes in November, 279,273 tonnes in December, 124,793 tonnes in January, and 180 tonnes in February. (*Dawn, March 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan secures major breakthrough in rice exports to Kenya

In a significant diplomatic and trade achievement, Pakistan has successfully negotiated a reduction in the customs valuation of its rice exports to Kenya, from 615 to 460 per metric ton. (*Business Recorder, March 20th, 2025, Page 3*)

Non-textile exports post paltry growth

Exports of non-textile products grew by a paltry 2.38 per cent to \$9.89 billion in the first eight months of FY25 against \$9.66bn a year ago, primarily driven by a high demand for value-added products. The primary catalyst for non-textile product exports has been a select group of value-added items, such as leather, footwear, and engineering

products during the first eight months of FY25 compared to last year, according to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. In FY24, exports of non-textile products surged 24.95pc to \$14.02bn compared to \$11.22bn in the preceding year. Non-textile exports are showing robust growth in the current fiscal year, maintaining the momentum established in the previous year. The increase reflects a positive trend in securing additional orders from the global market. The export of engineering goods saw an increase of 19.05pc in 8MFY25 from a year ago. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 9*)

5.2 # Import

Under guise of Brown Eyed Beans shipments: Bid to import American almonds foiled

The Collectorate of Customs Enforcement, Karachi has foiled an attempt to import around 155 tons of American almonds worth Rs. 1.43bn under guise of Brown Eyed Beans shipments. Officials discovered that the smugglers strategically placed Brown Eyed Beans as a decoy in first two to three layers of shipping containers, while hiding substantial quantities of almonds behind them. (*Business Recorder, March 5th, 2025, Page 4*)

Govt to import raw sugar to ‘stabilise prices’

Barely a few weeks after exporting half a million tonnes of sugar, federal government decided to import raw sugar to “stabilise prices” in the country. Import of raw sugar (*Shakkar*) would help bring down prices in the country and help increase future production, as it could be refined and converted into sugar locally. Interestingly, the export permission was granted after the industry promised to keep domestic prices between Rs145 and Rs150 per kilogram. However, prices have increased to over Rs180 per kg in the last 10 days. (*Dawn, March 11th, 2025, Page 9*)

Re-export of refined sugar: PM forms IMC to examine regional models for raw sugar import

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has formed an Inter-Ministerial Committee (IMC) to examine regional models for the import of raw sugar for re-export of refined sugar, sources in the Commerce Ministry told. The committee will be chaired by the Minister for National Food Security and Research and will include the Minister for Commerce, Minister for Petroleum, SAPM on Industries and Production, Secretary Industries, Jahangir Khan Tareen, Member EAC, two representatives from the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA), and the Secretary of National Food Security and Research. The committee has been tasked with developing a strategy to address the ongoing sugar pricing issue. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

Govt mulling importing sugar as prices soar

Following the local refined sugar prices touching Rs8,400 per 50-kg from Rs6,100 per 50-kg bag within the past four months, the government has now started pondering over importing sugar to stabilise the commodity prices. In this connection, a high-level meeting of a committee on the import of raw sugar constituted by Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif was held. Sugar price in the wholesale market was Rs6,100 per 50kg

bag or Rs122 per kg, which in retail was being sold in the range of Rs130/140 per kg, while now it is available at Rs8,400 per kg or Rs168 per kg in the wholesale market and in retail is being sold in the range of Rs170-180 per kg. The trend depicts an increase of Rs2,300 or Rs46 per kg in wholesale market and Rs50 per kg increase in retail sugar price over past four months. (*Business Recorder, March 13th, 2025, Page 4*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Supplier financing, agri supply chain Syngenta teams up with SCB to drive growth

Syngenta Pakistan partners with Standard Chartered Pakistan to strengthen supplier financing and enhance agricultural supply chain. Under this partnership, Syngenta Pakistan with support of Standard Chartered Pakistan will implement a digital supplier financing mandate, reinforcing its commitment to strengthening agricultural supply chain. Through this partnership, Standard Chartered will provide digital financing solutions to Syngenta Pakistan's supplier network, ensuring improved cash flow, optimized working capital, and enhanced financial resilience across agricultural ecosystem. This initiative aligns with Syngenta Pakistan's vision of fostering a robust, sustainable, and future-ready agribusiness landscape. (*Business Recorder, March 1st, 2025, Page 5*)

Matco Foods, Bank Alfalah ink financing agreement to expand corn starch production

Matco Foods Limited, a leading South Asian agribusiness, has entered into a PKR 750 million, three-year financing agreement with Bank Alfalah, one of Pakistan's leading commercial banks. This strategic partnership aims to enhance Matco Foods' corn starch production capabilities to meet the growing demands of a diverse customer base. The investment will be directed towards expanding Matco Foods' existing corn starch facility located in Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Special Economic Zone and Faisalabad. (*Business Recorder, March 9th, 2025, Page 5*)

6.1 # Fertilizer Companies

Gas supply to urea plants extended for three months

The government decided to extend the gas supply to urea manufacturing plants for three months, up to June this year, ensuring continued availability of fertiliser to farmers. Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain told meeting that his ministry remains vigilant and at forefront of efforts to ensure uninterrupted urea supply to farmers across country. (*Dawn, March 27th, 2025, Page 9*)

6.2 # Food Companies

Action against eight bottled water brands in Punjab

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) has sealed eight bottled water brand plants for being contaminated with dangerous levels of chemicals and bacteria unfit for human health. This crackdown comes in the wake of water sample tests conducted by the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR). The findings say bottled water, often perceived as a safe alternative in a country plagued by water contamination, has

itself become a health hazard. Test results compared against Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority benchmarks revealed alarming levels of arsenic, microbiological and chemical contaminants, making these brands unfit for human consumption. According to PCRWR report, some of contaminated brands contained dangerously high levels of sodium, arsenic, and potassium, while others were infested with harmful bacteria. The potential health consequences range from gastrointestinal infections such as cholera to kidney disease, high blood pressure, nervous system disorders, and even cancer. (*Dawn, March 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

Packaged dairy producers seek tax rationalisation

Seeking rationalisation of the taxation system, the Pakistan Dairy Association (PDA) has informed the government that high taxes and duties have resulted in elevated prices, which in turn are limiting the consumption of packaged milk and dairy products. In a letter to the Ministry of Industries and Production, the association maintained that Pakistan is the third largest milk producer. Still, high taxation is damaging the industry and leading to the spread of low-quality milk. The PDA has highlighted that Pakistan was the only country in the world with an 18 per cent general sales tax on packaged milk. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 9*)

‘Filling Hearts’ initiative: PepsiCo advancing food security efforts

PepsiCo Pakistan is advancing its food security efforts this Ramazan through “Filling Hearts” initiative, marking a significant milestone of 2 million meals distributed since programme’s inception. This year, company will provide 750,000+ meals near its operational sites across Punjab, continuing its collaborative efforts with PepsiCo Foundation – company’s philanthropic arm – to support underserved communities during holy month. This year’s programme emerges from a substantial foundation of community support, including over 7 million meals previously distributed through “Millions of Meals” programmes. Filling Hearts is part of a long-term approach to addressing food security challenges in Pakistan, which spans immediate relief and explores sustainable community support strategies. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 3*)

6.3 # Seed Companies

392 non-compliant seed firms closed

The National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority’s Board of Governors ordered to close 392 seed companies that failed to meet compliance standards. Strict actions were decided to improve seed quality, and it was emphasised that certified seeds must be the primary focus. The minister stressed that the government is committed to strictly enforcing quality standards in the agricultural sector. A third-party audit of seed companies was discussed in detail. NSDRA representatives briefed the minister on their action plan based on data from the third-party audit. Strict enforcement of the seed authority compliance mechanism was emphasised to regulate seed companies effectively. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 9*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

CK Hutchison plans \$1bn port investment in Pakistan

Hong Kong conglomerate CK Hutchison Holdings Limited's ports subsidiary plans to invest \$1 billion to upgrade its operations in Pakistan, its finance ministry said. "Hutchison Ports presented their upcoming investment plan of \$1 billion, aimed at upgrading their existing terminals to enhance operational efficiency, logistics connectivity, and automation," the ministry said. No timeframe was provided for the proposed investment. The investment is expected to generate at least \$4bn in revenue over the next 25 years through royalty, rent, and tax contributions, the statement said, citing a Hutchison Ports delegation. The company has been operating two major terminals in Pakistan over a 25-year period, and has contributed more than Rs225bn (\$805.01 million) in government revenue. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

MoU signed with UAE group

PM Shehbaz Sharif met an eight-member delegation from the International Free Zones Authority (IFZA) of the United Arab Emirates and the Aleria Group. The premier also witnessed a MoU exchanged between IFZA and the Board of Investment. The prime minister said Pakistan and the UAE had long-standing brotherly relations spanning decades, whereas the country had vast investment opportunities in several sectors. Aleria, a leading C-level Artificial Intelligence platform based in the UAE, entered into a strategic partnership with Fauji Foundation. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 9*)

BII announces \$75m facility with HBL to enhance food security

British International Investment (BII), the UK's development finance institution and impact investor, announced a \$75 million finance facility with Habib Bank Limited. The new facility will support farmers and agribusinesses in Pakistan by providing increased access to essential finance and enhancing their resilience to climate change. The agriculture sector is vital for Pakistan's economic growth, food security, and the livelihoods of many, contributing 24 per cent to the GDP and employing 37 per cent of the workforce, including being the largest employer of women. However, the sector faces numerous challenges such as limited access to finance, modern machinery, and equipment, increased vulnerability to climate change, and underdeveloped value chains. (*Business Recorder, March 11th, 2025, Page 7*)

Foreign direct investment plunges 45pc

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plunged 45 per cent year-on-year to \$95 million in February, reported the State Bank. However, the FDI during July-February FY25 increased by 41pc to \$1.618bn compared to \$1.147bn a year ago. The government is working to attract foreign investments, but the increasing terrorism is damaging the country's image and discouraging potential investors. The FDI is much less than that of regional countries, and economic experts believe there is no chance for higher inflows in current uncertain situation. China has been the largest investor in Pakistan. Out of the total inflows of \$1.6bn during 8MFY25, the Chinese investment was \$662m, followed

by \$160m from Hong Kong. Other significant inflows of \$167m and \$68m were from the United Kingdom and the US, respectively. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 9*)

Foreign loan inflows fall by a quarter

Pakistan has received almost \$12bn foreign loans in the first eight months (July-February) of 2024-25, aiming to cross the \$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 \$5.95bn in eight months, almost 25pc lower than the comparable period of last fiscal year. In its monthly report on Foreign Economic Assistance released, Economic Affairs Division said that against its annual target of \$19.4bn (including grants), total FEA in 8MFY25 amounted to \$4.953bn when compared to \$6.678bn 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 2024 as an upfront payment under the \$7bn ongoing EFF that is accounted for separately by the State Bank of Pakistan. However, \$1.2 billion was received a year back under the Standby Arrangement, which had also seen similar accounting treatment. With three rollovers and fresh disbursements, the total external assistance in eight months amounted to \$11.95bn. This included \$3bn rollovers by Saudi Arabia, \$2bn by UAE and \$1bn by China. This does not include another \$2bn China rolled over earlier this month, making its total rollovers 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 at a substantial deficit. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 9*)

Key infrastructure projects: Azerbaijan keen to invest \$2bn, Senate panel told

Senate Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiatives was informed that Azerbaijan has expressed its intention to invest \$2bn in Pakistan, potentially impacting key infrastructure projects. (*Business Recorder, March 25th, 2025, Page 4*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

30,000 jobs slashed to meet IMF conditions, minister tells Punjab Assembly

Irrigation Minister Kazim Pirzada told the Punjab Assembly during the Question Hour that the Punjab government has eliminated 30,000 posts in compliance with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) conditions. (*Dawn, March 8th, 2025, Page 2*)

Talks on first review of \$7bn EFF programme conclude

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission and Pakistani authorities concluded talks on the first review of the \$ 7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme. Following the completion of the ongoing discussions, the IMF staff will finalize its recommendations for the Executive Board's review, a prerequisite for Board approval for the release of the one billion dollar tranche. According to sources within the Ministry of Finance, Pakistan had requested a loan of \$2 billion from the IMF, which included the disbursement of the \$1 billion tranche under the EFF and an additional \$1 billion in

climate financing. According to sources within the Ministry of Finance, Pakistan had requested a loan of \$2 billion from the IMF, which included the disbursement of the \$1 billion tranche and an additional \$1 billion in climate financing. The sources further said that approval for both the loan tranche and climate financing would be considered by the Executive Board. (*Business Recorder, March 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

First review of \$7bn EFF, and new \$1.3bn RSF arrangement

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) staff and the Pakistani authorities have reached a staff level agreement (SLA) on the first review of the \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme and on a new arrangement of \$1.3 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). The agreement is subject to approval of the IMF's Executive Board. Upon approval, Pakistan will have access to about \$1 billion (SDR 760 million) under the EFF, bringing total disbursements under the programme to about \$2 billion. Pending board approval, the government can unlock the \$1.3 billion under a new climate resilience loan programme spanning 28 months. (*Business Recorder, March 27th, 2025, Page 1*)

IMF's RSF: Pakistan to get \$1.3bn in tranches

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Director of Communications Julie Kozack said Pakistan will receive \$1.3 billion under Resilience and Sustainable Facility (RSF) in tranches over 28 months. Speaking at a press conference, Kozack said that for the RSF over the length of the arrangement, subject to approval by the IMF's Executive Board, the staff-level agreement references an amount of \$1.3 billion and that access will be over the life of the RSF, delivered in tranches. She said that on September 25th of 2024, the Executive Board approved a 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement for Pakistan, and it was for \$7 billion. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

8.2 # World Bank

WB official sees conflict over water in near future

A World Bank official has warned that there will be conflict over every drop of water in Pakistan if measures to improve water distribution and extraction are not implemented. This warning was issued by Basharat Ahmed Saeed, Senior Water Specialist at the World Bank Group, during a seminar on water security in Pakistan organised by PIDE. He stated that given the current rate of groundwater consumption in agriculture, Pakistan is expected to face groundwater depletion by 2030 and surface water depletion by 2037. "We have a lot of water, which is why the situation has not yet become as dire as it should be due to excessive usage," Saeed warned that if situation is not addressed, any additional water extraction will negatively impact either industry or urban areas, leading to conflicts over water. He further explained that by 2030, if an agriculturalist or an industry seeks to extract more water, they will essentially be taking water that belongs to other citizens. (*Business Recorder, March 15th, 2025, Page 1*)

World Bank approves \$102m for microfinance

The World Bank has approved \$102 million in financing for a project aimed at expanding access to microcredit and strengthening the resilience of Pakistan's microfinance sector, particularly against climate-related shocks. The funding for the Resilient and Accessible Microfinance project was approved by the World Bank's board of directors, according to a statement issued by the bank's Resident Mission in Islamabad. The RAM project is expected to benefit nearly 1.89m people (including more than 1m women and over 350,000 youth), especially those in vulnerable and low-income rural communities.

