

HAAL AHWAL

Selected News on Food and Agriculture

February, 2026

Roots for Equity

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

1 Hectare = 2.471 Acres

1 Acre = 4,840 Square Yards

1 Mann = 40 Kilo Grams (Kgs)

1 Ton = 25 Mann = 1000 Kgs

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February, 2026

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Roots for Equity

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Particular	February, 2026 (PKR)		
	1st	28th	Max Rate
USD¹	282	282	282
Gold¹ (1 Tola)	510,067	547,607	547,607
Silver¹ (1 Tola)	8,919	9,769	9,769
Petrol² (1 Litre)	253.17	258.17	258.17
Diesel² (1 Litre)	268.38	275.70	275.70
Kerosene² (1 Litre)	175.80	180.53	180.53

References: 1. <https://www.forex.com.pk>
2. <https://psopk.com/fuel-prices/pol/archives?page=1>

Preface

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The publication addresses 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).

The publication is based on selected compilation of national and international news items, highlighting issues in this period, considered of importance by the editorial team. For both national and international news, we have provided a section based on excerpts that are a further condensation of the news items covered by the publication.

Please note, that both national and international news begins with a detailed listing of news sub-headings that help readers to find topics of interest. *Haal Ahwal* is based on news coverage from two major newspapers namely the "Dawn" and "Business Recorder." Only the Sunday newspaper is used for news coverage from "The News."

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

Glossary

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- ACAC:** Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee
- ACE:** Anti-Corruption Establishment
- ACRI:** Association for Civil Rights [in Israel]
- ADB:** Asian Development Bank
- AI:** Artificial Intelligence
- AJK:** Azad Jammu and Kashmir
- AMRI:** Agricultural Mechanisation Research Institute
- AVPN:** Asian Venture Philanthropy Network
- BNP:** Benazir Nashonuma Programme
- BNRGC:** National Office for Risk and Disaster Management
- CDWP:** Central Development Working Party
- CTD:** Counter Terrorism Department
- DLTL:** Duty and Taxes Remission for Export
- DPP:** Department of Plant Protection
- DRAP:** Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan
- EAD:** Economic Affairs Division
- ECC:** Economic Coordination Committee
- EFSA:** European Food Safety Authority
- FAO:** Food and Agriculture Organisation
- FDI:** Foreign direct investment
- FEA:** Foreign Economic Assistance
- FFC:** Fauji Fertiliser Company
- FIA:** Federal Investigation Agency
- FPI:** Foreign Portfolio Investment

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GCF: Green Climate Fund

GEF: Global Environment Facility

GIMS: Gambat Institute of Medical Science

HBWWF: Home-Based Women Workers Federation

ICE: Immigration and Customs Enforcement

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IWT: Indus Waters Treaty

Ji: Jamaat-i-Islami

JPMC: Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre

KP: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

KPBC: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council

MFVNT: Multi-Functional Vegetable Nursery Transplanter

MNFS&R: Ministry of National Food Security and Research

MoITT: Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication

MWM: Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen

NDC: Nationally Determined Contributions

NIH: National Institute of Health

NTUF: National Trade Union Federation Pakistan

OICCI: Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry

PAA: Pakistan Airport Authority

PAFDA: Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority

PASSCO: Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation

PBF: Pakistan Business Forum

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginnery Association

PCSIR: Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research

DDP: Pasban Democratic Party

PERA: Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority

PGA&LF: Pak Ghara Agri & Livestock Farms

PMA: Pakistan Medical Association

PMEX: Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited

PPA: Paediatric Association of Pakistan

PSC: Progressive Students' Collective

PSDP: Public Sector Development Programme

PUTA: Peshawar University Teachers' Association

QAT: Qaumi Awami Tehreek

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SCF: Sindh Community Foundation

SFA: Sindh Food Authority

SPDC: Seed Production & Development Centre

SPI: Sensitive Price Index

SPLA: Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association

SWD: Sindh Wildlife Department

TCP: Trading Corporation of Pakistan

TDAP: Trade Development Authority of Pakistan

UAF: University of Agriculture Faisalabad

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

WFP: World Food Programme

WMRC: Water Management Research Center

ZTBL: Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited

NEWS EXCERPTS

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National News

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz formally inaugurated Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority (PAFDA) described as ‘South Asia’s first and most advanced Punjab Science Enclave’, bringing high-tech agriculture, food and drug-testing laboratories under one roof.
- The government aims to introduce new projects for women farmers.
- Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced that free state land will be provided to peasants from April under the “Apna Khet, Apna Rozgar” initiative, in a major push to strengthen the province’s agricultural sector.
- The chief minister said that all cultivable government land across Punjab would be leased to peasants for 10 years, with each beneficiary receiving up to five acres free of cost. No lease charges would be collected.
- Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro attributed the chronic shortage at the barrage to inadequate allocations to the province, leaving an insufficient volume for downstream areas.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- Agricultural credit disbursements surged to record Rs1.412 trillion in the first half of FY26, while the number of borrowers edged up to 2.97 million.
- Officials in Balochistan distributed Rs3.26 billion in interest-free loans to 847 farmers under the second phase of Green Pakistan Initiative, a programme aimed at boosting agricultural output across province.
- Agriculture department has initiated action against advertising and sale of unapproved seed varieties of cotton, rice and other crops on social media platforms.
- The department would destroy all crops grown from such unapproved seeds.
- 212,171 verified wheat farmers would be able to receive Rs8,000 per acre as a urea subsidy from Sindh Bank and other relevant banks.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- The Punjab Agriculture Department has set a target of cultivating early cotton on 700,000 acres for this season.
- Pakistan’s agriculture sector is facing critical challenge as cotton production continues to decline, certified seed availability remains limited, and crop diseases are spreading across major farms, prompting experts, farmer leaders, and private sector stakeholders to call for urgent coordinated action.

