

HAAL AHWAL

Monthly News Reviews on Food and Agriculture

December, 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

Back

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 “Daily The 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

ADP: Annual Development Programme

AICS: Agency for Development Cooperation

APTMA: All Pakistan Textile Mills Association

AQI: Air Quality Index

ART: Antiretroviral Therapy

ATT: Afghan Transit Trade

BMA: British Medical Association

BuP: Built-up Property

CACs: Central Asian Countries

CAT: Competition Appellate Tribunal

CCP: Competition Commission of Pakistan

CCZ: Clarion-Clipperton Zone

CDD: Consecutive Dry Days

CDRI: Crop Diseases Research Institute

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

CHK: Civil Hospital Karachi

CO₂: Carbon Dioxide

CPI: Consumer Price Index

DC: Deputy Commissioner

DMC: Disaster Management Centre

DPP: Department of Plant Protection

DRAP: Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

ECC: Economic Coordination Committee

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EOC: Emergency Operation Centre

EPTB: Evacuee Property Trust Board

EU: European Union

FBR: Federal Board of Revenue

FCA: Federal Committee on Agriculture

FDI: Foreign Direct Investment

FFC: Fauji Fertiliser Company

FIA: Federal Investigation Agency

FSC&RD: Federal Seed Certification & Registration Department

G2G: Government-to-Government

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GIS: Geographic Information System

GLOFS: Glacial Lake Outburst Floods

GPI: Green Pakistan Initiative

HCSTSI: Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry

IED: Independent Evaluation Department

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IMIC: Integrated Maritime Industrial Complex

IOM: International Organisation for Migration

IPC: Inter-Provincial Coordination

ISO: International Organisation for Standardisation

IWT: Indus Waters Treaty

KCA: Karachi Cotton Association

KCE: Karachi Cotton Exchange

KPC: Karachi Press Club

LHC: Lahore High Court

LHWs: Lady health workers

LIMS: Land Information Management System

MNFS&R: National Food Security and Research

MoM: Month-on-Month

NARC: National Agriculture Research Center

NCA: National College of Arts

NEOC: National Emergency Operations Centre

NFC: National Finance Commission

NHA: National Highway Authority

NHM: Natural History Museum

NHS: National Health Service

NICL: National Insurance Company Ltd

NSDRA: National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority

NWS: National Weather Service

OPDs: Outpatient Departments

PAKFEA: Pakistan Fisheries Export Association

PAQI: Pakistan Air Quality Initiative

PARC: Pakistan Agriculture Research Council

PBA: Pakistan Banks Association

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCA: Permanent Court of Arbitration

PCCC: Pakistan Central Cotton Committee

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PCOS: Polycystic Ovary Syndrome

PEEF: Pakistan Education Endowment Fund

PFA: Punjab Food Authority

PFC: Provincial Finance Commission

PFMA: Pakistan Flour Mills Association

PFVA: Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters and Merchants Association

PGTA: Pakistan Goods Transporters Alliance

PHDEC: Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company

PHHSA: Pakistan Hi-Tech Hybrid Seed Association

PIACL: Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited

PIBTL: Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Ltd

PJBF: Pakistan-Japan Business Forum

PKI: Pakistan Kissan Itehad

PMD: Pakistan Meteorological Department

PMDC: Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation

PQA: Port Qasim Authority

PRA: Pest Risk Analysis

PRC: Poverty Research Centre

PSDP: Public Sector Development Programme

PSMA: Pakistan Sugar Mills Association

PTA: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority

RDMC: Reko Diq Mining Company

REAP: Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan

RSF: Sustainability Facility

SAB: Sugar Advisory Board

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBA: Stand-By Arrangement

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SEL: Sindh Engineering Ltd

SMDA: Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement

SML: Saindak Metals Ltd

SOEs: State-Owned Enterprises

SSWMB: Sindh Solid Waste Management Board

SUP: Sindh United Party

TA: Technical Assistance

TCF: Citizens Foundation

TDAP: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

UAE: United Arab Emirates

USC: Utility Stores Corporation

VEC: Variety Evaluation Committee

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WB: World Bank

WFP: World Food Programme

WMO: World Meteorological Organization

YoY: Year-on-Year

NEWS EXCERPTS

NATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal, said that under the Uraan Pakistan framework, 26 agricultural clusters have been identified, which will serve as the foundation for value-added processing, new export opportunities, and modern agricultural models.
- Pakistan is currently spending a hefty USD 650million annually on tea imports.
- More than 600,000 hectares of land in Pakistan is suitable for tea cultivation, and the establishment of large farms and agricultural clusters can significantly increase production.
- The government has already sent 1,000 agricultural scientists and researchers to China for advanced training, who will play an important role in bringing about an agricultural revolution through modern technologies,”
- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has emphasised need to gradually shift the province’s crop patterns to suit climate realities, water availability and market demand.
- He noted traditional practices are increasingly unsustainable due to water scarcity, soil degradation and changing weather conditions.
- CM called for enhanced collaboration between the government, research institutions and universities to introduce new seed varieties, improve soil health, and promote precision agriculture.
- Sindh Bank team outlined measures to improve farmers’ access to affordable credit, especially small growers facing liquidity constraints.
- Nearly 30 percent of country’s agricultural land, around 6.67 million hectares, is already affected by salinity and sodicity.
- Fertile land is being converted into saline soil at a rate of about 40,000 hectares annually, while salinity-related yield losses are estimated to exceed Rs 20 billion each year.
- Indus River system carries nearly 31.6 million tonnes of salt annually, with approximately 20 million tonnes deposited directly into canal command areas. More than 1.2 million tubewells extract brackish groundwater, adding an estimated 45 million tonnes of salt to agricultural soils every year.
- Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a cabinet meeting took a series of major decisions, including approval of the Sindh Land Revenue Bill for e-transfer and digitalisation of land records.
- Alarmed by the abrupt variations in the flow of the Chenab River, which have caused consternation among farmers in Punjab, Pakistan has asked India to

refrain from any unilateral manipulation of the river flow and fulfil its obligations under the Indus Waters Treaty.

AGRICULTURAL INPUT

- The Finance Division, in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Pakistan Banks Association (PBA), has launched Zarkheze, a digital platform aimed at digitising agricultural finance and expanding access to formal credit for small farmers.
- The programme provides that 75pc of the financing will be disbursed in kind for purchase of agricultural inputs through banks' pre-approved agri-vendors.
- Counterfeit and adulterated pesticides are widespread in Punjab and Sindh, damaging crops, causing major financial losses to farmers.
- Pakistan has no local pesticide manufacturing and relies entirely on imports.
- In a landmark move to modernise agriculture and tackle severe water scarcity, the Balochistan government has approved the use of hydroponics technology across the province.
- Pakistan's rice sector is poised for a major uplift as Guard Agricultural Research & Services Ltd (Guard) has successfully developed and advanced two Open-Pollinated (OP) Basmati varieties — Guard-101 and Guard-102.
- Both lines were formally registered with the Punjab Seed Council in 2023 after extensive research, genetic verification, and field performance trials.
- To address long-standing structural issues—including fragmented seed policies, weak regulatory oversight, limited access to improved and climate-resilient varieties, and outdated certification mechanisms—the government enacted the Seed (Amendment) Act, 2024, says a press release of the ministry.
- NSDRA has submitted the National Seed Policy 2025 and the Agriculture Biotechnology Policy 2025, along with crop-specific strategies.
- Regulatory enforcement has led to the cancellation of 430 non-compliant seed companies, while a new categorisation system has been introduced based on research and development capacity and technology adoption.
- During FY 2024–25, 208 improved crop varieties were approved, covering wheat, rice, cotton, maize, fodder, cereals, oilseeds, and horticultural crops.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

- Pakistan is likely to face a drier-than-usual start to the winter season along with above-normal temperatures, a development that could affect agriculture, water availability, air quality and public health.
- The federal government's decision to send nearly 70 per cent of the staff of the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) to the surplus pool has triggered alarm nationwide, with experts warning of serious

disruption to certified seed production and a possible record fall in per-acre yields of key crops, including cotton, wheat and rice.

- Rahim Yar Khan held a unique position in the seed sector, producing at least 70pc of the country's certified seed.
- Farmers have demanded the Sindh government to fix the rate of sugar cane officially at Rs650 per maund and allow them to immediately harvest and deliver it to sugar mills to save the commodity from damages.
- Pakistan's cotton production has fallen sharply to 6.8 million bales in the 2025-26 season — 34 percent below the target of 10.18 million bales. The estimated cotton production is 6.85 million bales from 2.0 million hectares.
- Federal Committee on Agriculture had fixed cotton cultivation targets for Punjab at 3.46 million acres with a production goal of 5.553m bales (170 kg each), for Sindh it was 1.556m acres with a production target of 4.040m bales.
- Data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) up to Dec 15 shows that actual production stood at only 2.453m bales in Punjab and 2.848m bales in Sindh,
- Despite Sindh's production target being 37pc lower than Punjab's, cotton output in Sindh remained surprisingly 61pc higher than Punjab's by mid-December.
- Flour millers have criticised Sindh government's dual standard of providing a limited wheat quota to millers under the Wheat Food Policy FY25-26 while offering unlimited wheat to traders. It appears that the Sindh government's subsidy for consumers is set to end up in the pockets of traders.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- Illegal ice fishing, which poses a serious threat to endangered trout fish, is continuing unabated in Kunhar River following the recent snowfall in the Kaghan Valley.

TRADE

- Merchandise exports shrank by 15.4 per cent year-on-year in November, marking the fourth consecutive month of decline in the current fiscal year.
- Pakistan's merchandise exports dipped 15.4pc to \$2.398 billion in November from \$2.833bn in the same month last year.
- Imports grew 5.42pc to \$5.25bn in November from \$4.98bn over the corresponding month of last year.
- In November, the trade deficit rose 33pc to \$2.85bn from \$2.15bn over the corresponding month of last year.
- Pakistan's exports to five central Asian countries (CACs) shrank 9.59 per cent year-on-year during the first four months of the current fiscal year.

- Pakistan's trade gap with nine neighbouring countries widened by 39.33 per cent to \$6.221 billion in the first five months 2025-26 compared to \$4.465bn in the same period last year.
- In FY25, Pakistan's exports to nine countries rose 1.49pc to \$4.401bn from \$4.336bn the preceding year. Contrary to this, imports surged 22.06pc to \$7.856bn in 5MFY26 from \$6.436bn in 5MFY25.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East swelled by 7.88 per cent during the first five months of 2025-26, driven by a surge in imports and a decline in exports to the region.
- Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Ltd signed an agreement with Reko Diq Mining Company for handling and export of its copper-gold concentrates.
- Pakistan's full-fledged seafood exports to European Union (EU) countries are unlikely to resume next year, as EU has not included Pakistan in its inspection plan for 2026, effectively extending the ban for at least another year.
- In November, Pakistan posted a trade deficit of \$2.9 billion, which represents a 32.8 per cent increase compared to the same month last year.
- The country's food import bill soared to \$3.847 billion in the first five months of the current fiscal year, marking an increase of 28.33 per cent from \$2.998bn in the same period last year.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- The United Nations and its partners launched their 2026 global humanitarian appeal, with \$64.9 million specifically earmarked to support 1.9m vulnerable people in Pakistan as part of the \$33bn plan aimed at saving lives threatened by wars, climate disasters, epidemics, earthquakes and crop failures worldwide.
- In 2026, the largest individual response plan is for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where \$4.1bn is needed to assist 3 million people who have experienced shocking levels of violence and destruction.
- In Sudan, world's largest displacement crisis, \$2.9bn is needed for 20 million people.
- Largest regional plan is for Syria, with \$2.8bn targeted for 8.6 million people.
- Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan declined by 25 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (FY26).
- FDI stood at USD 927.4 million in July to November of FY26, down from USD 1.242 billion in the same period last year, reflecting a fall of USD 315m.
- Inflow of foreign loans and grants to Pakistan increased 14 per cent to \$3.032 billion in the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year compared to \$2.667bn, mainly on the back of support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Asian Development Bank approved three projects totalling \$381 million concerning agriculture, education and health services in Punjab.
- ADB offered more loans to Pakistan for reforms in institutional capacity building and budget support on top of its existing debt stock of about \$17bn.
- ADB is the second largest multilateral to Pakistan in terms of the debt stock which stood at \$16.9bn as of end-June 2025 and third largest among all lenders led by China and then the World Bank.
- ADB has committed 764 public sectors loans, grants and technical assistance totalling \$43.4bn to Pakistan.
- Pakistan's total external debt stock stands at \$107bn by end-June 2025, according to the IMF.
- Pakistan and the ADB signed agreements for two major climate resilience initiatives in Sindh and Punjab, totalling \$304.5 million, aimed at enhancing climate resilience and promoting sustainable agriculture.
- The IMF has approved a fresh disbursement of around \$1.2 billion to Pakistan under its dual-track bailout — the 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and the climate-focused Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF).
- Total disbursements to Pakistan under the EFF and RSF now stand at approximately \$3.3 billion.
- The IMF has disbursed a total of SDR 914 million to Pakistan under the EFF and RSF.
- The SBP said that it received about USD 1.2 billion on December 10 as the EFF tranche and the first RSF disbursement.
- As of Dec 5, 2025, the total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at USD 19.612 billion. This includes foreign reserves held by the SBP amounted to USD 14.587bn and USD 5.026 billion by ye commercial banks.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Governor SBP Jameel Ahmad said Pakistan's external debt burden has begun to ease, with the debt-to-GDP ratio falling from 31 percent to 26 percent.
- The governor projected that remittances will cross 40 billion dollars this year, compared with 38 billion dollars received last fiscal year.
- He shared that women's financial inclusion has risen from 4 percent to 52 percent, and we have succeeded in narrowing the gender gap from 47 percent in 2018 to 30 percent in 2025.
- Pakistan's central government debt fell by 1.16 percent in the first four months of the current fiscal year (FY26).

- Pakistan’s total debt stocks, including domestic and external, eased to Rs 76.980 trillion by the end of October 2025, down from Rs 77.888 trillion in June 2025, depicting a decline of Rs 908 billion.
- External debt dropped by Rs 413bn to Rs 23.004tr at the end of October 2025.
- The SBP has earned a strong profit of Rs 2.5 trillion in the last fiscal year, out of which Rs 2.4 trillion was transferred to the federal government.
- The IMF has projected a significant increase of around Rs4.5 trillion in Pakistan’s domestic debt to reach Rs 63.966 trillion in the 2026-27 financial year against the projected Rs 59.404 trillion for the current fiscal year.
- The Fund noted that domestic debt as percentage of GDP is projected to reach 47.1 percent in the current fiscal year, which is projected to come down to 45.5 percent as percentage of GDP in next fiscal year.
- The report further noted that external debt is projected to increase to USD130.704 billion in the next fiscal year, compared to the projected USD125.612 billion for the current fiscal year.
- The IMF has projected Pakistan’s gross external financing needs at USD 19.398 billion i.e. 4.6 percent of the GDP for the next fiscal year 2025-26.
- The city commissioner has informed the Sindh High Court that all milk samples collected from Karachi were found unfit for human consumption.
- The report said that presence of formalin in 22 samples and phosphate in eight samples indicated extensive adulteration.
- Annual consumer inflation plunged to a 44-month low of 6.9pc in September.
- Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum dismissed a petition seeking a direction to fix minimum wage at \$1,000 in all provinces of Pakistan.

ENVIRONMENT

- PPP Senator Sherry Rahman stated that pollution claims 256,000 lives in Pakistan each year — more than the number of deaths caused by terrorism.
- The number of registered AIDS patients in Balochistan has reached 3,303, including 707 women and 90 transgender persons with 452 deaths reported in the province over the past year.
- Tuberculosis (TB) cases are on increase in Balochistan and especially its prisons as during the current year, 16,000 to 18,000 cases were reported across province.
- The Karachi city has seen a dramatic increase in cases of respiratory infections with the onset of winter, health experts shared, linking the spike in these illnesses directly with worsening air quality.
- Director General Health Dr Abdul Wali said eight out of 10 people affected by Aids were not aware of their status in Pakistan. Dr Wali said according to estimated data there were 350,000 people living with HIV in Pakistan.
- Over 1,100 AIDS-related deaths were reported in 2024.

- An estimated 26,000 children and teenagers developed Type 1 diabetes in Pakistan every year but 13,000 or nearly half of them did not survive due to delayed diagnosis and the unavailability of life saving insulin.
- Farmers affected by devastating 2022 floods announced filing of a climate justice claim against two major global carbon emitters in Germany, saying unprecedented disaster had exposed Pakistan’s extreme vulnerability to climate change.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has unveiled the provincial Disaster Management Plan 2026-30, declaring 10 districts highly vulnerable to floods, two to landslides and one each to snowfall and glacial lake outburst floods.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- The number of sea-floor animals fell by nearly 40 per cent in a deep-sea mining exploration zone.

TRADE

- Global standards have increasingly been used as tools in trade disputes since the turn of the century, reshaping trade flows and often favouring wealthy countries and large multinational companies over developing economies.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Pakistan’s total external debt stock reached nearly USD130bn by 2024, with debt servicing consuming a staggering 40pc of export earnings, said the World Bank.
- The gap between developing nations’ debt servicing costs and new financing hit a more than 50-year high of USD741 billion between 2022 and 2024.
- World food commodity prices fell for a third consecutive month in November.

ENVIRONMENT

- New Delhi recorded more than 200,000 cases of acute respiratory illnesses at six state-run hospitals between 2022 and 2024.

CLIMATE DISASTERS

- Ruinous floods and landslides have killed more than 900 people on Indonesia’s island of Sumatra with fears that starvation could send the toll even higher.

NATIONAL NEWS

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Sindh must adopt smarter cropping patterns: Murad [P. 2]

Agri and livestock sectors: MNFS&R urged to ensure effective federal-provinces coordination

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Seed watchdog cutbacks spark yield fears [P. 13]

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Flat cotton output triggers calls for policy reforms [P. 14]

Farmers want official sugar cane rate fixed at Rs650 per maund [P. 14]

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Punjab sugar output tops 0.43m tonnes this season [P. 15]

Karachi Cotton Association fails to issue cotton spot rates after 52 years [P. 15]

Cotton output misses targets by wide margin [P. 15]

17-day closure of cotton exchange creates crisis [P. 16]

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Major grain market reopens in Sindh after stakeholders settle thorny paddy issues

Trading at the major grain market (Anaj Mandi) of Qambar-Shahdadkot district resumed after weeks-long closure when all stakeholders reached an agreement on a reasonable deduction in paddy crop by rice millers. While lawmakers of the areas concerned and representatives of rice millers and paddy growers from Sindh and Balochistan were made to negotiate a deal. “The most irritant issue of deduction in the paddy crop has been resolved once and for all,” the stakeholders declared at the end of the crucial meeting. “We have agreed to 65 kilos deduction on 100 maunds of paddy. Hidden taxes have also been slashed,” they said. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2025, Page 15*)

Italy, Pakistan set to seal agriculture skills pact

Pakistan and Italy are currently working to enhance collaboration between two countries in agriculture sector, and are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding on professional capacity building and extension in agriculture early next year. Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain held a meeting with Italian Minister of Agriculture, Food Sovereignty and Forestry Francesco Lollobrigida, in Rome, and invited him to visit Pakistan early next year to sign the MoU, which he said would help advance bilateral cooperation. The two ministers reviewed progress on the ongoing olive sector projects, including Olive Culture Scale-Up Project funded by Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS). Programme follows earlier Olive Culture Project (2022-2024) and the Promotion of Olive Cultivation on Commercial Scale in Pakistan (Phase II, 2021-2026). (*Dawn, December 5th, 2025, Page 9*)

26 agri clusters identified under Uraan Pakistan framework: Ahsan

Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal, said that under the Uraan Pakistan framework, 26 agricultural clusters have been identified, which will serve as the foundation for value-added processing, new export opportunities, and modern agricultural models. The government considers the shift from raw production to value-added products a fundamental pillar of national development. Effective measures in tea processing, packaging, and branding will enable Pakistani tea to secure a distinguished position in the global market.

The local tea production will play a pivotal role in saving foreign exchange and boosting exports. Pakistan is currently spending a hefty USD 650 million annually on tea imports. More than 600,000 hectares of land in Pakistan is suitable for tea cultivation, and the establishment of large farms and agricultural clusters can significantly increase production. The production is only the beginning - by activating the complete value chain, Pakistan can earn billions of dollars, minister expressed. He said that the government’s efforts are focused on increasing exports and reducing imports to protect

the country from foreign exchange pressures. He said that modern techniques and trained experts will bring real transformation to the agriculture sector. For this purpose, the government has already sent 1,000 agricultural scientists and researchers to China for advanced training, who will play an important role in bringing about an agricultural revolution through modern technologies. Highlighting various agricultural value chains, planning minister said that billions of rupees can be generated through a complete value chain of rose petals. Pakistan is the world's fourth-largest date producer, and world-class products such as mango powder and date powder can be developed to significantly boost exports. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2025, Page 2*)

Sindh must adopt smarter cropping patterns: Murad

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has emphasised the need to gradually shift the province's crop patterns to suit climate realities, water availability and market demand. Chairing a meeting of the agriculture department here at the CM House, he noted that traditional practices are increasingly unsustainable due to water scarcity, soil degradation and changing weather conditions. They reviewed the ongoing initiatives and future strategies to strengthen Sindh's agricultural sector. CM described agriculture as the backbone of Sindh's economy, emphasising the need for a modern, research-driven and financially inclusive approach. "Our farmers are the foundation of our rural economy. We must support them with timely credit, advanced technology and scientific guidance so they can increase productivity and shift toward high-value crops," he said.

CM called for enhanced collaboration between the government, research institutions and universities to introduce new seed varieties, improve soil health, and promote precision agriculture. "Agriculture cannot progress without research. From seeds to soil to water management, every step must be informed by science. I want our research institutions to work closely with farmers and deliver solutions that reach the fields, He stressed importance of modern practices like drip irrigation, water efficiency, mechanisation and digital monitoring to maximise output. The meeting discussed necessity of shifting cropping patterns as traditional ones are no longer sustainable under current conditions. The chief minister said: "Sindh must adopt smarter cropping patterns — those that conserve lesser water, increase yields and ensure profitability. We must move from conventional practices to climate-resilient, market-oriented crops."

Credit access & farmer support

The Sindh Bank team outlined measures to improve farmers' access to affordable credit, especially small growers facing liquidity constraints. The CM directed the bank and the agriculture department to simplify loan procedures and expand support in underserved rural areas. "Financial inclusion is key to empowering small farmers. Every eligible grower must have access to fair and timely credit to invest in better seeds, fertilisers and technology," he stated. The meeting also reviewed mechanisms for distributing subsidies and assistance. The chief minister stressed transparency, accuracy, and timely support for those most in need. "Every rupee we allocate for farmers must reach them

directly,” he directed. In conclusion, Mr Shah reaffirmed government’s determination to uplift farming communities and build a resilient agricultural economy. “Our goal is clear — a prosperous, modern agricultural sector that supports farmers, enhances food security, and drives rural development. Together, we can transform Sindh’s agriculture for the future,” he declared. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2025, Page 15*)

Agri and livestock sectors: MNFS&R urged to ensure effective federal-provinces coordination

A parliamentary body urged Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) to ensure effective coordination between federal and provincial governments in the agriculture and livestock sectors. The Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research noted that although agriculture is a devolved subject under the 18th constitutional amendment, collaboration between the federation and provinces is essential for the sector’s development.