Key components of project include establishment of a Climate Risk Fund, innovative use of agrotechnology solutions, capacity-building for microfinance institutions, and the development of risk management frameworks to enhance the sector's resilience. The project is co-financed by a \$23m grant from the Global Shield Financing Facility, which is a multi-donor trust fund hosted by the World Bank Group and financed by the governments of Canada, Germany, Japan, Luxembourg and UK. The GSFF supports poor and vulnerable countries and people with increased access to financial protection against climate shocks, disasters and crises. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

WB okays \$300m for Punjab clean air initiative

The World Bank has approved a \$300 million International Development Association (IDA) loan for the 'Punjab Clean Air Programme' (PCAP) to strengthen air quality management and combat air pollution in the province. The PCAP, approved by the World Bank Group's board of directors, will support the Punjab government's 'Smog Mitigation Action Plan' (SMAP) in tackling the pressing issue of smog and air pollution with the launch of several comprehensive initiatives aimed at improving air quality and public health across the province. It will cover key sectors such as transport, agriculture, industry, energy, and municipal services, a press release issued by the WB mission in Islamabad said. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

CDWP clears six projects worth Rs151bn

CDWP cleared six projects with an estimated cost of Rs151.32 billion. A meeting of CDWP requested EcneC to formally approve two projects worth Rs140.129bn, and itself approved a total of four projects worth Rs11.2bn. In CDWP meeting, four development projects related to the higher education sector were presented and all of them were approved. (*Dawn, March 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

EcneC approves 13 key projects worth Rs1.275trn

EcneC approved 13 development projects worth Rs1,275.714 billion across key sectors, including transport, communications, railways, space technology, and public infrastructure; Projects for economic transformation in Gilgit-Baltistan aimed at poverty alleviation, as well as flood rehabilitation initiatives in Sindh to restore critical

infrastructure; Pakistan Railways' procurement of high-capacity wagons and passenger coaches, Pakistan's Optical Remote Sensing Satellite project and several major road projects. (*Business Recorder, March 26th, 2025, Page 1*)

9.2 # Environmental Policy

Policy for uniform standards of 'green projects' round the corner

Pakistan is set to launch its set of guidelines that would define the standards to classify sustainable economic activities based on their impact on climate adaptation and mitigation goals and fund them. A meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, held at the State Bank was told that a draft of the 'National Green Taxonomy' would be launched by next month. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

New policy framework to monitor melting glaciers recommended

Climate experts have strongly recommended a new policy framework to check melting glaciers in Gilgit-Baltistan and Chitral, due to climate change, leading to significant risks for both water security and the livelihoods of millions of people. Khan Faraz among other climate experts disclosed this during an interaction on "melting glaciers in Pakistan" with media at the National Press Club. Thus there is an urgent need for all stakeholders to join forces through adaptation and mitigation policies across all socio-economic sectors. However, rising global temperatures are causing these glaciers to shrink at an alarming rate, threatening to destabilize the country's already stressed water resources. (*Business Recorder, March 30th, 2025, Page 3*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Jul-Jan govt debt up 4.65pc to Rs72.12trn

The federal government's total debt stock surged by over Rs 3 trillion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (FY25), primarily due to substantial borrowing from domestic sources to bridge the fiscal deficit. According to the latest issued by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), the central government's total debt comprising both domestic and external liabilities climbed by 4.65 percent during the first seven months of FY25. The overall debt stock surged to Rs 72.123 trillion in January 2025, up from Rs 68.914 trillion in June 2024, showing an increase of Rs 3.209 trillion.

During the review period, a major increase was recorded in domestic debt, which rose by 6.5 percent. In absolute terms, the federal government's borrowings from the domestic market grew by Rs 3.08 trillion, reaching Rs 50.243 trillion in January 2025, up from Rs 47.160 trillion in June 2024. This domestic borrowing comprised Rs 41.825 trillion in long-term loans and Rs 8.352 trillion in short-term loans. External debt, measured in rupee terms, saw a slight rise of Rs 126 billion during the first seven months of FY25, bringing the total external debt to Rs 21.880tr by the end of January 2025 as against Rs 21.754 trillion in June 2024. (*Business Recorder, March 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

Public debt swells to Rs74tr in July-December

Despite a growth of about 10 per cent in total public debt to Rs74.103 trillion by the end of December 2024, the government has claimed that debt indicators are improving and risks are decreasing. In its debt bulletin for the period ending December 31, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) reported the total public debt at Rs74.013tr, showing an increase of more than Rs6.683tr (10pc) over the comparable period when it stood at Rs67.330tr. The MoF said the economic stabilisation and fiscal consolidation helped improve sustainability of public debt in the first half of 2024-25. “The stock of total public debt has increased by 3.9pc in 1HFY25, as against an increase of 7pc during the same period last year”, it said, adding that primary drivers for the rise in debt stock had been managed, with a significant federal primary surplus and stable exchange rate. Primary balance posted a surplus of 0.9pc of GDP in FY24 (after 20 years) and 2.9pc in July – December FY25. International rating agencies upgraded Pakistan’s credit rating by one notch and outlook from stable to positive. (*Dawn, March 29th, 2025, Page 9*)

10.1 # Food

Heavy snowfall causes food shortage in Broghil

Residents of Broghil have given an SOS call to the government to rush to their rescue as the valley is still covered in four feet of snow, causing severe food shortages for inhabitants and their livestock. Former Broghil village nazim Amin Jan Tajik said that the heavy snowfall in the valley had blocked the roads, making replenishment of food items impossible for last four months. He regretted that the construction of a warehouse of food department was yet to be completed in Broghil, and a petty stock of wheat maintained in a small rented room had run out long before. Mr Tajik said that the people were now left with no option but to slaughter their livestock to save themselves from starvation, while livestock had already started perishing due to shortage of fodder. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 8*)

10.2 # Inflation

Govt’s economic team blamed for hike in inflation

The Government’s economic management team has taken a curious stand on the very damaging issue of inflation that the people of Pakistan have had to endure during the last two years. The high inflation has pushed a large segment of the population close to the poverty line. This was stated by Founder Citizens for Reforms, Aamir Mumtaz who is also former Chairman PSMA Board. He said that household finances have been worsened and personal savings obliterated with more and more people having to borrow to make both ends meet, adding that inflation has started to come down but at what cost? Higher unemployment, diminished purchasing power and further de industrialization. He was of the view that there is a need to examine the role of government’s economic team in causing inflation. It started with a flawed budget making process which was based on over spending. (*Business Recorder, March 3rd, 2025, Page 2*)

Inflation drops to lowest in nearly a decade

Annual inflation continued its downward trend, falling to a nearly decade-low of 1.5 per cent year-on-year in February, primarily driven by a decline in perishable food prices, especially wheat flour. The decline even exceeded the Ministry of Finance's expectations, which had projected inflation to remain between 2pc and 3pc. In its February report, the ministry also predicted that the figure would rise to between 3pc and 4pc by March. The slowdown in inflation is primarily driven by lower prices of wheat and its by-products, perishable items like onions, certain pulses, and a slight reduction in electricity charges. These products hold significant weight in inflation calculations, making even minor price changes impactful in reducing the overall inflation rate. In contrast, sugar and edible oil prices are rising in the domestic market despite their declining rates globally. The government has permitted sugar exports, particularly to Afghanistan, citing surplus stock as the reason.

The headline inflation, measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI), eased by 0.8pc in February on a month-on-month basis, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The inflation rate in February 2025 was the lowest since November 2015, mainly due to the high base effect from the previous year (February 2024 — 23.1pc). The CPI inflation dropped to 9.6pc in August 2024, marking the first single-digit figure in over three years, and the downward trend continued in the following months. The CPI inflation surged above 10pc in November 2021 and remained in double digits for 33 consecutive months until July 2024. In between, it peaked at 38pc in May 2023, driven by unprecedented food and energy prices.

In the first eight months of FY25 (July-February), inflation averaged 5.85pc compared to 27.96pc during the same period last year. Analysts attributed the decline to lower global commodity prices, stable exchange rates, higher base effect and better agricultural outputs. The IMF has revised its inflation forecast for FY25 down to 9.5pc from the previous estimate of 12.7pc. In February, urban inflation stood at 1.8pc year-on-year, while rural inflation was recorded at 1.1pc. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.3 # Poverty

Stampede during ration distribution claims woman's life in Baldia

A young woman was killed while two others were injured in a stampede during distribution of free rations among the needy arranged by a local union committee in Baldia Town (Karachi). (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 13*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Plan to plant 40m trees in Punjab

The Punjab government will plant over 40 million trees in the province. "The project will cover 48,368 acres across the province, with a target of planting 42.5 million trees," Punjab Senior Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said. "In the fiscal year 2024-25, 8,496 acres will be planted with 7.361 million trees, for which Rs1.8 billion has been

allocated. Of this, Rs1.085 billion has already been utilized, accounting for 60 per cent of the estimated budget,” she said. During the Spring 2025 plantation campaign, 6,637 acres would be covered with 5.966 million trees. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 2*)

200,000 saplings planted in Pindi, Attock on forest day

As many as 200,000 saplings were planted in connection with the International Day of Forests in Rawalpindi and Attock. The drive was launched at Allama Iqbal Park to restore the natural beauty of area. District administration had arranged various events on the instructions of the Punjab government. Meanwhile, the Water and Sanitation Agency (Wasa) also launched a plantation campaign in the garrison city. Rawalpindi Arts Council organised a “Plant for Pakistan” event. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 4*)

Pakistan losing 11,000 hectares of forest cover every year: WWF-P

Despite efforts by the government, civil society and local communities to increase forest cover, 11,000 hectares of forests are lost every year across the country due to wildfires, climate change and the conversion of forest land into agricultural, commercial, and housing schemes. In a statement released in connection with International Day of Forests observed every year on March 21, World Wide Fund for Nature-Pakistan said conserving forests is not just an environmental imperative but a social and economic necessity. This year’s theme — ‘Forests and Food’ — emphasises forests’ critical role in supporting food security, improving local livelihoods, and conserving biodiversity.

The organisation said Pakistan is a forest-poor country, with only five per cent of the total area under forests. “Since most of the area falls in arid and semi-arid regions, low precipitation naturally deters the growth of forests.” “Thousands of hectares of forest are destroyed yearly, making way for various human activities. The rising population, coupled with poverty and lack of awareness, has led to illegal and unsustainable logging, overharvesting of wood for fuel and charcoal, and increased small-scale farming that continues to reduce the forest cover of Pakistan,” the organisation said. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 13*)

Punjab govt releases environmental survey report

The Punjab government has released a public survey report highlighting citizens’ feedback on Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif’s environmental, forestry, and wildlife conservation initiatives. Titled “echoes of the wild,” this survey is the first of its kind, incorporating the views of the people of Punjab on key environmental reforms. According to the survey results, 59% of the respondents acknowledged and appreciated CM Maryam Nawaz’s eco-friendly initiatives, recognizing her focus on previously neglected areas. 65% of Punjab’s citizens rated the government’s efforts on forests and fisheries as “excellent.” 64% of respondents recognized the reforms implemented for the protection of wildlife and their natural habitats. 70% of the citizens expressed their willingness to voluntarily participate in the government’s environmental initiatives. (*Business Recorder, March 30th, 2025, Page 2*)

11.1 # Pollution

Pakistan among five most polluted countries

Pakistan ranked third most polluted country in the list of most polluted countries in 2024, recording a national annual average PM2.5 concentration of 73.7 micrograms per cubic metre, the same as the previous year, according to the World Air Quality Report 2024 published. Despite the unchanged national average, key cities including Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Faisalabad, Lahore and Peshawar experienced increases in PM2.5 concentrations. The report says 12 cities in Pakistan had annual average concentrations more than 10 times the WHO guidelines, or above 50.0 micrograms per cubic metre (g/m³). (*Dawn, March 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

‘Really suffocating’: Pakistan emerges from record smog season

Tens of millions of Pakistanis spent at least four months breathing toxic air pollution 20 times above safe levels, in worst winter smog season for several years. Pakistan regularly ranks among world’s most polluted countries, with Lahore often most polluted megacity between November and February. AFP’s analysis of data recorded since 2018 by independent air monitoring project AQICN shows 2024-2025 winter smog season started a month earlier in October and persisted at higher levels, including in cities normally less affected by pollution. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 12*)

Sewage disposal an environmental hazard for three canals in RYK

The municipal authorities of Rahim Yar Khan and Khanpur are disposing of sewage into three canals of the district which irrigate the agricultural land and provide drinking water for humans and cattle. These three canals are Khanpur Minor Canal and Shareen Minor Canal in tehsil Khanpur and Adam Sahaba Canal in tehsil Rahim Yar Khan. This canal’s water is being used for irrigation of crops and drinking purpose for humans and animals. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 8*)

Plastic pollution must be treated as national emergency: Sherry

The chairperson of Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman, has emphasised the need to urgently address the rapidly worsening problem of plastic pollution and untreated waste. “This is no longer just an environmental issue. Plastic and untreated waste are choking our cities and rivers, threatening our water sources, damaging agricultural productivity, and triggering public health emergencies. Pakistan must treat this as a national emergency,” she said in a statement on the International Day of Zero Waste.

Quoting alarming statistics, she noted “Globally only 9pc of plastic waste is recycled, but in Pakistan that number drops to a staggering 1pc. The rest accumulates in landfills, drains, and water bodies — with the Indus River now ranked as the second most plastic-polluted river in the world.” Senator Sherry Rehman said Pakistan generates 49.6 million tons of solid waste annually, increasing at 2.4 per cent every year, while only 60–70 per cent of solid waste is collected and just 1 per cent of wastewater is treated.

She said in Rawal Dam alone, 9 million gallons of untreated sewage is dumped every single day, contaminating critical water supplies. “We’re not just talking about distant ecosystems -- this is about the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the cities we live in. The Indus, once our lifeline, is now a toxic pipeline of plastic pollution,” she said. Senator Sherry Rehman emphasised that the waste crisis is not just environmental but a full-blown public health disaster. She said the World Health Organisation estimates over 5 million deaths annually in Pakistan from waste-related diseases.