- Despite an estimated 600,000 bales of cotton lying unsold across the country, textile mills are rapidly turning to foreign markets, signing import deals for 3 to 3.5 million bales over the past seven months, with more agreements reportedly in the pipeline.
- Textile mills were importing premium cotton – primarily from the United States and Brazil – to produce fine-count yarn required for summer apparel manufacturing.
- For the first time in Pakistan’s history, agricultural commodities, starting with wheat and rice, will be traded on a formal, documented and transparent exchange-based platform, enabling credible price discovery and supporting free-market operations in the agri economy.
- An increase in per acre wheat production was noted this year. It increased from 3,086,337 acres in 2024-25 to 3,668,182 acres in 2025-26.
- The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to intervene over the continued supply of imported wheat allegedly declared unfit for human consumption, warning that the situation could trigger public unrest in the region.
- According to AJK officials, the imported wheat - procured in 2022 by the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) from Ukraine - has exceeded its prescribed shelf life and developed an unpleasant odour.
- Federal government has set an illustrative wheat procurement price at Rs3,500 per 40kg and has sensitised provinces to ensure smooth implementation of the procurement drive during upcoming harvesting season.
- The committee was informed that adequate wheat stocks are currently available in all provinces to meet national consumption requirements until the arrival of the new crop.
- Federal government reiterated that there is no risk of wheat shortage in Pakistan.
- Days after Punjab government set a wheat procurement price of Rs3,500, ECC of cabinet fixed an 8-18pc higher minimum reserve price for sale of 500,000 tonnes of commodity from federal government stocks through open bidding.
- The ECC approved the sale of 500,000 tonnes of wheat through competitive bidding on a First-In-First-Out (FIFO) basis at revised reserve prices of Rs4,150 per 40 kg for local wheat and Rs3,800 per 40 kg for imported wheat.
- University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) has announced developing the country’s first multi-functional vegetable nursery transplanter (MFVNT) aimed at reducing the cost of production and increasing productivity for profitable agriculture.

SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

- The government has prioritised investment in the olive and dairy sectors, and Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) has significantly increased financing for

small dairy farmers, disbursing Rs 60 billion under dairy financing, including Rs 13 billion under the Prime Minister's Kissan Package at concessional rates over the past three years.

- Pakistan's current fisheries exports stand at approximately USD 450m annually.

TRADE

- Pakistan's exports rebounded in January 2026, registering a year-on-year increase of 3.73 percent and a month-on-month rise of 34.96 percent, reaching USD3.06 billion in the first seven months of the 2025-26 fiscal year.
- On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, however, the trade deficit contracted by only 6.61 percent from USD2.918bn in January 2025.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed 3.92 per cent in the first half of 2025-26.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with nine regional countries swelled by 41.37 per cent to \$9.001 billion in the first seven months (July-January) of FY26, up from \$6.367bn in the corresponding period last year.
- Exports to European countries recorded a year-on-year growth of 4.5 per cent in the first half of fiscal year 2025-26.
- Exports of non-textile products dipped by 17.32 per cent to \$7.286 billion in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from \$8.812bn.
- Pakistan's merchandise exports to North America grew 3.07 per cent to \$3.916 billion in the first seven months of 2025-26 compared to \$3.799bn in the corresponding period last year.
- Pakistan's food import bill surged to \$5.502 billion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, marking a 19.27 per cent increase from \$4.613bn in the corresponding period last year.
- Exports of raw food items plunged 35.21pc to \$2.988bn in 7MFY26, compared with \$4.613bn a year ago.
- The steepest decline was recorded in rice exports, including both basmati and non-basmati varieties.
- Pakistan imported 308,741 tonnes of sugar during the July-January period, representing an unprecedented year-on-year increase of 13,494.93pc, up from 2,271 tonnes in the same period last year.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- The governments portrayal of the Seed (Amendment) Act, 2024 as a benign reform to modernise Pakistan's seed sector conceals a deeper project of neo-colonisation.
- Beneath the language of efficiency and innovation lies a systematic transfer of control over seeds from farmers and public institutions to monopoly capital.

- Government is reportedly considering imposition of cess on fertilizer companies to recoup windfall profits, which will be ring-fenced for benefit of farmers.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Foreign direct investment (FDI) plunged year-on-year by 41 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26.
- Investment during July-January FY26 fell to \$981 million from \$1.660 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year.
- The federal government during June-July 2024-25 has signed new agreements worth USD10.643 billion with multilateral and bilateral development partners.
- As of 30th June 2025, Pakistan's total external public debt amounted to USD91.795 billion. The government paid USD13.320 billion during the period July-June 2024-25 on account of debt servicing of external public loans.
- The outflow of profits and dividends on foreign investments rose by 26 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, even as foreign direct investment (FDI) declined by 41pc over same period.
- Cumulatively, foreign investors repatriated USD 1.678 billion in profits and dividends during July-January of FY26, compared with USD 1.329 billion in the same period last year (FY25).
- According to the SBP, returns on FDI recorded a strong growth of 28pc during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, rising by USD 353 million.
- Saudi Arabia has shown interest in investing in corporate farming in Pakistan's rice sector to ensure a stable, reliable supply of rice through structured, long-term arrangements between the two countries.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Federal government's total debt stocks rose by Rs641 billion during the first half of this fiscal year (FY26), mainly due to a rise in domestic borrowing.
- Overall federal government debt stocks (including domestic and external) stood at Rs78.529 trillion at the end of December 2025, up from Rs77.888 trillion in June 2025.
- A parliamentarian revealed that an amount of Rs0.6 million from the national exchequer was spent on a meeting of every Senate standing committee, lamenting that such expenditures are wasted because of officials' lack of preparedness.
- Government borrowed almost five times more from banks in the first seven months of FY26 than in same period last year, reflecting growing spending despite higher revenue collections.
- The food system of Pakistan is producing enough calories, but not enough healthy, nutritious and diverse foods, findings of United Nations claimed.