The committee meeting, which was held at the National Agriculture Research Center (NARC), reviewed the latest research conducted by scientists of Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) and NARC regarding newly evolved seed varieties and assessed progress of Green Pakistan Initiative (GPI), with particular emphasis on the livestock sector. NARC officials briefed the committee on the operations of scientific laboratories & research institutions. (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2025, Page 7*)

Heated debate in Punjab PA over agri issues

The Punjab Assembly proceedings were once again marked by heated exchanges and mutual accusations, especially over matters related to agriculture, between the treasury and opposition benches, with the government once again failing to complete quorum. At outset, opposition MPA Sheikh Imtiaz expressed anger over absence of agriculture minister and parliamentary secretary during the question hour related to the agriculture department. He questioned the seriousness of the process, asking why the question hour was held if ministers were not present. Treasury member Amjad Ali highlighted long-standing issue of lower-grade recruitments in the agriculture department and requested that the matter be referred to a committee. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2025, Page 2*)

Balochistan’s agricultural potential: TDAP to organise agri exhibition

Secretary Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Shahryar Khan announced that an agricultural exhibition will be organized in Balochistan in August or September to create awareness about fruits and vegetables grown in the province. He said that value addition of Balochistan’s olives, apples, onions, tomatoes and other agricultural produce will be carried out, while required certification and food safety standards will be ensured to facilitate their access to European and Central Asian markets. He stated that meetings are ongoing with the Governor of Balochistan, the Provincial Secretary Agriculture and other relevant officials in this regard. He added that agricultural exhibitions held in Karachi have already generated export demand worth 52 million dollars.

Speakers highlighted the need for modern machinery for value addition of olives and other agricultural produce in Balochistan. They proposed installation of 30 machines in different districts of the province. The speakers also criticized the fruit and vegetable trade agreements with Afghanistan, terming them exploitative for Balochistan's farmers, and stressed that all stakeholders must be consulted before finalizing such agreements. They emphasized that timely measures are essential to promote olive and saffron cultivation, along with value addition of apples, onions, grapes and other fruits.

TDAP Secretary along with Pakistan Horticulture Development and Export Company (PHDEC) officials said that discussions have already been held with provincial governments on a three-year plan for value addition and certification of olives and other produce. They confirmed that agricultural exhibition will be held at BUITEMS University in August or September to promote awareness of Balochistan's agricultural potential. (*Business Recorder, December 24th, 2025, Page 7*)

1.1 # Farmers

Economic issues facing farmers linked to govt neglect

Due to continued government neglect, farmers in Sindh confront a host of economic issues, said the Sindh Chamber of Agriculture Larkana division. SCA president Sirajul Oliya Rashidi said that agricultural producers are trapped in adverse conditions. The vegetables purchased from farmers at extremely low prices reach consumers at rates three times higher. Virtually no effective price control mechanism exists. He claimed that tomatoes are purchased from farmers at Rs5 per kg and sold to consumers at Rs50 per kg; onions are bought at Rs20 per kg and sold at Rs80 per kg; spinach is purchased at Rs5 per kg and sold in markets at Rs30 per kilogram; turnips are bought at Rs10 per kg and sold at Rs50 per kg; Brinjal (eggplant) is purchased at Rs20 per kg and sold at Rs60 per kg. A similar pattern exists across almost all vegetables markets. From farm to consumer, prices increase nearly threefold, which constitutes a clear injustice to the general public, he said.

The farmer organisations across Sindh have persistently been demanding establishment of farmers' markets, where producers could sell their produce directly to consumers at reasonable, cost-based prices without interference of commission agents. This would benefit consumers through lower prices while ensuring safety to farmers from losses. But the government pays little heed to this demand. Mr Rashdi said Sindh agriculture department, which is responsible for introducing modern agricultural technologies, has failed even to conduct basic soil testing to determine appropriate fertiliser requirements.

He said the farmers, due to lack of guidance, use imbalanced fertiliser inputs, causing financial losses and long-term degradation of soil fertility. The field assistants are frequently absent from duty. Given that a large proportion of farmers in Sindh are illiterate, it is essential for the agriculture extension wing staff to visit fields regularly and provide practical advice. Their absence directly results in reduced productivity and

farmers' losses, he added. There are several additional structural factors contributing to persistently high vegetable prices in Sindh, he said. They include high transportation costs due to rising diesel and petrol prices, which significantly increase the cost of transporting vegetables from farms to wholesale markets and from markets to urban centers, directly inflating retail prices. Profiteering middlemen purchase vegetables from farmers at low prices, while commission agents and traders multiply prices due to weak government oversight, he added. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2025, Page 15*)

1.2 # Land

Advocate, relative shot dead over land dispute

An advocate and his relative were killed when the car they were riding came under an armed attack in Naushahro Abro village of Garhi Yasin taluka in Shikarpur district. Locals attributed the attack to a land dispute between Jatoi and Brohi tribes which had left two men dead a few months ago. They claimed that Advocate Ali Hassan Brohi and his relative Nazeer Brohi were killed in the targeted attack ostensibly by their Jatoi rivals in the land dispute. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2025, Page 15*)

Deal signed to digitise land records in Balochistan

The Balochistan government has entered into a formal agreement with the Land Information Management System (LIMS) to digitise land records across the province in line with modern standards. A MoU in this regard was signed by Board of Revenue's senior member Qambar Dashti and the LIMS chief executive officer. Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti was given a detailed briefing on the project. He was informed that in the first phase, land records in 25 districts of Balochistan will be digitised with support of Geographic Information System (GIS) technology. Through this initiative, land records will be integrated into a modern, secure and transparent system, leading to improved management of land-related matters and greater convenience for the public. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2025, Page 5*)

LHC CJ suspends operation of Punjab land protection ordinance

Lahore High Court (LHC) Chief Justice Aalia Neelum issued an interim order to suspend operation of the newly enacted Punjab Protection of Ownership of Immovable Property Ordinance, 2025, which empowers deputy commissioner-led committees to decide property disputes. Justice Neelum issued the ruling during a hearing of petitions by Abida Parveen and others that challenged decisions pertaining to property disputes taken under ordinance. She also suspended decisions taken under new legislation to take away possession of properties. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2025, Page 1*)

30pc of agri land affected by salinity, sodicity: experts

Pakistan is facing an escalating salinity and water-logging crisis that poses a serious threat to agricultural productivity, food security, and rural livelihoods. Nearly 30 percent of the country's agricultural land, around 6.67m hectares, is already affected by salinity and sodicity. The problem, driven by unsustainable irrigation practices, canal

seepage, inadequate drainage systems, and the excessive use of brackish groundwater, continues to expand at an alarming pace. Fertile land is being converted into saline soil at a rate of about 40,000 hectares annually, while salinity-related yield losses are estimated to exceed Rs 20bn each year. Experts noted that the Indus River system carries nearly 31.6m tonnes of salt annually, with approximately 20m tonnes deposited directly into canal command areas.

Additionally, more than 1.2m tubewells extract brackish groundwater, adding an estimated 45m tonnes of salt to agricultural soils every year. The impact is most severe in the irrigated plains spanning 19.43m hectares, while nearly 1.4m hectares of farmland have been completely abandoned due to severe salinization. In Indus River Delta, reduced freshwater flows have enabled seawater intrusion, rendering over 50pc of soil samples highly saline. Researchers warn that, amid climate change and weak drainage management, salinization rates could increase by up to 10 percent annually. In Punjab, large tracts of irrigated farmland are affected by salt accumulation and poor-quality groundwater, leading to yield losses of 30 to 40 percent in wheat and 25 to 35pc in rice in affected areas of Indus Plain. (*Business Recorder, December 29th, 2025, Page 2*)

Sindh cabinet takes major step towards digitalisation of land records

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presided over a cabinet meeting took a series of major decisions, including approval of the Sindh Land Revenue Bill for e-transfer and digitalisation of land records. Motor Third-Party Insurance across the province, allocation of land for Danish schools, agreements with The Citizens Foundation (TCF) for management of municipal schools, restructuring of Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Department's role, and guidelines for the Provincial and District Annual Development Programme (ADP) 2026-27.

The cabinet approved amendments in Sindh Land Revenue (Amendment) Bill, to enable digitalisation of land records and introduce an e-Transfer of Land Title System across the province, and referred the bill to the Sindh Assembly. The Cabinet was informed that the project, approved earlier on July 8, 2025, aims at rewriting and authenticating Records of Rights, digitising land data through a block chain-based database, and developing an e-transfer system for land titles. The pilot phase is being implemented in Dehs Palijani and Matiari of District Matiari, and Deh Bagerji of District Sukkur. (*Business Recorder, December 31st, 2025, Page 4*)

1.3 # Water

Variations in Chenab flow put agricultural cycle at risk

Alarmed by the abrupt variations in the flow of the Chenab River, which have caused consternation among farmers in Punjab, Pakistan has asked India to refrain from any unilateral manipulation of the river flow and fulfil its obligations under the Indus Waters Treaty. Following the Pahalgam attack in April this year, New Delhi had put the treaty

in abeyance as it blamed Pakistan for the deadly attack in held-Kashmir. Pakistan, however, maintains that India cannot act unilaterally and that the treaty is still in effect.

“The situation is really disturbing; the Chenab River’s control from upstream (India) is being handled by the Indian authorities through various run-of-the-river hydropower projects. When they flush water from the dams downstream (Pakistan) without informing us, the flow suddenly increases. And sometimes, they hold water for days, reducing flows massively,” a Punjab Irrigation Department official said. The situation was particularly alarming from Dec 9 to 18. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 1*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUT

Agriculture dept, SAU to enhance collaboration in research

Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) and the Sindh agriculture department have agreed to enhance collaboration in agricultural research, extension services and farmer-friendly advisory systems. The meeting focused on advancing sustainable agriculture, crop monitoring through satellite technology, introducing improved crop varieties, addressing climate change challenges, promoting farmer-centric practices, ensuring access to modern technologies at the farm level, and enhancing awareness among farming communities. These initiatives were intended to bridge the gap between academic learning and practical field exposure while substantially enhancing employability of young graduates. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 15*)

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

New platform launched to digitise agri finance

The Finance Division, in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and the Pakistan Banks Association (PBA), has launched Zarkheze, a digital platform aimed at digitising agricultural finance and expanding access to formal credit for small farmers. Under the initiative, farmers will be able to apply digitally through the Zarkheze app for financing of up to Rs1 million. After verification and agronomic assessment, applications will be forwarded to the bank chosen by the farmer for processing. The programme provides that 75 per cent of the financing will be disbursed in kind for the purchase of agricultural inputs through banks’ pre-approved agri-vendors.

Farmers will also receive advisory services through the Land Information Management System (LIMS). Officials said the product was designed not only to provide financing but also to improve productivity by ensuring access to quality inputs and advisory services. To encourage banks to increase lending to small farmers, the government has offered 10pc first-loss coverage and an operational cost subsidy of Rs10,000 per borrower for the net increase in banks’ outstanding borrowers. Commenting on the initiative, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said it was part of the government’s push for financial inclusion and rural development, adding that it would support national food security goals. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2025, Page 12*)

2.2 # Fertilizers

Sales of cement fall, urea surge in November: Urea sales surge

Urea sales surged 133pc month-on-month and 25pc year-on-year to 817,000 tonnes in November, signalling improved agriculture activity coupled with discounts offered by select manufacturers. Total DAP sales fell 1pc to 216,000 tonnes MoM and 14pc YoY in November. In 11M2025, total DAP offtake was 1.2m tonnes, down by 17pc YoY. Urea offtake declined 4pc to 5.37m tonnes in 11M2025 compared to 5.58m tonnes. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

2.3 # Pesticide

Fake pesticides flood Punjab, Sindh: CCP

Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has released its Competition Assessment Study on Pesticide Sector in Pakistan, noting that counterfeit and adulterated pesticides are widespread in Punjab and Sindh, damaging crops, causing major financial losses to farmers, and distorting competition in market. Report reviews the structure, regulatory framework, and overall performance of the pesticide sector, highlighting significant gaps that undermine fair competition and quality assurance. It notes that despite a large and expanding agricultural market, Pakistan has no local pesticide manufacturing capacity and relies entirely on imports. Weak enforcement, regulatory gaps, and complex approval procedures continue to create hurdles for legitimate businesses and expose farmers to low-quality products. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

Registration of pesticide products must remain solely under federal control: CCP

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has strongly recommended that the registration of pesticide products must remain solely under the jurisdiction of the federal government, specifically Department of Plant Protection (DPP). A centralized system for pesticide registration would prevent growing administrative complexities currently faced by manufacturers and importers due to overlapping federal and provincial requirements. CCP has also expressed serious concern that counterfeit and adulterated pesticides are widespread in Punjab and Sindh, damaging crops, causing major financial losses to farmers, and distorting competition in the market.

The CCP has released its “Competition Assessment Study of the Pesticide Sector in Pakistan,” and reviewed the structure, regulatory framework, and overall performance of the pesticide sector, highlighting significant gaps that undermine fair competition and quality assurance. The report noted that despite a large and expanding agricultural market, Pakistan has no local pesticide manufacturing and relies entirely on imports. (*Business Recorder, December 21st, 2025, Page 2*)

Pesticides products: CCP suggests re-evaluation of two-year shelf-life limitation

The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has recommended re-evaluation of the two-year shelf-life limitation on pesticide products in light of new technological advancements. According to the CCP report on pesticides, it is recommended that the

current two-year shelf-life restriction be re-evaluated. The review should be conducted in consultation with industry stakeholders, scientific experts, and government departments. Advancements in chemical formulation and preservation technologies have enhanced the stability of modern pesticide products, which enable them to remain effective beyond two years.

To support this, past data on pesticide usage should be carefully reviewed before approving future imports. Therefore, a science-based, flexible approach should be adopted, whereby the shelf-life of pesticide products is determined according to manufacturer-declared expiry dates backed by validated stability data and aligned with international best practices. (*Business Recorder, December 22nd, 2025, Page 1*)

2.4 # Industrial production of Agriculture

Balochistan govt okays use of hydroponics technology

In a landmark move to modernise agriculture and tackle severe water scarcity, the Balochistan government has approved the use of hydroponics technology across the province. Hydroponics technology is a soil-free farming method using nutrient-rich water to grow plants, providing direct access to water, oxygen, and minerals for faster growth, higher yields, and less water usage, suitable for controlled environments like vertical farms, greenhouses, or even space, using inert media (like perlite or coco coir) for root support or none at all.

This technology enables year-round cultivation, reduces pesticide needs, saves space, and offers precise control over growing conditions (pH, nutrients, light). The decision was taken during a meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on the Public Sector Development Programme, chaired by CM Sarfraz Bugti at his secretariat. The meeting endorsed a major project to establish hydroponic facilities and promote horticulture.

The meeting agreed that hydroponics — an advanced farming system that uses minimal water while delivering higher yields — is ideally suited for Balochistan’s arid climate. In the pilot phase, the project will be launched in 10 districts and successful results will pave way for its province-wide adoption. The initiative is expected to boost agricultural productivity, create jobs and accelerate economic growth. The meeting also reviewed ongoing irrigation and dam projects in province. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2025, Page 5*)

2.4 # Seed

Guard introduces two new OP Basmati varieties

Pakistan’s rice sector is poised for a major uplift as Guard Agricultural Research & Services Ltd (Guard) has successfully developed and advanced two Open-Pollinated (OP) Basmati varieties — Guard-101 and Guard-102. The varieties will be available for commercial cultivation in the 2026 season. Both lines were formally registered with the Punjab Seed Council in 2023 after extensive research, genetic verification, and field

performance trials. Having completed the pre-basic and basic seed stages, the company has multiplied seed this year, setting stage for commercial rollout in the 2026 crop year.

Guard Agricultural Research & Services Ltd Chief Executive Shahzad Ali Malik told that the yield potential of Guard-101 and Guard-102 ranges between 50–55 maunds per acre, comparable to leading varieties such as Super Basmati 1121 and 1509. During development, the varieties even demonstrated yields of 60–65 maunds per acre. Grain length, traditional Basmati aroma, and cooking quality have been fully preserved through rigorous DNA authentication performed by Eurofins.

For seed multiplication, Guard allocated 30 acres to Guard-101 and 71 acres to Guard-102 across Narang, Sheikhupura and Manga Mandi (Lahore). This season, the company produced 59 tonnes of Guard-102 and 27 tonnes of Guard-101 seed for commercial sowing. DNA reports compared the new varieties with widely grown market lines and confirmed that Guard-101 and Guard-102 possess distinct genetic identities, reinforcing Pakistan’s varietal integrity claims. (*Business Recorder, December 8th, 2025, Page 2*)

Govt claims significant progress in seed sector

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) claims significant progress in institutional reforms and modernisation initiatives aimed at strengthening Pakistan’s seed sector and ensuring nationwide availability of quality, certified seed for farmers. To address long-standing structural issues—including fragmented seed policies, weak regulatory oversight, limited access to improved and climate-resilient varieties, and outdated certification mechanisms—the government enacted the Seed (Amendment) Act, 2024, says a press release of the ministry.

Under the act, the National Seed Development and Regulatory Authority (NSDRA) was established as a specialised body mandated to enhance regulatory oversight, promote varietal development, and ensure the supply of genetically true-to-type seed. As part of the reforms, the Federal Seed Certification & Registration Department (FSC&RD) was integrated into NSDRA. The transition involved strategic rightsizing to optimise human resources and strengthen technical capacity, enabling the authority to function as an efficient, performance-oriented regulator across the seed value chain, it says.

For digital transformation, an MIS-based digital system has been introduced to provide end-to-end traceability of seed sector activities, including registration and renewal of seed companies, variety approval, registration of nurseries and seed processing plants, fruit plant certification, internationally accredited seed testing, and market monitoring. The Truth in Labelling Scheme has also been notified and implemented to promote transparency and accountability through performance-based regulation.

On the policy front, NSDRA has submitted the National Seed Policy 2025 and the Agriculture Biotechnology Policy 2025, along with crop-specific strategies. Regulatory enforcement has led to the cancellation of 430 non-compliant seed companies, while a

new categorisation system has been introduced based on research and development capacity and technology adoption. Internationally harmonized certification protocols have been developed for olive, mango, and citrus crops. The authority has also regulated the inter-provincial movement of 221,731 tonnes of wheat seed, improving certified seed availability across provinces and contributing to higher seed replacement rates, including 67 percent in Sindh during the current Rabi season.

Research coordination and varietal innovation have been strengthened through the digital revamping and activation of the Variety Evaluation Committee (VEC) across major crops. During FY 2024–25, 208 improved crop varieties were approved, covering wheat, rice, cotton, maize, fodder, cereals, oilseeds, and horticultural crops. A dedicated VEC fund disbursement mechanism has been established to ensure timely support for varietal trials and approvals.

Additionally, NSDRA facilitated the import of elite germplasm from CGIAR centers, including CIMMYT, and convened a national consultation with heads of agricultural research institutions on Dec 3, 2025, to develop a unified roadmap for varietal research and development. These reforms are part of a broader effort to enhance regulatory effectiveness, institutional capacity, and coordination across seed sector, ultimately improving farmer access to high-quality seed, boosting agricultural productivity, and strengthening national food security. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2025, Page 2*)

Seed sector reform

The Ministry of National Food Security & Research claims significant progress in reforms and initiatives aimed at strengthening Pakistan’s seed sector to ensure the availability of quality, certified seed for farmers. It says the Seed (Amendment) Act, 2024, will help address long-standing structural issues facing the seed sector. These include: fragmented policies, weak regulations, lack of access to climate-resilient varieties, and outdated certification mechanisms. The law is being projected to reset the sector, shifting it from a fragmented and weakly regulated one to a performance-driven regulatory framework. Indeed, the initiatives signal an attempt to consolidate market oversight, streamline certification and align regulation with seed development.

One of the key reforms is regulatory tightening and institutional discipline. The cancellation of hundreds of non-compliant seed companies and the introduction of a categorisation system based on R&D capacity indicate a move away from liberal licensing towards quality-based market participation. At the same time, internationally harmonised certification protocols for selected high-value crops point to an export- and standards-oriented approach. Digitalisation is being positioned as the backbone of enforcement and transparency. The reforms are expected to improve traceability across seed value chain and improve information dissemination between regulators, companies and farmers. If effectively implemented, it could help resolve issues of counterfeit and substandard seed varieties that have brought down yields and affected quality.

On the supply side, the reforms must encourage development of seed varieties that are resilient to climate change. More importantly, the revival of the Variety Evaluation Committee will reduce approval timelines. Overall, the reforms reflect an ambition to modernise the seed sector through stronger regulation, digital systems and closer research-regulatory linkages. But success will depend on the execution of regulatory oversight to weed out unscrupulous players. The presence of poor quality seeds is a major reason for the low crop yields, as seen, for example, in decline of the cotton crop in Pakistan. The turnaround seen in the rice sector due to development of hybrid seeds by the private sector companies shows that the crop sector can be revived and agricultural exports increased far more quickly than industrial exports, provided government executes reforms it has initiated to facilitate legitimate and honest seed companies in the country. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 6*)

2.5 # Subsidies

Farmers to get subsidies for ginger cultivation

Under the Agriculture Transformation Plan of the Punjab government, ‘Ginger Festival’ was organised in Dawari village of Rawalpindi to elevate ginger cultivation in the Potohar region. The festival aimed to promote ginger cultivation and its supply chain in the Potohar region. Director General of Agriculture Research, Punjab, Dr Sajidur Rehman stated that the Punjab Agriculture Department has taken several steps to promote ginger cultivation so that local cultivation of this crop can be increased and its import can be reduced to reduce the country’s expenses.

He further emphasised that the Vegetable Department of Ayub Agricultural Research Institute, Faisalabad, is working to introduce ginger cultivation and its varieties, and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has allocated a huge amount for the promotion of ginger cultivation in the agriculture transformation plan in very region. Under this plan, he said that farmers are being given subsidies to cultivate ginger on 100 acres of land in Potohar region in three years, which includes the provision of seeds as well as subsidies on drip irrigation systems and tunnels. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 4*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Rabi crops: PMD warns below-normal rainfall may hinder early growth

Pakistan is likely to face a drier-than-usual start to the winter season along with above-normal temperatures, a development that could affect agriculture, water availability, air quality and public health, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The PMD warns that below-normal rainfall in December 2025 may reduce soil moisture in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, potentially hindering early growth of Rabi crops. Farmers in rain-fed regions may rely more on irrigation, increasing costs and further straining water resources. Warmer temperatures may support pest and disease activity in Punjab, Sindh and KP plains, while prolonged dry spells could intensify fog and smog in the country’s lowlands. Health authorities may

also need to prepare for an extended dengue period until colder conditions set in by January and February 2026. The PMD notes that the September–October–November 2025 period remained mostly dry, with national rainfall standing about six percent below normal. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 11*)

Seed watchdog cutbacks spark yield fears

The federal government’s decision to send nearly 70 per cent of the staff of the Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department (FSC&RD) to the surplus pool has triggered alarm nationwide, with experts warning of serious disruption to certified seed production and a possible record fall in per-acre yields of key crops, including cotton, wheat and rice. For decades, the FSC&RD has been responsible for registering seed companies, regulating and monitoring certified seed production, and taking action against the sale of substandard seed. Operating under the federal government, it maintained offices in most major agricultural centres and played a crucial role in ensuring farmers’ access to quality seed despite limited resources.

Experts say the sharp staff reduction, part of a broader move to downsize or abolish departments, has left FSC&RD offices severely understaffed. Although the department has not been formally shut down, the transfer of most of its workforce has effectively paralysed operations, raising fears that farmers will be forced to rely on low-quality seed. This, they warn, could result in a record decline in per-acre yields of cotton, wheat, rice and oilseed crops, directly hurting farm incomes and pushing Pakistan towards costly imports running into billions of dollars.