Senator Sherry Rehman underscored Pakistan’s addiction to plastic is especially worrying as the country consumes 55 billion plastic bags annually, with usage expected to increase by 15 per cent each year. She said per capita plastic consumption stands at 6.5kg — the approximate weight of all human vital organs — and over a lifetime, an average Pakistani consumes enough plastic to equal the weight of at least five adults. 65 per cent of the waste that washes up on Pakistan’s beaches consists of plastic bottles, caps, bags, and packaging, contributing to an increasingly toxic environment. Pakistan’s garbage -- amounting to 250 million tons -- is largely composed of plastic bags, PET bottles, and food scraps.” (*The News, March 30th, 2025, Page 3*)

11.2 # Health

Auditors recommend action over Rs3.496 billion ‘irregular’ vaccine payment

External auditors have revealed that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa health department made an “irregular” payment of Rs3.496 billion to the federal government for supplying vaccines in the financial year 2023-24 but failed to produce records. They recommended punitive action against the responsible officials and measures to prevent such irregularity in the future. It said a scrutiny of records revealed that the amount included Rs2.992 billion for the supply of vaccines and Rs473 million for freight charges, buffers, handling fee, and taxes. (*Dawn, March 2nd, 2025, Page 8*)

Nearly 20pc medical errors prove fatal annually, say experts

Every year medical errors claim lives of around 20 per cent of patients admitted to hospitals in the country. Common types of medical errors include medical negligence, surgical errors, diagnostic errors, medication errors, equipment failures, hospital-acquired infections, and communication failures, etc. The experts shared shocking data at a press conference held at Karachi Press Club. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 14*)

WHO donates Rs70m equipment, medicines to health dept

The World Health Organisation donated essential medicines and equipment to the health department to help patients requiring emergency care in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. WHO’s representative in Pakistan, Dr Loduping, met with health adviser Ihtesham Ali to discuss various public health matters. During the meeting, he donated medicines and medical equipment worth Rs70 million to the health department on behalf of WHO. (*Dawn, March 12th, 2025, Page 8*)

Six died of rabies at three Karachi hospitals in over two months

Amid lack of government efforts to control canine population in the city and other parts of the province, at least six lives have been lost to rabies and more than 8,000 dog-bite cases have been reported this year so far at three hospitals in Karachi alone. (*Dawn, March 13th, 2025, Page 13*)

Business leaders sound a warning: Shortage of medical devices could lead to healthcare crisis

Pakistan is facing a shortage of medical devices, which could lead to a healthcare crisis if regulatory processes are not streamlined. Industry leaders have urged authorities to expedite the registration process and extend deadlines for all classes of medical devices. At an emergency press conference at Karachi Press Club, representatives called for immediate action. They warned that delays in approvals and regulatory hurdles are disrupting supply of essential medical equipment across country. (*Business Recorder, March 21st, 2025, Page 4*)

Year's second mpox case reported from Karachi

Pakistan reported the second case of mpox in 2025 when a 29-year-old man tested positive for the contagious viral infection in Karachi. Last year, eight mpox cases were reported, while the government confirmed nine cases in 2023, all among travellers returning from the Middle East and other countries. There have been no cases of local transmission of the virus so far. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 1*)

US aid cut to hamper TB control efforts in Pakistan

With 510,000 new cases each year, Pakistan ranks fifth among countries with the most cases of tuberculosis, but recent aid cuts by the US threaten to upend efforts to control the disease in the country. In a statement on World TB Day, WHO said Pakistan makes up for 61pc of all cases in Eastern Mediterranean Region. Globally, the WHO estimated that 1.25 million children and young adolescents (aged 0 to 14) fall ill with TB each year, with nearly 600 children dying every day from the preventable and treatable disease. In Pakistan alone, an estimated 81,000 children develop TB each year, often with subtle symptoms that delay diagnosis until the disease has advanced. The statement issued by WHO claimed that in EMR, a person is diagnosed with TB every 34 seconds and every six minutes, a life is lost. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 3*)

DRAP issues immediate recall alert for substandard pharma products

The Drug Regulatory Authority Pakistan has issued an immediate recall alert for a number of substandard pharmaceutical products after receiving various complains from the Directorate of Drug Control Punjab. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 3*)

Alarm after measles claims 28 children's lives in Karachi over three months

Despite government efforts to improve immunisation status of children, an alarming situation over measles persists with at least 28 deaths reported in first three months of this year at two tertiary-care hospitals in city alone. (*Dawn, March 31st, 2025, Page 13*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Pakistan seeks simpler process for accessing climate funds

Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change Romina Khurshid Alam called for streamlining access to climate finance for long-term adaptation and mitigation plans to make communities resilient against climate change. PM's aide made these comments in a meeting with International Finance Corporation (IFC) delegation which promised to collaborate with Pakistan in addressing climate change challenges. The meeting focused on strengthening the partnership between the IFC and the climate change ministry with an emphasis on enhancing capacity of stakeholders across various sectors to address the impacts of climate change. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 4*)

Pakistan faces finance, capacity gap in climate fight: minister Aurangzeb

Pakistan faces a finance gap and a lack of technical capacity in its fight against climate change, but the government is actively pursuing policies that integrate climate action across all sectors. This was the gist of separate remarks made by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. Speaking at a ceremony held to mark the World Day of Glaciers at NDMA Headquarters, finance minister said that sustainable economic and environmental growth were correlated, and reiterated the government's commitment to promoting environmentally stable growth. He highlighted Pakistan's growing recognition of climate change as an existential threat, citing concerns such as severe flooding and escalating pollution levels in major cities.

Recalling the 'super floods' of 2022, he called them a terrible example of environmental imbalance, saying that it had been identified as a major challenge for the future. He said that in order to achieve environmental sustainability, the country needed short, medium and long-term policies, as there was not enough time to rely on long-term policies alone. Mr Aurangzeb also pointed out that glaciers in the northern regions of the country were central for the Pakistani economy, and at least 10,000 out of 13,000 glaciers were currently at risk. In order to deal with the threats posed by melting of glaciers, a monitoring system and glacier protection strategy would be required for their conservation. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 12*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Drought

Met Office warns of drought in three provinces

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a drought alert for Sindh, Balochistan and Punjab due to scant rainfall. According to the alert issued, drought conditions would persist in Sindh, southern parts of Balochistan and lower eastern plain areas of Punjab. This was despite the recent rainfall spells that have improved drought conditions in central and upper parts of the country. The mean temperature during March 2025 in the lower half of the country was 2-3 degrees Celsius above normal. The consecutive dry days in some areas of the southern region even exceeded 200 days. The

current weather and seasonal climate outlook were likely to exacerbate and intensify the drought situation in the affected areas. Overall rainfall from September 1, 2024, to March 21, 2025, was 40 per cent below normal. The rainfall deficit across the country was Sindh (-62pc), Balochistan (-52pc), Punjab (-38pc), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (-35pc), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (-29pc) and Gilgit-Baltistan (-2pc). As per the PMD, there was an acute shortage of water in Tarbela and Mangla dams and water flowing in different rivers was at an extremely low level. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

Punjab districts told to prepare for looming drought

The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) directed district administrations of Punjab to prepare for a potential drought as the province faces a severe rains deficit. The PDMA issued a high alert advisory stating that Punjab has received 38 per cent less rains than normal since September 2024, with southern districts particularly Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, and Rahim Yar Khan at the highest risk of drought. The warning follows an advisory from the Pakistan Meteorological Department's NDMC, which reported a 40pc below-average rains in country, with Sindh (-62pc) and Balochistan (-52pc) even worse affected. The PDMA alert highlighted concerns over Rabi season crops, warning that prolonged dry spells could devastate agricultural output. Farmers in rice growing regions fear significant losses as water levels in Tarbela and Mangla dams have plummeted to dead levels. (*Dawn, March 27th, 2025, Page 3*)

13.2 # Flood

Climate change key driver of frequent, less predictable floods: study

Climate change is the key driver of more frequent and less predictable floods in the mountains of Hindu Kush Himalayan region, an analysis of 73 years of flooding events has found. The analysis of 1,015 floods, published this month in the *Science Bulletin* — a peer-reviewed international journal — confirms a significant rise in the frequency of floods since 2000 driven by rising temperatures. The journal is sponsored by Chinese Academy of Sciences and National Natural Science Foundation of China. Flood frequency has gone up, the study confirms, but a key additional finding is a rise in unpredictability in timing of floods. While most events continue to occur during monsoon, study says, there is a marked rise in number of floods happening outside these times.

The study, 'Flood Complexity and Rising Exposure Risk in High Mountain Asia under Climate Change', authored by Peking University's Dongfeng Yi, ICIMOD Cryosphere Specialist Sonam Wangchuk, Peking University's Yuanyuan Bai and University of Colorado's Albert J. Kettner, is grounded in a new inventory of the types, patterns and causes of floods in the region stretching back to 1950. The two most common causes for floods are rain and snowmelt, but less common and more sudden and highly destructive are those that caused by glacial lake outbursts (GLOFs) and landslide-dammed lake outburst floods (LLOFs). (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 3*)

13.3 # Rainfall

Rain, hailstorm hit crops in Hafizabad

Hafizabad town and its adjoining areas received heavy rain and hailstorm, causing some damage to crops in rural areas. Because of the downpour and hailstorm, temperatures dropped considerably in the entire Gujrat region, including Hafizabad, Mandi Bahuddin and Wazirabad. Intermittent heavy rain has been continuing in Gujrat city and its adjoining rural localities for the last two consecutive days, resulting in the accumulation of rainwater in different areas of Gujrat city, causing inconvenience for the residents. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 2*)

13.4 # Snowfall / Avalanches

Snowfall, avalanches wreak havoc on Astore

Thousands of people are stranded in the upper areas of Astore, as most parts of district remained disconnected from other areas of Gilgit-Baltistan after heavy snowfall and avalanches blocked roads and damaged a bridge. Astore has received plenty of snow in recent days, with some areas such as Burzil Top, Chillum Daskhram, Mirmalik and other localities receiving up to six inches of snow. An avalanche that recently hit Mirmalik Batwash village, near Shuntar Pass, destroyed not only a major portion of their house but also a connecting bridge. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 3*)

Avalanches leave GB locals stranded

Heavy snowfall and avalanches across Gilgit-Baltistan have damaged homes and blocked roads, resulting in a shortage of essential items and medicines. The region remains under the grip of intense cold weather and received snowfall in the last week of February and the start of March. Continuous snowfall and subsequent avalanches have compounded the miseries of locals as roads, including the Karakoram Highway, have been blocked due to landslides. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 3*)

Avalanche damages houses, power turbines in Kaghan

Several houses, hotels and electrical turbines were damaged after collapse of a glacier on the Naran-Saiful Muluk Road in Nara area of Kaghan Valley. “No casualties are reported as residents & business owners had already moved to lower parts of Mansehra after Kaghan Valley received first snowfall of winter season in November last year,” resident Qaisar Khan told reporters in Balakot. Mass of ice, detached from nearby mountains, damaged hotels, shops and houses. (*Dawn, March 26th, 2025, Page 8*)

Man killed as rain, snow trigger landslides in GB

A man was killed and another injured in accidents following torrential rains and snowfall in upper parts of Gilgit-Baltistan. Life in the northern region has been brought to a standstill as landslides and avalanches blocked major roads, including Karakoram Highway (KKH), Baltistan Road and Astore Valley road. The inclement weather also damaged water channels, land communications and electricity infrastructure in many areas. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 3*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Karakoram Highway reopened, Baltistan road blocked again

While the KKH, which was blocked due to a landslide in the Lotar area of Kohistan district for days, has been reopened for traffic, Baltistan road was blocked again in the Shangus area of Skardu. In collaboration with the local administration, Frontier Works Organisation reopened the KKH for traffic after which stranded passengers on both sides of the highway resumed their journey. (*Dawn, March 13th, 2025, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Police enter Quetta Press Club, arrest protesters

Police barged into the Quetta Press Club, arresting some individuals who had arrived for a press conference to air their grievances against the authorities after they appeared in a test for jobs in Balochistan Education Department. The shortlisted candidates wanted to register their protest against delays in the issuance of appointment letters. The police action drew a strong reaction from the Balochistan Union of Journalists and the Quetta Press Club (QPC). Police arrested a number of protesters who had gathered outside the QPC. (*Dawn, March 2nd, 2025, Page 1*)

Tangwani shut over lawlessness

A large number of protesters, including activists of political, social and religious parties and general public staged a rally and a sit-in at railway crossing on Jaffarabad Road in Tangwani town, Jacobabad district in protest against deteriorating law and order. Traders shuttered their shops and closed down businesses to participate in the protest against police accusing them of failing to rein in criminals and restore peace across the district. The protesters' leaders said that the town had been handed over to criminals. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Protests in Baltistan over arrest of three religious scholars

Demonstrations were held in various areas of Baltistan division against the arrest of three religious scholars at the Pakistan-Iran border in Balochistan after they returned from Iran. Leader of the Opposition in the Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly Kazim Mesum, along with religious scholars, demanded the immediate release of the three detained scholars. A sit-in blocking Kargil Road in GB's Kharmand district continued for the third consecutive day, while another demonstration was staged on K2 Road in Shigar district. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

Parachinar sit-in against road closures continues

Residents protested prolonged closure of roads in the district headquarters Parachinar for the second consecutive day. They complained that the blockade of roads to and from Kurram for the last five months had left a population of over 0.5 million without access to essential food items and medical care. The protesters, who staged a sit-in outside the Parachinar Press Club, stayed put despite fasting amid chilly weather. They included people of all ages, including elderly. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 8*)

Youth's 'enforced disappearance' at Wagah leads to rally in Mirpurkhas

Scores of people belonging to the Kachhi community held a noisy protest demonstration along with civil society activists and local Sindh United Party (SUP) leaders over, what they believed, 'enforced disappearance' of a Kachhi community member in Lahore. The angry protesters assembled at Market Chowk and marched up to the Mirpurkhas Press Club raising slogans for the "release of Oam Parkash" who, they claimed, was whisked away by unknown security officials while he was busy getting his papers cleared at Wagah border for onward journey to India. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 15*)

Chilas protesters lock Wapda offices over delay in Bhasha dam talks

The ongoing protest in Chilas intensified as some enraged protesters barged into the offices of Wapda and private companies working on Diamer-Bhasha Dam and threatened the officials to suspend their activities and vacate the buildings before locking them. They warned authorities that construction work would remain suspended until their charter of demands was fully implemented, as their sit-in entered its 18th day. The Gilgit-Baltistan government asked the Centre to settle the issue on a priority basis before the situation worsens. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 5*)

BNP supporters block Quetta-Karachi National Highway

Hundreds of workers and supporters of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal blocked Quetta-Karachi National Highway at Wadh, in protest against lodging of FIRs against BNP-M leaders, tribal elders, and traders. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 5*)

Islamabad Aurat March held behind police cordon

The organisers of the Aurat March in the capital went ahead with their planned rally to mark International Women's Day despite receiving no formal approval from authorities to organise the gathering. Initially, the organisers had planned to march from the press club to D-Chowk, but Islamabad administration did not grant a no-objection certificate (NOC) for the event. The demonstration was held in an open area adjacent to National Press Club amid strict security arrangements. Activists have said that women rights have not been protected in Gilgit-Baltistan as local women remain deprived from their constitutional and legal rights. They expressed their concerns over the absence of laws that protect women rights including inheritance, harassment, early marriages restraint and protection at workplace. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 4*)

Political, civil society activists stage peace march in Landi Kotal

Scores of political parties and civil society activists staged a "peace march" in Landi Kotal area amid calls for a meaningful Pak-Afghan dialogue for an early reopening of Torkham border. Holding banners, they called for restoration of traditional relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan as neighbouring countries.