- FAO further claimed deep structural imbalances in food availability that undermine nutrition, public health, and long-term development outcomes.
- Cereal-heavy plate that may ward off hunger but quietly fuels malnutrition and disease.
- Pakistan now faces a double burden of malnutrition. Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies persist even as obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases surge. Non-communicable diseases account for 58pc of all deaths nationwide.
- Food policy is health policy. If Pakistan continues to measure success in tonnes of wheat rather than quality of diets, it will keep producing enough calories — and too much disease.
- Serious concern has been expressed over the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) spreading through food in Pakistan.
- Raw milk and chicken meat sold in Karachi were found to be contaminated with dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- A Large quantity of substandard and rotten flour was supplied to the masses under the Ramazan subsidy scheme in Taxila and Wah.
- Residents from various localities reported that flour bags purchased from officially designated Ramazan subsidy stalls were unfit for human consumption. According to consumers, the flour emitted a foul odour, had a dull greyish colour and contained visible impurities.
- The WFP country director briefed CM Shah on the five-year, \$40 million School Meals Programme. The initiative, titled “Kal Ki Bunyad (Foundation for the Future)”, will target 100,000 students in 614 government schools in Malir and Keamari districts of Karachi.
- The Government of Sindh and United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program launched Sindh School Meals Program, which leverages US-provided commodities to deliver daily cooked meals & take-home rations to more than 200,000 students across nearly 1,300 primary schools in Sindh.
- Consumer inflation rose to 5.8pc in January from 5.6pc in December. On a month-on-month basis, inflation increased by 0.4pc compared to previous month.
- Pakistan’s poverty rate has increased under the 2024–25 estimates, with national poverty rising from 21.9 percent to 28.9 percent, while rural poverty saw a sharper increase from 28.2 percent to 36.2 percent and urban poverty from 11 percent to 17.4 percent.
- Trends indicate a rise in income inequality across Pakistan between 2018-19 and 2024-25, with provincial patterns also reflecting this upward shift.
- The total development budget was Rs 4,000 billion in 2018. Out of this, the federal government had Rs 2,000bn and provinces also had Rs 2,000bn. Now, the federal government has Rs 1,000bn, while the provinces have Rs 3,000bn.

- PSDP allocations declined from 2.8 percent to 0.9 percent of the total budget in recent years.
- Provincial-level poverty reduction efforts directly impact national poverty indicators.
- Strict reform measures, including subsidy reductions under IMF agreements, contributed to rising poverty levels. Previous government imports surged to USD80 billion, resulting in a USD50 billion trade deficit.

ENVIRONMENT

- Pakistan has secured \$3 million from Global Environment Facility (GEF) to conserve marine biodiversity and accelerate the transition to sustainable and regenerative fisheries management.
- Of the total allocation from the GEF Trust Fund, \$1.2 million will support biodiversity interventions, while \$1.8 million will address land degradation linked to coastal and marine ecosystems.
- Pakistan currently reports over 185,000 new cancer cases annually.
- Health department had released Rs413 million to the hospitals outsourced to private organisations under the public-private partnership initiative but the amount had yet to reach recipients, causing services at the hospitals to decline.
- Pakistan loses 675 newborns & 27 mothers daily from preventable conditions.
- Poor quality water is responsible for nearly 40pc of annual deaths in country.
- Also carrying the heaviest burden of Hepatitis C globally and breast cancer (in Asia) as well as the highest rates heart disease in South Asia.
- Every fifth Pakistani suffers from a water-related illness, adding immense pressure to the already burdened healthcare system.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Pakistan is losing close to 1 percent of its gross domestic product every year to climate-related damage from floods, heatwaves and infrastructure destruction, despite contributing less than 1 percent to global emissions.
- Over the last four floods alone, 6,000 people have died, and 19,000 have been disabled or injured, while more than 40 million have been displaced.
- Economically, Pakistan celebrates growth rates of 3-4pc, only for floods to wipe out nearly 10pc of GDP, erasing years of progress in a single season.

RESISTANCE

- A workers' rally demanded immediate withdrawal of Labour Code and other controversial policies and laws. It urged government to launch meaningful consultation on any labour law reforms.

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Indian farmers slammed a new US trade deal as “a surrender to multinational agricultural giants”.
- Leaders of the union representing apple and cotton growers said any relaxation on the import of cotton would be disastrous for the economies of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- US President Donald Trump’s administration re-approved the use of pesticide dicamba for spraying on top of genetically-modified cotton and soybean crops, drawing swift backlash from environment groups and the Make America Healthy Again movement.

TRADE

- India’s stated intention to buy \$500 billion of U.S. goods over five years under a trade deal is drawing scepticism, with economists warning it could distort commercial procurement and sharply reshape New Delhi’s trade balance.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- The infant formula industry has been rocked by several firms recalling batches that could be contaminated with cereulide, which can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea.
- There is no established safety limit for cereulide in infant formula.
- Several manufacturers, including European giants like Nestle, Danone, and Lactalis, have issued recalls of infant formula in France and dozens of countries since December.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- The number of unemployed people in Germany hit a 12-year high, surpassing the 3 million mark, while inflation moved back above the European Central Bank’s 2 percent target, clouding the outlook for Europe’s largest economy after a stronger-than-expected end to 2025.
- Five months after Israel’s Supreme Court ruled that its prisons were failing to provide enough food for Palestinian detainees and ordered conditions be improved, emaciated prisoners are still emerging with tales of extreme hunger and abuse.

ENVIRONMENT

- The World Health Organisation said that a woman had died in northern Bangladesh in January after contracting deadly Nipah virus infection.

NATURAL DISASTER

- The death toll from a landslide on Indonesia's main island of Java a week ago rose to 53.
- The Democratic Republic of Congo's government said it feared "at least 200 dead" in a "massive" landslide that struck a militia-held mine in the country's east.

NATIONAL NEWS LISTING

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Punjab agriculture, food, drug authority inaugurated

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz formally inaugurated Punjab Agriculture, Food and Drug Authority described as ‘South Asia’s first and most advanced Punjab Science Enclave’, bringing high-tech agriculture, food and drug-testing laboratories under one roof. The inauguration also marked the launch of PAFDA’s laboratory operations, while premier and CM laid the foundation stone of a hostel project for women scientists. PAFDA Director General Dr Talat Naseer Pasha said that authority had 232 scientists, most of them gold medalists, with women comprising 70pc of workforce. Scientists from other provinces are also working at facility.