Cotton Gainers Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq said Rahim Yar Khan held a unique position in the seed sector, producing at least 70pc of the country’s certified seed. Around 1,150 public and private seed companies operate across Pakistan, more than 200 of them in Rahim Yar Khan, producing certified seed of cotton, wheat, rice, mustard, mung bean and sesame. He said reports that the federal government was considering two or three alternative models for certified seed production had failed to ease concerns, as the lack of clarity had already created uncertainty. Farmers, he warned, could face acute shortages of certified cotton and rice seed in the current season. Mr Haq also noted that the government had decided to introduce a three-tier monitoring system — Green, Yellow and Red — for imported seeds, including cotton. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2025, Page 9*)

4.1 # Cash Crop

High-yield seeds key to revive cotton crop

Representatives from the cotton industry have called on the federal government to urgently finalise Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) agreements with major cotton-exporting countries, emphasising that the revival of the country’s cotton crop depends on timely access to advanced, high-yield seed varieties. Shahzad Ali Malik, the founding chairman of the Pakistan Hi-Tech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA), believes that

while the government's recent decision to lift restrictions on cotton seed imports is a positive development, Pakistan will not reap significant benefits unless the PRA arrangements between the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) and international plant protection organisations are finalised promptly. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

Flat cotton output triggers calls for policy reforms

The local cotton industry is facing a deepening crisis as the data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) showed a decline in national arrivals and growing stress on the ginning and spinning sectors. Experts warn that without urgent policy reforms, research investments and protection from unchecked imports, the economic strain on the entire cotton value chain will intensify. According to Business Club analyst Haseeb Ahmad, total cotton arrivals as of Nov 30 stood at 5,133,620 bales, down from last year's 5,190,725 bales. He noted that unsold stocks have reached 667,257 bales. "The numbers paint a troubling picture. We are producing less, consuming less, and relying more on imports," Ahmad remarked. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2025, Page 9*)

Farmers want official sugar cane rate fixed at Rs650 per maund

Farmers have demanded the Sindh government to fix the rate of sugar cane officially at Rs650 per maund and allow them to immediately harvest and deliver it to sugar mills to save the commodity from damages. They put forward the demand at a meeting of local farmers held at the lawn of a local landlord, Mansoor Cheema. Speaking on the occasion, a landlord, Iqbal Jan Sarhandi, said the farmers suffered huge expenses in the cultivation of cane crop, its harvest and transportation to sugar mills; "we only demand the rate of cane as rate of three kilogramme of sugar". He urged the government to take notice of the grievances of the farmers who were the backbone of the agriculture economy of the country. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2025, Page 15*)

Steps aimed at revival of Pakistan's cotton production approved by Dar

An inter-ministerial meeting has approved measures on implementation plan for the revival of cotton including collection of cess through FBR. Pakistan's cotton production has fallen sharply to 6.8m bales in the 2025-26 season — 34pc below the target of 10.18 million bales. The estimated cotton production is 6.85 million bales from 2.0 million hectares. The Cotton Commissioner, Ministry of National Food Security & Research (MNFS&R) gave a detailed presentation on the implementation plan for the revival of cotton, prepared after incorporating the recommendations and proposals of the All Pakistan Textile Mills Association (Aptma).

Representative of Aptma proposed establishment of an independent "Cotton Board" on the pattern of the United States, to oversee all cotton-related matters. Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research informed the forum that the merger of the Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) and Pakistan Central Cotton Committee (PCCC) is in process, and the proposed revamping of the PCCC would address concerns raised by the cotton industry. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2025, Page 1*)

Punjab sugar output tops 0.43m tonnes this season

Sugar mills in Punjab have so far produced slightly over 0.43 million tonnes of sugar during the ongoing crushing season, supported by uninterrupted operations across the province, according to Cane Commissioner Punjab Amjad Hafeez. He stated that mills have completed crushing of 5.41 million tonnes of sugarcane to date, while total sugar stocks in Punjab have reached 0.54 million tonnes as of December 9. These include 112,116 tonnes carried over from last year, a volume he described as comfortably above provincial requirements. The Cane Commissioner noted a marked reduction in sugar prices since the start of the season. The ex-mill price, previously ranging between Rs171–178 per kg, has declined to Rs154–163 per kg, reflecting a drop of Rs15–17 per kg. Retail prices have similarly fallen by Rs10–15 per kg, with expectations of further easing in the coming days, he hoped. He said growers are currently being paid between Rs375 and Rs480 per 40 kg for their sugarcane, and that mills are ensuring timely payments. However, mills are deducting Rs2.5 to Rs5 per 40 kg under the cess head. (*Business Recorder, December 11th, 2025, Page 2*)

Karachi Cotton Association fails to issue cotton spot rates after 52 years

A wave of concern swept through Pakistan's cotton sector after the Karachi Cotton Association (KCA) failed to issue the daily cotton spot rate for the first time in 52 years, disrupting bank financing to ginners and textile mills and suspending Pakistan's representation of daily cotton prices in international markets. The sudden action has triggered serious concerns among cotton stakeholders in Pakistan and abroad. KCA building has long been regarded as a symbol of organised cotton trading system.

Since 1935, KCA has been issuing the daily cotton spot rate, which serves as a benchmark for domestic trade, bank financing, insurance valuation and international market representation. The crisis emerged after the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and Evacuee Trust Property Board declared historic Karachi Cotton Association/Cotton Exchange building, established in 1933, as federal government property and took its possession. Authorities sealed building and ordered immediate evacuation of offices of over 320 registered cotton brokers, cotton importers and exporters, as well as major textile groups operating from the premises. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2025, Page 9*)

Cotton output misses targets by wide margin

The country's cotton sector has expressed serious concern over the sharp shortfall in cotton production against the targets set by the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) for the 2025-26 season. The FCA had fixed cotton cultivation targets for Punjab at 3.46 million acres with a production goal of 5.553m bales (170 kg each), for Sindh it was 1.556m acres with a production target of 4.040m bales. However, the data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA) up to Dec 15 shows that actual production stood at only 2.453m bales in Punjab and 2.848m bales in Sindh, triggering widespread concern across the entire cotton value chain.

Despite Sindh's production target being 37 per cent lower than Punjab's, cotton output in Sindh remained surprisingly 61pc higher than Punjab's by mid-December. A total of 5.3m bales had arrived at ginning factories across the country by Dec 15, reflecting only a one per cent increase compared to the same period last year. The PCGA report shows that during the said period, 2.453m bales reached ginning factories in Punjab, registering a five percent decline compared to last year, while Sindh recorded 2.848m bales, showing a three percent increase. During this time, textile mills purchased 4.491m bales from ginning factories, while exporters bought 175,000 bales.

Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsan-ul-Haq has questioned the FCA's projected per-acre yield figures. According to FCA targets, per-acre cotton productivity this year was estimated at 9.80 bales in Punjab and 15.84 bales in Sindh. "It is incomprehensible how Sindh's per-acre cotton yield can be 61 percent higher than Punjab's," he remarked. He criticised the FCA for issuing unrealistic national cotton production estimates for several consecutive years. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

17-day closure of cotton exchange creates crisis

Nearly 17 days have passed since the Karachi Cotton Exchange (KCE) was shut, raising serious concerns under a government that claims to promote business, economic growth and an export target of \$60 billion. The unexpected move by the Evacuee Property Trust Board (EPTB) to take over the KCE premises has forced the closure of an institution that had remained operational for 52 years, affecting around 320 registered cotton brokers. Brokers say they are incurring losses running into billions of rupees due to the complete halt in trading, while the textile industry, particularly spinning mills, is struggling to obtain working capital from banks because cotton rates are unavailable. No cotton spot rates have been issued since the EPTB took possession of the building on Dec 12. The cotton and cotton-based textile sector contributes about 60 per cent to the country's export earnings and provides up to 70 per cent of direct and indirect employment nationwide. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2025, Page 9*)

4.2 # Food Crop

Millers slam Sindh govt's 'dual standards' in wheat supply

Flour millers have criticised Sindh government's dual standard of providing a limited wheat quota to millers under the Wheat Food Policy FY25-26 while offering unlimited wheat to traders. "It appears that the Sindh government's subsidy for consumers is set to end up in the pockets of traders, as provincial administration is supplying wheat at Rs8,000 per 100kg bag, while traders are selling the same to millers at Rs9,500," said Abdul Junaid, Sindh zone chairman of the Pakistan Flour Mills Association (PFMA). He added that it was unclear whether the subsidy of Rs1,500 per 100kg bag was meant for consumers, traders or end users. He said the government had earmarked Rs85 billion for the subsidy fund. Millers in Karachi and interior Sindh had been allocated only 8,000 to 15,000 wheat bags per mill from Landhi godowns 1, 2 and 3, and nearly half of the grain available at these godowns is substandard. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2025, Page 9*)

Transparency in wheat subsidy system imperative: Saleem Memon

Muhammad Saleem Memon, President Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry (HCSTSI), expressed serious concern over the emerging information regarding the wheat subsidy and Food Pass Policy for 2025-26 in Sindh. He emphasized that transparency, balance, and public interest must be prioritized to ensure that the relief provided by the government truly reaches the end consumers. Sindh government provides a 100-kg bag of wheat under subsidy at approximately PKR 8,000, while in the market; the same wheat is reportedly being supplied to flour mills at around PKR 9,500 per bag, creating a difference of roughly PKR 1,500 per bag.

Saleem Memon also expressed concern over wheat stored in various warehouses for several years. He urged that technical inspections and joint assessments be conducted to prevent potential public health risks associated with the use of old or deteriorated wheat. Regarding daily allocations to flour mills, he noted that Sindh's mills receive only limited quantities ranging from 8,000 to 15,000 bags per day. Meanwhile, reports suggest that large quantities of wheat are being transported to other provinces, which may lead to supply challenges and adversely affect local consumers.

He demanded that wheat allotment policy be comprehensively reviewed, clarifying the roles of traders and flour mills in a balanced manner. He called for transparent audits of all stocks and distribution, timely identification and disposal of spoiled wheat, and above all, ensuring that wheat intended for Sindh's population is not diverted elsewhere but reaches consumers directly. (*Business Recorder, December 26th, 2025, Page 9*)

3.3 # Fruits

Ghazi University starts olive cultivation training for students, women

A training programme on olive cultivation was launched at the Ghazi University with the aim to educate students, particularly local women, about olive cultivation and its business opportunities. The programme was launched in collaboration with the Pakistan Education Endowment Fund (PEEF) Islamabad and varsity's Department of Sociology. VC Prof Dr Ashfaq Ahmad Chattha said that adopting innovative agricultural practices was crucial in the current climate change scenario, focusing on crops that provide more profit with less labour and cost. (*Dawn, December 27th, 2025, Page 2*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Dairy

Balochistan CM plans to relocate dairy farms out of Quetta

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti approved a series of reform measures aimed at improving departmental efficiency, safeguarding public health and strengthening transparent governance, including a plan to relocate dairy farms from Quetta city. One of the key decisions, taken during a meeting, was the phased relocation of dairy farms from within the city to areas outside municipal limits. To ensure effective implementation, a special committee was formed to review all aspects of the plan and

submit a comprehensive report within one week. The meeting also approved departmental recruitments in the livestock and dairy development department. The chief minister noted that improvements in livestock and dairy sector would create new employment opportunities across the province. The initiative is expected to significantly enhance milk and meat production, strengthen the provincial economy and improve the standard of living. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 5*)

4.2 # Fisheries

Illegal ice fishing in Kunhar River threatens endangered trout

Illegal ice fishing, which poses a serious threat to endangered trout fish, is continuing unabated in Kunhar River following the recent snowfall in the Kaghan Valley. “I have witnessed ice fishing where hunters use strips of nets and retrieve the caught trout from holes beneath snow-covered water,” Hasnain Nisar, a local resident. The trout fish, which is considered among the tastiest, is found only in the Kunhar River. “This is the breeding season for the endangered indigenous trout species, and fishing through nets or carving watercourses from Kunhar River is an attempt to drive it towards extinction,” Mr Nisar said. He said trout fish was sold during the tourism season for over Rs5,000 per kilogramme in Naran and rest of the valley. “Though some civic agencies working in Kaghan Valley claim to have released trout fry into the Kunhar River for breeding in recent years, no practical work has so far been launched for its evolution and preservation in the true sense,” Mr Nisar added. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 8*)

Export-led development of fisheries, aquaculture: govt initiative highlighted

The federal government in collaboration with the provincial governments has initiated various initiatives for utilization of the immense potential of the fisheries and Aquaculture sub sector for economic growth, employment generation, nutritional security and boosting of exports. Talking to this scribe, Omar Hayat Khan, an expert on fisheries, aquaculture and environment, said that the initiative is supporting export led development of Fisheries and Aquaculture has started paying dividends in increasing the quality of fish and its export revenue. The blue revolution policy would be applied to area of Trout Aquaculture in Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir as well as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. (*Business Recorder, December 29th, 2025, Page 3*)

4.2 # Poultry

Punjab bans use of wheat in poultry feed as govt moves to avert shortage

The Punjab government imposed a ban on use of wheat in poultry feed manufacturing under Section 144, citing an urgent need to protect the province’s staple food supply and prevent a potential shortage. The order follows a detailed report from the Price Control and Commodities Management Department, which revealed that 513,376 metric tonnes of hoarded wheat had been identified during the ongoing anti-hoarding drive and reintroduced into the formal supply chain.

Officials said the discovery of such a large quantity of wheat, much of it held by poultry feed mills, raised serious concerns about the diversion of edible wheat into non-food uses at a time when the province continues to face pressure on staple grain availability. According to the Home Department, the practice of using wheat for poultry feed risks reducing supplies meant for flour mills and the general public, potentially leading to market instability and price increases. The government said the situation demanded “immediate prevention and speedy remedy” to ensure the sustained availability of wheat, flour and roti throughout Punjab. (*The News, December 7th, 2025, Page 12*)

Rs155m cartelisation case: LHC refuses to stay CAT’s proceedings against eight poultry firms

The Lahore High Court (LHC) has refused to stay proceedings of the Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) in the Rs 155 million cartelization case against eight poultry companies and the poultry association for price-fixing of day-old broiler chicks (DOCs). The petitions were filed by Supreme Farms (Private) Limited and Sabir Poultry, seeking to halt CAT proceedings on appeals filed by poultry hatcheries and the poultry association against CCP’s order. The petitioners requested the court to restrain CAT from deciding the appeals during the pendency of their constitutional challenges. Supreme Farms challenged the constitutionality of Section 34 of the Competition Act, 2010, which empowers CCP to enter and search premises, and Section 53, which allows CCP to seek assistance from other authorities and agencies for collection of evidence.

The petitioner also sought a stay on CAT proceedings and requested that the Tribunal be barred from relying on forensic reports prepared by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and data obtained from the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), which were relied upon in its order. It is pertinent to note that during search and inspection operations, the CCP teams recovered electronic material evidence from the offices of the poultry association and several hatcheries. The materials were later forensically analyzed and used by the CCP to pass its order. Sabir Poultry filed a separate petition before the LHC on similar grounds, requesting the court to restrain CAT from issuing a decision based on evidence obtained from cellular phones and PTA data. The LHC did not accept the pleas seeking a stay or suspension of CAT proceedings. However, the court will continue to hear the petitions on their merits. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2025, Page 3*)

5 # TRADE

Exports dip for fourth straight month

Merchandise exports shrank by 15.4 per cent year-on-year in November, marking the fourth consecutive month of decline in the current fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. The downward trend has raised alarm among policymakers amid fears of weakening global demand and a possible slump in foreign orders. Pakistan’s merchandise exports dipped 15.4pc to \$2.398 billion in November from \$2.833bn in the same month last year. On a month-on-month basis, the export proceeds fell 15.8pc in

November. In first five months (July-November) of current fiscal year, export proceeds recorded negative growth of 6.39pc to \$12.84bn, compared with \$13.72bn a year ago.

In July this year, the exports posted a growth of 16.9pc, a sharp turnaround from the negative growth recorded in the previous three consecutive months. In the previous fiscal year, export proceeds stood at \$32.1bn, compared with \$30.675bn over the corresponding months of last year, an increase of 4.67pc. Export growth fell to single digits in October last year and progressively slowed in the following months, eventually hitting negative territory in February. Export growth returned in March with a modest 3.08pc increase, but fell back into negative territory in April and the following months.

Imports grew 5.42pc to \$5.25bn in November from \$4.98bn over the corresponding month of last year. Month-on-month, imports decreased 13.8pc in November. In first five months (July and November), import bill grew 13.3pc to \$28.32bn this year, up from \$24.99bn over the year-ago period. Imports rose 6.57pc to \$58.38bn in FY25 compared to \$54.78bn in previous year. In November, trade deficit rose 33pc to \$2.85bn from \$2.15bn over corresponding month of last year. Trade deficit between July and November stood at \$15.47bn, up from \$11.27bn over the corresponding months of the previous year, indicating a 37.2pc increase. Trade deficit in FY25 increased by 9pc to \$26.27bn from \$24.11bn over last year. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

Jul-Nov period: Trade deficit swells to \$37.17bn on falling exports

Exports continued showing a downward trend for the second consecutive month, declining by 15.35 percent in November on a Year-on-Year (YoY) basis and swelled the trade deficit to USD 37.17 billion in the first five months of FY26, which is USD 5 billion higher than the total export proceeds of FY25. The statistics released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed a very gloomy picture of the country's exports, which declined to USD2.4 billion compared to USD2.83 billion in the same period of last year. On a Month-on-Month (MoM) basis, the exports are down by 15.8 percent compared to the export proceeds of October.

The imports showed an increase of 5.42 percent on a YoY basis, reaching USD5.25 billion in November compared to USD4.98 billion in the corresponding period of last year. However, on a MoM basis, the imports declined by 13.7 percent as imports were USD6.1 billion in October. In the July-November period of FY26, the total export proceeds stood at USD 12.84 billion compared to USD 13.7 billion in the same period of last year. Whereas imports reached USD28.3 billion in the July-November period of FY26 compared to USD25 billion in the same period of last year, showing an increase of 13.26 percent. Until now, the textile exports showed positive signs mainly because of an exceptional increase of 32 percent in textile exports in the month of July.

Food exports and especially the rice exports were jolted by the floods. In the July-October FY26 period, food exports declined by 35 percent. Among food items, the major casualty is rice, which exports nosedived by 46.4 percent with a decline of 39

percent in Basmati rice and a 49.65 percent reduction in IRRI-6 &9 rice. The aftermath of floods hit the vegetable and tobacco exports badly, which are down by 41 percent and 28.5 percent, respectively. During the corresponding period, among the food groups, only fish & fish preparations and fruit exports showed an upward trend of 12.8 percent and 11.78 percent, respectively.

Meanwhile, the export of services in the July-October period of FY26 increased by 15.95 percent to reach USD3 billion, and imports also up by 12 percent to reach USD4.1 billion. Alone in October, the services exports remained 825 million, up by 2.45 percent on a MoM basis and 17.61 percent on a YoY basis. Whereas the import of services in October reached 1.05 billion, up by 4 percent on a MoM basis and 12.81 percent on a YoY basis. (*Business Recorder, December 3rd, 2025, Page 1*)

Exports to five central Asian states contract

Pakistan's exports to five central Asian countries (CACs) shrank 9.59 per cent year-on-year during the first four months of the current fiscal year. The country's exports to the region have yet to attain their full potential. Similarly, imports from Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan to Pakistan have dipped 63.59 percent despite regular high-profile visits to increase the volume of bilateral trade. In absolute terms, the value of Pakistan's exports to the five central Asian countries — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — dipped by 9.59pc to \$62.545 million in July-October 2025-26 from \$69.183m. Imports from the region dipped by 63.59pc to \$15.795m in 4MFY26 from \$43.392m. The majority of these imports came from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Pakistan's trade with CACs is between \$400 and \$500m annually via Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has already implemented its transit trade agreement with Pakistan. Under the agreement, Uzbekistan has started importing goods under the transit agreement as well. The exports to almost all countries posted a negative growth except Uzbekistan. Similarly, imports dropped during the first four months of current fiscal year. Exports to Turkmenistan stood at \$0.505m in 4MFY26 from \$0.663m over corresponding months last year, showing a decline of 23.83pc. Imports from Turkmenistan rose 12.64pc to \$3.92m against \$3.48m over the corresponding months last year.

The export to Uzbekistan surged 51.63pc to \$32.95m in 4MFY26 against \$21.73m in the corresponding months last year. Imports plunged by 73.85pc to \$8.49m from \$32.47m. Shipments to Kazakhstan dropped 16.72pc to \$24.54m in 4MFY26 compared to \$29.47m. Imports stood at \$0.263m against \$0.313m over the corresponding months of last year. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2025, Page 9*)

Trade deficit with nine states swells to \$6.22bn

Pakistan's trade gap with nine neighbouring countries widened by 39.33 per cent to \$6.221 billion in the first five months 2025-26 compared to \$4.465bn in the same period last year. The soaring deficit is mainly the outcome of a decline in Pakistan's overall

exports to regional countries, mainly led by a drop in exports to China, followed by Afghanistan. Pakistan has suspended all kinds of trade, including exports to Afghanistan, since Oct 10. A marginal increase was also recorded in exports to India, but in value its volume is very negligible. The shipments to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka registered negative growth during the period under review, according to the latest data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan.

In FY25, Pakistan's trade deficit with nine neighbouring countries expanded by 29.42pc to \$12.297bn compared to \$9.502bn in the same period last year. The value of Pakistan's exports to nine countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — dipped 17.05pc to \$1.635 billion in July-November FY26 from \$1.971bn over the same period last year. In FY25, Pakistan's exports to nine countries rose 1.49pc to \$4.401bn from \$4.336bn the preceding year. Contrary to this, imports surged 22.06pc to \$7.856bn in 5MFY26 from \$6.436bn in 5MFY25. Further analysis showed that imports from China grew by 22.90pc to \$7.713bn in 5MFY26 from \$6.275bn in the same period last year. In FY25, imports from China stood at \$16.312bn, up by 20.79pc from \$13.504bn in the preceding year. The bulk of imports in the region are sourced from China, followed partially by India and Bangladesh. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

Sost Dry Port: Over 2,403 Chinese goods granted duty & tax relief

Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) exempted over 2,403 Chinese goods from payment of sales tax, income tax and federal excise duty being cleared from Customs Dry Port Sost meant for exclusive consumption in Gilgit-Baltistan. The FBR has notified S.R.O. 2488 (I)/2025 to issue a special procedure for clearance of goods from Customs Dry Port Sost. These rules shall apply for clearance of goods from Customs Dry port at Sost. The sales tax, income tax and federal excise duty payable on imports covered under this notification shall not be levied provided that consignment wise authorization is issued on-line in Customs Computerized Clearance system by the duly notified authority of Government of Gilgit-Baltistan in the format as provided in the said system. (*Business Recorder, December 27th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trade deficit with Middle East swells to \$5.9bn

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East swelled by 7.88 per cent during the first five months of 2025-26, driven by a surge in imports and a decline in exports to the region. In absolute terms, the trade gap with the Middle East widened to \$5.948 billion in July-November from \$5.514bn in the same period last year, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY25, the deficit with the region increased 7.37pc to \$13.974bn from \$13.014bn in the preceding year. The swelling trade deficit is a cause for concern among policymakers, primarily due to the rising influx of petroleum products from the region.

The increase was noted in imports from the region, reflecting higher oil imports from United Arab Emirates, followed by Saudi Arabia and other countries. Exports to the Middle East fell 9.85pc to \$1.217bn in 5MFY26 from \$1.350bn over the corresponding months of last year. In FY25, exports to the Middle East fell 1.52pc to \$3.107bn from \$3.155bn over the same period last year. At the same time, Pakistan's imports from the Middle East saw an increase of 4.39pc to \$7.166bn in 5MFY26 from \$6.864bn over the corresponding months of last year. In FY25, imports surged 5.64pc to \$17.081bn from \$16.169bn over the same period last year. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2025, Page 9*)

5.1 # Export

Fruit, green exporters eye \$2bn target in three years

A comprehensive plan has been finalised to boost the country's exports to \$2 billion within the next three years from \$700 million, announced Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters and Merchants Association (PFVA) Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed. He said this year, 25 fruit, vegetable and value-added exporting companies participated in FoodAg, while buyers from 35 countries expressed interest in Pakistani produce and value-added items. Addressing a joint press conference with Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Secretary Shehryar Taj, Mr Waheed claimed that for the first time, Pakistan received export orders from the United Kingdom, Germany and Oman during the FoodAg Pakistan held in the last week of November. Mr Shehryar said expected business deals worth \$730m emerged at the expo, strengthening Pakistan's position as a reliable and strong partner in the global agricultural and food supply chain. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 9*)

REAP raises alarm over declining export of rice

Group Chairman, Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) Abdul Rahim Janoo said that things are not good for rice as exports are going down the hill, and this year presents serious challenges for rice exporters, many of whom are operating at a loss, barely able to cover overheads. Exchanging views at a meeting during the visit of REAP delegation to KCCI, Abdul Rahim Janoo warned that current trends are worrying, as exports are now declining, and the sector is facing multiple challenges including burdensome taxes and policy uncertainty. Janoo recalled that when he assumed charge as Chairman REAP, Pakistan's rice exports stood at roughly USD 300 million.