Women's Day: Women here have expressed disappointment about the observance of the International Women's Day, complaining that a large section of the local female population is not even aware of importance of day. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 8*)

Call for unity against ‘anti-Sindh’ projects marks Women’s Day in Karachi

There were several events held across Karachi and other cities of Sindh to mark International Women’s Day. At almost every event, the participants voiced their concerns over the federal government’s controversial canals project and vowed to fight against any anti-Sindh move. The most notable of these was the Mehnatkash Aurat Rally organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF) in Karachi under slogan ‘Class resistance against looting of Indus River, our land and environment’. The rally asked people of Punjab and progressive forces across Pakistan to stand in solidarity with Sindh against what they called ‘life-threatening projects’.

The rally, which began from the Boy Scouts Auditorium, culminated at the Arts Council of Pakistan with women workers, labourers and human rights activists with bright red flags chanting slogans and holding up placards against corporate farming, environmental destruction, Indus water theft, feudal structures that sustain systemic oppression. Highlighting the growing gender oppression, regressive social attitudes, and the inherent biases against women, the Mehnatkash Aurat Rally called upon the people of Punjab and progressive forces across Pakistan to stand in solidarity with Sindh just as the ruling elite were united in implementing anti-people policies. “The oppressed must also unite to resist these life-threatening projects,” they added.

Their demands include recovery of all missing political and social activists, concrete measures to promote girls’ education and increase the number of girls’ schools, end media restrictions and censorship and stop leasing agricultural land to foreign entities under the guise of cooperative farming.

On the occasion of Women’s Day, hundreds of fisherfolk women from different parts of Karachi gathered at Ibrahim Hyderi to demand from the government to immediately cancel the six-canal project on the Indus River. They chanted slogans such as “No more canals on the Indus River! Let it flow naturally!”

Women’s Day was also commemorated at the Karachi Press Club (KPC) where speakers spoke about the day’s significance in light of raising awareness among women and their capacity building. Meanwhile, almost every political party either organised an event or issue a statement to mark the day. (Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 13)

Diamer protest continues despite govt cajoling

The protest organised by the people affected by the Diamer-Bhasha dam continued despite a meeting between a federal committee and the protesters in Chilas to break the deadlock. The 20-day-long protest in Chilas is seeking the implementation of a 31-point charter of demands, which pertain to their rehabilitation, and the allotment of agricultural land, among other things. In his meeting with the protesters, Federal Minister for Kashmir Affairs Amir Muqam said that the government has included the rehabilitation of the affected people of Bhasha and Dasu dams, and the development of the area in its top priorities. He assured that their demands concerning a financial

package for the affected households, a resettlement programme, health, education, and infrastructure would be resolved on a priority basis. He also promised a ‘Danish School’ for the area. Minister directed Wapda officials to ensure payment of land compensation along with the construction of 23 schools. (*Dawn, March 10th, 2025 Page 5*)

Paramedics protest ‘sale’ of hospital waste

A group of paramedics staged a token hunger strike against administration of Liaquat University Hospital, Hyderabad accusing it of selling away infected hazardous hospital waste instead of disposing of it in incinerator. The protesters said that the hazardous waste was being sold as the hospital’s incinerator was not working. Action should be taken against those involved in its sale and the dysfunctional incinerator should be repaired. (*Dawn, March 11th, 2025, Page 15*)

Punjab-wide protests against BHUs, RHCs privatisation

Health department employees, including doctors, paramedics, nurses and clerical staff, staged protests across Punjab against the provincial government’s decision to outsource basic health units (BHUs) and rural health centres (RHCs). Demonstrations, rallies, and sit-ins were held in multiple districts, with protesters warning of a complete shutdown of health services if their demands were not met. (*Dawn, March 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

Gomal varsity’s ex-employees protest as pension not paid for months

Former employees of the Gomal University demonstrated against the non-payment of pension for the last four months. During a protest camp at GPO Chowk, the pensioners complained that the denial of payments had caused severe financial problems for them and their families. They insisted that the government had promised the disbursement of pension, but it had yet to happen. (*Dawn, March 16th, 2025, Page 8*)

Check post torched in Tangwani during protest against police

Enraged relatives of a van driver, who was gunned down by dacoits on Thull road near Tangwani town in Kandhkot-Kashmore district set a check-post on fire during protest against police’s failure to protect lives of innocent citizens across the district. Witnesses said van driver, Yaqoob Buriro, died instantly when the dacoits opened indiscriminate fire on the vehicle near Saifal Stop on Thull road after he ignored their signal to stop and tried to speed through their cordon. The dacoits had blocked the road to rob motorists and commuters in the morning. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 15*)

Rs724m spent to shield capital from protests in FY23

Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry informed the National Assembly that the authorities spent Rs724 million to prevent protests and secure the Red Zone in the federal capital during the fiscal year 2022-23. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 3*)

Residents block Mauripur Road against anti-encroachment operation

At least three residents of the Younisabad area were taken into custody when they blocked the Mauripur Road and put up resistance against an anti-encroachment

operation launched by the Karachi Port Trust (KPT). A spokesperson for the KPT said that the operation at Younisabad was launched under the supervision of Pakistan Rangers, Sindh. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 13*)

Protest held against Israeli strikes on Gaza

A large number of youth gathered outside the Karachi Press Club (KPC) to protest against the latest Israeli air strikes on Gaza, which claimed over 400 innocent lives. The demonstration, organised by Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi Youth, saw participants carrying placards and chanting slogans condemning Israel and its allies for the brutal attacks. (*Business Recorder, March 20th, 2025, Page 3*)

Protesters take away bodies from Quetta hospital morgue

Relatives of missing persons, who had been demanding they be allowed to identify dead bodies brought to the Civil Hospital, managed to take away a number of corpses from the hospital morgue. While it was not clear whether they had positively identified the bodies as belonging to their missing loved ones, hospital officials told *Dawn* that protesters linked to the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) forced their way into the morgue and took away at least five bodies. Images and videos posted to social media showed a number of men and women gathered at the Civil Hospital to stage a demonstration. Some clips showed masked individuals retrieving bodies, encased in burial shrouds, and placing them in coffins. (*Dawn, March 21st, 2025 Page 1*)

Tear gas, water cannon employed to disperse BYC protesters

Police used tear gas and water cannon and fired blank shots to disperse protesters from the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) who had staged a sit-in on the Sariaf Road, near University of Balochistan, against some arrests, including its leaders. There were conflicting reports about casualties, with Bolan Medical College Hospital sources saying two bodies were brought there while one body and nine injured, including a policewoman, were received at Civil Hospital. On her part, BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch claimed that three people were killed and 13 others injured during the police action while they were protesting against the arrest of BYC leader Bebarq Baloch, his brother, a senior doctor of the Bolan Medical College, his son and son-in-law a few days ago. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

Parties hold rallies in Karachi to condemn Israeli brutalities in Gaza

Processions, rallies, conferences and seminars were held to express solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemn Israeli brutalities in Gaza. The people who participated in the events condemned the 'Zionist state' for violating set rules of ceasefire and targeting unarmed innocent civilians.

The Jamaat-i-Islami took out a rally from Boat Basin to the US Consulate against Israeli atrocities and genocide in Palestine amid tight security and the closure of roads. Carrying banners and placards, a large number of protesters chanted slogans against Israel and the US. However, police stopped the rally from reaching the US Consulate

after crossing M.T. Khan Road. However, some leaders of the protesters were allowed to proceed. DIG-South Asad Raza told *Dawn* that they submitted a “memorandum” to the consulate officials and dispersed peacefully.

The Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen observed Youm-i-Yakjehti Palestine and Yemen: Palestine and Yemen Solidarity Day. The party organised protest demonstrations and rallies outside various mosques all over Sindh. A large number of people participated in the rallies and raised their voice against brutalities in Palestine and Yemen. The Tehreek Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) staged a rally outside the Karachi Press Club. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 13*)

Baloch students protest against `excessive use of violence`

The Baloch Students Council (BSC), Punjab demanded the government end, what they alleged, excessive use of violence in Balochistan. The BSC, Progressive Students Collective (PSC), Progressive Students Alliance (PSA), Seraiki Students Council, Pashtun Students Council and social activists held a rally outside Lahore Press Club against the killing of peaceful protesters in Quetta and illegal detention of Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) head Dr Mahrang Baloch and others. A large number of Baloch students, including girls and boys, civil society members and political parties’ workers were present in the protest. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 2*)

Many booked in Karachi as police break up BYC protest

As the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) continued its protests against rights violations and the arrest of its supporters, Karachi police detained BYC leader Sammi Deen Baloch and several others for violating Section 144 and used force to break up their demonstration. On the other hand, BYC Chief Organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch was not produced before a court, despite the lapse of more than 24 hours since her detention, while protests against her arrest continued in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, with police using tear gas to disperse protesters in some cases.

In Balochistan, protests and sit-ins against the arrest of BYC leaders and supporters continued in some areas. In Quetta, the BYC activists tried to block Brewery Road, but police dispersed them using tear gas. The BYC claimed that some workers were arrested during the crackdown, but police said they had not arrested anyone. The BYC workers later gathered in the Qambrani Road area and staged a sit-in while blocking the road, but police used tear gas and vacated the area. BYC claimed that the police picked a woman activist, but the police denied this claim too. In Panjgur, a shutter-down strike continued on the third day. In Turbat also a protest rally was organised by the BYC which marched on various roads in the town before its culmination. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

Young doctors, paramedics protest BHUs’ outsourcing

Scores of young doctors, nurses and paramedics lodged a protest under the banner of the Grand Health Alliance against the government’s decision of outsourcing the Basic

Health Units, Rural Health Centres of Punjab. They took out the rallies in various parts of Lahore and other cities of the province and then reached on The Mall in front of Punjab Assembly. The protesters chanted slogans against the Punjab government and health authorities. Most of them were workers of Integrated Reproductive Maternal Newborn, Child Health & Nutrition Programme. (*Dawn, March 26th, 2025, Page 2*)

Diamer-Bhasha Dam protest enters seventh week

The sit-in by Diamer-Bhasha Dam affected persons entered its 42nd day as the Gilgit Baltistan (GB) government and other stakeholders failed to strike a deal with the protesters. Protesters in Chilas, Diamer's district headquarters, said their 31-point character of demands was not met despite promises. The 'Huqooq Do, Dam Banao' (Ensure the rights, build the dam) protest movement has gained public traction from across GB and is expected to intensify after Eid. Protesters said they would not allow construction of dam unless their demands were met. (*Dawn, March 29th, 2025, Page 4*)

BNP-M long march against arrests leaves Mastung for Quetta

The long march, launched by the Balochistan National Party (BNP-Mengal) to protest the arrest of BYC chief organiser Dr Mahrang Baloch, other leaders and workers as well as police crackdowns on a sit-in, did not reach Quetta. Led by BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal, the marchers and motorists from different political parties had started their journey from Wadh, the native town of Sardar Mengal, for Quetta at around 9am. Hundreds of vehicles, including small trucks, pickup, cars and other vehicles are part of the long march, displaying banners inscribed with anti-government slogans. People in Khuzdar, Surab, Kalat, Mangochar and Mastung welcomed the long march in their respective areas and started joining them. (*Dawn, March 29th, 2025, Page 5*)

Rallies held in Karachi to mark Al-Quds Day

Rallies and demonstrations were held across the city to mark Al-Quds Day in solidarity with the people of Palestine and condemn the atrocities of Israel against them. A large number of people, who attended the events across the city, also demanded strong reaction from the Muslim world for immediate help to the people in Gaza and rejected the "so-called normalisation of terms with Israel" from the Islamic countries and warned the rulers of those states that their move could lead to devastating consequences.

The Imamia Students Organisation (ISO) staged a rally from Numaish to Tibet Centre on M.A. Jinnah Road, which was attended by a large number of people, including women and children, who vowed to continue their support for an independent Palestinian state with Al-Quds as its capital. Condemning the Israeli brutalities against the humanity, they also questioned the "criminal silence" of the world in general and Muslim countries in particular which has disappointed the faithful as an Ummah. The Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) also staged demonstrations in different parts of the city in connection with Youm Al-Quds. (*Dawn, March 29th, 2025, Page 13*)

Nationwide protests staged against Peca by PFUJ

Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) led nationwide protests against the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca), with journalists, human rights activists, and trade union leaders demonstrating outside press clubs in major cities. Protesters demanded the immediate repeal of Peca, warning that if the government fails to act, PFUJ will announce its next course of action in its Federal Executive Council (FEC) meeting. Various organizations, including the Joint Action Committee, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP), Pakistan Supreme Court Bar Association, and civil society groups, pledged their support for a united struggle alongside PFUJ. In Lahore, the Punjab Union of Journalists (PUJ) staged a major protest outside Lahore Press Club. (*The News, March 30th, 2025, Page 3*)

15.1 # Resistance on Six Canal Project

Students protest

Students of the Quaid-i-Awam University of Engineering, Science and Technology, Nawabshah, held a protest demonstration outside the local press club against federal government's six canals project. A number of students gathered outside the press club, blocked the road and kept raising slogans against the plan. They said that the federal government must shelve the plan and should not create any new canal to be fed through the Indus water. They said that people of Sindh would never allow theft of its water. They asked rulers to refrain from taking any such step which seemed to have been taken to "prolonging their rule". A police contingent led by DSP City proceeded to venue of protest and tried to disperse protesters but in vain. However, protesters dispersed peacefully after speeches delivered by their leaders. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 15*)

Many injured as Jamshoro police use force to quell students' protest against canals project

The Jamshoro police baton-charged and lobbed teargas shells to disperse the students who were protesting against Cholistan canal and other water channels being created to irrigate millions of acres of Panjab lands with Indus water. Following the police action, the protesters blocked a section of the Indus Highway. The students belonged to the Jeay Sindh Students Federation (JSSF) and Jeay Sindh Qaumi Mahaz (JSQM) Bashir and Arisar factions, besides others nationalist entities. The protest was also marked the struggle launched on March 4, 1967 by students in Sindh. Several hundred students, including girls, gathered at Zero Point of Sindh University where police tried to prevent them from heading for Indus Highway. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers protest in Larkana, Mirpurkhas

Members of High Court Bar Associations of Larkana and Mirpurkhas demanded federal government halt plans for the construction of six 'strategic' canals on Indus River and take back 26th Amendment and Peca Act. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers from across Sindh slam canals project, corporate farming and Peca amendments

Road users in Karachi experienced severe traffic jams on several major thoroughfares as a protest rally organised by lawyers from Hyderabad and the metropolis against the controversial canals project created gridlock on Sharea Faisal near the FTC flyover and other roads leading to the Karachi Press Club, venue of the protest. The call for the protest was given by the Karachi Bar Association (KBA), Hyderabad District Bar Association (HDBA) and High Court Bar Association (HCBA) against the proposed project, the 26th Amendment, alleged handover of Sindh's land for corporate farming and the Prevention of Electronic Crimes (Amendment) Act (Peca).