He said PAFDA would ensure quality standards for food, agriculture and pharmaceutical products, with capabilities including nutrient profiling, microbiological safety testing and verification of ingredients. The authority would reduce reliance on foreign laboratories for quality certification and help restore international confidence in “Made in Pakistan” products. He said a high-tech drug testing laboratory had been established with technical assistance from England and Turkiye. He said 42 high-tech machines worth Rs4.4bn had already been installed at PAFDA, while an additional 565 machines would be provided in near future. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 2*)

Worm-powered farming gains ground in climate-stressed Sindh

The mother of six farms in Bachal Sand village in Sindh’s Tando Allahyar district. In recent years, her sugarcane fields were losing productivity as repeated floods and long dry spells compacted the land, said a report in Arab News. Now she produces and applies vermicompost — an organic fertilizer made with worms — and says the results have been dramatic. “First, we bring animal dung and water it. Then we make a bed and put the worms into it. When it is ready, we apply it to our crops,” she told Arab News, describing the simple process she carries out at home.

The speak for themselves. “Earlier, our sugarcane crop used to yield 1,000 mounds per acre. Now, we are getting 1,500 to 2,000 mounds per acre.” A mound, a traditional South Asian agricultural unit of weight, equals 40 kilograms. The report said that Pakistan ranks among the countries most vulnerable to climate change. Intense monsoon rains and recurring floods regularly damage farmland, particularly in Sindh, where soil has also become increasingly saline and hard. (*The News, February 15th, 2026, Page 15*)

1.1 # Agricultural Policy

SAU-FAO deal to help mitigate climate change impact on agriculture

The Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam, and UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) have agreed to establish a joint task team and develop a comprehensive research agenda aimed at addressing escalating impacts of climate

change on agriculture, food security and rural livelihoods in Sindh. The agreement was reached at a seminar held at the university. The two sides agreed to initiate mapping of climate-affected areas across Sindh to guide evidence-based research and targeted interventions. The two institutions would collaborate on reducing harmful impacts of excessive pesticide use, enhancing farmer awareness and launching new community-level initiatives to address malnutrition. The seminar reviewed opportunities available under international climate and development frameworks, including Green Climate Fund (GCF) and Global Environment Facility (GEF), to support climate-smart agriculture initiatives in the province. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 15*)

1.2 # Farmer

Growers seek governor's help to resolve issues with tobacco companies

The chairman of Tobacco Growers Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa claimed that Governor Faisal Karim Kundi had promised to resolve farmers' problems on a priority basis. Daud Jan Khan was briefing media persons at the Swabi Press Club about the association leaders' meeting with Mr Kundi at the Governor's House, Peshawar. He declared that the current year seemed to be the worst year for the growers for all tobacco growing districts of the province. Mr Khan said that a seven-member delegation met with the governor and apprised him of 'exploitative' policies of the tobacco purchasing companies, both national and multinational. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 9*)

Sindh govt plans to introduce new projects for women farmers: Sharjeel

Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that the Sindh government wants to stand on its own feet and is taking practical steps to make the province economically stable. It has been decided to provide facilities to women associated with the agricultural sector. Regular data of women farmers across Sindh is being compiled so that they can be provided with facilities effectively. The government aims to introduce new projects for women farmers. (*Business Recorder, February 26th, 2026, Page 4*)

1.3 # Land

Four arrested in Jamrud over land dispute

Police arrested four persons after four pedestrians were injured in a firing incident over a land dispute in Jamrud tehsil of Khyber tribal district. Police officials told this scribe that rival groups of Kukikhel tribe in Jamrud established bunkers and raised other illegal structures in order to fortify their claim over the forced possession of land of their rivals. (*Dawn, February 15th, 2026, Page 8*)

Armed clash over land dispute claims three lives in Benazirabad

Two children were among three persons killed in a clash between two groups of the Bhand community over a piece of agricultural land near Qazi Ahmed. Seven others were injured. In 2021, five persons of the Bhand community and a police inspector were killed in a clash between the Bhand and Zardari communities over farm land. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 15*)

Jirga settles 16-year-old blood dispute over land

A jirga settled a 16-year-old blood dispute between two rival groups of Magnejo and Kalhoro tribes over land in Shikarpur. The court was held at Mahar House in Wazirabad. Presiding over it, former MPA Ghaus Bakhsh Khan Mahar presided over the Jirga, imposed a total fine of Rs76.445 million on both warring parties over killing 17 members and causing injuries to 20. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2026, Page 15*)

CM Maryam unveils free land scheme for farmers

Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has announced that free state land will be provided to peasants from April under the “Apna Khet, Apna Rozgar” initiative, in a major push to strengthen the province’s agricultural sector. In a statement, the chief minister said that all cultivable government land across Punjab would be leased to peasants for 10 years, with each beneficiary receiving up to five acres free of cost. No lease charges would be collected, she added. She said farmers will also receive financial assistance along with land allocation to help them immediately begin cultivation. The initiative aims to boost agricultural productivity and support the rural economy.

The scheme was first announced on February 4 during her address at the inauguration ceremony of an electric bus service in Rajanpur, where she stated that around 250,000 acres of land would be distributed among deserving and underprivileged individuals. Detailed guidelines and the application procedure are expected to be issued soon. Separately, speaking at the launch ceremony of the CM Green Tractor Programme Phase-III, the chief minister formally initiated the balloting process and congratulated successful farmers. She said that while 20,000 tractors were distributed over the past 25 years, her government has provided 31,000 tractors in just two years, setting a new record. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2026, Page 3*)

1.4 # Water

Haleji Lake begs for attention on World Wetlands Day

The greenery leading to Haleji Lake — tall eucalyptus trees, neem, peepal, coconut and other wild vegetation — point to the high water table level in the area. Yet the lake is not doing so well. It is slowly drying. A recent visit to Haleji Lake organised by Green Media Initiatives in collaboration with Accountability Lab Pakistan and the Sindh Wildlife Department (SWD) helped highlight several issues with this sanctuary. A man-made lake, Haleji, located some 88 kilometres from Karachi, was constructed during World War II, between 1940 and 1943, by the British rulers in India to provide water to their troops stationed in Karachi.