Under REAP's active promotion, including trade delegations, global outreach and marketing efforts such as the Biryani Festival, exports had surged, reaching nearly USD 4 billion but, unfortunately, these were descending this year. He expressed concern that many rice exporters who run parallel businesses in real estate, stock market, or earning on deposits are increasingly subjected to more taxes, further eroding investor confidence and hurting rice-export activities. (*Business Recorder, December 3rd, 2025, Page 12*)

Non-textile exports dip over 14pc in July-October

Pakistan's exports of non-textile products shrank 14.45 per cent to \$4.056 billion in the first four months from \$4.741bn over the corresponding months of last year, according to data compiled by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The country's raw food exports declined in 4MFY26, primarily due to a significant drop in rice shipments, marking the first downturn after 19 consecutive months of growth. However, a paltry growth was noted in the export of value-added non-textile products during the period under review. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2025, Page 9*)

Kinno exports begin

Exporters so far shipped around 6,000 tonnes of kinno to the Middle East, Sri Lanka and the Philippines since Dec 1. The All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporters, Importers and Merchants Association (PFVA) has set a citrus export target of 300,000 tonnes for this season, which is expected to generate \$110 million. Last season, Pakistan exported 250,000 tonnes of kinno, which fetched \$95m. PFVA Patron-in-Chief Waheed Ahmed said this season has seen a bumper crop, with total production expected to reach 2.7m tonnes compared to 1.7m tonnes last season.

Despite the increase in production, Pakistan's kinno exports are still 50pc lower than the 550,000 tonnes exported five years ago, he said, attributing the main reason for this decline to a lack of research and development in citrus cultivation and reliance on old varieties that cannot withstand environmental challenges, rather than introducing new ones. Mr Waheed, in a statement, said the PFVA has presented short-term, medium-term, and long-term plans to the government to boost kinno exports. If implemented, Pakistan can introduce new varieties and increase kinno exports to \$400m within the next five years. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2025, Page 9*)

Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Ltd to handle Reko Diq's copper-gold exports

Pakistan International Bulk Terminal Ltd (PIBTL) signed an agreement with Reko Diq Mining Company (RDMC) for the handling and export of its copper-gold concentrates. The signing follows PIBT's execution of a Supplemental Implementation Agreement with the Port Qasim Authority (PQA), enabling PIBT to handle, store, and export copper-gold commodities, including minerals, metals, and other natural earth resources, said a press release. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 9*)

Premier approves halal meat export policy

PM Shehbaz Sharif approved Halal Meat Export Policy and issued special instructions to officials concerned to present, within two weeks, a three-year comprehensive strategy comprising practical measures to increase halal meat export. "A comprehensive strategy, formulated through coordination among all relevant federal ministries and provincial governments, is essential to make Pakistan's share in halal meat market of Muslim countries and the global market, significant," PM said on meat export policy and sector's reforms. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 3*)

Textile exports log fourth straight monthly decline

In what appears to be major concerns over the country's export performance, Pakistan's textile and clothing sector recorded a 2.57 percent decline in November, fourth straight month of negative growth, signalling persistent challenges in one of the country's key industries. The November decline extends a trend of volatility in the textile and clothing industry, which had seen a sharp rebound of over 30 percent in July — the first month of the current fiscal year.

The stark contrast highlights unstable global demand and ongoing domestic challenges that continue to weigh on the sector's performance. Official data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed that textile and clothing exports dropped to \$1.423bn from \$1.464bn in November 2024. This follows a sharper 11pc decline in November on a month-on-month basis, reflecting ongoing challenges in the sector. In September, textile and clothing exports saw a decline of 1.99pc and 7.34pc year-on-year in August, following a strong rebound of over 30pc in July. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 9*)

Kinno exports struggle amid regional tensions

Despite being among the world's largest producers of citrus, Pakistan is set to export only 400,000-450,000 tonnes of kinno during the 2025-26 season, well below its estimated potential of 700,000-800,000 tonnes, as growers and exporters struggle with high freight costs, border restrictions and the absence of effective government facilitation. During the 2024-25 season, kinno exports stood at around 350,000-400,000 tonnes, with Russia, Indonesia, the UAE, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Central Asian states as major destinations. For the current season, a slight improvement is expected due to better fruit size and quality in Sargodha and adjoining areas, but structural issues continue to cap growth. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

Bangladesh approves new rice imports from Pakistan

Bangladesh has approved the import of 50,000 metric tons of white rice from Pakistan under a government to government deal as part of efforts to stabilise domestic prices. The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase cleared the deal at USD395 per ton, reinforcing Dhaka's renewed trade engagement with Islamabad. Rice prices in Bangladesh have jumped by between 15 percent and 20 percent over the past year, with medium-quality rice selling at about 80 taka (USD0.66) per kilogram. Despite increased imports and the removal of duties to ease supply constraints, prices for the staple grain remain stubbornly high. The deal follows Bangladesh's resumption of direct rice trade with Pakistan earlier this year for the first time since independence in 1971. In February, it imported 50,000 tons of rice from Pakistan at USD499 per ton under a similar agreement. Diplomatic ties between the two South Asian nations have improved since an interim government led by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus took office after mass protests last year. (*Business Recorder, December 24th, 2025, Page 12*)

Seafood exports to EU states unlikely to resume next year

Pakistan's full-fledged seafood exports to European Union (EU) countries are unlikely to resume next year, as the EU has not included Pakistan in its inspection plan for 2026, effectively extending the ban for at least another year. Pakistan's seafood exports to the EU have remained delisted since 2007. However, government officials said they are still hopeful that an EU inspection team may visit Pakistan next year, most likely in the first quarter, following several rounds of meetings held on the issue.

According to sources, the EU's proposed inspection plan for 2026 does not list Pakistan for evaluating seafood facilities, particularly at Karachi Fish Harbour. As a result, hopes of enlisting more seafood processing companies have been dashed. Exporters, however, appeared largely unfazed by development. "There are already four companies exporting seafood to EU countries, and most others are not prepared to seek enlistment because EU regulations are extremely strict and difficult to maintain," Senior Vice Chairman of Pakistan Fisheries Export Association. (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2025, Page 8*)

5.2 # Import

Rupee may come under pressure amid higher imports

The Pakistani rupee has appreciated by 1.2 per cent so far this fiscal year; however, it may face pressure in future due to increased import demand, according to a brokerage report. The rupee closed at 280.41 per dollar in the interbank market, but after a slight gain, it settled at 280.32. "The PKR has appreciated 1.2 per cent FYTD, supported by stronger inflows, improved credit ratings, and continued progress under IMF program. However, rising import demand and shifting trade dynamics could create some pressure ahead," said Arif Habib Limited in a report.

In November, Pakistan posted a trade deficit of \$2.9 billion, which represents a 32.8 per cent increase compared to the same month last year. Exports decreased by 15.4 per cent year-on-year to \$2.4 billion, while imports rose by 5.4 percent to \$5.3 billion. Over the first five months of the current fiscal year, the trade deficit widened by 37.2 per cent, reaching \$15.5 billion. During this period, imports increased by 13 per cent to \$28.3 billion, while exports fell by 6.4 per cent to \$12.8 billion. "This widening implies that the current account deficit for November may also rise compared to recent readings. Remittances offered some support, rising 9.0 percent YoY to \$3.2 billion in November," the report said. (*The News, December 14th, 2025, Page 17*)

Food imports surge over 28pc

The country's food import bill soared to \$3.847 billion in the first five months of the current fiscal year, marking an increase of 28.33pc from \$2.998bn in the same period last year. The rising arrivals reflect growing reliance on imported food commodities amid domestic production and supply challenges. The increase was primarily driven by higher imports of sugar, edible oil, and tea to bridge domestic shortages. Palm oil constituted the largest share among imported food items, followed by pulses, tea,

soyabean oil and sugar. Pakistan imported 308,142 tonnes of sugar during July-November FY26, indicating an unprecedented year-on-year increase of 18,921.14pc compared to just 1,620 tonnes in the same period last year. In terms of value, sugar imports rose sharply to \$174.220 million, up from \$1.627m in 5MFY25 — a jump of 10,608.04pc. Retail sugar prices have been fluctuating between Rs180 and Rs230 per kg, prompting authorities to step in and ease supply constraints through imports.

The value of palm oil imports surged to \$1.677bn 5MFY26, up from \$1.259bn, reflecting a growth of 331.7pc. In terms of quantity, import of palm oil reached to 1.567m tonnes in 5MFY26 from 1.320m tonnes in the corresponding months of last year, an increase of 18.74pc. However, import of pulses declined 20.58pc to \$322.799m during 5MFY26 from \$406.438m in the same period last year. Soyabean oil imports value reached \$68.842m, dipped 6.52pc from \$73.647m recorded in the same period last year. The import bill for all other food items rose 41.45pc to \$1.107bn in the 5MFY26 from \$784.524m. The imports of tea dipped 1.14pc, with its value dropping to \$261.492m from \$264.518m. The import of milk, cream and milk food for infants grew 6.90pc to \$57.917m. (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2025, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Cabinet approves gas allocation for fertiliser plants

The federal cabinet has approved gas allocation for fertiliser plants, transitioning fertiliser production to a Mari-based standalone gas supply system. The decision ensures a long-term sustainability of domestic fertiliser production, safeguards national food security, protects farmers from price volatility, and strengthens overall economic stability. The cabinet ratified gas allocation and supply arrangements proposed by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

Under the approved plan, gas from new Ghazij/ Shawal off-spec/ raw gas discoveries has been allocated as follows: Fauji Fertiliser Company (Port Qasim) will receive 104 mmcf of raw gas, translating into 80 mmcf of processed gas; Fatima Fertiliser (Sheikhupura) will receive 68 mmcf of raw gas and 52 mmcf of processed gas; while Agritech (Daudkhel) will be allocated 50 mmcf of raw gas and 38 mmcf of processed gas. (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2025, Page 1*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Pakistan to receive \$64.9m under \$33bn UN humanitarian appeal

United Nations and its partners launched their 2026 global humanitarian appeal, with \$64.9 million specifically earmarked to support 1.9m vulnerable people in Pakistan as part of the \$33bn plan aimed at saving lives threatened by wars, climate disasters, epidemics, earthquakes and crop failures worldwide. The humanitarian appeals' immediate priority is to save 87 million lives with \$23bn in funding, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said. Ultimately, in 2026, the aim is

to raise a total of \$33bn to support 135m people through 23 country operations and six plans for refugees and migrants.

The appeal, titled '2026 Response Plan' earmarks \$64.9m to provide assistance to 1.9m people in Pakistan. The aim of the appeal, called 'Life by Life', is to reach 135m in 50 countries in 2026, the UN agency said. UNOCHA noted that in 2025, 98m people received help despite funding cuts and attacks on aid workers. In 2026, the largest individual response plan is for the Occupied Palestinian Territory, where \$4.1bn is needed to assist 3 million people who have experienced shocking levels of violence and destruction. In Sudan, the world's largest displacement crisis, \$2.9bn is needed for 20 million people. The largest regional plan is for Syria, with \$2.8bn targeted for 8.6 million people.

The highly prioritised appeal follows a year in which humanitarian lifelines were strained and, in some places, snapped due to severe funding cuts. Funding for the 2025 appeal — \$12bn — was the lowest in a decade, resulting in 25 million fewer people being reached compared to 2024. Amidst this devastation, civilians endured blatant disregard for the laws of war, and more than 320 aid workers, the vast majority of them local staff, were killed. The consequences were immediate: hunger surged, health systems came under crushing strain, education collapsed, mine clearance stalled and families suffered blow after blow, with no shelter, no cash assistance and no protection services. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2025, Page 3*)

Jul-Nov FDI down 25% to roughly \$1billion YoY

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into Pakistan declined by 25 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (FY26). According to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), FDI stood at USD 927.4 million in July to November of FY26, down from USD 1.242 billion in the same period last year, reflecting a fall of USD 315 million. In November 2025 alone, net FDI dropped 16 percent to USD 180 million compared with USD 214 million in November 2024. Foreign Portfolio Investment and Foreign Public Investment also remained negative during the period, recording net outflows of USD 192 million and USD 422 million, respectively.

As a result, total foreign investment in the country plunged 77 percent to USD 314 million in the first five months of the current fiscal year, compared with USD 1.391 billion in the corresponding period of FY25. Sector-wise, the power sector attracted the highest FDI at USD 384 million, followed by financial services with USD 327.6 million and electrical machinery with USD 58 million. Analysts said Pakistan needs concrete and sustained policy measures to attract higher FDI, warning that weak inflows could further strain the economy at a time when external financing needs remain high. (*Business Recorder, December 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

Foreign loan inflows surge by 46pc in July-Nov

Inflow of foreign loans and grants to Pakistan increased 14 per cent to \$3.032 billion in the first five months (July-November) of the current fiscal year compared to \$2.667bn, mainly on the back of support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Inflows in November alone amounted to \$511m, relatively higher than \$471m in October, but almost 46pc lower than \$944m in the same month of last year. Of the total, foreign loan inflows rose 46.22pc to \$2.521bn in 5MFY26 compared to \$1.724bn last year. Grants, on the other hand, fell by 43pc to \$54m from \$94m in the same period last year.

These inflows do not include \$1.2bn disbursed by the IMF early this month and would be accounted for later. The target for total foreign inflows for current year has been set at \$19.9bn compared to \$19.4bn last year. In July-November of 2023, Pakistan was able to materialise more than \$4.3bn mainly because of signing of the 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) with the IMF. As a result, Pakistan received a major injection of \$2bn in time deposit from Saudi Arabia. In fact, total inflows in July 2023 had amounted to \$5.1bn that also included \$1.2bn from the IMF and another \$1bn from the UAE.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs said that total foreign inflows in 5MFY26 stood at \$3.032bn compared to \$2.667bn last year. The EAD said that out of total inflows, \$1.157bn was received for project financing compared while non-project inflows amounted to \$1.875bn. This meant about \$966m loans were received in five months for budget support. This is despite the fact that annual target for budget support this year was set at \$13.5bn compared to \$15bn last year. The authorities were also able to materialise \$500m against Saudi Oil facility in five months, at a set rate of \$100m each month, of the fiscal year against an annual target of \$1bn.

Against a full year target of \$5bn from multilaterals (excluding IMF), Pakistan got only \$1.258bn in five months from multilateral lenders against \$1.46bn of same period last year when the annual target was \$4.5bn. Total inflows from bilateral lenders (other than three strategic friendly countries) in five months of year amounted to \$808m against annual target of \$1.36bn but was 200pc higher than \$269m of same period last year when full year target was \$523m. Total inflows from bilateral and multilateral lenders amounted to \$2.066bn in five months of this year against annual target of \$6.4b. Last year, government had secured \$1.73bn from bilateral and multilaterals against annual target of \$5.05bn. Inflows from overseas Pakistanis increased to \$966m in five months, up from \$735m of same period last year in the shape of Naya Pakistan Certificates. The government has targeted a total of \$609m through these certificates during the current year, which has already been surpassed by a wide margin. The full year \$19.9bn target for current fiscal year includes \$6.4bn from both multilateral and bilateral lenders including \$5.05bn from multilaterals and \$1.36bn from bilateral lenders, \$400m in international bonds, \$3.1bn foreign commercial loans, \$5bn time deposit from Saudi Arabia and \$4bn SAFE deposit from China. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 9*)

7.1 # Countries / Regions

Saudi Arabia rolls over \$3bn loan for another year

Saudi Arabia announced that it would roll over a \$3 billion loan to Pakistan for another year, making it the first relief for Islamabad after the two countries signed a defence pact in September. In FY25, \$16.3bn was rolled over out of a principal amount of \$22bn, while the central bank repaid the remaining amount by buying dollars from the interbank currency market. The \$3bn deposit was placed with the SBP in 2021 and has been rolled over every year since then. Pakistan also gets oil from Saudi Arabia on deferred payments to stabilise its paltry foreign exchange reserves. A \$2bn current account surplus in FY25, the first in 14 years, has given enough room to the government for reducing the country's external financing needs. However, the situation has changed considerably during the new fiscal year as the country posted a current account deficit of \$733 million during the first four months of FY26.

Rollover by China

The government has been trying to boost foreign exchange reserves of the State Bank and is currently negotiating for another rollover from China and the UAE, but financial experts think it would be difficult to get the concession from Beijing this year. It is feared that Pakistan's tilt towards the United States over the past year could make Beijing think twice on Islamabad's request. Pakistan is also ready to launch Panda bonds during the current financial year. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) on Sept 17, formalising their long-standing security partnership. Saudi Arabia has also assured Pakistan of making a \$10bn investment. (*Dawn, December 5th, 2025, Page 9*)

Japan's investment in Pakistan crosses USD1.3bn mark: envoy

Japan's investment in Pakistan has crossed USD 1.3 billion, the Japanese Ambassador Akamatsu Shuichi said, highlighting over seven decades of diplomatic and economic relations between the two nations. Speaking at the Annual Gala Dinner of the Pakistan-Japan Business Forum (PJBF), the Ambassador said that ties between the two countries date back more than 70 years, beginning with early cotton trade. Japanese investment, he said, now covers sectors including automobiles, energy, textiles, daily products and IT. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2025, Page 4*)

Chinese group keen to build €2bn industrial complex at Port Qasim

China's Shandong Xinxu Group has expressed interest in building a multi-billion-euro Integrated Maritime Industrial Complex (IMIC) at Port Qasim. The proposal was formally presented by a high-level five-member delegation from Shandong Xinxu Group during its meeting with the Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs, Muhammad Junaid Chaudhry. The delegation, led by the company's chairman, Hou Jianxin, discussed a proposal for the project, estimated to cost between €1 billion and €2 billion. The project envisages revitalising Pakistan's maritime and heavy industrial base. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2025, Page 12*)

UAE to take \$1bn stakes in Fauji Foundation, says Dar

Pakistan will offload stakes in key Fauji Foundation Group companies to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) under an investment deal that will wipe out a \$1 billion external liability and potentially roll over another \$2 billion in maturing loans, a major boost to the country's strained finances, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar. The arrangement was agreed during the recent visit of the UAE president, marks a shift from short-term borrowing toward equity-backed investment.

Under the arrangement, a \$1 billion UAE deposit will be converted into an ownership stake in Fauji Foundation-linked firms, eliminating the liability from Pakistan's books once the transaction is completed by March 31. Dar said discussions are already at an advanced stage, with multiple meetings held to finalise the structure of the share transfer. Once executed, the amount will no longer be treated as debt, easing pressure on Pakistan's balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves. Beyond the equity deal, Pakistan almost secured firm assurances on continued financial support from Abu Dhabi. Dar confirmed that a separate \$2 billion loan due in January 2026 is expected to be rolled over, following high-level engagement led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. (*The News, December 28th, 2025, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

Lenders approve \$940m for SOE reforms, water hygiene, sanitation

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank approved a total of \$940 million to Pakistan for reforms in the state-owned entities (SOEs), water sector and safely managed water, sanitation and basic hygiene services. Of the total, the Manila-based ADB will be providing about \$540m in loan and grant while the Washington-based World Bank will be extending \$400m. The ADB said its board of directors approved two projects totalling \$540m to accelerate SOE reforms in Pakistan and enhance disaster resilience in the coastal districts of Sindh. The financing comprises a \$400m results-based loan for National Highway Authority (NHA) under the Accelerating SOE Transformation Programme and \$140m concessional loan for Sindh Coastal Resilience Sector Project. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2025, Page 9*)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

ADB approves \$381m for three Punjab projects

Asian Development Bank approved three projects totalling \$381 million concerning agriculture, education and health services in Punjab. Development projects are aimed at fostering economic growth in province. "Investing in education, health, and agricultural mechanisation will play a transformative role in driving growth of Punjab, a vital pillar of Pakistan's economy," ADB Country Director for Pakistan Emma Fan was quoted. "These strategic investments will modernise agriculture, enhance human capital, and significantly improve livelihoods for millions of people across Punjab," she said.

According to handout, a \$120m concessional loan and \$4m grant have been allocated for the Punjab Climate-Resilient and Low-Carbon Agriculture Mechanisation Project to accelerate the province’s transition to modern, disaster-resilient, and low-carbon agriculture practices, benefiting 220,000 rural farm households. “The project will help mechanise farming and provide alternative livelihoods for agricultural workers, including through boosting the knowledge and skills of 15,000 women. It will introduce a new financing model for farm mechanisation service providers to equip small-scale farmers with advanced machinery,” ADB said. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2025, Page 5*)

Punjab agri market project: ADB wing says technical assistance less than effective

The Independent Evaluation Department (IED) of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) rated the technical assistance ‘Pakistan: Preparing the Punjab Agriculture Markets Development Project’ as less than effective and less than successful. The IED in its technical assistance completion report stated that the objective of the technical assistance (TA) was to help prepare a project to finance the establishment of a modern, holistic wholesale agriculture market in Punjab, Pakistan.

The original TA amount was increased from USD800,000 to USD2,000,000 after two minor modifications. However, ADB approved additional financing of USD700,000 on 6 December 2021 and USD500,000 on 3 August 2022 to finance additional studies and surveys. The TA used 99.4% of the funds, with a disbursed amount of USD1,987,863.84. Despite multiple extensions, additional financing, and substantial fund usage, the majority of activities were not completed, and the preparation of an ensuing project was not realized. Based on the foregoing, this validation assesses the TA less than efficient. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

ADB commits more loans for reforms, budget support

The ADB offered more loans to Pakistan for reforms in institutional capacity building and budget support on top of its existing debt stock of about \$17bn. The offer to Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb was made by an ADB delegation led by its Country Director Emma Fan, Director General for Central and West Asia Department Leah Gutierrez along with senior officials from local ADB team. The Manila-based ADB is second largest multilateral to Pakistan in terms of debt stock which stood at \$16.9bn as of end-June 2025 and third largest among all lenders led by China and then World Bank.

As of now, the ADB has committed 764 public sectors loans, grants and technical assistance totalling \$43.4bn to Pakistan, according to the lending agency. Pakistan’s total external debt stock stands at \$107bn by end-June 2025, according to the IMF. Ms Fan “emphasised ADB’s willingness to support reforms aimed at improving implementation efficiency and strengthening institutional capacity... and confirmed readiness to provide further budget support aligned with the Extended Fund Facility (of IMF), announced the ministry of finance. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 9*)

Asian Development Bank approves \$730m for power, SOE reforms

Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed two major initiatives worth \$730 million aimed at strengthening the power transmission system and accelerating the state-owned enterprises transformation programme. Under the initiative breakdown shows that the second power transmission strengthening project was valued at \$330m, while accelerating SOE transformation programme amounted to \$400m, respectively. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 9*)

ADB signs two major climate resilience initiatives with Pakistan

Pakistan and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed agreements for two major climate resilience initiatives in Sindh and Punjab, totalling \$304.5 million, aimed at enhancing climate resilience and promoting sustainable agriculture. The agreements were signed by Secretary Economic Affairs Division (EAD) Muhammad Humair Karim and ADB Country Director Emma Fan. They include the Sindh Coastal Resilience Sector Project, valued at \$180.5m, and the Punjab Climate Resilient and Low-Carbon Agriculture Mechanisation Project, amounting to \$124m.