They said through the 26th Amendment, the judicial system was being destroyed. They said construction of six canals on the Indus and handing over of thousands of acres of land for corporate farming was equal to "economic murder" of Sindh. They said that construction of six canals on Indus was equal to "throwing nuclear bomb" on Sindh. They said that in Umerkot district over 190,000 acres of land was being given for corporate farming, which must be stopped. They demanded withdrawal of notifications of handing over of thousands of acres for corporate farming in different areas of Sindh. The lawyers also demanded an end to "enforced disappearances". They also condemned Peca amendments and appointment of bureaucrats as vice chancellors of universities in Sindh. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 13*)

Indus River: PTI protests against planned construction of new canals

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Karachi Division has urged the people of Karachi to protest against the construction of new canals on the Indus River. (*Business Recorder, March 10th, 2025, Page 4*)

Lawyers, growers demand audit to determine water availability in system

Larkana District Bar Association, Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam-Fazl and Sindh Chamber of Agriculture reiterated their opposition to federal government's plans for construction of six 'strategic' canals on Indus River. (*Dawn, March 13th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers, students continue protest against new canals

While a group of lawyers continued its protest against the controversial six-canal project by observing a strike and attending the camp set up on the premises of the Sindh High Court, Larkana court, a rally was also taken out by law students in the city. (*Dawn, March 14th, 2025, Page 15*)

Lawyers in Karachi stage rally against canals project

Lawyers took out a rally from the Sindh High Court to the Karachi Press Club against the construction of six new canals on the Indus River and corporate farming. Members of the legal fraternity gathered at the parking lot of the SHC and marched up to the press club. Chanting slogans against what they termed anti-Sindh projects, they were carrying placards and banners inscribed with their demands. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 13*)

Canals project condemned at widespread rallies on International Day of Action for Rivers

Marking the ‘28th International Day of Action for Rivers 2025’, large groups of people from a cross section of society held ‘long marches’, sit-ins, demonstrations and other events across Sindh. Most of the groups had set their destination points at the closest section of Indus bank with in their respective area to assemble there and shower rose petals on the surface of the river in a symbolic gesture of respect to it, being their lifeline. Major events of the day were witnessed at the Indus banks in Jamshoro, Larkana-Khairpur Bridge and Doolha Darya Bridge (Thatta).

Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) fully participated in the anti-canals rallies in different cities and towns. At all these gatherings, leaders of the organising parties, groups and civil society organisations expressed their strong reservations over the federal government’s six canals project aimed at irrigating millions of acres of lands in Cholistan and other parts of Punjab. They believed that bulk of Indus water would be syphoned into these canals and this was bound to render Sindh’s lands barren. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 15*)

No let-up in Sindh-wide protests over new canals

Activists of federalist and nationalist parties, civil society outfits, trade unions and literary associations staged processions and rallies in several Sindh towns in continuation of the ongoing protest against construction of six ‘strategic’ canals on Indus River. (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 15*)

Protesters reiterate demand for shelving of six-canal project

Members and supporters of Sindh Chamber of Agriculture (SCA), Qaumi Awami Tehreek, Awami Tehreek and Jeay Sindh Mahaz staged rallies in Hyderabad, Naushahro Feroze, Nawabshah and Mirpurkhas districts as part of ongoing province-wide protest against federal government’s plan for construction of six ‘strategic’ canals on Indus River. (*Dawn, March 20th, 2025, Page 15*)

Many rallies held in Sindh to oppose canals project on World Water Day

Awami Tehreek organised rallies under the banner of ‘Sujag Baarh Tehreek (SBT)’ in Hyderabad, Tando Allahyar, TMK, Shahdadpur, Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Sukkur and some other districts to mark the World Water Day. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 15*)

Rallies, processions and sit-ins against canals project continue across Sindh

Activists of various nationalist, political and religious parties, members of growers’ bodies and civil society staged rallies and sit-ins and took out processions in several Sindh towns as part of ongoing protest against construction of new canals on Indus River and corporate farming. The protesters marched on the town’s roads before staging a sit-in on main Tando Mohammad Khan-Hyderabad road where the leaders made speeches. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 15*)

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS RESOURCES

Peru to spend \$24bn on irrigation to expand farmlands

Peruvian Agriculture Minister Angel Manero announced some \$24 billion in largely public-private projects to improve irrigation in the Andean nation, as the government looks to expand its farmlands by some one million hectares (3,860 square miles). The added farmland would be larger than the size of the island of Puerto Rico. Manero told a press conference the funds would be spent over three to seven years to jumpstart some 22 new or stalled projects across Peru's coast, highlands and Amazon, and these should be awarded between 2025 and mid-2026.

The most important project would be the "Trasvase Marañon," he said, a project valued at some \$7 billion that is set to carry water from the Marañon River to the Pacific coast and irrigate more than 300,000 hectares. Manero added that the package would include the Chincas project, valued at some \$3.5 billion, on Peru's northern coast and Pampas Verdes project in the south, which is expected to cost some \$4 billion. Economy Minister Jose Salardi, speaking at the same press conference, said over 85% of the projects would be developed through public-private partnerships.

Peru's agricultural exports - mainly fruits such as blueberries - jumped over 20% last year to total some \$12.8 billion, according to latest ministry figures, and the government is aiming for \$40 billion by 2040, helped by planned shipments of beef and pork to China. (*Business Recorder, March 26th, 2025, Page 70*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

China hits back at Canada with fresh agri tariffs

China announced tariffs on over \$2.6bn worth of Canadian agricultural and food products, retaliating against levies Ottawa introduced in October and opening a new front in a trade war largely driven by US President Donald Trump's tariff threats. levies, announced by commerce ministry and scheduled to take effect on March 20, match 100% and 25% import duties Canada slapped on China-made electric vehicles and steel and aluminium products just over four months ago. By excluding canola, which is also known as rapeseed, and was one of Canada's top exports to world's No.1 agricultural importer prior to China investigating it for anti-dumping last year, Beijing may be keeping door open for trade talks. (*Business Recorder, March 9th, 2025, Page 6*)

Morocco to extend wheat import subsidies to year-end

Morocco will extend its current subsidy programme for soft wheat imports until December 31, state grains agency ONICL said, indicating the drought-affected country will need to import throughout the year. Citing a decision by Morocco's finance and agriculture ministries, ONICL said in a statement on its website that the new round of

subsidies for importers would run from May 1 to December 31, with details to be announced subsequently. The authorities had previously announced a subsidy programme running up to the end of April. The continuation of the programme for the whole of 2025 suggests the upcoming harvest will be insufficient to replenish supply. In the past, Morocco shut its market to imports at times during good crop years to protect domestic supply. (*Business Recorder, March 27th, 2025, Page 48*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

5 # TRADE

Brazil braces for more Chinese demand, higher food prices amid US trade war

US President Donald Trump's trade war with China will give Brazilian agricultural exporters an opportunity to take an even bigger share of Chinese market at expense of American farmers, but it could also fuel already high food inflation in Brazil. China this week retaliated swiftly to fresh US duties announced by Trump, imposing hikes of 10pc and 15pc in levies covering \$21bn worth of American agricultural goods, including meat and soybeans. Brazil, world's largest exporter of soy, cotton, beef and chicken meat, is expected to ship more to China as importers there seek tariff-free imports. During Trump's first term, trade war he triggered with China led to US farmers losing a chunk of market share to Brazil, including for China's valuable soybean imports. US never regained that market share for soybeans. China continues to buy more of its agricultural imports from Brazil than it did before first trade war, and that will likely accelerate again with latest round of tariffs. (*The News, March 9th, 2025, Page 18*)

Trump doubles down on Canada trade war with massive new tariffs

US President Donald Trump announced massive new tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, while threatening to "shut down" its auto industry and saying best way to end trade war was for Washington's ally to be absorbed into United States. Trump's shock new threats came hours before a midnight deadline for ramping up Republican's increasingly global trade offensive. On his Truth Social platform, Trump announced that would double planned 25-percent tariffs on steel and aluminum to 50 percent for imports of metals from Canada. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

US imports eggs from Turkiye, S. Korea amid shortage

The United States will import eggs from Turkiye and South Korea to ease an avian flu-fuelled supply crunch that has pushed up prices across the country, the agriculture secretary said. Brooke Rollins told reporters in Washington that imports from Turkiye and South Korea had already begun and that White House was also in talks with other countries about temporarily importing their eggs. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 10*)

US suspends financial contributions to WTO, trade

The United States has paused contributions to the World Trade Organization, three trade sources told Reuters, as US President Donald Trump's administration ramps up efforts to cut government spending. Trump administration is retreating from global institutions it sees as at odds with his "America First" economic policies. It plans to quit some, such as the World Health Organization, and has cut contributions to others as part of a broad review of federal spending.

The WTO has already been hobbled by a US move in 2019 during Trump's first term to block new judge appointments to its top appeals court, which left its key dispute settlement system only partially functional. Washington had accused the WTO Appellate Body of judicial overreach in trade disputes. The Geneva-based trade watchdog had an annual budget of 205 million Swiss francs (\$232.06 million) in 2024. The United States was due to contribute about 11% of that based on a fees system that is proportionate to its share of global trade, according to public WTO documents.

A US delegate told a March 4 WTO budget meeting that its payments to the 2024 and 2025 budgets were on hold pending a review of contributions to international organisations and that it would inform the WTO of the outcome at an unspecified date, two trade sources with direct knowledge of the meeting said. A third trade source confirmed their account and said the WTO was coming up with a "Plan B" in case of a prolonged funding pause, without elaborating. All three sources asked for confidentiality because the budget meeting was private and the US funding pause has not been formally announced. (*Business Recorder, March 28th, 2025, Page 5*)

China, South Korea and Japan agree to strengthen free trade

China, South Korea and Japan agreed to strengthen free trade in the face of a raft of new tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump. The agreement came at a meeting of top trade officials — the first at that level in five years — days ahead of the start of tariffs on a huge range of US imports, including cars, trucks, and auto parts. South Korea and Japan are major auto exporters, while China has also been hit hard by the US tariffs. (*Business Recorder, March 31st, 2025, Page 8*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Pharma giants face new trial over infant formula

A Missouri judge has ordered Abbott Laboratories and Reckitt Benckiser unit Mead Johnson to face a new trial over allegations that they failed to warn a mother about the risks of their specialised baby formulas for premature infants, re-opening a case that had resulted in a victory for the defendants. The ruling comes months after a St. Louis, Missouri state court found that the companies were not responsible for a young boy's debilitating intestinal disease. The case had been a victory for the two companies following large losses in similar trials that had rattled investors. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 11*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

EU unveils 4.7-bn-euro investment package for South Africa

The European Union and South Africa vowed to deepen cooperation at a summit as both grapple with aid and trade threats from the new US administration. European Commission head Ursula von der Leyen also plans to mobilise a 4.7-billion-euro (\$5 billion) investment package in South Africa that includes funding for a transition to clean energy and to boost vaccine manufacturing. The EU-South Africa summit came at a time of “global uncertainty ... characterised by rising unilateralism, economic nationalism”, South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa said in opening remarks that referenced a huge global shake-up since US leader Donald Trump took office. There had been a retreat from “a world order that seeks to advance all nations” and promote a human rights culture, he said. (*Business Recorder, March 14th, 2025, Page 5*)

Forcibly displaced to surge by 6.7m in 2025-26: aid group

Wars and attacks on civilians are expected to drive 6.7 million people from their homes worldwide over the next two years, while the “devastating” withdrawal of international aid by the United States, UK and Germany has already left millions of vulnerable people without essential support, a humanitarian organisation, Danish Refugee Council (DRC), said. The number of displaced people worldwide was currently 122.6m, the DRC said. The organisation said its Global Displacement Forecast showed a “staggering spike” of 4.2m people was expected in 2025 — highest forecasted by DRC since 2021. Civil wars in Sudan and Myanmar will account for nearly half of all projected displacements.