According to In Charge Haleji Wildlife Sanctuary, Sohail Ahmed Khoso this was initially a saltwater lake. But then the British created a small natural depression into a reservoir fed by a feeder canal from the Indus River. “Soon after, migrant birds from Siberia started frequenting here. Following the Ramsar Convention in 1971, Haleji Lake was included in the list of protected Ramsar sites, which includes marshes, lakes,

mangroves and man-made sites. So far some 172 nations are signatories to the Ramsar Convention of which Pakistan is also one,” he said. “The SWD also made Haleji Lake a protected area in 1972.

The reason behind the water scarcity at Haleji Lake, as pointed out by Mr Khoso, is the stoppage of inflow of sweet water for eight years now. “We are no longer getting water from the Indus River. It is being diverted towards water projects such as the K-IV before it reaches here. Earlier, water to Karachi was going from here. With no inflow and no out flow either, Haleji Lake has become a stagnant water body,” he said. Wetlands also have economic value. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 13*)

Pakistan asks India to fully comply with Indus Waters Treaty

Pakistan asked India to fully comply with the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), reiterating that Islamabad will never compromise on the water rights of its people. This was stated by Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi during his weekly press briefing. His remarks came after India declined to participate in the recent proceedings of the Court of Arbitration held at The Hague to address water-related issues between the two countries. Andrabi said that Pakistan was committed to the peaceful resolution of disputes and issues with India through dialogue and international legal mechanisms.

“Pakistan calls upon India to return to full treaty compliance and fulfill its obligations,” he said. He further stated that Pakistan has taken up the controversial Svskot project being built by India on the River Chenab by writing a letter to India’s Indus Water Commissioner on 11 February as mandated by the IWT. We reiterate that the IWT remains a binding international instrument. “No unilateral actions or defiance can alter this legal reality. We reiterate that we will never compromise on our existential water rights of our people,” he said. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2026, Page 1*)

Inadequate allocation of water to Sindh causing scarcity, provincial assembly told

The Sindh Assembly was informed that the Kotri Barrage had been facing a constant water scarcity, and the K-IV project, aimed at enhancing water supply to Karachi, would also require allocations from alternative sources. Irrigation Minister Jam Khan Shoro attributed the chronic shortage at the barrage to inadequate allocations to the province, leaving an insufficient volume for downstream areas. He said that at least one million cusecs should flow downstream Kotri but due to this shortage, the establishment of new water reservoirs was also not possible. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2026, Page 15*)

Balochistan CM vows to strengthen irrigation infrastructure

Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has reaffirmed provincial government’s commitment to strengthening irrigation infrastructure, describing it as a pillar of agricultural development and economic stability. Chief minister reviewed ongoing development and rehabilitation projects, with key decisions taken to enhance water management and agricultural productivity. The Rs5 billion Hairdin Drainage Project in Sohbatpur district was highlighted, with consensus to expedite completion to ensure

timely benefits for farmers. Rehabilitation of Manjhooti and Uch canals will be included in upcoming fiscal year's budget, aimed at addressing water shortages and supporting cultivators. Mr Bugti directed authorities to adopt modern technology for monitoring and managing irrigation schemes. He underscored the urgent need for comprehensive measures to boost agricultural output. (*Dawn, February 28th, 2026, Page 5*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

2.1 # Agricultural Loan & Finance

'Agriculture sector needs investment boost'

Food Security Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain said that Pakistan's agriculture sector does not lack potential; it needs confidence, coordination and capital. Despite its strategic importance, the agriculture sector today stands at a critical crossroads, as "we face clear challenges: declining productivity; increasing climate stress; limited value addition; and persistent under-investment, particularly in long-term, development-oriented financing, Mr Tanveer said while speaking at Hand-in-Hand National Agriculture Investment Summit focusing on olive and dairy sectors of Pakistan. The summit was organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations in collaboration with the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. The minister announced that the government is open to agribusiness partnerships and innovation. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2026, Page 9*)

Faysal Bank and Waseela ink MoU to finance farmers

Faysal Bank Ltd signed a MoU with Waseela Pakistan to provide fast-track, Shariah-compliant financing to support farmers in meeting their agricultural needs. The partnership will offer quick and hassle-free access to finance through digital solutions, reducing farmers' dependence on middlemen. Financing will be provided under Electronic Warehouse Receipt framework to improve transparency, efficiency and risk management in the agricultural supply chain. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2026, Page 9*)

Farm credit surges to Rs1.41tr in six months

Agricultural credit disbursements surged to record Rs1.412 trillion in the first half of FY26, while the number of borrowers edged up to 2.97 million. Chairing a meeting of the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC), State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmad said that in FY25 the agricultural credit disbursement had hit a record Rs2.577tr, marking a 16 per cent year-on-year increase. The meeting reviewed agricultural credit performance and discussed measures to strengthen inclusive and resilient farm finance.

To accelerate borrower expansion, particularly among small farmers in underserved and unserved areas, Mr Ahmad urged banks to fully utilise SBP initiatives, including the Risk Coverage Scheme for Small Farmers and Underserved Areas and Zarkheze, the central bank's flagship digital platform for agricultural lending. The committee reviewed progress under Zarkheze, described as a major step towards the digital transformation of agricultural credit delivery. The platform enables digital onboarding

for farmers, standardised credit assessment, integration with land and crop information, and end-to-end loan traceability. It also ensures financing is used for quality agricultural inputs through an integrated vendor network. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 9*)

Beyond banks and arthis: the missing intermediary in agricultural finance

Pakistan keeps misdiagnosing the agricultural credit problem. It is framed as a pricing question, a morality play about “usury,” or a technocratic challenge of “financial inclusion.” None of these framings explains the persistence of the status quo, or repeated failure of formal finance to replace it. The issue is institutional fit. Agriculture is a seasonal, probabilistic, price-discovered-at-harvest activity, exposed to shocks that are often systemic rather than borrower-specific. The first-principle question is therefore not whether credit is expensive. It is whether banks are even the right intermediary for this kind of financing.