The project will be financed through \$140.5m from ADB — including \$140m loan and a \$0.5m technical assistance grant — along with \$40m from the Green Climate Fund and \$20m in counterpart funding from the Sindh government. It will directly benefit over 3.8 million people in the Thatta, Sujawal, and Badin districts. Referring to Punjab initiative, he said the Punjab Climate Resilient and Low-Carbon Agriculture Mechanisation Project will enhance agricultural productivity and climate resilience across 30 districts in the province. The \$129m project will be financed through a \$120m ADB loan, a \$4m ADB grant, and \$5m in counterpart funding from the Punjab government. (*Dawn, December 31st, 2025, Page 12*)

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF approves another \$1.2bn tranche for Pakistan

IMF has approved a fresh disbursement of around \$1.2 billion to Pakistan under its dual-track bailout — the 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and climate-focused Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF). The decision came, after the IMF Executive Board convened in Washington. The board’s statement highlighted that “Pakistan’s strong programme implementation, despite recent devastating floods, has maintained stability and improved financing and external conditions”. The board noted that Pakistan’s fiscal performance has been strong, with a primary surplus of 1.3 per cent of GDP achieved in FY25, in line with programme targets. Gross reserves stood at \$14.5bn at end-FY25, up from \$9.4bn a year earlier, and are projected to continue rebuilding in FY26 and over the medium term. The board also noted that “inflation has increased, reflecting the impact of the floods on food prices, but this is expected to be temporary”. With this tranche, total disbursements to Pakistan under EFF and RSF now stand at approximately \$3.3 billion, supporting both macroeconomic stabilisation and long-term structural reforms for climate resilience. (*Dawn, December 9th, 2025, Page 1*)

SBP receives \$1.2bn for EFF and RSF programmes

Pakistan has received inflows of amounting to USD 1.2 billion from IMF under two different programs. The IMF Executive Board, on December 8, completed the second review of Pakistan's economic reform programme under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) and approved an immediate disbursement of SDR 760 million. In the same meeting, the Board also concluded the first review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), clearing the release of the first tranche of SDR 154 million.

With these approvals, IMF has disbursed a total of SDR 914 million to Pakistan under the EFF and RSF. The SBP said that it received about USD 1.2 billion on December 10 as the EFF tranche and the first RSF disbursement. This includes the disbursement of around USD 1 billion under the EFF and USD 200 million under the RSF, bringing total disbursements under the two arrangements to about USD 3.3 billion or SDR 2,434 billion. "As of Dec 5, 2025, the total liquid foreign reserves held by the country stood at USD 19.612 billion. This includes foreign reserves held by the SBP amounting to USD 14.587 billion and USD 5.026 billion by the commercial banks." (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

8.3 # World Bank (WB)

WB okays \$700m for Pakistan

World Bank has approved \$700 million in financing for Pakistan under a multi-year initiative aimed at supporting the country's macroeconomic stability and service delivery, it emerged. The lender said the funds will be released under the bank's Public Resources for Inclusive Development — Multiphase Programmatic Approach (PRID-MPA), which could provide up to \$1.35 billion in total financing. Of this amount, \$600m will go for federal programmes and \$100m will support a provincial programme in Sindh. The approval follows a \$47.9m World Bank grant in August to improve primary education in Punjab. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Agricultural Policy

Murad vows reforms to boost agriculture

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah, presiding over an agriculture department meeting, emphasised the need to gradually shift the province's cropping patterns to suit climate realities, water availability, and market demand. He noted that traditional practices are increasingly unsustainable due to water scarcity, soil degradation, and changing weather conditions. He described agriculture as the backbone of Sindh's economy, emphasising the need for a modern, research-driven, and financially inclusive approach. "Our farmers are the foundation of our rural economy. We must support them with timely credit, advanced technology, and scientific guidance so they can increase productivity and shift toward high-value crops."

CM called for enhanced collaboration between the government, research institutions, and universities to introduce new seed varieties, improve soil health, and promote precision agriculture. “Agriculture cannot progress without research. From seeds to soil to water management, every step must be informed by science. I want our research institutions to work closely with farmers and deliver solutions that reach the fields.” He stressed the importance of modern practices like drip irrigation, water efficiency, mechanisation, and digital monitoring to maximise output.

The meeting discussed the necessity of shifting cropping patterns as traditional ones are no longer sustainable under current conditions. The Chief Minister said, “Sindh must adopt smarter cropping patterns - those that conserve water, increase yields, and ensure profitability. We must move from conventional practices to climate-resilient, market-oriented crops.” The Sindh Bank team outlined measures to improve farmers’ access to affordable credit, especially small growers facing liquidity constraints. The CM directed the bank and the Agriculture Department to simplify loan procedures and expand support in underserved rural areas. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2025, Page 2*)

Centre asks provinces to ‘fully implement’ interim wheat policy

The federal government has asked provincial governments to fully implement the interim national wheat policy 2025-26 within their respective jurisdictions to safeguard the rights of wheat farmers and flour consumers. The advice came at the conclusion of the first meeting of the National Wheat Oversight Committee formed under the interim wheat policy, chaired by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain. Minister emphasised that all provincial governments must maintain strategic wheat reserves in accordance with their population requirements to ensure food security. It may be noted that the interim policy remains under wraps, but a few weeks ago, the government shared a new roadmap for wheat procurement.

In September this year, the federal government unveiled the ‘National Wheat Policy and Wheat Management Strategy’ for 2025-26 to serve as a long-term plan to ensure food security, safeguard farmers’ livelihoods, protect consumers and build resilience against market disruptions and climate-induced emergencies. At the time, the food minister had said the wheat policy would be finalised and adopted after comprehensive consultations with all stakeholders. Mr Tanveer highlighted strategic importance of wheat in meeting the country’s food requirements and emphasised need for increasing wheat cultivation to ensure national food security. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 3*)

Traders want wheat release policy revised

The president of the Hyderabad Chamber of Small Traders and Small Industry has expressed concern over wheat release policy of the Sindh food department for 2025-26. On the ground, he said, the policy lacked transparency in the province and public interest was not given due consideration to ensure access of the relief provided by the government to consumers. Mohammad Saleem Memon said government was releasing

100kg wheat bag for Rs8,000, and the same crop was being supplied to flour mills from the market for Rs9,500, causing a difference of roughly Rs1,500 per bag. He said the government had allocated Rs85bn as a wheat subsidy to ensure direct benefit to the general public. He said wheat was lying in warehouses for several years and joint assessments should be done to prevent potential public health risks associated with unhealthy wheat. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 15*)

9.2 # Developmental Policy

Mangi dam still incomplete three years after deadline

The Mangi dam — intended to supply water to Quetta — remains incomplete three years after its scheduled deadline, despite an expenditure of Rs19.80 billion, the Public Accounts Committee of Balochistan was informed during a meeting with senior officials of the Public Health Engineering Department. The dam was supposed to be completed in June 2022 and it was to supply eight million gallons of water per day to Quetta while the daily requirement of the provincial capital is 60m gallons. Committee expressed serious concern over the delay in completion and the escalation of costs of project, noting that dam cost has already seen a 42 per cent increase, reaching almost Rs19.800bn in 2025, yet it is still incomplete. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2025, Page 5*)

Mayor says Rs30bn to be spent on Karachi development

Karachi Mayor Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that Rs 30 billion will be spent this year on the development of megacity, including making strong and sustained arrangements for the smooth supply of clean drinking water to each household. (*Business Recorder, December 10th, 2025, Page 4*)

CDWP clears eight projects worth Rs266bn

The Central Development Working Party (CDWP) cleared a total of eight development projects worth Rs266.55 billion despite serious reservations over 193 percent cost escalation in Karachi's Yellow Bus Transit and non-compliance with prior government guideline in Rawalpindi's cardiac centre. The meeting of the CDWP, presided over by Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal, itself approved four projects involving a total cost of Rs10.55bn and recommended four larger projects to the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecne) for approval. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2025, Page 9*)

Only 9pc of development budget used in five months

Development spending under federal Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) remained subdued in the first five months of the current fiscal year, with utilisation amounting to just 9.2 per cent of the Rs1 trillion annual allocation amid fiscal rationing to meet the IMF's contingency measures for growing revenue shortfall. "Development spending remained modest, with Rs92 billion utilised against Rs196bn sanctioned, led mainly by infrastructure," Ministry of Planning and Development said in its Monthly Development Outlook (December 2025). It added that foreign-funded projects showed relatively better utilisation, with Rs12.8bn spent out of Rs25.1bn sanctioned.

At Rs92bn, the July-November utilisation was 20pc lower than the Rs115bn spent in the same period last year. The ministry attributed the slowdown to “significant reduction in expenditure by provinces, special areas and the Ministry of Railways”. The government has given a written commitment to the IMF for contingency measures as part of the recent \$1.2bn disbursement, as a five-month revenue shortfall touched Rs430bn. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 1*)

Sindh Government’s Development Strategy 2025–26: Projects worth Rs 1,018bn approved: Sharjeel

Under the Sindh Government’s Development Strategy 2025–26, projects worth a total of Rs 1,018 billion have been approved. Rs 340 billion have been allocated for the reconstruction of 1,600 flood-affected secondary schools. Nine new cadet colleges will be established. Senior Minister and Minister for Information, Transport and Mass Transit Sharjeel Inam Memon said that building resilient infrastructure to withstand extreme weather, rehabilitation of flood-affected areas, improvements in education and health, better connectivity, and poverty reduction are among the government’s top priorities. (*Business Recorder, December 25th, 2025, Page 2*)

PSDP projects: Ministry okays Rs348.98bn against Rs1trn allocation

The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives has authorised Rs348.98 billion (34.9 percent) for development projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2025-26 against Rs 1 trillion budgeted allocation during July-November, while the actual expenditures stood at Rs91.91 billion (26.34 percent). According to the Ministry of Finance’s notification, under the strategy for development budget for the financial year 2025-26, the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives has been authorised to approve the release of 15 percent of funds for the first quarter, 20 percent for the second quarter, 25 percent for the third quarter, and 40 percent for the fourth quarter under the PSDP. (*Business Recorder, December 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

9.3 # Neo – Liberal Policy

Saindak, PMDC, NICL to be privatised

The Board of Privatisation Commission recommended addition of three state-owned enterprises (SOEs) in the privatisation programme and removing two from the active list. Following the recommendations of its Investment Committee, the PC board cleared Saindak Metals Ltd (SML), Pakistan Minerals Development Corporation (PMDC), and National Insurance Company Ltd (NICL) for inclusion in list. The committee conducted a detailed evaluation of 15 SOEs referred to the commission by the relevant ministries for potential inclusion in privatisation programme. Committee determined that remaining 12 SOEs were not viable for divestment. Board recommended delisting Sindh Engineering Ltd and Utility Stores Corporation from the privatisation programme. PC board stressed that privatisation programme will align with the government’s broader SOE reform and fiscal consolidation framework. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Wapda workers vow to fight against privatisation plan

Workers of the All Pakistan Wapda Hydro Electric Workers Union held protests in parts of Sindh against the proposed privatisation of the water and power authority. In Hyderabad, they staged a big rally from the Labour Hall to the local press club in the lead of union president Abdul Latif Nizamani. Addressing the rally, Mr Nizamani said that such attempts for privatisation were also made in 2012 and 2017, but the workers had foiled them through their unity and protests. He said that since the government had borrowed money from the World Bank and International Monetary Fund; therefore, at their behest it wanted to privatise national enterprises like Iesco, Fesco and Gepco in the first phase followed by Hesco and Sepco in the second phase.

In Badin, the union workers took out a procession from the Badin Hesco Division Office to the Awan-i-Sahafat. Later they held a sit-in, blocking the main Badin–Karachi Road, severely disrupting vehicular traffic for several hours. In Mirpurkhas, a protest rally was staged by hundreds of workers and employees of Hesco Mirpurkhas division from their office to local press club. Similar protests were held in Digri Town and Tando Allahyar. In Nawabshah also, union workers staged a rally and held a protest demonstration against the proposed privatisation and for the acceptance of their demands. The rally was staged from Old Power House in Manuabad to the local press club. A similar protest was held in Naushahro Feroze. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2025, Page 15*)

Drap to review prices of 400 top-selling medicines after deregulation

The Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) has invited bids to conduct a comprehensive national survey of 400 top-selling non-essential medicine brands to assess changes in prices since the deregulation of non-essential medicines in February 2024, senior Drap officials said. The move follows an earlier survey of 100 leading non-essential medicine brands carried out by Drap this year, which showed that prices of those medicines had increased by an average of 32 percent over a two-year period. Officials said the new and expanded review is aimed at building a broader evidence base to better understand market trends after deregulation and to support informed policymaking. (*The News, December 14th, 2025, Page 12*)

Draft policy on deregulating sugar sector finalised

The government has finalised the draft policy for deregulating the country's sugar sector, under which sugar mills will be allowed to import raw material, a senior official of the Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) informed a parliamentary panel. Briefing the National Assembly Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research, the official said the deregulation policy was prepared by a high-level committee constituted by the prime minister.

Under the proposed policy, amendments will be made to sugarcane-related laws, while the ban on establishing new sugar mills will be lifted. Chairman of the committee, Syed Hussain Tariq, noted that the current price of sugarcane is around Rs400 per maund. He

said mills had briefly raised the price to Rs471 per maund but reduced it once farmers began harvesting their crops. Another MNFS&R official informed the committee that sugarcane crushing had started, and so far 11 million tons of sugarcane had been crushed, producing around 900,000 tons of sugar during the current season. (*Business Recorder, December 18th, 2025, Page 3*)

Senate panel told: Guddu and Nandipur power plants ready for sell-off

A parliamentary panel was informed that Guddu and Nandipur power plants are ready for privatisation. The Power Division informed the Senate Standing Committee on Privatisation that all power distribution companies (DISCOs) are being privatized under a phased plan, with preparations completed from the government's side. The officials said IESCO, FESCO, and GEPCO will be privatized in the first phase, followed by PESCO and SEPCO in the second phase, while LESCO, MEPCO, and HESCO are planned for the third phase. Officials said 51 to 100 percent shares of PIA will be offered, with a second bidding round planned if initial bids fall short. The Committee was also informed that only the core/aviation business of PIA is being privatized, while properties such as the Roosevelt Hotel and other assets will remain property of Government of Pakistan. (*Business Recorder, December 19th, 2025, Page 12*)

Sugar deregulation sparks debate on growth vs farmer security

The sugar sector is currently at a major turning point as it set to transform towards deregulation amid a cautious case for balancing between industry growth and farmer security. The potential change highlights the optimistic outlook of the industry and the deep-rooted concerns over what it could mean for farmers. Zaka Ashraf, chairperson of the Pakistan Sugar Mills Association (PSMA), believes that removing government control is necessary for long-term stability and creating a win-win situation for all. He suggests that the industry is ready to move away from state controls and towards a free-market model. (*The News, December 21st, 2025, Page 17*)

All eyes on PIA as govt looks to offload major liability today

With the privatisation of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Limited (PIACL) — the country's most high-profile transaction of a state-owned entity — scheduled for today (Tuesday), the government is making all-out efforts to prevent a repeat of what happened the last time the airline went under the hammer. Three parties are currently in the hunt to acquire 75pc shares in the flag carrier — consortiums led by AirBlue, Arif Habib Pvt Ltd and Lucky Cement, following the exit of the Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC). (*Dawn, December 23rd, 2025, Page 1*)

Rs135bn bid finally takes PIA off govt hands

A consortium led by the Arif Habib group won the auction for a controlling stake in Pakistan International Airlines Corporation Ltd (PIACL) with a bid of Rs135 billion after a competitive, televised process, marking the country's first major privatisation in nearly two decades. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 1*)

Eleven more trains to be outsourced, says Hanif Abbasi

Pakistan Railways will achieve the target of earn over Rs50 billion by Dec 31 while Rs60 billion target will be achieved in the second half of fiscal year, Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi claimed. “Railways will cross the milestone of Rs1 trillion in revenue for the first time in the history of the railways at the end of the financial year,” he added. Pakistan Railways adopted new reforms under the leadership of PM Shehbaz Sharif, he said. Under the reforms programme, he said, 11 more trains were going to be outsourced. While three railway schools had been outsourced, others would be outsourced over the next six months. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 3*)

PIA’s privatisation

PIA’s sale — the first major privatisation in nearly two decades — is being hailed as a historic achievement. Symbolically, it is. Substantively, it is far more complicated because it underscores Pakistan’s economic constraints, low investor interest, bureaucratic resistance to reforms, and public misgivings over the privatisation process. The government’s disinvestment of its majority stake in the national flag carrier undoubtedly represents a significant breakthrough. This comes nearly five decades after the first Benazir Bhutto administration sold about 8pc of the state’s shareholding in the company through the stock exchange, and follows multiple missed deadlines since and a failed privatisation attempt last year.

It shows how politically and economically fraught privatisation of SOEs, especially entities like PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills, has been. Further, it highlights how frustrating and costly it can be for any administration to generate investor interest in privatisation due to past examples of political victimisation of buyers, frequent policy reversals, transparency issues, judicial interventions etc. Successful sale apart, the fact remains that PIA could not have been sold without the state first cleaning up its balance sheet by transferring the firm’s legacy liabilities in debt, losses and pension obligations to a holding company, partial write-off, as well as substantial tax concessions, deferred credits and other incentives to sweeten the deal for investors.

The buyers will now get a company with positive equity, four million passengers in annual traffic, and global landing rights. Given this background, it is not surprising that the winning bid of Rs135bn — including the actual sale price of Rs10bn and commitment of capital investment of Rs125bn in the airline’s operations and fleet over the next five years — for 75pc of the current government holding in the airline’s operating assets has raised many an eyebrow. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2025, Page 6*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Debt-to-GDP ratio falls to 26pc: SBP governor

Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad said Pakistan’s external debt burden has begun to ease, with the debt-to-GDP ratio falling from 31 percent to 26 percent. Speaking at the Pakistan Women Entrepreneurship Day 2025 ceremony at SBP

head office, he said this is the first meaningful improvement in several years. He added that Pakistan has not added to its external debt stock since 2022, breaking a long trend of steady annual increases. Governor SBP noted that previously between 2015 and 2022 external debt had been rising by an average of USD 6.4 billion every year. The governor projected that remittances will cross 40 billion dollars this year, compared with 38 billion dollars received last fiscal year. He said the upward trend in workers' remittances is helping support external account and easing pressure on foreign exchange reserves.

Meanwhile, SBP marked Pakistan Women Entrepreneurship Day 2025 with Governor Jameel Ahmad reaffirming the state bank's commitment to expanding women's access to finance and strengthening their role in the country's economic growth. He said there is now widespread understanding that no nation can grow when half of its population is excluded from the financial system. He shared that because of our collective efforts, women's financial inclusion has risen from 4 percent to 52 percent, and we have succeeded in narrowing the gender gap from 47 percent in 2018 to 30 percent in 2025.

More than 17.6 million new women-owned bank accounts have been added since 2021, reflecting active engagement in financial system. While sharing the progress on loans to women led business, he said that over 974,000 loans have been disbursed amounting to Rs. 230.3 billion between November 2024 and October 2025. Over 14,600 women have joined banking workforce in last three years, raising the overall ratio of female employees from 13 to 17 percent. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

Govt debt falls by Rs908bn in 4 months

Marking a modest improvement in the country's overall debt position, Pakistan's central government debt fell by 1.16 percent in the first four months of the current fiscal year (FY26). The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported that Pakistan's total debt stocks, including domestic and external, eased to Rs 76.980 trillion by the end of October 2025, down from Rs 77.888 trillion in June 2025, depicting a decline of Rs 908 billion. The decline in the central government debt was driven by reductions in both external and domestic borrowing. However, in terms of percentage the bulk of the decline came from external debt, which contracted by 1.72 percent. External debt dropped by Rs 413 billion to Rs 23.004 trillion at the end of October 2025. This compares with Rs 23.417 trillion recorded in June 2025, reflecting lower reliance on foreign financing during the period. On the domestic side, the government has successfully trimmed its debt by 1 percent or Rs 496 billion. Domestic debt stood at Rs 53.976 trillion by October 2025, down from Rs 54.472 trillion in June 2025, as authorities slowed fresh borrowing and retired some existing obligations.

Recently, Governor SBP Jameel Ahmad has revealed that Pakistan's debt management has improved and overall external debt burden has begun to ease, with the debt-to-GDP ratio falling from 31 percent to 26 percent. Pakistan has not added to its external debt stock since 2022, breaking a long trend of steady annual increases. This is the first

meaningful improvement in the debt during the several years, while previously between 2015 and 2022 Pakistan's external debt had been rising by an average of USD 6.4 billion every year. Downward trend in the debt is a good indication for the economy and offers some relief for policymakers, though they caution that sustained improvement will require continued fiscal discipline and stronger revenue performance. SBP has earned a strong profit of Rs 2.5 trillion in the last fiscal year, out of which Rs 2.4 trillion was transferred to federal government. Transfer of profit has helped to retire some debt as well as improve debt management. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2025, Page 1*)

IMF projects Rs4.5trn jump in domestic debt

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected a significant increase of around Rs4.5 trillion in Pakistan's domestic debt to reach Rs 63.966 trillion in the 2026-27 financial year against the projected Rs 59.404 trillion for the current fiscal year. In its latest report, "second review under the Extended Fund Facility and the first review of the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), the Fund noted that domestic debt as percentage of GDP is projected to reach 47.1 percent in the current fiscal year, which is projected to come down to 45.5 percent as percentage of GDP in next fiscal year.

The report further noted that external debt is projected to increase to USD130.704 billion in the next fiscal year, compared to the projected USD125.612 billion for the current fiscal year. Pakistani authorities have committed to the Fund to improve liability management to mitigate debt vulnerabilities. Consistency in implementing the recently published 2026-28 Debt Management Strategy is critical for further extending maturities and reducing high exposure to short-term interest rates in the medium term. The authorities further stated that, in line with its fiscal commitments, they have used the SBP dividend windfalls to retire domestic debt, including Rs 1,133 billion of PIBs held by the SBP. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2025, Page 1*)

IMF projects gross external financing needs at USD19.398bn

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected Pakistan's gross external financing needs at USD 19.398 billion i.e. 4.6 percent of the GDP for the next fiscal year 2025-26. The Fund in its report stated that the country's external financing needs would be USD 19.123 billion in the fiscal year 2026-27 adding that the ongoing Extended Fund Facility (EFF) is fully financed, with firm commitments for the next 12 months and good prospects for the remainder of the Fund-supported program. (*Business Recorder, December 13th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.1 # Food

All milk samples collected in Karachi found unfit for human health, SHC told

The city commissioner has informed the Sindh High Court that all milk samples collected from Karachi were found unfit for human consumption by the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority. The report, which was submitted on behalf of the commissioner, also said that presence of formalin in 22 samples and phosphate in

eight samples indicated extensive adulteration. It also maintained that there was no justification for any increase in the price of fresh milk particularly due to decline in consumption of milk related products in winter.

However, it maintained that the hygiene practices and safety standards followed by wholesalers/farmers/retailers were hazardous to human health. Subsequently, the report also said that a fresh notification was issued on Nov 27, fixing the maximum retail price of fresh milk at Rs220 per litre and all the associations were instructed to adhere to the notified rates, maintain proper measurement practices and ensure quality strictly in accordance with the SOPs. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 13*)

Neglecting food safety

Food adulteration is a major public health concern in Pakistan — in both remote and major urban centres. A report by the Pakistan Standards & Quality Control Authority on milk adulteration in Karachi, submitted to the Sindh High Court, starkly highlights the scale of the problem. Laboratory tests confirmed the presence of formalin — a chemical used as a preservative — and excessive phosphate in all milk samples, rendering the essential dairy product unfit for human consumption and underscoring the extent of this widespread menace. Equally problematic is the poor hygiene and safety practices observed across the supply chain — from farm to retail outlets — which the city administration described as dangerous to public health. But adulteration and unhygienic handling of food are not the only practices compromising food safety.

Weak enforcement has long allowed unscrupulous actors to flood the market with unsafe food products. Their proliferation not only threatens public health but also undermines compliant manufacturers who struggle to compete with unregulated producers operating in the grey economy. These legitimate manufacturers have repeatedly raised the issue with the relevant authorities in the past. Yet their pleas have failed to move these officials to take sustained action against the culprits. Though the PSQCA's latest quality control enforcement drive in Lahore and Faisalabad has produced early but limited results, the scope of the campaign must urgently be expanded to smaller cities and towns where the counterfeit industry truly thrives. Besides that, the federal quality control authority should forge strong alliances with provincial food safety departments to ensure a sustained crackdown for long-term results and impact. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2025, Page 6*)

Operations continue against food fraud mafia

The Punjab Food Authority (PFA) conducted a field operation during which an unhygienic murabba (preserve) manufacturing unit was sealed and a criminal case was registered. During the operation, 36,000 kilograms of murabba, rotten vegetables, and hazardous chemicals were destroyed. Large quantities of substandard carrot, amla, and harar murabba were recovered and disposed of on the spot. (*Business Recorder, December 14th, 2025, Page 2*)

10.2 # Inflation

Inflation plummets to 44-month low of 6.9pc

The annual consumer inflation plunged to a 44-month low of 6.9 percent in September, owing to a steady decline in global commodity prices, an increase in domestic agricultural production and a stable currency rate. The headline inflation, measured by the Consumer Price Index (CPI), had slowed the previous month to 9.6pc, the first single-digit reading in more than three years, data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed. The monthly consumer price index in September stood at -0.5pc, reflecting that the overall prices dropped compared to the previous month.