Sudan — “the world’s most urgent humanitarian crisis” — will account for nearly a third of new displacements, it said, noting that 12.6m people had already been displaced inside Sudan and to neighbouring countries. In Myanmar, the civil war had intensified and resulted in 3.5m people displaced, and nearly 20m people in need of humanitarian assistance, the council noted. Of the 6.7 million people forecasted to be displaced by the end of 2026, some 70 per cent will be internally displaced, DRC said. DRC Secretary-General Charlotte Slente blasted US President Donald Trump’s decision to cancel 83pc of USAID’s humanitarian aid programmes across the world as a “betrayal of the most vulnerable”. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 12*)

UN releases \$110m after ‘brutal’ global aid cuts

The UN said it was allocating \$110 million from its emergency fund for life-saving assistance in several countries after “brutal” cuts in global humanitarian aid. The announcement came after US President Donald Trump decided shortly after returning to office to freeze virtually all foreign aid spending. “For countries battered by conflict, climate change and economic turmoil, brutal funding cuts don’t mean that humanitarian needs disappear,” United Nations aid chief Tom Fletcher said in a statement. The money will come from the UN’s Central Emergency Response Fund. Rights groups say the sweeping cuts by the United States, traditionally the world’s largest humanitarian donor, have already hurt millions. (*Business Recorder, March 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

UN seeks nearly \$1bn in aid for Rohingya refugees in BD

The United Nations announced it was seeking nearly \$1 billion to provide life-saving aid this year for some 1.5 million Rohingya refugees and their hosts in Bangladesh. The UN and more than 100 partners launched a two-year 2025-26 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya crisis, amid what it called “dwindling financial resources and competing global crises”. The appeal seeks \$934.5 million in its first year to reach some 1.48 million people including Rohingya refugees and host communities. Around a million members of the persecuted and mostly Muslim minority live in squalid relief camps in Bangladesh, most of whom arrived after fleeing the 2017 military crackdown in neighbouring Myanmar. (*Business Recorder, March 27th, 2025, Page 48*)

7.1 # Countries / Regions

UK minister quits to protest PM's cut to aid budget

Britain's international development minister Anneliese Dodds resigned in a surprise move triggered by Prime Minister Keir Starmer's decision to slash the foreign aid budget in order to boost defence spending. Dodds's resignation comes a day after Starmer enjoyed one of the most successful days of his premiership in his meeting with US President Donald Trump in the White House, where they discussed a trade deal and the war in Ukraine. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 10*)

Dubai retains top ranking for greenfield FDI projects, attracts \$14.24bn in 2024

Dubai has retained its position as the world's leading destination for greenfield FDI projects for fourth successive year, according to a statement issued by Government of Dubai Media Office, citing Financial Times Ltd.'s 'fDi Markets' data. In 2024, Dubai attracted AED52.3bn (\$14.24bn) in estimated FDI capital, a 33.2 percent increase from AED39.26bn (\$10.69bn) in 2023, marking highest FDI value ever recorded in a single year for the emirate since 2020. It attracted a record 1,117 greenfield FDI projects in 2024 — the highest in its history — followed by Sharjah and Abu Dhabi. Dubai also achieved a historic milestone in FDI attraction with 1,826 announced FDI projects, an 11 percent increase from 1,650 projects in 2023, according to the Dubai Department of Economy and Tourism's FDI Monitor. (*Business Recorder, March 12th, 2025, Page 4*)

UAE commits to \$1.4trn US investment, White House says

United Arab Emirates has committed to a 10-year, \$1.4tr investment framework in the United States after top UAE officials met President Donald Trump, the White House said. The framework will “substantially increase the UAE's existing investments in the US economy” in AI infrastructure, semiconductors, energy, and manufacturing, the White House said in a statement. The White House did not outline how UAE investments would reach \$1.4tr, with some of deals unveiled as part of the framework having already been announced. The only fully new deal appeared to be an investment by Emirates Global Aluminium in what would be the first new aluminum smelter in the United States in 35 years, the White House said, adding the plant “would nearly double US domestic aluminum production”. (*Business Recorder, March 25th, 2025, Page 34*)

7.2 # America

Court rejects Trump bid to freeze \$2bn in foreign aid

A divided US Supreme Court handed a legal defeat to President Donald Trump rejecting his bid to freeze some \$2 billion in foreign aid payments. The court, in its first significant ruling on a legal challenge to the Trump administration, voted 5-4 to uphold a lower court order requiring that payments be made on aid contracts that have already been completed. The justices said the federal judge who ordered the resumption of payments for contracts with the USAID and State Department “should clarify what obligations the Government must fulfill.” Conservatives John Roberts, the chief justice, and Amy Coney Barrett, a Trump appointee, voted with the three liberal justices on the nine-member Supreme Court. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 10*)

Rubio says US canceling 83pc of USAID programs

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States was cancelling 83 percent of programs at the US Agency for International Development (USAID). President Donald Trump signed an executive order in January demanding a freeze on all US foreign aid to give his administration time to assess overseas spending, with an eye to gutting programs not aligned with his “America First” agenda. “After a 6 week review we are officially cancelling 83% of the programs at USAID,” Rubio said on social media platform X. (*Business Recorder, March 11th, 2025, Page 5*)

Washington formalizes plans to shutter USAID

US President Donald Trump’s administration announced plans to effectively close the US international development agency USAID, formalizing widely-criticized plans to dramatically cut foreign aid spending. “Today, the Department of State and the USAID have notified Congress on their intent to undertake a reorganization that would involve realigning certain USAID functions to Department by July 1, 2025,” US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said. State Department, also plans on “discontinuing remaining USAID functions that do not align with Administration priorities.” Prior to its closure, the agency managed an annual budget of close to \$43 billion, accounting for more than 40pc of world’s humanitarian aid. Most of its staff were placed on administrative leave shortly after Trump took office. (*Business Recorder, March 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF pledges more help to Sri Lanka

IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva pledged to support Sri Lanka’s economic recovery, praising the cash-strapped nation’s “remarkable turnaround” during online talks with its president. The International Monetary Fund Managing director promised unspecified help to the South Asian nation during a virtual meeting with President Anura Kumara Disanayake. Sri Lanka secured a \$2.9bn IMF bailout in 2023 after declaring its first sovereign default in April 2022 following an unprecedented foreign exchange shortage and an economic meltdown. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 9*)

IMF warns Sri Lanka trade unions against strike over pay demand

Sri Lanka's fragile economic recovery could be hampered by threatened trade union strikes over reduced benefits for government employees in this year's budget, the International Monetary Fund warned. Leftist President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's maiden budget raised public sector salaries but also made deep cuts to longstanding perks in a continuing effort to repair the island nation's tattered finances. Sri Lanka's main doctors' union is considering a strike from to protest against cuts to their allowances, while teachers are also considering stoppages. The island nation secured a \$2.9 billion bailout loan from the IMF in 2023, almost a year after defaulting on its \$46 billion foreign debt. (*Business Recorder*, March 26th, 2025, Page 40)

8.2 # World Bank

World Bank to decentralize operations, shift regional VPs to overseas hubs

The World Bank said it will restructure its global operations by shifting its regional management teams from Washington to hub offices around the world, a move aimed at helping the bank respond better and more quickly to local needs. (*Business Recorder*, March 28th, 2025, Page 120)

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Israel's halt to food, aid deliveries worsens conditions in Gaza

Israel's suspension of goods entering Gaza is taking a toll on the Palestinian enclave, with some bakeries closing and food prices rising, while a cut in the electricity supply could deprive people of clean water. The suspension, which Israel said was aimed at pressuring Hamas in ceasefire talks, applies to food, medicine and fuel imports. The UN Palestinian refugees agency UNRWA said the decision to halt humanitarian aid threatens the lives of civilians exhausted by 17 months of "brutal" war. Most of Gaza's 2.3 million people were dependent on aid. Hamas describes the measure as "collective punishment" and insisted it will not be pushed into making concessions at the discussions. (*Dawn*, March 11th, 2025, Page 12)

10.1 # Food

FAO says global food commodity prices rise in Feb

Global food commodity prices rose in February, driven by higher sugar, dairy, and vegetable oil prices, FAO said. The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in international prices of globally traded food commodities, averaged 127.1 points last month, up 1.6% from January and 8.2% from February 2024. The jump was largely driven by sugar prices, which shot up 6.6% month-on-month, pushed higher by concerns over tighter global supplies for the 2024/25 season, partly because of unfavourable weather conditions in Brazil. Dairy prices increased 4% from January, with all major dairy products rising, spurred on by strong import demand which

exceeded production in key exporting regions. Vegetable oil prices rose 2% month-on-month and 29.1% year-on-year, largely due to higher prices for palm, soy, and sunflower oils, driven by supply constraints in Southeast Asia and strong demand from the biodiesel sector. (*Business Recorder, March 9th, 2025, Page 1*)

UN chief promises to do ‘everything’ to avoid food cuts to Rohingyas

UN chief Antonio Guterres said the organisation would do “everything” to prevent food rations being cut for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. Guterres met Rohingya refugees in the camps in Cox’s Bazar for a show of solidarity and attended Iftar with the mostly Muslim persecuted minority. Many of the one million refugees that live in the squalid relief camps escaped war in neighbouring Myanmar after 2017 military crackdown and are now threatened by dire humanitarian aid cuts. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 10*)

Half of Yemen’s under-fives acutely malnourished: UN

One in two children aged under five in Yemen are acutely malnourished, the United Nations said, with more than half a million of them suffering from potentially deadly wasting. The UN children’s agency Unicef warned that a decade of conflict in Yemen had stolen childhoods and left an entire generation fighting to survive, even as the humanitarian crisis is escalating. In Yemen, it is not just a health crisis — it is a death sentence for thousands. Yemen’s Houthi rebels control large swathes of the country. They have been at war with a Saudi-led coalition backing the internationally recognised government since 2015, a conflict that has triggered a major humanitarian crisis. Severe acute malnutrition levels have reached 33 percent in some areas along the west coast, in “a catastrophe where thousands will die”. (*Dawn, March 26th, 2025, Page 11*)

Food supplies for only two weeks left in Gaza: UN

The UN’s World Food Programme warned it had only two weeks’ worth of food left in Gaza, where “hundreds of thousands of people” are at risk of severe hunger and malnutrition. “WFP has approximately 5,700 tons of food stocks left in Gaza — enough to support WFP operations for a maximum of two weeks,” the Rome-based agency said in a statement. Israel resumed military operations in the Palestinian territory just over a week ago, shattering weeks of relative calm brought by a fragile ceasefire. The United Nations said that the renewed Israeli operations had displaced 142,000 people in just seven days, and warned of dwindling supplies after Israel resumed a block on humanitarian aid entering Gaza. WFP said that it and others in the food security sector had been “unable to bring new food supplies into Gaza for more than three weeks.” (*Business Recorder, March 28th, 2025, Page 10*)

10.2 # Poverty

Number of UK children in poverty highest in 20 years

The number of children living in poverty in the UK reached a new record as the government faces a storm of criticism over plans to cut welfare payments. Almost 4.5 million children were living in low-income households in the year ending March 2024,

according to the Department of Work and Pensions — the highest number since records began in 2002-2003. The figure rose from a previous record of 4.33 million in March 2023 to 4.45 million last year. A household is considered to be in relative poverty if it lies below 60 percent of the median income, or below £337 (\$435) per week.

The record figures come after Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government announced cuts to disability welfare payments among other spending cuts. According to the government's own estimates, changes to the welfare system risk plunging 50,000 more children into poverty in the next five years. Meanwhile, 21 percent of the population, or 14.25 million people, were in poverty as per the data, down slightly from the previous year. (*Business Recorder*, March 29th, 2025, Page 42)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Record 2024 temperatures accelerate ice loss

Record greenhouse gas levels helped bring temperatures to an all-time high in 2024, accelerating glacier and sea ice loss, raising sea levels and edging the world closer to a key warming threshold, the UN weather body said. Annual average mean temperatures stood at 1.55 degrees Celsius (2.79 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels last year, surpassing the previous 2023 record by 0.1C, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in its annual climate report. Countries agreed in the 2015 Paris Agreement to strive to limit temperature increases to within 1.5C above the 1850-1900 average. Preliminary estimates put the current long-term average increase at between 1.34-1.41C, closing in on but not yet exceeding the Paris threshold, the WMO said. (*Dawn*, March 20th, 2025, Page 10)

Warming threatens to expand area of world too hot for humans

Extreme heat will reach dangerous levels even for younger people across an area equivalent to the size of the United States if Earth's global warming hits two degrees Celsius, scientists warned. Climate change is driving an increasing number of deadly heatwaves across the world, exposing a growing number of people to conditions that test the limits of human endurance. Last year, more than 1,300 people died at the hajj pilgrimage in Saudi Arabia where temperatures hit 51.8C. For this study, published in journal *Nature Reviews Earth and Environment*, researchers looked at global warming and the effects of searing heat on the human body. They found a significant increase in the area of the world potentially exposed to unsafe temperatures, with people in North Africa and South Asia most at risk. (*Business Recorder*, March 28th, 2025, Page 120)

11.1 # Biodiversity

WWF, GSK announce multi-million-pound partnership

In a groundbreaking initiative to combat water stress and safeguard biodiversity, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and biopharma GSK have announced a multi-million-pound partnership to conserve and restore freshwater ecosystems in South Asia. (*Business Recorder*, March 26th, 2025, Page 7)

11.2 # Pollution

Over a billion pounds of Coke plastic waste to enter waterways: study

By 2030, Coca-Cola products will account for an estimated 1.33 billion pounds (602,000 metric tons) of plastic waste entering the world's oceans and waterways each year, according to a stark new analysis published by the nonprofit Oceana. That's enough plastic to fill the stomachs of 18 million whales. The report arrives amid mounting concerns over the human health risks posed by the spread of microplastics, which scientists increasingly link to cancer, infertility, heart disease, and more. "Coca-Cola is by far the largest manufacturer and seller of beverages in the world," said Matt Littlejohn, who leads Oceana's campaigns targeting corporate polluters. "Because of that, they really matter when it comes to the impact of all this on the ocean."

Coca-Cola ranks as the world's top branded plastic polluter, followed by PepsiCo, Nestle, Danone, and Altria, according to a 2024 study published in Science Advances. Oceana's estimate is based on Coca-Cola's publicly reported packaging data from 2018 to 2023, combined with sales growth forecasts to create a "business-as-usual" scenario. The result: the company's plastic use is projected to exceed 4.13 million metric tons (9.12 billion pounds) annually by 2030. To estimate how much of that plastic will reach aquatic ecosystems, researchers applied a peer-reviewed method developed by an international team of scientists and published in the academic journal Science in 2020 to arrive at the 1.33 billion pounds estimate, which is equivalent to nearly 220 billion half-liter bottles. Plastic production relies on oil, making corporate plastic use a direct driver of climate change. (*Business Recorder*, March 28th, 2025, Page 136)

'Policy actions to halve number of people exposed to pollution by 2040': World Bank

The number of people exposed to dangerously high levels of air pollution could be halved by 2040 with targeted policy action with economic benefits as high as \$2.4 trillion, according to a new World Bank study. The study, 'Accelerating Access to Clean Air on a Livable Planet' estimates that outdoor air pollution kills roughly 5.7 million people annually, with 95 per cent of deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. It adds that 99pc of the world's population is exposed to unhealthy levels of air pollution that exceed WHO air quality guideline levels. However, low- and middle-income countries face the highest burden. Eighty percent of people directly exposed to unsafe average annual PM2.5 concentrations live in low- and middle-income countries, where economic growth often relies on polluting technologies. Most of them are in South Asia (1,200m) and East Asia (660m). A substantial portion of them live in Sub-Saharan Africa (330m) and Middle East and North Africa (224m). Exposure to high levels of air pollution accounts for a loss equivalent to nearly 5pc of global GDP due to health impacts, lost productivity, and reduced life expectancy. Ambient or outdoor air pollution accounted for more than 5.7m deaths globally in 2020 and remains a leading risk factor for premature death. The corresponding economic damages are estimated at between \$4.5tr and \$6.1tr a year — equivalent to between 4.7pc and 6.5pc of global

GDP, says the study released this week. In South Asia, health damages from ambient air pollution exceeded the equivalent of 8.9pc of GDP in 2020, without accounting for the implications of lost productivity on future growth. Poverty and inequality compound the health burden caused by being exposed to high levels of air pollution.