The durability of the arthi model is often treated as evidence of farmer irrationality or rural backwardness. That is both convenient and wrong. The arthi persists because his contract matches the operating reality of farm economy. He advances liquidity without formal collateral, tolerates repayment volatility, rolls stress across seasons, and does not require enforcement that the system cannot deliver. In a setting where yields are uncertain, prices are discovered only at harvest, and one adverse crop cycle can permanently exclude a borrower from formal credit, this flexibility has real economic value. The arthi survives not because he is cheap, but because he is structurally aligned with risk.

Banks are not, and that is not an insult to bankers. It is a description of what a regulated balance sheet is designed to do. Bank lending assumes predictable cash flows, standardized underwriting, enforceable security, and rule-based collections. It can tolerate volatility only if the volatility can be priced, collateralized, or transferred. Pakistani agriculture routinely defeats all three. When stress appears, banks respond exactly as they are designed to respond: tighten underwriting, demand stronger security, shorten tenors, and harden collections. In doing so they reproduce the very exclusion that policy interventions claim to solve. The system then labels this prudence and moves on. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2026, Page 2*)

Farmers to get Rs3.26bn in interest-free loans

Officials in Balochistan distributed Rs3.26 billion in interest-free loans to 847 farmers under the second phase of Green Pakistan Initiative, a programme aimed at boosting agricultural output across province. Balochistan CM Mir Sarfraz Bugti presided over a ceremony in Quetta where cheques were handed to farmers for cultivation across 35,609 acres. “Such measures promote agriculture, a major source of Pakistan’s exports,” CM Bugti said, adding that the provincial government would play a key role in supporting farmers and advancing prosperity in Balochistan. The second phase builds on success of the initiative’s first round, which provided Rs685 million in interest-free loans to 257 farmers under the 12 Corps headquarters. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2026, Page 5*)

2.2 # Fertilizer

Urea sales plunge to six-year low

Urea sales are expected to clock in at 218,000 tonnes in January, a 75-month low and down by 84 per cent month-on-month and 51pc year-on-year. Topline Securities, in its report, noted that the sharp slowdown follows advance purchases in December 2025, driven by higher manufacturer discounts, which pushed December 2025 sales to an all-time high of 1.36 million tonnes. Discounts offered by select manufacturers decreased in January, with Engro Fertilisers Ltd offering Rs100-150 per bag, down from Rs400 in December 2025, while Fauji Fertiliser Company did not offer any discounts in January after offering Rs150-200 per bag in December 2025. The closing inventory of urea is expected to be around 0.63m tonnes in January, up from 0.32m tonnes in December.

The inventory rise reflects normalisation after an exceptionally strong December 2025, as discounts were rolled back, seasonal Rabi demand tapered, and production remained steady, leading to an inventory build-up. Company-wise, Fatima Group holds highest inventory of 220,000 tonnes, followed by Engro Fertilisers of 264,000 tonnes, and Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC) of 90,000 tonnes. Among the companies, Engro Fertiliser is anticipated to record a massive 96pc month-on-month and 77pc year-on-year decrease in urea sales to 24,000 tonnes in January. While Fauji Fertiliser is expected to record urea sales of 175,000 tonnes, down 54pc month-on-month and 10pc year-on-year, followed by Fatima Fertiliser of 7,000 tonnes, down 97pc month-on-month and 93pc year-on-year, in January. Total DAP (Diammonium Phosphate) sales in January is likely to be at 34,000 tonnes, down 58pc month-on-month and 45pc year-on-year. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 9*)

CM approves roadmap for Thar Coal-to-Fertiliser flagship project

The flagship Coal-to-Fertiliser (C2F) initiative being executed by the Fauji Fertiliser Company (FFC) will reduce reliance on imported fertiliser, create jobs, generate exports and add value to the country's indigenous coal resources. Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah made these remarks while reviewing progress and finalising the strategic roadmap for C2F project. A delegation led by FFC CEO Jahangir Piracha briefed CM on technical, financial, and environmental aspects of the \$1.12 billion project, which aims to utilise Thar's indigenous coal reserves to strengthen Pakistan's fertiliser security and reduce import dependence. (*The News, February 22nd, 2026, Page 14*)

2.3 # Pesticide

'Toxic' water kills five children

Five children died in village of Mundhan Chajjan near Mirpur Mathelo, Ghotki district. Returning from school, the children found an empty bottle of agricultural pesticide, filled it with water from a handpump and drank it. As a result their health deteriorated immediately. Four died in the village while fifth one during treatment in the Sukkur Civil Hospital. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2026, Page 13*)

2.4 # Seed

Crackdown on advertising, sale of unapproved crop seeds

Agriculture department has initiated action against advertising and sale of unapproved seed varieties of cotton, rice and other crops on social media platforms. According to a spokesperson, promotion and sale of seeds of unapproved crop varieties is not only illegal, but can also prove extremely harmful to crop yields. He said that those promoting and selling such unapproved seed varieties on social media are misleading the farmers. He warned that the department would destroy all crops grown from such unapproved seeds. He said that action would be taken against the elements involved in advertising unapproved seeds under cyber laws. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 2*)

2.5 # Subsidy

Rs12bn subsidy for wheat growers

The Sindh government has decided to provide a subsidy on urea fertiliser to verified farmers under the Sindh Wheat Growers Support Programme, starting from February 2. Sindh Minister for Agriculture Sardar Muhammad Bux Mahar stated that government would begin disbursing subsidy. He added that the agriculture department had released more than Rs12 billion to Sindh Bank for the second phase of the programme. A list of 212,171 verified farmers has also been sent to Sindh Bank. The minister explained that verified wheat farmers would be able to receive Rs8,000 per acre as a urea subsidy from Sindh Bank and other relevant banks. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 15*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

3.1 # Cash Crop

Uptick in cotton output

Cotton arrivals at ginning factories have shown a marginal increase this season, but mounting international trade challenges and falling textile exports are raising serious concerns within the cotton and textile industry. According to Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA), a total of 5.545 million bales reached ginning factories across the country by Jan 31, reflecting an increase of 35,000 bales or 0.62 percent compared to the same period last year. The data show that Punjab's ginning factories received 2.63m bales, a decline of around 3pc, while Sindh and Balochistan together received 2.915m bales, marking an increase of about 4pc. (*Dawn, February 4th, 2026, Page 9*)

Administrative challenges aggravate climate risk to cotton

As an unexpected rise in temperature has accelerated start of cotton cultivation across most cotton-growing zones, a new study warned that risk to the sector posed by climate change is being aggravated due to administrative weaknesses including poor pest surveillance, limited crop insurance and insufficient traceability systems. Institutional fragmentation remains a major constraint, according to the study. There is no single accountable entity responsible for national cotton outcomes, resulting in limited data integration, weak risk-sharing frameworks, and inadequate export compliance systems.