The decline in inflation is partly attributed to a high-base effect from last year when annual inflation stood at 31.4pc. The annual CPI inflation has historically been driven by the food and energy sectors. Improved crop yields, particularly of wheat, rice and sugar, helped reduce food prices this year, alongside a lower reliance on imports. The government's support for agriculture, including increased loans, and favourable weather played a crucial role in boosting production.

Inflation crossed 10pc in November 2021 and then remained in double digits for 33 consecutive months until July 2024. In between, it peaked at 38pc in May 2023. In the first quarter of the current fiscal year (July to September), inflation averaged 9.19pc compared to 29.04pc during the same period last year. Analysts attribute this decline to a combination of factors, including lower global commodity prices, stable exchange rates and better agricultural outputs.

Of the 12 groups of commodities and services included in the CPI, the most significant impact was probably due to the "Food and Non-Alcoholic Beverages" head, which holds 34.6pc weight in the basket. The index for this group was down 0.59pc year-on-year, thanks to a 3.5pc drop in the prices of non-perishable food items. The index for the second-biggest group — "Housing, Water, Electricity, Gas and Fuels", which has a weight of 23.6pc in the CPI basket — was up 20.9pc in September, a slight decrease from 22.2pc in the previous month. The biggest drop of 7.3pc was seen in the "Transport" group, which holds a weight of 5.9pc in the basket.

Urban inflation in September stood at 9.3pc year-on-year, down from 11.7pc in August, with a month-on-month drop of 0.5pc. In rural areas, inflation was significantly lower, at 3.6pc year-on-year, also with a month-on-month decline of 0.5pc. Food inflation in urban areas dropped to 1.7pc, while rural food inflation saw a slight decrease of 0.9pc. Core inflation, which excludes volatile food and energy prices, was recorded at 9.3pc in urban areas and 12.1pc in rural areas. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2025, Page 9*)

Inflation seen rising: Floods weigh on FY26: IMF

International Monetary Fund (IMF) has said that growth was stronger than anticipated in fiscal year 2025, but the recent floods moderately dampen the outlook for fiscal year

2026, while inflation is expected to increase. The Fund in its latest report ‘second review under the extended arrangement under the extended fund facility, first review under the resilience and sustainability facility, request for a waiver of non-observance of a performance criterion, and modification of performance criteria’ stated that continued strong policy implementation has helped Pakistan weather several shocks this year.

Despite being weighed down by the floods, growth is projected to increase slightly to 3.2 percent in fiscal year 2026, driven by industrial and services activity and supported by steady reform implementation and progressively improving financial conditions and confidence. Inflation is expected to increase temporarily, peaking at around 8-10 percent due to higher food prices and adverse base effects before a durable return to target in fiscal year 2027. (*Business Recorder, December 12th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.3 # Poverty

Plea for minimum wage dismissed

Lahore High Court Chief Justice Aalia Neelum dismissed a petition seeking a direction to fix minimum wage at \$1,000 in all provinces of Pakistan. The chief justice heard the preliminary objection raised by the registrar’s office on the petition filed by Fehmeed Nawaz Ansari, a lawyer from Faisalabad. The chief justice upheld the objection, holding that the petition was not maintainable. In his two-page petition, the lawyer argued that wages in Pakistan should be aligned with those in the United States and the United Kingdom. He contended that setting the minimum wage at \$1,000 per month would increase citizens’ purchasing power, which in turn would attract foreign investment. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2025, Page 2*)

UoG hosts event to advance poverty research methodologies

Poverty Research Centre (PRC), University of Gujrat, organised a two-day academic and capacity-building event in collaboration with the Urban Unit of the Punjab government. Primary objective of the event was to strengthen institutional collaboration between Poverty Research Centre at UoG and Urban Unit for commissioning joint research projects on poverty estimation in Punjab, while also enhancing the research capacity of students and faculty members of the social sciences through applied training and methodological exposure. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 2*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Stench, toxic gases from garbage dump along Karachi’s Malir river plague residents, commuters

Residents of Defence View and adjacent localities, students of nearby educational institutions and thousands of commuters using Shaheed-i-Millat Expressway are forced to endure the stench of garbage collected by authorities from across district East and dumped along Malir riverbank. The area is also polluted with dust, harmful fumes and toxic gases emanating from the piles of garbage. Garbage dump is managed by Sindh Solid Waste Management Board (SSWMB). (*Dawn, December 15th, 2025, Page 13*)

11.1 # Pollution

Pollution claims 256,000 lives in Pakistan each year: Sherry

Senator Sherry Rahman stated that pollution claims 256,000 lives in Pakistan each year — more than number of deaths caused by terrorism. Senator stated this while chairing a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change. She called for strong action to tackle Pakistan’s escalating smog and air pollution crisis. She expressed strong disappointment over the lack of credible data, incomplete statistics, and unverified numbers. “Pollution is a serial killer. It kills more Pakistanis annually than terrorism, latest WHO figures show 256,000 annual deaths,” she remarked.

The meeting began with a presentation on smog by Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency — smog was described as a severe form of air pollution that becomes more intense during the winter. She added that Lahore now shares rankings with Delhi in global pollution indices, with toxic air reducing life expectancy by 3.7 to 4.6 years. Pakistan remains the third most polluted country in the world. Senator Rehman shared some key statistics that smog affects 11 million children under five in Punjab’s worst-hit areas. Children breathe twice as fast as adults, making them more vulnerable to respiratory disease. Air pollution costs Pakistan USD 22 billion annually, nearly 6.5percent of GDP. (*Business Recorder, December 5th, 2025, Page 2*)

Transport sector emerges as key cause of air pollution

While the mainstream discourse on air quality has remained focused on Lahore and Karachi, a recent report by the Pakistan Air Quality Initiative (PAQI) has described the phenomenon as being equally stark in Islamabad-Rawalpindi and Peshawar, as well as peri-urban and rural areas. PAQI’s comprehensive Unveiling Pakistan’s Air Pollution: A National Landscape Report on Health Risks, Sources and Solutions provides multi-sectoral emissions inventories, concluding that urban smog is overwhelmingly generated within Pakistan’s own airsheds. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2025, Page 1*)

Lahore most polluted city, yet again

Lahore was ranked the most polluted city in the world, yet again, as hazardous levels of air quality were recorded across multiple areas. City’s air quality index (AQI) reached a maximum of 364. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

Lahore again ranked ‘most polluted’ city with 661 AQI

Lahore continued to be ranked among the most polluted cities in world with hazardous air quality. According to IQAir, the metropolitan city recorded a maximum Air Quality Index (AQI) of 661. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2025, Page 2*)

11.2 # Health

Balochistan reports 3,303 registered AIDS cases

The number of registered AIDS patients in Balochistan has reached 3,303, including 707 women and 90 transgender persons with 452 deaths reported in the province over

the past year, senior health officials said. Speaking at a press conference at the Quetta Press Club ahead of World AIDS Day 2025, which carries the theme “Overcoming Stagnation and Transforming the AIDS Response” and is observed globally on Dec 1 (today). (*Dawn, December 1st, 2025, Page 5*)

TB cases on the increase in Balochistan

Tuberculosis (TB) cases are on the increase in Balochistan and especially its prisons as during the current year, 16,000 to 18,000 cases were reported across the province. (*Dawn, December 10th, 2025, Page 5*)

‘Unprecedented’ increase in poliovirus spread alarms Sindh govt

There has been a sharp surge in circulation of poliovirus in the province, affecting at least 21 union councils, forcing the chief minister to direct concerned officials to look into the emerging public health crisis and take targeted measures to strengthen immunisation efforts against the crippling disease. (*December 10th, 2025, Page 13*)

Respiratory infections rise in Karachi amid poor air quality

The Karachi city has seen a dramatic increase in cases of respiratory infections with the onset of winter, health experts shared, linking the spike in these illnesses directly with worsening air quality. The experts specialising in internal and pulmonary medicine, critical care and ear-nose-throat diseases, underscored the need for promoting and prioritising lung health which, they said, had been overlooked by the government as well as citizens for too long. AKUH study titled ‘Impact of fine particulate pollution exposures on respiratory health in a megacity of Pakistan’ was published last year in the journal *Atmospheric Pollution Research*. (*Dawn, December 11th, 2025, Page 13*)

29 dengue patients hospitalised in Sindh: report

The Director General Health Sindh has issued the daily report regarding the dengue situation across the province. According to the report, 15 new dengue patients were admitted to government hospitals, while 18 additional cases were reported from private hospitals during the last 24 hours, bringing the total number of hospitalized dengue patients in the province to 29. (*Business Recorder, December 11th, 2025, Page 3*)

Eight out of 10 people with Aids unaware of their status: DG health

Director General Health Dr Abdul Wali said eight out of 10 people affected by Aids were not aware of their status in Pakistan. He was speaking at an event held in connection with the World Aids Day marked under the theme “Overcoming disruption, transforming the AIDS response”. Dr Wali, who is also the national coordinator CMU, said according to estimated data there were 350,000 people living with HIV in Pakistan.

He said over last decade, Pakistan had increased eightfold the number of persons living with HIV who received antiretroviral therapy - from around 6,500 in 2013 to 55,500 in 2024 - thanks to the joint efforts by government, UN entities and partners. Country has also increased number of antiretroviral therapy centres from 13 in 2010 to 96 in 2025.

Over 1,100 AIDS-related deaths were reported in 2024. Meanwhile, health experts said an estimated 26,000 children and teenagers developed Type 1 diabetes in Pakistan every year but 13,000 or nearly half of them did not survive due to delayed diagnosis and the unavailability of life saving insulin. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 4*)

22 lives lost to rabies in Sindh this year

Persistent official failure at various levels has claimed the lives of at least 22 people, about half of them hailing from interior parts of Sindh, this year, while cases of dog-bite have increased dramatically. Information gathered from three key tertiary care hospitals in the city shows that over 42,000 dog-bite cases have been reported this year so far – over 16,000 at the Indus Hospital, over 12,000 at the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre and over 13,000 at Dr Ruth Pfau Civil Hospital Karachi (CHK). (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 13*)

Rabies death toll in Sindh climbs to 25 as another patient dies

A 12-year-old boy who developed rabies despite receiving multiple vaccine shots at a government hospital in Jacobabad died at the Indus Hospital, raising the death toll to 25 this year in Sindh. According to the hospital staff, the victim had already developed full-blown rabies by the time he was brought to the hospital. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2025, Page 13*)

Over 55pc women reported at CHK's gynae OPDs affected by Polycystic Ovary Syndrome: study

Health experts at a programme shared findings of a local hospital-based study according to which Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) affects more than 55 per cent of women visiting gynaecology outpatient departments (OPDs) in (Civil Hospital) Karachi. They were speaking at the launch of Discovering PCOS, an awareness and screening initiative where medical experts described PCOS as a silent but growing public health challenge, increasingly affecting girls at younger ages. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 14*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

43 flood-hit farmers in Pakistan to move German court against two 'highest CO2 emitters'

Farmers affected by the devastating 2022 floods announced the filing of a climate justice claim against two major global carbon emitters in Germany, saying the unprecedented disaster had exposed Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate change. The announcement was made at a press conference here at the Karachi Press Club by farmer claimants Hamza Khan Kalhor, Abdul Hafeez Khoso and Abdul Khaliq Leghari from Larkana, Jacobabad and Dadu. They are filing a climate accountability claim in Germany against two corporations reportedly recognised among the highest carbon dioxide (CO2) emitters.

The case will be filed under German civil law and guided by the polluter pays principle, seeks compensation for devastating climate impacts that contributed to the catastrophe.

They said that Pakistan, despite contributing less than one per cent to global greenhouse gas emissions, had suffered disproportionate losses due to climate-induced extreme weather events. They argued that historically high-emitting corporations must be held accountable for climate-related losses and damages. They had now begun their struggle and were filing a climate justice case against RWE and Heidelberg Materials. They said that 43 farmers from Sindh were filing the claim, seeking compensation for the losses they suffered during 2022 floods. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

KP govt rolls out disaster management plan 2026-30

KP government has unveiled provincial Disaster Management Plan 2026-30, declaring 10 districts highly vulnerable to floods, two to landslides and one each to snowfall and glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs). It said the initiative was meant to protect the province from natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, strengthen disaster management system and minimise potential losses. Lower and Upper Chitral districts are the most vulnerable to the highest number of natural hazards among all districts of province and have been ranked highly vulnerable to snowfall, floods, landslides, Glofs and composite hazards. Likewise, Chitral, Buner, Swat, Shangla, Nowshera, Charsadda, Dera Ismail Khan, Peshawar, Swabi and Mardan are highly vulnerable to floods & Mansehra to landslides.

Hazard profiling of province contained in report has declared that floods, earthquakes and climate change-induced hydro-meteorological events including drought, rain, snowfall and heatwaves are risks faced by the province. The report said that Kabul River and other key watercourses, such as Indus, Swat, Chitral, Kunar, Siran, Panjkora, Bara, Kurrum, Dor, Haro, Gomal and Zhob, intensified flood risk, primarily during the monsoon season. Also, this network of rivers, combined with rugged topography, accelerates runoff, deforestation and climate change, resulting in frequent floods that severely impact surrounding communities and infrastructure.

The report warned that with onset of climate change impacts of increasing temperature and changing patterns of precipitation, drought was emerging as a significant challenge for agrarian economy, with drastic impacts on the food security of province. Climatic projections anticipated further reduction in the rainfall that might lead to increasing and prolonged drought conditions and expansion in deserts, mainly in Karak, Lakki Marwat, Bannu and Dera Ismail Khan districts. (*Dawn, December 25th, 2025, Page 8*)

13.1 # Drought

PMD Drought Advisory: ‘Situation is worsening across western & south-western Balochistan’

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has issued a Drought Advisory (Pre-Alert), depicting worsening situation across western and south-western Balochistan. The pre-alert is an extension to the drought watch first announced on 27 October 2025,

as the department reports that the rainfall deficit across western and south-western Balochistan has worsened between May and November 2025, while the number of Consecutive Dry Days (CDD) has also increased. This combination of reduced rainfall and prolonged dry spells is likely to further intensify drought conditions in the affected regions. According to PMD, climatological patterns and the seasonal forecast for December 2025 to February 2026 indicate below-normal rainfall and above-normal temperatures. These conditions are expected to aggravate drought impacts in western and south-western Balochistan. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2025, Page 2*)

13.2 # Rainfall

Alarm over below normal rainfall in Balochistan

Balochistan recorded 41.9pc below-normal rainfall over past three months, heightening drought threats in Quetta and six other districts. Province received only 8.6 mm of rainfall during September, October and November, significantly lower than the normal 14.8 mm. The Met Office's drought advisory (pre-alert) stated that from May to November, western and southwestern Balochistan witnessed a decline in rainfall, along with a rise in the number of consecutive dry days. Forecasts indicate rainfall in the affected regions below normal till February 2026, while temperatures higher than usual, thus aggravating drought conditions. Met Office also expects partial relief due to a weather system that may bring rainfall to some areas later this month. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2025, Page 1*)

13.3 # Smog

Three die in smog-related incidents

Three persons died and seven others were injured in smog-related accidents in various districts of central and south Punjab. In Bahawalpur, one Malik Akhtar was killed when his motorcycle rammed into a tractor-trolley, parked by the roadside on the Goth Mehrab Road near Musafir Khana. The motorcyclist could not spot the trolley due to poor visibility owing to a thick blanket of smog. In Lodhran, a rickshaw driver was overtaking a trailer when it collided with a tractor-trolley coming from the opposite direction. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 2*)

Nine dead, 30 injured in smog-related accidents in Punjab

Nine people died and 30 were injured in fog-related accidents in various districts of the province. In Sahiwal, two persons, including a nine-year-old child, lost their lives and eight others were critically injured in separate smog-related road accidents. Reports said heavy smog blanketed the districts of Pakpattan, Okara and Sahiwal, reducing visibility to almost zero on roads and streets. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 2*)

13.4 # Wildfire

Fire partially destroys forest in Karak

A fire destroyed portion of a forest in a mountainous area of Karak district the other day. A Rescue official said that the fire suddenly broke out in the mountainous range in Lakkanra area and spread within no time. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2025, Page 8*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earthquake

5.2-magnitude quake jolts Karachi, parts of Balochistan

A 5.2-magnitude earthquake was felt in Karachi and parts of Balochistan, causing panic among residents. No casualties were immediately reported. According to the Met office, little before 1am, tremors were felt in many parts of the city. It said that the earthquake measured 5.2 on Richter scale & had a depth of 12 kilometres, with its epicentre located approximately 87km northwest of Karachi. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2025, Page 13*)

Quake rattles Islamabad, several Punjab cities

An earthquake rattled several cities of Punjab and Islamabad, creating panic among the residents. According to the National Seismological Center, the earthquake measured 4.2 in magnitude with a depth of 15 kilometers at 9.37 am. The epicenter of the earthquake was 50 kilometers southwest of Tarbela. The 4.2 magnitude earthquake also jolted Attock, Hassanabdal, Kamra, Hazro, Kharian, Islamabad, and adjacent areas. No casualties or property damage were reported in initial assessments. Earlier on December 19, 2025, a strong earthquake was felt in various parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) According to the Seismological Centre, the earthquake measured 5.7 on the Richter scale, which occurred at a depth of 12 kilometers. Its epicenter was located in the Hindukush region of Afghanistan. (*Business Recorder, December 21st, 2025, Page 3*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters block highway over girl's death

A girl injured in a mortar attack in the Hoshab area of the Kech district succumbed to her wounds in a hospital, prompting her family and local residents to block the M-8 CPEC highway in protest. Police said a mortar shell fired from an unknown location fell in a residential area the previous night, injuring five girls. The victims were shifted to the district hospital, where one girl, identified as Yasmeen, died after receiving serious injuries. Following her death, her family, relatives, and local residents staged a protest on the M-8 road, blocking all traffic. Women and children participating in the demonstration carried placards and demanded an independent probe into the incident. (*Dawn, December 1st, 2025, Page 5*)

Activists protest trees felling at Nasser Bagh

Civil society activists staged a protest demonstration outside Nasser Bagh against the launch of the construction work to construct an underground parking plaza after transplantation of 123 trees. The activists headed by the Lahore Conservation Society's founding member and eminent historian Ajaz Anwar first gathered at the National College of Arts (NCA) and then reached Nasser Bagh. Carrying banners inscribed with the slogans "Cutting of trees unacceptable" etc, the protesters chanted slogans against the government for depriving the city of trees. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 2*)

Cane growers, farmers and truckers hold sit-in over ‘forced closure’ of sugar mill

Sugar cane growers, along with workers and management officers of the Alliance Sugar Mill held a three-hours-long sit-in at the nearby section of the National Highway in Ubauro over “forcible closure” of the mill by police. Civil society activists also joined in the protest. They alleged that the police acted on behalf of certain influential political figures who were in the process of establishing their own sugar mill in the area.

Sugar cane-laden trucks were seen lined up outside the Alliance Sugar Mill which, according to growers, had offered a higher price of their produce than the officially fixed rate. Just before the mill management could start sugar cane procurement, the area police arrived and started turning back the truckers, the protesters said. This, they said, ultimately led to the closure of the mill and also made the truckers, growers, farmers and mill workers to hold a sit-in at the nearby section of the highway.

After persuading the protesters to end their sit-in and disperse peacefully, the Ubauro police booked more than 100 protesters for blocking the highway, attacking and damaging vehicles and obstructing police from performing their official duties. The FIR registered on behalf of the state was lodged by ASI Sikandar Ali Dahar against protesting truckers, growers and farmers, as well as some officers and other employees of the Alliance Sugar Mill. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 15*)

SUP holds march against lawlessness in upper Sindh

The Sindh United Party (SUP) took out a rally in Kandhkot to condemn murder of two children — Gul Hassan, and Muzammil — the son and grandson, respectively, of an SHO, Sikandar Panhwar. The participants carried banners and placards inscribed with slogans against feudalism, tribal conflicts and failure of police to ensure safety and security of citizens. They held a protest march from City Park to the local press club raising slogans against increasing lawlessness in the district. The government was also silent on the situation, they lamented. They said the recent murder of two schoolchildren had forced people to stop their children from going to schools. They urged the government to play its active role in bringing an end to tribal feuds, bloodshed and crime in the region. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2025, Page 15*)

NA clears agri trade & CDA bills amid opposition’s protest

The National Assembly passed the National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority Bill, 2025 and The Capital Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025, despite strong protest from opposition lawmakers. Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain presented “The National Agri-Trade and Food Safety Authority Bill, 2025” for approval, while Minister of State for Interior Talal Chaudhry moved “The Capital Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2025” for passage. Both bills were approved by a majority vote as the PTI members chanted slogans and protested on the floor of the House. (*Business Recorder, December 9th, 2025, Page 3*)

Nationwide transporters' strike halts supply chain

A nationwide strike by goods and public transporters has brought Pakistan's supply chain to a grinding halt, severely impacting the distribution of food items, industrial raw materials, and essential commodities across the country. With trucks and containers parked idle at terminals in multiple cities, business activities have stalled while citizens struggle with travel disruptions. Market observers warn that the breakdown in logistics could trigger a sharp rise in prices, adding to existing economic pressures. (*Business Recorder, December 11th, 2025, Page 12*)

Exporters turn panicky as transporters strike enters fifth day

At a time when Pakistan's exports have recorded negative growth for four consecutive months, a nationwide cargo transporter's strike has entered its fifth day and exporters fear that this prolonged strike will obstruct the movement of goods to ports for shipment. The strike, announced for an indefinite period, is in response to the Punjab and Sindh governments' decision to ban older cargo trucks and trailers from operating in their provinces. The goods transporter's nationwide strike has severely disrupted the entire supply chains across the country. (*Dawn, December 12th, 2025, Page 2*)

Mamund residents protest delay in road construction

The prolonged delay in the completion of a road prompted residents of various areas of War Mamund tehsil to stage a demonstration. Scores of people from different walks of life, belonging to a number of villages located along the under-construction Gatkai-Safari Road, participated in the demonstration held in the Gatkai area. The participants, many of them youth, pointed out that construction work on the about five-kilometre road was inaugurated by Gul Zafar in 2019. However, they alleged that work on the road, which was meant to link several hilly areas with rest of the region, was halted a few weeks after its inauguration. The protesters, who chanted slogans against the former lawmaker and relevant authorities for failing to complete the road within the stipulated time, claimed the contractor had also removed machinery from the site several months ago. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2025, Page 8*)

JI stages sit-in over increasing fatalities involving heavy vehicles

The Jamaat-i-Islami staged a sit-in near Numaish traffic intersection in protest over growing fatal road accidents involving heavy vehicles and looting of the people in the name of e-challans. The party also criticised Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government for introducing heavy traffic fines as well as dilapidated infrastructure and violation of citizens' rights. Carrying banners and placards, a number of JI activists gathered on a roadside of the Numaish traffic intersection to stage their protest. The protesters chanted slogans against the Sindh government, the traffic police and the unchecked tanker mafia. (*Dawn, December 14th, 2025, Page 13*)

Hospital guards protest against low wages, overtime

Security guards at two public hospitals the DHQ (Dr Faisal Masood) Teaching Hospital held a protest against the security companies for extra working hours and low pay and closed the main gate of the public hospital and did not allow the ambulances carrying the patients to enter. The security guards of Dr Masood Hospital and Maula Bakhsh Hospital in Sargodha protested against the owners of their security companies at the main gate of the DHQ (Dr Faisal Masood) Teaching Hospital and did not allow the ambulances to enter the premises. The security guards said owners of their contractor security company forced them to work overtime but paid them Rs16,000 as wages. They raised slogans, demanding their rights. (*Dawn, December 15th, 2025, Page 8*)