The agriculture sector, especially industrial farming, is a significant source of air pollution despite being negatively affected by it. Intensive fertiliser use, poor manure management and the burning of crop residue, especially in Asia, contribute significantly to PM2.5 concentrations. Over the next 15 years, the study says, existing and currently planned policies are expected to exacerbate uneven exposure to air pollution. By 2040, existing or planned energy and climate policies and air quality measures are expected to curb global PM2.5 emissions by 6pc. However, due to economic and population growth, the number of people exposed to PM2.5 levels is anticipated to increase by 15pc. To cut emissions, the study calls for policy changes across sectors that cause air pollution — agriculture, urban development, transport, industry and residential cooking and heating. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 5*)

11.3 # Health

Chinese scientists develop AI tool to predict liver cancer recurrence

A Chinese research team has developed an artificial intelligence (AI) tool that predicts liver cancer recurrence risk with 82.2 per cent accuracy, according to a study recently published in the journal Nature. Liver cancer, the third leading cause of cancer-related deaths worldwide, has a postoperative recurrence rate as high as 70pc. Accurately predicting recurrence was a critical challenge. Researchers from University of Science and Technology of China, led by Sun Cheng, have developed a scoring system named TIMES, which quantifies spatial distribution patterns of immune cells within tumour microenvironment to assess relapse likelihood. (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 10*)

WHO says 80pc of Afghanistan operations risk shutdown by June

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said that 80 per cent of services that it supports in Afghanistan could shut down by June due to a funding shortage. The UN health agency said the cash shortfall, which comes amid massive US aid cuts, is tied to a shift in “development aid priorities”. “Without urgent intervention, over 220 more facilities could close by June 2025, leaving an additional 1.8 million Afghans without access to primary health care,” the WHO said. The agency said that 167 such operations have already closed due to a lack of financial support. Malnutrition is also widespread in the country, which is facing economic, humanitarian and climate crises after being battered by four decades of war. The UN says 10pc of children under five are malnourished and 45pc are stunted. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 12*)

Stem cell treatment helped improve spinal cord injuries

A stem cell treatment helped improve the motor function of two out of four patients with a spinal cord injury in the first clinical study of its kind, Japanese scientists said.

There is currently no effective treatment for paralysis caused by serious spinal cord injuries, which affect more than 150,000 patients in Japan alone, with 5,000 new cases each year. Researchers at Tokyo's Keio University are conducting their study using induced pluripotent stem cells (iPS) — created by stimulating mature, already specialised, cells back into a juvenile state. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 10*)

US aid cut for vaccine alliance may cause one million deaths, says Sania Nishtar

The United States cutting funding to Gavi, an organisation that provides vaccines to world's poorest countries, could result in more than a million deaths and will endanger lives everywhere, group's CEO warned. The news that Washington is planning to end funding for Gavi, first reported in *New York Times*, comes as two-month-old administration of President Donald Trump aggressively slashes foreign aid. Decision was included in a 281-page spreadsheet that severely downsized United States Agency for International Development sent to Congress. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 10*)

Air pollution fuels lung cancer among non-smokers: study

Air pollution is fuelling a rise in the commonest form of lung cancer among non-smokers, hitting women and people in southeast Asia particularly hard, according to a study published. Lung cancer is the commonest form of the disease, with 2.5m people diagnosed in 2022, said the study published in *Lancet Respiratory Medicine* journal on World Cancer Day. Most of them were men but there was a growing share of nearly a million cases among women. (*Business Recorder, March 28th, 2025, Page 120*)

Services collapsing as USAID cuts health contracts worldwide

US-funded health projects worldwide, including those providing lifesaving care, received termination notices as the Trump administration neared completion of a review to ensure grants are aligned with its "America First" policy. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 32*)

US exit forces WHO to consider budget cut

The World Health Organisation has proposed slashing a fifth of its budget following the US decision to withdraw, and must now reduce its reach and workforce, its chief said. The WHO is facing an income gap of nearly \$600 million in 2025 and has "no choice" but to start making cutbacks. The United States was by far the WHO's biggest donor. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 10*)

'Funding cuts threaten decades of leaps in ensuring child survival'

The United Nations has warned that decades of progress in child survival are now at risk as major donors have announced or indicated significant funding cuts. According to two recent reports, released by the United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), reduced global funding for life-saving child survival programmes is causing healthcare worker shortages, clinic closures, vaccination programme disruptions and the lack of essential supplies such as malaria treatments. These cuts are severely impacting regions in humanitarian crises, debt-stricken

countries, and areas with already high child mortality rates. Since 2015, the annual rate of reduction of under-five mortality has slowed by 42pc, and stillbirth reduction has slowed by 53pc. The global efforts to reduce child mortality has yielded extraordinary results over the last 30 years. The decline in the global under-5 mortality rate since 2000, a remarkable 52pc, is an achievement that underscores power of sustained commitment, investment and coordinated action. (*Dawn, March 31st, 2025, Page 3*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Nations fail to break deadlock on UN climate report timing

Nations failed to break a deadlock over the timing of the UN's next blockbuster assessment of climate change science after a marathon meeting in China that US envoys skipped. At issue was whether the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which informs policymakers, will deliver its next three-part assessment before a 2028 United Nations' "stocktake" of global response to rising temperatures. Many wealthy countries and developing nations exposed to climate impacts wanted an accelerated timetable, arguing the reports would allow countries to be guided by most up-to-date science. But they faced objections from some oil producers and major polluters with rising emissions, such as India and China. (*Dawn, March 3rd, 2025, Page 11*)

Beijing's plans to combat climate change

China said it would develop a package of major projects to tackle climate change as it moves to bring its carbon dioxide emissions to a peak before 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060. The world's largest producer of climate-warming greenhouse gas said it would develop new offshore wind farms and accelerate the construction of "new energy bases" across its vast desert areas, the National Development and Reform Commission, the country's economic planner. (*Dawn, March 6th, 2025, Page 12*)

12.1 # Climate Crisis

World's biggest iceberg runs aground off Antarctic island

The world's biggest iceberg appears to have run aground roughly 70 kilometres from a remote Antarctic island, potentially sparing the crucial wildlife haven from being hit, a research organisation said. The colossal iceberg A23a — which is more than twice the size of Greater London and weighs nearly one trillion tonnes — has been drifting north from Antarctica towards South Georgia island since 2020. This had raised fears it could collide with the island or run aground in shallower water near it, potentially disrupting the ability of penguins and seals to feed their young. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 10*)

World's sea ice cover hits record low in February

Global sea ice cover hit a historic low in February as the world endured exceptional heat, with temperatures near the North Pole soaring 11 degrees Celsius above average, Europe's climate monitor said. The Copernicus Climate Change Service said February 2025 was the third-hottest on record, continuing a warming trend since 2023 stoked by greenhouse gas emissions. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 10*)

Billions will suffer if rapid glacial melt continues: report

A new UN report has warned that rapidly melting glaciers and snow have imperilled the global ecosystem and billions of people who rely on freshwater from these sources. The World Water Development Report 2025, released by Unesco to mark ‘World Water Day’ on March 22, said 25 countries, home to one-quarter of the world’s population, face extremely high water stress every year. About four billion people, or half of world’s population, experience severe water scarcity for at least part of the year. The report said glaciers were at extreme risk due to global warming, pollution, and unsustainable human activities, and if not properly managed, they could become a source of perpetual conflicts. (*Dawn, March 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

World’s glacier mass shrank again in 2024, UN says

All 19 of the world’s glacier regions experienced a net loss of mass in 2024 for the third consecutive year, the United Nations said, warning that saving the planet’s glaciers was now a matter of survival. Five of the last six years have seen the most rapid glacier retreat on record, the UN’s World Meteorological Organization said on the inaugural World Day for Glaciers. (*Business Recorder, March 28th, 2025, Page 150*)

Arctic sea ice hits lowest peak in satellite record, says US agency

This year’s Arctic sea ice peak is the lowest in the 47-year satellite record, according to data released by the US NSIDC, as the planet continues to swelter under the mounting effects of human-driven climate change. Arctic sea ice forms and expands during the dark, frigid northern winter, reaching its seasonal high point in March. But in recent years, less new ice has formed, and accumulation of multi-year ice has steadily declined. The maximum sea ice level for 2025 was likely reached on March 22, measuring 14.33m square kilometers (5.53m square miles) — below the previous low of 14.41 million square kilometers set in 2017. (*Business Recorder, March 29th, 2025, Page 52*)

Human activity disrupting ocean CO2 absorption

Commercial activities that damage sea floors are disrupting the oceans’ natural carbon capture capacity, with more research needed on their impact on carbon dioxide absorption. Scientists estimate around 30 percent of the carbon dioxide (CO2) released by humans is absorbed by the oceans, playing a crucial role in climate regulation and reducing the rate of global warming. The analyses found multiple ways in which the practices reduce the alkalinity of the water, limiting the amount of carbon dioxide that can be absorbed. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 10*)

12.2 # Climate Financing

World agrees hard-fought nature funding plan at UN talks

A gathering of countries in Rome this week agreed a plan to generate \$200bn in finance a year by 2030 to halt and begin to reverse destruction of the natural world. UN’s COP16 talks on biodiversity began last October in Colombia but failed at that time to reach an agreement on key elements, including who would contribute, how money would be gathered and who

would oversee it. US President is scaling back involvement of world's biggest economy in development finance, so agreement was a welcome boost for global deal-making. Led by negotiators from the so-called BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - final deal saw delegates agree a plan to find at least \$200bn per year from a range of sources to protect nature. (*Business Recorder, March 1st, 2025, Page 1*)

Doubts over climate funding as donors squeeze aid

There are growing doubts about a pledge by rich nations to provide more climate finance to poorer nations, as foreign aid budgets are slashed and the US guts environmental spending. Richer nations committed at the UN COP29 summit in November to boost spending on climate action in developing countries to \$300 billion a year by 2035, an amount decried as woefully inadequate. Since then, President Donald Trump has frozen US contributions to the global pot and withdrawn from a funding deal to help developing nations transition to clean energy, among other climate initiatives. Diplomats and analysts say it remains unclear where the axe may fall, but there are fears that money earmarked for climate finance could be on chopping block. (*Dawn, March 14th, 2025, Page 12*)

Karachi, Dhaka to receive 5.4m climate migrants by 2050: UN

Karachi and Dhaka will be the only two cities in Asia-Pacific region among the 10 cities of the Global South that will receive eight million climate migrants by 2050 if the world warms by more than 1.5 centigrade above pre-industrial levels, a UN study finds. Of those 10 cities, Karachi and Dhaka, projected to receive the most extreme influx of climate-induced migration: 3.07 million additional people in Dhaka and 2.4 million additional people in Karachi, according to the "Urban Transformation in Asia and the Pacific: From Growth to Resilience" report, published by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP). The report is part of the agenda of the 81st annual session of the UN-ESCAP, opening in Bangkok next month. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 3*)

Climate shift to help boost StanChart income by almost \$1bn, CEO says

Standard Chartered is set to book almost \$1 billion in income in 2025 from business geared towards helping clients meet sustainability goals, CEO Bill Winters told executives at World Economic Forum in Davos, as he doubled down on supporting the net-zero agenda. The UK lender, which has pledged to mobilise \$300 billion in green and sustainable financing by 2030, has taken a leading role in global climate finance efforts. (*Business Recorder, March 28th, 2025, Page 120*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

Climate disasters cost \$4.3tr since 1970: UN report

Climate-related disasters have caused economic losses exceeding \$4.3 trillion and claimed the lives of over two million people globally between 1970 and 2021, according to the UN agency World Meteorological Organisation (WMO). The WMO says the world

just witnessed the hottest 10 years on record, and 2024 is likely to be the first calendar year to temporarily hit 1.5°C above the pre-industrial era. We are seeing more frequent and intense heatwaves, more devastating storms and floods, more rapidly intensifying tropical cyclones. The theme of this year's World Meteorological Day is, therefore, "Closing the Early Warnings Gap Together". The day is observed on March 23 each year to showcase the essential contribution of national meteorological and hydrological services to society and to building a safer, more resilient world.