The report, produced by EMPAK Strategies, dedicated to fostering a proactive, adaptive, and strategically sound approach to Pakistan's foreign and security policies, highlighted that Pakistan was no longer self-sufficient in the sector as it has to import cotton worth US\$2-3 billion annually, which could negatively affect Pakistan's export competitiveness. On the other hand, temperatures in Sindh's coastal cities, including Thatta, Badin, Gharu, Golarchi, Mirpur and Tando Muhammad Khan, reached up to 35°C, prompting the rapid commencement of cotton sowing in these areas. Sowing is expected to begin in Sindh cities such as Sanghar, Mirpurkhas, Hyderabad and Umerkot, as well as in Punjab districts of Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Vehari, Sahiwal, Pakpattan and Toba Tek Singh within the next eight to 10 days.

The Punjab Agriculture Department has set a target of cultivating early cotton on 700,000 acres for this season. The department designated Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Sahiwal and Faisalabad divisions for early cotton sowing. Surprisingly, Bahawalpur division, which has historically led Punjab in early cotton cultivation, has not been included in the campaign. For several years, the Bahawalnagar district has recorded the highest acreage under early cotton in Punjab. Additionally, large-scale early cultivation takes place in Bahawalpur and in Cholistan areas. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2026, Page 3*)

Experts say concerned at declining cotton production

Pakistan's agriculture sector is facing critical challenge as cotton production continues to decline, certified seed availability remains limited, and crop diseases are spreading across major farms, prompting experts, farmer leaders, and private sector stakeholders to call for urgent coordinated action. These concerns were highlighted during the 17th Coordination Committee meeting of the Seed Production & Development Centre (SPDC) held at Sindh Agriculture University (SAU), Tandojam. Participants noted that Pakistan's cotton output has fallen sharply in recent years, with national seed cotton arrivals standing at 5.45 million bales in 2024–25, down from historical highs of over 14 million bales, indicating a steep decline in production, particularly in Sindh and Punjab. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2026, Page 7*)

Textile mills importing about 3.5 million bales despite local cotton availability

Despite an estimated 600,000 bales of cotton lying unsold across the country, textile mills are rapidly turning to foreign markets, signing import deals for 3 to 3.5 million bales over the past seven months, with more agreements reportedly in the pipeline. According to Cotton Ginners Forum Chairman Ihsanul Haq, the surge in imports is being driven by limited availability of high-quality cotton domestically and an unexpected spike in temperatures that has accelerated demand for summer garments nearly a month ahead of schedule. He said textile mills were importing premium cotton – primarily from the United States and Brazil – to produce fine-count yarn required for summer apparel manufacturing. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2026, Page 8*)

3.2 # Food Crop

Wheat & rice trading now on transparent exchange platform

In a landmark development for Pakistan's agricultural sector, Pakistan Mercantile Exchange Limited (PMEX) has signed a strategic agreement with Meskay & Femtee Trading Company, one of Pakistan's leading agri-commodity traders and exporters. For the first time in Pakistan's history, agricultural commodities, starting with wheat and rice, will be traded on a formal, documented and transparent exchange-based platform, enabling credible price discovery and supporting free-market operations in the agri economy. Pursuant to this agreement signing, the exchange expects the trading of enlisted agri-futures contracts to commence later this month.

By integrating major agricultural trade flows onto PMEX's platform, the initiative is expected to deliver broad-based benefits across the value chain, enabling farmers to access transparent price signals, while traders and exporters benefit from standardization and effective risk management. Importers, processors, and investors gain reliable price benchmarks and documented, regulated transactions. Collaboration will commence with deliverable wheat and rice futures. As an Agri Market Maker on PMEX, Meskay & Femtee Trading Company will provide continuous two-way quotes and bring sizeable agri-commodity volumes onto the Exchange, deepening liquidity, improving price discovery, and reducing volatility for market participants. (*Business Recorder, February 5th, 2026, Page 10*)

Wheat production showing growth, say officials

Sindh Chief Secretary Asif Hyder Shah was informed that an increase in per acre wheat production was noted this year. It increased from 3,086,337 acres in 2024-25 to 3,668,182 acres in 2025-26 which reflects renewed confidence of growers in support policy of the provincial government. He was presiding over a meeting of the Sindh agriculture department to assess status of the ongoing wheat crop for Rabi crop 2025-26 season and review production targets and measures to support farmers aimed at ensuring food security across Sindh. The CS directed agriculture department to maintain close monitoring of crop conditions until harvest and ensure continued support to farmers to sustain the upward production trend. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 15*)

Imported wheat supplied to AJK termed 'unfit for consumption'; PM urged to intervene

The Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) government has urged Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to intervene over the continued supply of imported wheat allegedly declared unfit for human consumption, warning that the situation could trigger public unrest in the region. AJK authorities had conveyed serious concern to the federal government over the quality of imported wheat being supplied through the Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco), and sought its immediate replacement with locally produced wheat of fair average quality (FAQ) standard.

AJK procures around 300,000 tonnes of wheat annually to meet its food security requirements. Under a 2023 decision of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), Passco has since been supplying wheat to AJK in a 50:50 ratio of indigenous and imported stocks — unlike Gilgit-Baltistan, which receives 75pc local and 25pc imported wheat. According to AJK officials, the imported wheat - procured in 2022 by the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) from Ukraine - has exceeded its prescribed shelf life and developed an unpleasant odour.