Goods transporters' strike has caused closure of numerous factories, shortage of essential commodities

The ongoing goods transporters' strike has turned into a major crisis for both traders and the underprivileged. Traders have incurred losses amounting to billions of rupees, while the poor are shivering in the cold due to the non-availability of warm clothing. According to details, the strike — now in its ninth consecutive day — has led to the shutdown of certain factories and shortages of essential commodities in cities, while also creating severe difficulties for citizens battling harsh winter conditions. Five containers carrying warm clothing for Saylani Welfare International Trust from Malaysia are currently stranded at the port, resulting in a halt in the distribution of these clothes among the needy. (*Business Recorder, December 17th, 2025, Page 2*)

Transporters end 10-day strike after govt 'accepts' key demands

After negotiations with various government departments, goods transporters called off their 10-day strike that had paralysed the movement of raw materials, local production and exports. Nisar Hussain Jafri, chairman of the Pakistan Goods Transporters Alliance (PGTA), which represents around 20 major transport associations across the country, told *Dawn* that the government had accepted the group's major demands and goods' movement had resumed. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2025, Page 1*)

University of Peshawar students boycott classes against 'disappearance' of colleagues

A protest by students of various organisations at the University of Peshawar entered the third day against the disappearance of two colleagues. The protesters led by Waziristan Students' Society visited several departments and forced students to boycott classes. They also forced the closure of Madina Market, Coffee Shop and Green Chili restaurants on campus. The students demanded early recovery of Khubaib Wazir of the third semester at the International Relations Department and Adnan Wazir of fifth semester at the Political Science Department. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2025, Page 8*)

LHWs protest across Dadu district against inadequate security

Lady health workers (LHWs) staged protest demonstrations at various polio support centres across Dadu district against their inadequate security during polio duties. They

also alleged harassment by deputy commissioner and demanded a judicial inquiry against him. Demanding proper security, LHWs stated that they had been part of polio eradication campaign since 1994, but despite presence of thousands of monitors and officers during each campaign, undue pressure was placed on the LHWs instead of facilitating their work. They said, monitors, instead of resolving refusal cases, exerted pressure on LHWs to cover refusal areas without security, which was tantamount to posing serious threats to their lives. (*Dawn, December 19th, 2025, Page 15*)

South Waziristan residents protest ‘worsening’ law and order situation

Residents of Azam Warsak, a remote area of Birmal tehsil in Lower South Waziristan district, launched a long march to protest the “worsening” law and order situation in the region. The protesters, including tribal elders, youth, PTM members and political and social activists, marched on Wana, where they later staged a sit-in to press for their demands related to security and public safety. The demonstration disrupted traffic flow in the area, prompting the police to take precautionary measures. Barbed wire was installed, while police personnel were placed on high alert to prevent any untoward incident. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2025, Page 8*)

JI stages sit-ins against fatalities caused by heavy vehicles

Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi held protest sit-ins at 13 major points across the megacity, demanding an end to fatalities caused by heavy vehicles, street criminals, and open manholes. JI Karachi Chief Monem Zafar Khan, addressing a press conference and later the sit-ins, highlighted alarming statistics: 254 people killed and 12,000 injured by traffic this year, 25 shot dead by robbers, and 24 including children dead due to falling into manholes and gutters. He criticized Sindh government’s focus on issuing e-challans instead of addressing these issues. (*Business Recorder, December 20th, 2025, Page 5*)

Climate March in Karachi seeks end to fossil fuel use, demands transition to clean energy

Activists and people from all walks of life participated in the Climate March 2025 to express their concern over the effects of climate change in the city, country and the rest of the world. The march, which was organised by the members of civil society, was started from Frere Hall. The participants proceeded towards the Karachi Press Club. A large number of people, including rights activists, trade union members, students, women and children, participated in the walk. They expressed concerns over climate change by chanting slogans and waving placards and holding banners.

One of the banners in the red colour background read: “There is no Planet B”. Another big one called for an end to coal use, urging protection for people from unhealthy wastewater and air pollution, while another carried the message “Right to Life”. Some participants lay down on the road while displaying placards to register their protest. One such placard read: “The reason behind climate change is capitalism and feudalism.”

Several protesters were also seen wearing Palestinian keffiyeh scarves and carrying Palestinian flags to express solidarity with the people of Palestine.

Attending the march, labour union leader Nasir Mansoor told that the working class is the worst affected by climate change, as they are displaced or even lose their lives due to heatwaves or excessive rainfall. He added that during past heatwaves, 70 per cent of those who died were members of the working class. He said that a transition from fossil fuels to clean and renewable energy in industries and other sectors was necessary, but it should not lead to lay-offs of workers. He further demanded that the government, in implementing such a transition, must work in consultation with working-class organisations to ensure protection of workers' rights. "Without the end of capitalism, the question of climate change remains incomplete," Mr Mansoor claimed.

Home-Based Women Workers Federation Secretary General Zehra Khan said that heat stress is increasing, particularly among labourers working in garment factories, where workers often faint due to extreme heat, making it essential for factories to have proper cooling systems. She added that while the Sindh Occupational Safety and Health Act exists, it does not mention heat stress leave. She said the legislature should provide legal safeguards on the issue so that workers can be entitled to heat stress leave. (*Dawn, December 22nd, 2025, Page 13*)

JI holds 'youth demo' against civic issues

On the call of Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan Engr Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, a 'youth protest demonstration' was held outside the Karachi Press Club (KPC) as part of a nationwide movement demanding an empowered local government system and action on major civic and municipal issues. A large number of young people from across Karachi participated in the demonstration. Donkey-cart owners also joined the protest in a large number, expressing anger over government policies. He said that while the Sindh government insisted on receiving its full share under the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, it had failed for 17 years to announce the Provincial Finance Commission (PFC) Award. (*Business Recorder, December 22nd, 2025, Page 2*)

Classes in school demanded

Residents of Sorband area of Torghar district demanded of the government to resume classes at the only school in the area, as it continued to be closed depriving children of education. "The school was closed years ago for maintenance after the building developed cracks, but has yet to be made operational," Arshad Alam, a local resident, told reporters. He said it was the only primary school for both girls and boys in the Sorband and adjoining villages. He added that the issue had been taken up with the education department and local lawmakers, but to no avail. The residents demanded that the chief minister direct the education department to appoint teachers and other staff to launch classes at the school at the earliest. (*Dawn, December 24th, 2025, Page 8*)

JI women stage demo against rising Islamophobia in India

Chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi chapter Monem Zafar strongly condemned the act attributed to Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar of forcibly pulling Hijab of a Muslim woman doctor, terming it a clear manifestation of Islamophobia and the Hindutva mindset. He was addressing a protest organised by the Women's Wing of Jamaat-e-Islami Karachi here to denounce the incident in Bihar. A large number of women participated in the demonstration, holding banners and placards with slogans against rising Islamophobia in India. (*Business Recorder, December 24th, 2025, Page 4*)

Land owners hold protest, reject CDA's built-up awards for C-16 & H-16

Landowners affected by various undeveloped sectors rejected the built-up property (BuP) awards recently announced by the Capital Development Authority for the C-16 and H-16 sectors. After hearing unconfirmed news that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will inaugurate the Jinnah Medical Complex project and Daanish University in H-16, hundreds of landowners rushed to the purported inauguration site and staged a massive protest. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 4*)

Sit-in over 'enforced disappearances' enters third day

Protesters staging a sit-in and blocking the CPEC Highway in the Tajban area of Kech district continued their protest, the third day of demonstrations, against the alleged enforced disappearance of four members of a family, two of them women. Two women whose family members said were forcibly taken away from their homes were identified as Khairun Nisa and Hani Dilwash. Hundreds of trucks, cars and other vehicles remained stuck on both sides of the highway due to the blockade, causing serious difficulties for the public. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 5*)

Talks between officials, Kohistan protesters fail

Talks between the district administration and the protesters failed despite the fact that Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) has announced to have released Rs500 million for the reconstruction of the Dubair-Ranowalia Road, which was washed away in the 2022 floods in Lower Kohistan. The residents have been staging a sit-in at the Dubair Khawar hydropower unit for the last five consecutive weeks, suspending power generation. Additional assistant commissioner Owail Khan explained that the road project was being financed by the World Bank, which required completion of the entire process from survey to tendering in a transparent manner.

Mr Khan urged the protesters and, later, a local committee of elders to end the sit-in, assuring them that authorities would honour their commitment to complete the tendering process within the stipulated timeframe. However, Malik Salauddin, a leader of the protest, told the gathering that their committee had decided not to end their ongoing sit-in, and wouldn't allow electricity generation from the power station until the reconstruction of the road started. (*Dawn, December 27th, 2025, Page 8*)

Balochistan govt workers to stage pen-down strike from today

The Grand Alliance of Balochistan government employees has announced a pen-down strike for acceptance of their demands, including payment of a Disparity Reduction Allowance. Ali Asghar Bangulzai, General Secretary of Balochistan Grand Alliance, said the protest of government employees in the province has entered the second phase due to “government’s apathy and incompetence”. He said the government employees’ organisations affiliated with the Balochistan Grand Alliance will observe the pen-down strike, followed by a complete lockdown of all government institutions in the province on December 30 and 31. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2025, Page 5*)

Residents protest after dozens of homes demolished

The families affected by an anti-encroachment operation in Lashari village took to street to condemn Mirpurkhas district administration for the ‘unlawful action’ against them. Protesters told media that operation was launched without serving them any eviction notice. “Dozens of Lashari families were rendered homeless in unjustifiable action,” they moaned, arguing that they had nothing to do with the dispute over a plot’s limits between two litigant parties which had ended up in the murder of Advocate Chaudhry Shehzad Jatt, who was a party in the case. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 15*)

Sukkur locality without gas for 10 weeks

Residents of the densely populated Old Sukkur area came out of their houses to hold a noisy demonstration over unavailability of sui gas for the last 10 weeks. The protesters, mainly women, strongly criticised the Sui Southern Gas Company for not heeding their multiple complaints for a solution to the issue. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 15*)

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

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10.1 # Food

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11 # ENVIRONMENT

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Fuel shortage forces Gaza hospital into stasis [P. 68]

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

India's Chenab dam plan riles eco-activists, Pakistan alike

India's Ministry of Environment has been pondering clearances for a slew of controversial hydroelectric projects on Chenab River in aftermath of the Pahalgam incident earlier this year. Yet, it does not seem to share serious apprehensions that leading environmentalists have expressed over their threat to a fragile Himalayan ecology. Last week, a panel under the ministry approved the 260-megawatt Dulhasti Stage-II hydropower project on Chenab River in Kishtwar district of India-held Jammu and Kashmir, according to *The Hindu*. Earlier, in October, it was reported that environmental clearances were revived for the larger Sawalkote hydro-electric project on the same river.

The clearances came against the backdrop of India unilaterally suspending the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) after blaming Pakistan over the Pahalgam incident — an allegation Islamabad had denied, terming the suspension of the 1960 treaty “an act of war”. Earlier this month, Pakistan's Foreign Office had sounded the alarm on New Delhi's “weaponisation of water” following abrupt variations in the flow of the Chenab and Jhelum rivers, which caused consternation among farmers in Punjab. At the time, Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar had noted that the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) had also reaffirmed the continued validity of the treaty and its dispute-resolution mechanisms. In addition, he cited concerns expressed by UN rapporteurs over India's actions in connection with the treaty.

The Sawalkote project has been in the works for decades, and has faced numerous delays related to forest clearances and the compliance compulsions of the Indus Waters Treaty. As of now, the 1,856MW project is still said to be in the pre-construction stage. Its environment clearances have been reheated several times over. The Dulhasti Stage II is a 258MW project, conceived as a complementary run-of-the-river scheme to utilise the water discharged from the existing 390MW Dulhasti Power Station “more efficiently”. It is a smaller component of the frequently discussed Chenab basin projects. It is expected to cost around \$35 million. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 1*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

China hits EU dairy with tariffs, broadening trade conflict

China will impose provisional duties of up to 42.7 percent on dairy products imported from the European Union, the latest in a series of measures against EU exports widely

seen as retaliation for the bloc’s electric vehicle tariffs. The duties will range from 21.9 percent to 42.7 percent, although most companies will pay just under 30 percent. They target unsweetened milk and cream and fresh and processed cheeses, including the iconic French Roquefort and Camembert. China’s Ministry of Commerce said it had found evidence that EU dairy imports were subsidised and hurting Chinese producers.

The European Commission, which oversees EU trade policy, said the investigation was based on “questionable allegations and insufficient evidence” and called the measures “unjustified and unwarranted”. It already lodged a complaint at the World Trade Organization more than a year ago. “Right now, the Commission is examining the preliminary determination and will provide comments to the Chinese authorities,” a spokesperson said, noting that the investigation was set to conclude by Feb 21.

Trade tensions with the EU erupted in 2023 when the European Commission launched an anti-subsidy investigation into Chinese-made electric vehicles. It imposed tariffs in October 2024. In apparent retaliation, Beijing has imposed measures on imports of EU brandy, pork and now dairy. Conor Mulvihill, director of Dairy Industry Ireland, said it was frustrating that dairy seemed to be used as a “political pawn” in the wider EU-China EV dispute. (*Business Recorder, December 23rd, 2025, Page 5*)

4.1 # Fisheries

Sea-floor animals have decreased 40pc in mining zone: study

The number of sea-floor animals fell by nearly 40 per cent in a deep-sea mining exploration zone, according to a study probing the emerging industry’s impact on biodiversity. The five-year research is believed to be the most extensive yet on the possible consequences of modern commercial deep-sea mining machines on oceans already threatened by pollution and overfishing. The industry plumbs previously untouched seabeds for commodities including nickel, cobalt, and copper, which are used in everything from rechargeable batteries to military technology.

Deep-sea habitats also play a crucial role in the climate system. Scientists from Britain’s Natural History Museum (NHM), National Oceanography Centre, and Sweden’s University of Gothenburg took baseline data on wildlife in the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ) — an area of the Pacific Ocean that has been targeted for mining. They found a nearly 40-percent reduction in the number of tiny invertebrates such as worms and shellfish living within the sediment directly affected by the tracks of a mining machine. A UN treaty on the high seas is set to become law in January 2026, aiming to protect vast expanses of the world’s oceans.

No licences have been issued yet for commercial mining in high seas waters, but some countries have launched or are preparing to launch exploration in waters within their own exclusive economic zones. The Cook Islands, in cooperation with China, awarded exploration licences to three companies in 2022. The Metals Company in Canada wants

to exploit international waters in the Pacific Ocean without the approval of the seabed authority, relying on a US law reinstated by President Donald Trump. Norway applied the brakes on issuing the first licences for its Arctic waters. The licences were postponed for four years, which environmentalists hoped would end the plans. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2025, Page 11*)

EU countries strike deal on 2026 fishing quotas, avoid tighter Mediterranean curbs
European Union fisheries ministers struck a deal on 2026 fishing quotas, avoiding an earlier proposal to tighten restrictions in the Mediterranean. Spain, which opposed a European Commission plan to cut trawler fishing days in the Mediterranean next year, welcomed the agreement. Spain will be allowed 143 fishing days in 2026, broadly maintaining this year’s allowance, instead of the planned cuts. Brussels had said its proposal aimed to bring fishing to sustainable levels over the longer term.

The deal also sets catch limits and fishing days for Atlantic, North Sea, Mediterranean, Black Sea and other waters for 2026, with some rules extending to 2028. Changes include a more than 50% increase next year in catch limits for Norway lobster in the Bay of Biscay, and reductions in common sole limits in the eastern and western Baltic to protect stocks. Vessels can gain extra fishing days if they adopt more sustainable practices. Denmark’s fisheries minister Jacob Jensen, who led the talks, said deal “strikes a balance between scientific advice and protecting vulnerable fish stocks”. The rules will apply from January 1. (*Business Recorder, December 14th, 2025, Page 1*)

5 # TRADE

Iran, Turkiye agree to build key trade rail link

Iran and Turkiye have agreed to begin constructing a new joint rail link to serve as a strategic gateway between Asia and Europe, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said. The planned route, known in Iran as the Marand-Cheshmeh Soraya railway transit line and running towards Turkiye’s Aralik border region, will cover around 200 kilometres (120 miles). It will cost roughly \$1.6 billion and is expected to take three to four years to complete. (*Business Recorder, December 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

China trade surplus tops USD1trn for first time on non-US growth

China’s trade surplus topped USD1 trillion for the first time as manufacturers seeking to avoid President Donald Trump’s tariffs shipped more to non-US markets in November, with exports to Europe, Australia and Southeast Asia surging. Shipments to the United States dropped by close to one-third from the same month a year before.

“The tariff cuts agreed under the US-China trade truce didn’t help to lift shipments to the US last month, but overall export growth rebounded nonetheless,” said Zichun Huang, China economist at Capital Economics. “We expect China’s exports will remain resilient, with the country continuing to gain global market share next year.” “The role of trade rerouting in offsetting the drag from US tariffs still appears to be increasing,”

she added. Chinese exports overall grew 5.9pc year-on-year in November, customs data showed, a reversal from October's 1.1 percent contraction, and beating a 3.8 percent forecast in a Reuters poll. (*Business Recorder, December 9th, 2025, Page 5*)

China urges Gulf nations to seal free trade agreement

China's foreign minister has pressed the Gulf Cooperation Council to conclude long-running talks on a free trade agreement with China, attributing the urgency to rising protectionism and unilateralism as free trade comes "under attack", according to a statement from the ministry. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi is on a three-nation tour in the Middle East that began in the United Arab Emirates and is expected to end in Jordan. He met GCC Secretary-General Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi in Riyadh, when he also met top Saudi officials separately.

"The talks have lasted for more than 20 years, and conditions for all aspects are basically mature, it is time to make a final decision," he said during a meeting with Albudaiwi, according to the Chinese foreign ministry. A successful FTA will send a "strong signal to the world about defending multilateralism," Wang said, adding that China was supportive of the bloc strengthening its strategic autonomy and coordination, and advancing its integration process. China has interests in deepening cooperation in economy, trade, investment and other fields with the GCC as well, Wang said. (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2025, Page 5*)

Japan sets \$19bn trade goal for Central Asia

Japan unveiled a five-year goal for business projects totalling \$19 billion in Central Asia as Tokyo vies for influence in the resource-rich region. The announcement came after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi hosted an inaugural summit with the leaders of five Central Asia nations — Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan — in Tokyo. Japan "set a new target of business projects at a total amount of 3 trillion yen in 5 years in Central Asia", a joint statement said after Takaichi wrapped up her meeting with the five leaders.

Like United States and the European Union, Japan is drawn by the region's enormous, but still mostly unexploited, natural resources in a push to diversify rare earths supplies and reduce dependence on China. "It is important for Central Asia, blessed with abundant resources and energy sources, to expand its access to international markets," the statement said. The leaders agreed to promote cooperation that can help the "strengthening of critical minerals supply chains", while also pledging to achieve economic growth and decarbonisation. (*Dawn, December 21st, 2025, Page 9*)

China files WTO case against Indian tariffs, subsidies

China has filed a case against India's tariffs on information and communications technology products and Indian photovoltaic subsidies with World Trade Organisation, the Chinese commerce ministry said in a statement. The Indian tariffs and subsidies "give India's domestic industries an unfair competitive advantage, harm Chinese

interests” and were in violation of WTO rules, the ministry said. “We once again urge India to abide by its relevant commitments at WTO and immediately correct its erroneous practices,” it added. (*Business Recorder, December 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

Trade rules often favour wealthy states, MNCs: WB

Global standards have increasingly been used as tools in trade disputes since the turn of the century, reshaping trade flows and often favouring wealthy countries and large multinational companies over developing economies, according to a World Bank report. “A proliferating set of international standards, covering everything from food labelling to specifications of 5G cellular networks, is steadily reshaping the global economic order, delivering hefty benefits to wealthy nations and large multinational companies that set them, while leaving many developing countries on the sidelines,” the bank’s World Development Report 2025 says.

The report says developing countries are not sufficiently represented when standards are written, largely because they lack the resources and expertise required to participate. On average, they sit on less than one-third of the technical committees that determine global standards at ISO, and even fewer in other bodies. Supporting broader and more strategic participation is key to ensuring standards are globally relevant and reflect diverse development needs and contexts, it adds. Focusing on standards for development, the WB report says non-tariff measures, such as pesticide specifications or labelling requirements, now affect 90 per cent of global trade, up from just 15pc in the late 1990s.

It notes that global appetite for standards has surged. More than half of 20,000 standards issued over last seven decades by International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) have been created since 2000. In 2024 alone, key global standard-setting bodies issued more than 7,000 standards. By making the transportation of goods seamless, the standardisation of the shipping container boosted global trade more than all trade agreements concluded over last 60 years, report notes. Turning standards into a springboard for development requires a deliberate strategy. The report proposes an adapt-align-author framework for countries at different stages of development. At low levels of development, countries should adapt international standards to local realities so firms can learn and markets can grow. Blindly copying most stringent global standards is unwise, as local ambitions should match local capacity. (*Dawn, December 27th, 2025, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Nestle sells remaining 40pc Herta stake to Casa Tarradellas

Nestle said it had completed the sale of its remaining 40 percent stake in packaged meat business Herta Foods to Spanish company Casa Tarradellas. No other terms were disclosed. Nestle said the joint venture that had been created in 2019 when it sold an initial stake in Herta to Casa Tarradellas had come to an end. Nestle first put Herta charcuterie, the cold cuts and meat-based products unit, under strategic review as it no longer fitted with company’s strategic focus on healthy nutrition and plant-based offerings. Nestle currently has water and vitamins businesses under review and new

CEO Philipp Navratil has ordered a portfolio-wide review that could see brands sold or partnered off as the world's largest packaged food company looks to focus on fast-growing areas. (*Business Recorder, December 24th, 2025, Page 5*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

UN aid consignments cleared for Afghanistan

After nearly two months of halted cross-border cargo movement, the Pakistani government has begun clearing humanitarian consignments for Afghanistan, marking the first controlled reopening of transit trade since routine trade was suspended in October. The government has completely suspended customs clearance for both exports and imports, along with Afghan Transit Trade (ATT) cargos, at major border crossings — including Torkham, Ghulam Khan, Kharlachi, and Angoor Adda — effective October 12, and at the Chaman border from October 15.

An official letter was issued to the FBR and the Directorate General of Transit Trade to initiate the movement of consignments belonging to three United Nations agencies through the border crossings at Chaman and Torkham. In the first phase, a total of 143 containers of humanitarian goods will be allowed for clearance at Chaman and Torkham. The breakdown shows that the containers include 67 containers of food assistance from World Food Programme, 74 containers of supplies for children from Unicef, and two containers of healthcare and family support items from UNFPA.

Officials confirmed that the decision followed instructions issued by the foreign ministry after consultations with the UN resident coordinator in Pakistan. According to letter, the cargo movement will proceed in three stages: the first covers food shipments, the second covers medicine and medical equipment, and the third covers items for education services. More consignments are expected to follow once agencies provide updated requirements. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

US pledges \$2bn for UN aid work with 'adapt, shrink or die' warning

Washington pledged an initial \$2 billion for United Nations humanitarian aid in 2026 — far less than it has provided in recent years, warning UN agencies to “adapt, shrink or die”. With its pledge, announced at the US mission in Geneva alongside UN aid chief Tom Fletcher, US is pursuing a dramatic overhaul of how it funds UN humanitarian work. Instead of handing funds to individual agencies, the United States will funnel its contributions through UN aid agency OCHA, headed by Fletcher, which earlier this year launched a so-called Humanitarian Reset to improve efficiency and accountability.