The report showed that atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide are at the highest levels in the last 800,000 years. Globally, each of the past 10 years were individually 10 warmest years on record. Each of the past eight years has set a new record for ocean heat content. The 18 lowest Arctic sea-ice extents on record were all in the past 18 years. The three lowest Antarctic ice extents were in the past three years. The largest three-year loss of glacier mass on record occurred in the past three years. The rate of sea level rise has doubled since satellite measurements began. (*Dawn, March 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

Cities face 'whiplash' of floods, droughts as temperatures rise, study warns

The weather in some of the world's most densely populated cities is swinging from droughts to floods and back again as rising temperatures play havoc with the global water cycle, a study commissioned by the charity WaterAid showed. South and Southeast Asia face the strongest wetting trends, while Europe, the Middle East and North Africa are becoming ever drier, researchers found in a study of 42 years of weather data drawn from more than 100 of the world's most populous cities. (*Business Recorder, March 30th, 2025, Page 14*)

13.1 # Avalanche

Avalanche hits Uttarakhand labour camp in Himalayas

At least 25 people remain trapped under snow after an avalanche struck the Indian Himalayan mountain state of Uttarakhand following recent heavy snowfall in region. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 12*)

Eight dead in India avalanche as rescue operation ends

Rescuers recovered the eighth and final body from the site of an avalanche in a remote area of northern India, the army said, marking the end of a marathon operation in sub-zero temperatures. More than 50 workers were submerged under snow and debris after the avalanche hit a construction camp near Mana village on the border with Tibet in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. (*Business Recorder, March 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

13.2 # Cyclone

145,000 sans power as cyclone batters French territory

Authorities ordered all people on La Reunion island to stay indoors for several hours as Cyclone Garance's fierce winds caused destruction across French Indian Ocean territory. Winds of up to 230 kilometres per hour battered the territory of 900,000 people and storm

earlier forced closure of main airport on nearby Mauritius. Residents posted pictures online of uprooted trees, torn-off roofs and flooded homes on La Reunion. Power outages affected around 145,000 people across island, while 82,000 had no drinking water and 39,000 were without internet access, authorities said. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 10*)

‘Erratic’ cyclone creeps towards eastern Australia

An “erratic” tropical cyclone lingered off Australia’s eastern coast, bringing drenching rains and record-breaking waves to a heavily populated region rarely hit by typhoons. Tropical Cyclone Alfred was 250 kilometres east of busy Brisbane city, but government forecasts warned its slow and “erratic” crawl towards mainland was growing difficult to predict. Some four million people were in firing line along a 400-kilometre stretch of coastline expected to see worst of the storm. (*Dawn, March 7th, 2025, Page 11*)

13.3 # Flood

1,000 displaced after ocean surge in Ghana

Heavy waves have flooded Ghana’s coastal Volta Region, displacing some 1,000 people and destroying homes and schools, prompting local authorities to declare a state of emergency. The community of Agavedzi, near the border with Togo, was the heaviest hit by the “tidal waves”, as the ocean swells are locally referred to, with 51 houses and more than 300 people uprooted. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 10*)

Florence cathedral closed after floods, residents told to stay indoors

Heavy rain swelled rivers and flooded streets in an area near Florence, with authorities issuing a red weather alert for the historic Italian city and its surroundings and urging residents to stay indoors. Eugenio Giani, head of central Tuscany region that includes Florence and Pisa, told citizens to exercise “maximum care and attention”, warning of “intense and persistent rain” during the day. (*Dawn, March 15th, 2025, Page 10*)

13.4 # Heatwave

Heat wave shuts down schools in nearly half Philippine capital

Soaring temperatures shut down schools in nearly half the Philippine capital, local officials said, as the torrid dry season started in the tropical Southeast Asian country. A national weather service advisory warned the heat index, a measure of air temperature and relative humidity, was set to reach “danger” levels in Manila and two other areas of the country. (*Business Recorder, March 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

13.5 # Rainfall

Newsmaker: Chiva (Spain)

Flood-damaged homes line the river in Spain's Valencia region amidst new alerts for heavy rains. Over four months after devastating floods left 200 people dead throughout eastern Spain, weather alerts about heavy rains forced closures of schools and other services. (*Dawn, March 8th, 2025, Page 10*)

13.6 # Storm

Storm in US leaves 14 dead

At least 14 people were dead and several injured after violent tornadoes swept across the central United States. Twenty-six tornadoes were reported but not confirmed to have touched down as a low pressure system drove powerful thunderstorms across parts of Arkansas, Illinois, Mississippi and Missouri. (*Dawn, March 16th, 2025, Page 10*)

13.7 # Tornadoes

Over 30 dead, dozens hurt as tornadoes hit central US

Tornadoes and violent storms raked across the central United States, killing at least 33 people and leaving dozens more injured amid forecast of more severe weather. Local news showed roofs torn off homes and large trucks overturned. Eight people died in Kansas in a crash involving more than 50 vehicles, caused by low visibility during a “severe dust storm,” police said. (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 12*)

13.8 # Wildfire

Japan’s worst wildfire in 50 years makes 4,000 homeless

Firefighters were battling Japan’s worst wildfire in half a century, which has left one dead and forced the evacuation of nearly 4,000 local residents. White smoke billowed from a forested area around the northern city of Ofunato, aerial TV footage showed, five days after the blaze began after record low rainfall. The fire also follows Japan’s hottest summer on record last year, as climate change pushes up temperatures worldwide. As of the wildfire had engulfed around 6,400 acres, the fire and disaster management agency said — over seven times the area of New York’s Central Park. That makes it Japan’s largest wildfire since 1975 when 2,700 hectares burnt in Kushiro on northern Hokkaido island. It is estimated to have damaged at least 80 buildings, although details were still being assessed. (*Dawn, March 5th, 2025, Page 10*)

Four killed in South Korea wildfire

At least three firefighters and a public servant have been killed in a wildfire in South Korea, prompting the government to declare a state of emergency in southeastern regions. The fire, which began in Sacheong county, prompted the deployment of 304 personnel, along with 20 helicopters, according to South Korea’s Interior Ministry. More than 200 residents in 15 southern villages have been told to evacuate. (*Dawn, March 23rd, 2025, Page 10*)

South Korea wildfires ‘largest on record’

Wildfires in South Korea are now the largest and deadliest on record, having burned more forest and killed more people than any previous blaze as the death toll hit 27. More than a dozen fires broke out over the weekend, scorching wide swathes of the southeast and forcing around 37,000 people to flee, with the fire cutting off roads and downing communications lines as residents escaped in panic. South Korea’s Ministry of Interior and Safety said that 27 people had been killed and dozens more injured, with the toll

likely to rise. It is the highest number of deaths since the Korea Forest Service started records for wildfires in 1987. More than 35,000 hectares (86,500 acres) of forest have been burned. The extent of damage makes it South Korea's largest ever wildfire, after an inferno in April 2000 that scorched 23,913 hectares across the east coast. (*Dawn, March 28th, 2025, Page 10*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquake

Quake damages buildings, sparks panic in Italy's Naples

A 4.4-magnitude earthquake struck the volcanic area around Naples overnight, causing several light injuries, damaging buildings and sending terrified residents into the streets. (*Dawn, March 14th, 2025, Page 10*)

Massive quake kills over 150 in Myanmar, Thailand

A massive earthquake hit Myanmar and Thailand, killing more than 150 people and injuring hundreds, with dozens trapped in collapsed buildings and the death toll expected to rise. The shallow 7.7-magnitude tremor hit northwest of the city of Sagaing in central Myanmar, and was followed minutes later by a 6.4-magnitude aftershock. The quake flattened buildings, downed bridges, and cracked roads across swathes of Myanmar, and even demolished a 30-storey skyscraper under construction hundreds of km away in Bangkok. (*Dawn, March 29th, 2025, Page 1*)

Myanmar quake death toll passes 1,600

Myanmar's military rulers let in hundreds of foreign rescue personnel after an earthquake killed more than 1,600 people, the deadliest natural disaster to hit the impoverished, war-torn country in years. 7.7 magnitude quake, among the biggest to jolt the Southeast Asian nation in last century, crippled airports, bridges and highways amid a civil war that has wrecked the economy and displaced millions. The death toll in Myanmar climbed to 1,644, military government said, according to *BBC Burmese* news service. In neighbouring Thailand, where the quake rattled buildings and brought down a skyscraper under construction in the capital Bangkok, at least nine people were killed. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

Aid rushes into Myanmar as quake toll rises to 1,700

Foreign rescue teams and supplies arrived in Myanmar to help the impoverished country cope with an earthquake that killed over 1,600 and left many near the epicentre scrambling for help without proper equipment. The 7.7-magnitude quake, one of Myanmar's strongest in a century, jolted the Southeast Asian nation, leaving at least 1,700 people dead and 3,408 injured besides 139 missing in Myanmar and at least 18 in neighbouring Thailand. Along with aid and personnel from Malaysia, Singapore and Russia, India, China and Thailand among Myanmar's neighbours sent relief materials and teams. (*Dawn, March 31st, 2025, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Thousands turn up at Greece train crash demonstration

Masked youths threw petrol bombs and clashed with police outside the Greek parliament, as huge crowds gathered in a show of force to mark the second anniversary of the country's worst rail tragedy. Nearly 200,000 people gathered to demand justice for the 57 victims of the crash that happened between a freight train and a passenger train near the central city of Larissa on Feb 28, 2023. But much of the crowd, including children and the elderly, was forced to flee when hooded and masked attackers hurled petrol bombs and rocks, prompting riot police to fire teargas and stun grenades in response. Police then deployed a water cannon as the youths set fire to bins and vandalised bus stops and shop windows. (*Dawn, March 1st, 2025, Page 10*)

News Makers: Abobo (Ivory Coast):

Women hold banners during a protest against gender-based violence called by the Ivorian minister for women's affairs. (*Dawn, March 2nd, 2025, Page 10*)

Thousands join anti-corruption protest in Serbian town

Thousands of protesters amassed in the southern Serbian city of Nis, in the latest mass student-led anti-corruption rally to rock the Balkan nation after the fatal collapse of a train station last year killed 15 people. For months, the movement has put increasing pressure on the Serbian government and President Aleskandar Vucic, spurring the resignation of several high-ranking officials, including the prime minister in January. The collapse of the station roof in Novi Sad in November followed extensive renovations to the building, and ignited long-smoldering anger in the country over corruption and the alleged lack of oversight on construction and development projects. (*Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2025, Page 6*)

Gaza protesters force their way into Trump's Scottish golf resort

US President Donald Trump's prized Turnberry golf resort in Scotland has been vandalised by protesters who sprayed "GAZA IS NOT 4 SALE" in huge white letters on the lawn. The activists also damaged greens and sprayed blood-red paint over the luxury resort's clubhouse overnight. The Palestine Action group said it was a "direct response to the US administration's stated intent to ethnically cleanse Gaza". Trump sparked outrage last month when he suggested the US "take over" Gaza and turn it into the "Riviera of the Middle East", while forcing its Palestinian inhabitants to relocate to Egypt or Jordan. (*Dawn, March 4th, 2025, Page 11*)

Scientists rally across US to protest budget cuts

Scientists rallied in cities across United States to denounce efforts by the administration of US President Donald Trump to eliminate key staff across multiple agencies and curb life-saving research. Since Trump returned to the White House, his government has cut federal research funding, withdrawn from the World Health Organisation and the Paris Agreement. (*Dawn, March 9th, 2025, Page 12*)

Palestinian detained for leading anti-Israel rallies at US varsity

Immigration officers have arrested a leader of the protests at Columbia University against Israel's conflict in Gaza, authorities said, after US President Donald Trump vowed to deport foreign pro-Palestinian student demonstrators. Mahmoud Khalil, one of the most prominent faces of the university's protest movement that erupted in response to Israel's conduct of the conflict, was arrested, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) said on X. The agency said the action was taken "in support of President Trump's executive orders prohibiting anti-Semitism, and in coordination with the Department of State." (*Dawn, March 11th, 2025, Page 11*)

Protesters flood Belgrade in one of biggest anti-government rallies

More than 100,000 protesters descended on Serbia's capital Belgrade in one of the largest rallies in decades, with students and workers facing riot police and supporters of President Aleksandar Vucic. Serbia has seen months of anti-government rallies after 15 deaths from a railway station roof collapse triggered accusations of widespread corruption and negligence. (*Business Recorder, March 16th, 2025, Page 6*)

Rights group files lawsuit to block Trump deportations of pro-Palestinian protesters

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) filed a lawsuit challenging as unconstitutional the Trump administrations actions to deport international students and scholars who protest or express support for Palestinian rights. The lawsuit filed in the US District Court for the Northern District of New York, seeks a nationwide temporary restraining order to block enforcement of two executive orders signed by US President Donald Trump in the first month of his second term earlier this year. (*Dawn, March 17th, 2025, Page 11*)

Thousands gather in Rio de Janeiro to demonstrate support for Bolsonaro

Thousands of people gathered on Copacabana Beach in a show of support for former President Jair Bolsonaro, who faces charges of leading a plot to topple the government and undermine Brazil's democracy after he lost a 2022 election. Charges against the former army captain and several key allies will go before a five-judge panel at Brazil's Supreme Court on March 25. If judges agree to hear the trial, Bolsonaro and others will become defendants. Bolsonaro and his representatives have denied wrongdoing. (*Business Recorder, March 17th, 2025, Page 9*)

Yemenis take to the streets amid fresh US strikes

Huge crowds joined protests in rebel-controlled Yemen after deadly US strikes killed several and sparked fears of a new cycle of violence in the conflict-torn country. Tens of thousands of demonstrators chanted "Death to America, death to Israel!" in the capital Sanaa. There were also large crowds in Saada, birthplace of the Houthi movement, and demonstrations in Dhamar, Hodeida and Amran. "Yemen will never back down — we defy the Americans, we defy the Zionists," said a man shouting slogans to the Sanaa crowd. (*Dawn, March 18th, 2025, Page 11*)

Anti-Israeli premier protesters clash with Jerusalem police

Israeli police deployed a water cannon and made several arrests as protests against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's move to oust the head of the domestic intelligence service flared for a third consecutive day. Thousands of Israelis have joined anti-Netanyahu demonstrations with opponents of the move to sack Shin Bet head Ronen Bar joining forces with protesters angry at the decision to resume fighting in Gaza, breaking a two-month-old ceasefire, while 59 Israeli prisoners remain in the Palestinian enclave. (*Dawn, March 21st, 2025 Page 12*)

Hundreds of farmers detained by Indian Punjab police

Police in India's northern state of Punjab detained hundreds of farmers and used bulldozers to tear down their temporary camps in a border area where they had protested for more than a year to demand better crop prices. The farmers had camped on the border with adjoining Haryana since last February, when security forces halted their march toward the capital, New Delhi, to press for legally-backed guarantees of more state support for crops. (*Business Recorder, March 21st, 2025, Page 36*)

Protesters clash with police over Indonesia military law

A violent clash broke out in the Indonesian metropolis of Surabaya between police and demonstrators protesting against the country's newly passed military law, journalists witnessed. Around 1,000 students and activists dressed in black participated in the protest in front of an East Java government building. Holding posters that said "Reject the Military Law", and "The Military Should Return to the Barracks", protesters hurled rocks, sticks, and Molotov cocktails towards the police guarding the demonstration. (*Dawn, March 25th, 2025, Page 10*)

Student anti-corruption rallies spread across Balkans

Massive student-led anti-graft protests have spread from Serbia to neighbouring Balkan countries, with thousands rallying under the slogan "Corruption kills" following a series of deadly tragedies that have claimed dozens of lives. Young people have used the rallies to vent their anger in a region of Europe that rights groups say suffers from endemic corruption, prompting hundreds of thousands of mostly young people to go onto the streets in Serbia alone. (*Business Recorder, March 26th, 2025, Page 80*)

Twelve killed as protesters clash with Nigerian military

Nigerian police said they had come under intense gunfire a day earlier in a neighbourhood of the capital, Abuja, during clashes between security forces and Shia protesters that led to several reported deaths. Eleven protesters and one soldier were killed, the report said, at a pro-Palestinian demonstration held by the Islamic Movement in Nigeria (IMN) in the capital Abuja. Nigeria has a history of deadly clashes between security forces and members of the banned Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), which advocates for the peaceful establishment of an Islamic state in Africa's most populous nation. (*Dawn, March 30th, 2025, Page 11*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

Roots for Equity

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