The US funds will then be distributed to 17 selected countries, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Myanmar, Sudan and Ukraine. The UN's Central Emergency Response Fund, which provides swift aid as new emergencies erupt or when existing crises rapidly deteriorate, will also receive a tranche of money. “It is an initial anchor commitment,” Jeremy Lewin, the senior US official for foreign assistance, humanitarian

affairs and religious freedom, told reporters. “There are other countries that we will add, as we continue to get more funding into this mechanism.” Among the crisis situations not listed were Yemen and Afghanistan, where Lewin stressed the need to “prevent diversion to the Taliban and other US-designated foreign terrorist organisations”. (*Dawn, December 30th, 2025, Page 11*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

9 # POLICY

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

10 # Socio – Economic Condition

External debt stock hits \$130bn mark by 2024: World Bank

Pakistan’s total external debt stock reached nearly USD130 billion by 2024, with debt servicing consuming a staggering 40 percent of export earnings, said the World Bank. The Bank in its latest report, ‘International Debt Report 2025’, noted that Pakistan’s external debt woes deepened in 2024, as net foreign inflows plummeted over tenfold to USD354 million. “Net debt flows to the Middle East, North Africa, Afghanistan, and Pakistan region turned negative in 2024, from an inflow of USUSD11.9 billion in 2023 to an outflow of USD4.1 billion. These flows were heavily concentrated in Egypt, where net flows reversed from an inflow of USD5.2 billion to an outflow of USD3.4 billion in 2024, followed by Pakistan, where net flows decreased by more than a factor of 10 to USD354.4 million”, it added.

China remains Pakistan’s largest bilateral creditor, holding 23 percent of the country’s public external debt. Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Pakistan together account for close to 30 percent of IDA-eligible countries’ debt stock; Mozambique, Senegal, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan together account for another 21 percent. Haiti, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Mozambique, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, and Senegal had the largest total debt service-to-export ratios in 2024; Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Suriname, and Zambia had the largest total debt service-to-GNI ratios.

Net debt flows from bilateral creditors turned negative for the first time since 2011, from an inflow of USUSD3.9 billion to an outflow of USUSD3.7 billion. Net bilateral debt flows to Pakistan and Iraq drove the trend, led by reductions of more than 75 percent in disbursements from new financing to USD1.5 billion and USD320.7 million, respectively. Multilateral creditors were the only creditor base that provided positive flows to public sector borrowers in 2024. Most of the region’s increase was attributable to the World Bank’s IBRD. At the country level, increases were largest in Tunisia, Jordan, and Pakistan (primarily because of the 2024 IMF disbursement), but they were offset by Egypt’s surge in principal repayments, primarily to the IMF.

The World Bank report noted that total external debt stocks stood at USD129.718bn by 2024 including the use of IMF credit and SDR allocations of USD12.321bn against USD11.532bn in 2023, long-term external debt of USD107.88bn in 2024 against USD110.548bn in 2023. Public and publicly guaranteed debt, by creditor and creditor type in 2024, including IMF credit includes 49pc multilateral, (18 per cent World Bank, 16pc ADB, 15 per other multilateral), 43 pc bilateral (23 per cent China, 5pc Saudi Arabia, 6 pc other bilateral) and 8pc private (8pc bondholders, 8pc multiple lenders). (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

Developing nations' debt servicing costs: World Bank for using relaxed global financing terms

The gap between developing nations' debt servicing costs and new financing hit a more than 50-year high of USD741bn between 2022 and 2024, World Bank said urging countries to use more relaxed global financing conditions to bring their houses in order. In its annual International Debt Report, Washington-based lender also found that overall interest payments had hit a fresh record of USD415.4 billion in 2024 despite some relief from falling global interest rates. "Global financial conditions might be improving, but developing countries should not deceive themselves: they are not out of danger," World Bank Chief Economist Indermit Gill said in report, adding that debt build-up is continuing "sometimes in new and pernicious ways."

Bond markets reopened for most countries as the long global interest rate hiking cycle ended, paving the way for billions of dollars in new issuance. But this came at a cost, with interest rates on bond debt near 10 percent - roughly double those before 2020 - and options for low-cost financing dwindling. Emerging nations are also increasingly turning to domestic debt markets to fund themselves. In 50 countries, domestic debt grew at a faster pace last year than external debt. The bank said this was a sign of evolving local credit markets but cautioned that it could squeeze local bank lending to the private sector and potentially raise the cost of refinancing due to shorter maturities. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 1*)

10.1 # Food

World food prices fall for third month: FAO

World food commodity prices fell for a third consecutive month in November, with all major staple foods except cereals showing a decline, FAO said. FAO Food Price Index, which tracks a basket of globally traded food commodities, averaged 125.1 points in November, down from a revised 126.6 in October and the lowest since January. The November average was also 2.1pc below the year-earlier level and 21.9pc down from a peak in March 2022 following Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The agency's sugar price reference fell 5.9pc from October to its lowest since December 2020, pressured by ample global supply expectations, while dairy price index dropped 3.1pc in a fifth consecutive monthly decline, reflecting increased milk production and export supplies. Vegetable oil prices fell 2.6pc to a five-month low.

Meat prices declined 0.8pc, with pork and poultry leading decrease, while beef quotations stabilised as the removal of U.S. tariffs on beef imports tempered recent strength, FAO said. In contrast, FAO's cereal price benchmark rose 1.8pc month-on-month. Wheat prices increased due to potential demand from China and geopolitical tensions in Black Sea region, while maize prices were supported by demand for Brazilian exports and reports of weather disruption to field work in South America. In a separate cereal supply and demand report, FAO raised its global cereal production forecast for 2025 to a record 3.003 billion tonnes, compared with 2.990bn tonnes projected last month. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2025, Page 9*)

10.2 # Food Scarcity

UN warns 17m face food insecurity in Afghanistan

The number of people facing acute food insecurity in Afghanistan this winter is on the rise, and now stands at more than 17m, United Nations warned. “The situation is getting worse, and we need to act now as Afghanistan is entering the winter period where needs are highest,” said Jean-Martin Bauer, director of food security and nutrition analysis at UN's World Food Programme. More than 17m people are facing acute food insecurity: “three million more than last year”, he told a press briefing in Geneva. Furthermore, “there are almost four million children in a situation of acute malnutrition”, he said.

Speaking from WFP's Rome headquarters, Bauer said the situation was down to a combination of factors, including drought affecting crops and livestock, earthquakes that have plunged many families into poverty, and cuts in international aid. Added to this, the forced return of more than 2.5 million Afghans from Iran and Pakistan this year “is putting stress on very limited resources” and the “very limited infrastructure in the country”. WFP expects a similar number of people to return to Afghanistan in 2026. The organisation currently has only 12 percent of the funds needed for its programmes in the country. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2025, Page 10*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

11.1 # Atmosphere

New Delhi records over 200,000 respiratory cases due to toxic air

New Delhi recorded more than 200,000 cases of acute respiratory illnesses at six state-run hospitals between 2022 and 2024 highlighting adverse effects of toxic air on health. Delhi is regularly ranked among world's most polluted capitals. More than 30,000 people with respiratory illnesses had to be hospitalised in three years. Acrid smog blankets Delhi's skyline each winter, when cooler air traps pollutants close to ground, creating a deadly mix of emissions from crop burning, factories, and heavy traffic. Levels of PM2.5 — cancer-causing microparticles small enough to enter the bloodstream — sometimes rise to as much as 60 times the UN's daily health limits. A study in *The Lancet Planetary Health* last year estimated that 3.8 million deaths in India between 2009 and 2019 were linked to air pollution. UN children's agency warns that polluted air puts children at heightened risk of acute respiratory infections. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2025, Page 10*)

India tightens pollution curbs as Delhi's air quality worsens

India tightened anti-pollution measures in Delhi and adjoining areas after the capital's air quality deteriorated to season's worst. The Commission for Air Quality Management invoked stage four, the highest level, of the Graded Response Action Plan for Delhi and surrounding areas, according to an advisory by India's environment ministry. Delhi's air quality was "severe" with official index readings over 450 across several monitoring stations, up from 430 and the highest so far this winter season, Central Pollution Control Board data showed. Readings below 50 are "good". The curbs ban entry of older diesel trucks, suspend construction, including on public projects, and impose hybrid schooling. (*Business Recorder, December 15th, 2025, Page 9*)

11.2 # Health

Groundbreaking HIV prevention shots begin in Africa

South Africa, Eswatini and Zambia began administering a groundbreaking new HIV-prevention injection in the drug's first public rollouts in Africa, which has the world's highest HIV burden. Lenacapavir, which is taken twice a year, has been shown to reduce the risk of HIV transmission by more than 99.9 percent, making it functionally akin to a powerful vaccine. In South Africa, where one in five adults lives with HIV, a Wits University research unit oversaw the rollout as part of an initiative funded by Unitaid, the United Nations health agency. It did not specify how many people received first doses of drug, which cost \$28,000 per person a year in the United States. (*Business Recorder, December 2nd, 2025, Page 5*)

Fuel shortage forces Gaza hospital into stasis

A major Gaza hospital has suspended several services because of a critical fuel shortage in the devastated Palestinian territory, which continues to face a severe humanitarian crisis. Gaza's health sector has been among the hardest hit by war. During the fighting, Israeli military repeatedly attacked and destroyed hospitals and medical centres across Gaza. Israel's war on Gaza has claimed the lives of at least 70,942 people, mostly civilians. (*Dawn, December 27th, 2025, Page 11*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

13 # CLIMATE DISASTERS

13.1 # Cyclone

Cyclone turns Sri Lanka's tea mountains into death valley

In the mist-draped mountains of Sri Lanka's tea country, rescuers were still plucking bodies from the reddish-brown mud after last week's cyclone, the island's worst natural disaster in decades. At least 465 people were killed with another 366 missing. Sri Lanka's Air Force has been combing the landslide-struck landscape, surveying the damage and ferrying food and other essential supplies to marooned residents. Though the rain has stopped, recovery has just begun. (*Dawn, December 3rd, 2025, Page 10*)

Sri Lanka counts cyclone cost as toll hits 465

Sri Lankan authorities said they would need some USD7 billion to rebuild homes, industries and roads destroyed by Cyclone Ditwah, which has left at least 465 people dead so far. Hopes have faded for 366 other people unaccounted for after mudslides and floods triggered by cyclone, which brought record rains across the island last week. (*Business Recorder, December 4th, 2025, Page 5*)

Sri Lanka unveils cyclone aid plan as rains persist

Disaster-hit Sri Lanka has unveiled a major compensation package to rebuild homes damaged by a deadly cyclone, even as the island prepared for further landslides and flooding. The government has confirmed 607 deaths, with another 214 people missing and feared dead, in what President Anura Kumara Dissanayake has called the country's most challenging natural disaster. More than two million people — nearly 10 percent of the population — have been affected.

Disaster Management Centre said more than 71,000 homes were damaged, including nearly 5,000 that were completely destroyed by last week's floods and landslides. Around 150,000 people remain in state-run shelters, down from a peak of 225,000. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) said it was considering Sri Lanka's request for an additional \$200 million, on top of the \$347 million tranche the country was already due to receive this month. (*Business Recorder, December 7th, 2025, Page 1*)

Landslide warnings in Sri Lanka as toll hits 627

Sri Lankan authorities issued fresh landslide warnings with rains lashing areas already devastated by a powerful cyclone, as the death toll rose to 627. A chain of tropical storms and monsoon rains has battered Southeast and South Asia, setting off landslides, flooding vast tracts and cutting off communities from Sumatra island's rainforests to the highland plantations of Sri Lanka. At least 1,826 people have been killed in the natural disasters rolling across Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam over the past two weeks. (*Dawn, December 8th, 2025, Page 12*)

13.2 # Flood

Millions of lives upended by Asia floods, 'extreme' rainfall on the rise

Officials in Indonesia and Sri Lanka battled to reach survivors of deadly flooding in remote, cut-off regions as the toll in the disaster that hit four countries topped 1,500. In Monsoon rains paired with two tropical storm systems dumped record deluges across Sri Lanka, and parts of Indonesia's Sumatra, southern Thailand, and northern Malaysia last week. World Meteorological Organization (WMO) spokesperson Clare Nullis told reporters in Geneva that Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Viet Nam are among the countries most affected by what she described as "a combination of monsoon-related rainfall and tropical cyclone activity". In Indonesia, 770 were confirmed dead, revising the toll down from 812 it announced earlier in the day. Another 463 people are also missing. (*Dawn, December 4th, 2025, Page 11*)

Starvation feared as flood toll passes 900 in Indonesia

Ruinous floods and landslides have killed more than 900 people on Indonesia's island of Sumatra with fears that starvation could send the toll even higher. A chain of tropical storms and monsoonal rains has pummelled Southeast and South Asia, triggering landslides and flash floods from Sumatran rainforest to highland plantations of Sri Lanka. Nearly 900 have been killed in natural disasters unfolding across Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam over past week. (*Dawn, December 7th, 2025, Page 12*)

UN says floods endanger 800,000 in Gaza Strip

Hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians face flooding of their tents and shelters by heavy rains, and materials for shelters and sandbags are not being allowed to enter the enclave, UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said. Torrential rain swept across the Gaza Strip, flooding tents sheltering families displaced by two years of Israeli bombardment and leading to the death of a baby girl due to exposure. Sixteen people were dead or missing as a result of the storm, with 13 buildings having collapsed and 27,000 tents flooded. Nearly 800,000 displaced people are at heightened risk of potentially dangerous flooding in low-lying, rubble-filled areas where families are living in unsafe shelters, the IOM said. Insufficient drainage and waste management also heightened the risk of disease outbreak. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2025, Page 11*)

Indonesia flood death toll passes 1,000 as authorities ramp up aid

Devastating floods and landslides have killed 1,006 people in Indonesia as the Southeast Asian nation grapples with the huge scale of relief efforts. The disaster, which has hit northwestern island of Sumatra over the past fortnight, has also injured more than 5,400. Deadly torrential rains are one of the worst recent disasters to strike Sumatra, where a tsunami wreaked havoc in 2004 in the northern tip of the island. With vast tracts of territory destroyed by rain, mud and felled trees, 1.2 million residents have been forced to take refuge in temporary shelters. (*Business Recorder, December 14th, 2025, Page 8*)

13.3 # Rainfall

Heavy rain floods UAE streets as Saudi Arabia, Qatar see snow

Heavy rains lashed UAE and other Gulf states, flooding roads and disrupting flights at the world's busiest international airport, while parts of neighbouring Saudi Arabia and Qatar were blanketed in unexpected snow. Meanwhile, snow unexpectedly covered several regions across Saudi Arabia and Qatar. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2025, Page 12*)

Heavy rain, flash floods hit southern California

Torrential rains unleashed flash floods and warnings of debris flow across southern California with further downpours forecast as authorities declared a state of emergency in several counties. Driven by an atmospheric river known as "the Pineapple Express," which moves heavy moisture from the tropical climes of Hawaii to the United States' west coast, the storm was expected to deliver months' worth of rain over a few days. (*Dawn, December 26th, 2025, Page 11*)

13.4 # Storm

Collapse of buildings feared as storms lash Gaza Strip

Authorities in Gaza warned that more war-damaged buildings may collapse because of heavy rain in devastated Palestinian enclave and said weather was making it hard to recover bodies still under the rubble. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 11*)

Newborn baby freezes to death in storm-hit Gaza

A newborn baby has died of severe cold in Gaza amid bad weather conditions in the war-ravaged enclave. Two-week-old Muhammad Khalil Abu al-Khair breathed his last due to hypothermia amid cold temperatures. At least 14 people lost their lives in Storm Byron in Gaza last week. Over 53,000 displacement tents were partially or fully flooded, swept away by torrents, or torn apart by strong winds, and 13 buildings collapsed across Gaza. Israel has killed nearly 70,700 people, mostly women and children, and injured over 171,000 in its genocidal war on Gaza since October 2023, and reduced the enclave to rubble. (*Dawn, December 17th, 2025, Page 11*)

'Shivering from cold and fear' as winter rains batter Gaza

It only took a matter of minutes after the heavy overnight rain first began to fall for Jamil al-Sharafi's tent in southern Gaza to flood, drenching his food and leaving his blankets sopping wet. Nearly 80 percent of buildings in the Gaza Strip have been destroyed or damaged by the war. And about 1.5 million of Gaza's 2.2m residents have lost their homes. (*Dawn, December 29th, 2025, Page 12*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTERS

14.1 # Earthquake

Powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake strikes Japan's northeast

A powerful 7.5-magnitude earthquake shook northeastern Japan, prompting orders for about 90,000 residents to evacuate and tsunami warnings that hours later were downgraded to advisories. The Japan Meteorological Agency initially said a tsunami as high as 3 metres (10 feet) could hit Japan's northeastern coast after the earthquake struck off the coast. (*Business Recorder, December 9th, 2025, Page 12*)

Taiwan rattled by 7 magnitude quake, no major damage reported

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake struck some 32 km off Taiwan's northeastern coastal city of Yilan, the island's weather administration said, with no immediate reports of major damage. The weather administration said people should be on alert for aftershocks between 5.5 and 6.0 in the coming day. (*Dawn, December 28th, 2025, Page 11*)

14.2 # Volcanic Eruptions

Volcanic eruptions may have brought Black Death to Europe

Previously unknown volcanic eruptions may have kicked off an unlikely series of events that brought the Black Death — the most devastating pandemic in human history — to the shores of medieval Europe, new research has revealed. The outbreak of bubonic

plague, known as the Black Death, killed tens of millions and wiped out up to 60 percent of the population in parts of Europe during the mid-14th century. How it came to Europe — and why it spread so quickly on such a massive scale — have long been debated by historians and scientists. (*Dawn, December 6th, 2025, Page 11*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Australia arrests dozens in coal port protest

Australian police said they had arrested dozens of people during climate protests that claim to have halted two cargo ships at one of the world's biggest coal export ports. A total 32 people were arrested and charged with “marine-related” offences at the Port of Newcastle, a major deepwater gateway north of Sydney, police said. Several activists engaged in “unsafe practices” on the water during the protests, New South Wales state police said, warning that they had a “zero-tolerance” approach to threats to public safety or the safe passage of vessels. (*Business Recorder, December 1st, 2025, Page 9*)

Afghan Americans rally against collective blame

Afghan Americans from different neighbourhoods gathered outside the White House to urge the US administration not to hold an entire community responsible for the actions of a few individuals. Amid heightened scrutiny of Afghan nationals, following reports of alleged involvement in terrorism-related incidents in US. (*Dawn, December 2nd, 2025, Page 12*)

News Maker: Rome (Italy)

Workers march behind a banner reading "Money for salaries - not for armaments", near the Colosseum during a national day of strike called by an Italian trade union against the government's austerity plans. (*Dawn, December 13th, 2025, Page 10*)

Hungarian protesters demand Orban quits over abuse cases

A demonstration in the Hungarian capital Budapest drew tens of thousands of protesters demanding that Prime Minister Viktor Orban resign due to perceived inaction over allegations of child abuse in state-run institutions. Since returning to power in 2010, the nationalist premier has vowed to prioritise protection of children but multiple high-profile child abuse scandals have rocked his government in recent times. Protest was called by opposition leader Peter Magyar, whose TISZA party is leading opinion polls ahead of parliamentary elections in spring, after fresh allegations surfaced at a juvenile detention centre in the capital. (*The News, December 14th, 2025, Page 10*)

French farmers block roads over cow disease cull

Farmers in southwestern France blocked roads and set fire to bales of hay to protest the culling of cows due to a skin disease, as the government said one million cattle would be vaccinated. French farmers have been angry over what they see as the government's heavy-handed response to an outbreak of nodular dermatitis, widely known as lumpy skin disease. (*The News, December 14th, 2025, Page 10*)

Tunisian opposition joins forces in protest against President Saied

Activists and opposition figures from across Tunisia's political spectrum took to the streets in a rare show of unity against President Kais Saied, demanding an end to one-man rule and the restoration of democracy. The protest followed three weeks of demonstrations and underscored growing momentum among opposition groups and civil society against what they describe as Saied's unprecedented crackdown on critics. Hundreds marched through the capital carrying portraits of jailed politicians, journalists and activists, turning the protests into a weekly showdown between Saied and his opponents. (*The News, December 14th, 2025, Page 11*)

News Maker: Paris (France)

Louvre museum employees hold a banner which reads "Louvre on strike" after they went on strike to protest their working conditions, the state of the museum's buildings and staffing issues. The strike comes two months after a spectacular heist which saw thieves make off with jewels in broad daylight. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 10*)

Dutch police arrest 22 during protest against Israeli cantor's concert

Dutch police said they arrested 22 people after clashes with protesters outside an Amsterdam concert hall hosting a performance by the Israeli army's official cantor. Several hundred people gathered near the famous Concertgebouw hall in the evening to protest a performance by Shai Abramson, the Israeli military's chief cantor. "The police intervened several times to keep demonstrators at a distance and maintain public order," police said. Riot police used batons as demonstrators set off smoke bombs, adding one officer sustained minor injuries. (*Dawn, December 16th, 2025, Page 11*)

Doctors in England to strike as 'super flu' surges

Doctors in England voted to go ahead with a five-day strike starting this week in the busy Christmas season as a "super flu" outbreak sweeps the country. Prime Minister Keir Starmer branded the move "irresponsible" and said doctors had "lost sympathy" of the public and their colleagues in the state-funded National Health Service (NHS). So-called resident doctors rejected a new pay offer from the government and will walk out, the British Medical Association (BMA) announced. NHS figures showed that the number of cases jumped 55 percent in a week to an average of 2,660 patients in hospital each day the previous week. (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2025, Page 5*)

Louvre Museum closed as workers strike

The Louvre closed its doors to thousands of disappointed visitors as staff launched a rolling strike to protest working conditions at the Paris landmark, two months after a shocking robbery. Staff assembled outside the museum's world-famous glass pyramid, blocking the main entrance and holding signs, as security agents turned tourists away. (*Business Recorder, December 16th, 2025, Page 5*)

Doctors in England go on strike for 14th time

Doctors in England walked out for the 14th time in less than three years in a dispute with the government over pay and jobs. The five-day stoppage by resident doctors — those below consultant level — comes as negotiations reached a deadlock over the medics' demand for a 26 percent pay rise to compensate for what they say is a real-time loss of earnings due to inflation. (*Dawn, December 18th, 2025, Page 10*)

Student leader's death sparks violent protests across Bangladesh

A frontliner of Bangladesh's 'July uprising' and a spokesperson for political platform Inqilab Moncho, Sharif Osman Hadi's death triggered violent protests across Bangladesh, including attacks on major newspaper offices. Hadi, an aspiring independent parliamentary candidate for the Dhaka-8 constituency, was pronounced dead while undergoing advanced treatment at a hospital in Singapore. (*Dawn, December 20th, 2025, Page 1*)

Bangladesh journalists rally after attack on media houses

Bangladeshi journalists protested against arson and vandalism at the offices of two leading newspapers, attacked last week as anger over a student leader's death spilled into violence. Dozens of journalists and media workers formed a human chain in the capital Dhaka, holding placards condemning attacks on "freedom of the press" and on "democratic values", as security personnel stood guard. Angry mobs attacked the offices of Prothom Alo and the Daily Star, torching parts of buildings and vandalising premises of the two publications caught up in surging anti-India sentiment in the wake of popular student leader's death. (*Business Recorder, December 23rd, 2025, Page 5*)

Three dead in Alawite protests on Syrian coast

Three people were killed when protests in Syria's Alawite heartland of Latakia spiralled into gunfire and other violence. Syria has been rocked by several episodes of sectarian bloodshed since longtime leader Bashar al-Assad, who hails from the Muslim Alawite minority, was ousted by a rebel offensive last year and replaced by a Sunni-led government. Thousands of Alawite protesters gathered in Azhari Square in Latakia city to demand a decentralized political system in Syria and the release of thousands of Alawite prisoners. (*Business Recorder, December 29th, 2025, Page 12*)

Govt offers talks as Iran protests spread to varsities

Protests over Iran's soaring cost of living spread to several universities, with students joining shopkeepers and traders, as government offered dialogue with demonstrators. Iran's rial currency has lost nearly half its value against the dollar this year, with inflation reaching 42 per cent this month. President Masoud Pezeshkian said in a social media post that he had asked the interior minister to listen to "legitimate demands" of protesters. Government spokesperson Fatemeh Mohajerani said a dialogue mechanism would be set up and include talks with protest leaders. (*Dawn, December 31st, 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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