Laboratory assessments conducted by the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the Pakistan Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (PCSIR) reportedly found that the commodity did not meet food safety standards. Officials maintained that flour milled entirely from the imported wheat was unsafe for human consumption. As a temporary measure, the AJK Food Department had been blending imported stocks with local wheat to maintain minimum quality standards. Despite repeated representations to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research and Passco over the past three years, officials said no remedial action had been taken. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 4*)

Wheat procurement price fixed at Rs3,500

Federal government has set an illustrative wheat procurement price at Rs3,500 per 40kg and has sensitised provinces to ensure smooth implementation of the procurement drive during upcoming harvesting season. The current procurement framework will remain applicable for one year, as the federal government is working on a comprehensive long-term wheat policy for 2026-2030, aimed at strengthening national food security through modern reforms, Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain said while chairing a meeting of the national wheat oversight committee.

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has adopted a hybrid wheat procurement model comprising 75 per cent public sector participation and 25pc private sector involvement to enhance efficiency and market responsiveness. The Sindh government informed the committee that wheat procurement will be carried out through public sector to ensure a stable supply and price management. The committee was informed that adequate wheat stocks are currently available in all provinces to meet national consumption requirements until the arrival of the new crop. The federal government reiterated that there is no risk of wheat shortage in Pakistan, and coordinated measures are in place to ensure an uninterrupted supply across markets. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 9*)

ECC revises sale price for Passco wheat stock

Days after Punjab government set a wheat procurement price of Rs3,500, the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet fixed an 8-18pc higher minimum reserve price for sale of 500,000 tonnes of commodity from federal government stocks through open bidding. A meeting of the ECC presided over by Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb took up again a proposal of the Ministry of National Food Security regarding disposal of 500,000 tonnes of wheat stocks through competitive bidding. These stocks

were held by Pakistan Agricultural Storage and Services Corporation (Passco) currently under winding up. The committee was informed that an earlier attempt to sell the wheat at previously approved reserve prices could not be finalised due to lower bids received. In view of the existing stock position and associated carrying costs, the ECC approved the sale of 500,000 tonnes of wheat through competitive bidding on a First-In-First-Out (FIFO) basis at revised reserve prices of Rs4,150 per 40 kg for local wheat and Rs3,800 per 40 kg for imported wheat. Punjab government has recently fixed minimum procurement price of Rs3,500/- per 40kg from farmers for the current season.

ECC also approved on Jan 28 about 800,000 tonnes of Passco's wheat amid allegations of waste of public funds on managing imported wheat stocks since 2021-22. The ECC was then told that around 1.8m tonnes of wheat stocks were still lying with Passco. Around 550,000 tonnes of these stocks belonged to imports made from Ukraine in 2021-22, most of which are now reportedly beyond the category of human consumption. The ECC had decided to offload 800,000 tonnes at an estimated cost of about Rs70 billion, which would still leave about one million tonnes in storage, largely in bad shape. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2026, Page 9*)

3.3 # Vegetable

Country's first vegetable nursery transplanter developed at UAF

University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) has announced developing the country's first multi-functional vegetable nursery transplanter (MFVNT) aimed at reducing the cost of production and increasing productivity for profitable agriculture. An event was jointly organised by the Department of Irrigation & Drainage, Faculty of Agricultural Engineering & Technology, WMRC and Agricultural Mechanisation Research Institute (AMRI) Multan under PARB Project (22-390) to demonstrate and create awareness about the MFVNT at the Water Management Research Center (WMRC). (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 2*)

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Dairy

ZTBL disbursing Rs60bn under dairy financing

The government has prioritised investment in the olive and dairy sectors, and Zarai Taraqiati Bank Limited (ZTBL) has significantly increased financing for small dairy farmers, disbursing Rs 60 billion under dairy financing, including Rs 13 billion under the Prime Minister's Kissan Package at concessional rates over the past three years. These remarks were made by Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain and ZTBL President Tahir Yaqoob Bhatti at the Hand-in-Hand National Agriculture Investment Summit 2026 on Olive and Dairy Sectors, organised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations.

He said vast potential of the olive sector, stating that its development could reduce Pakistan's edible oil import bill by up to USD 3 billion. Pakistan is the world's fifth-

largest producer of milk, offering significant opportunities for growth. He added that there is strong potential to expand exports of value-added dairy products. The ZTBL president said that the bank is the country's largest agriculture financing institution with a nationwide rural footprint. Key feature highlighted was ZTBL's ginger intercropping experiment in olive orchards, undertaken at the Bank's demonstration farm in Islamabad in collaboration with Ayub Agricultural Research Institute, Faisalabad. (*Business Recorder, February 6th, 2026, Page 3*)

4.2 # Fishery

Giant Freshwater Prawn Farmers' Day, Technical Roadshow held

The Giant Freshwater Prawn Farmers' Day & Technical Roadshow, titled "Unlocking Pakistan's Aquaculture Export Potential through High-Value Species," was successfully organized at Pak Ghara Agri & Livestock Farms (PGA&LF), Ghara, in collaboration with the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), under the initiative and leadership of Director General Athar Khokhar. The event marked a historic milestone for Pakistan's aquaculture sector with the introduction of PakRos – Pakistan's first All-Male Giant Freshwater Prawn (Scampi) hatchery.

This pioneering initiative introduces advanced all-male production technology, ensuring faster growth rates, better size uniformity, and higher yields—significantly improving farm profitability and export competitiveness. Pakistan's current fisheries exports stand at approximately USD 450 million annually. Speakers at the event emphasized that with structured development, technology adoption, and value-chain integration, Giant Freshwater Prawn production alone has the potential to contribute an additional USD 1 billion in export revenue, substantially strengthening the country's foreign exchange earnings.

Farmers demonstrated keen interest in this new freshwater species, widely known as Scampi, engaging actively in discussions and asking detailed questions regarding feasibility, production cycles, input requirements, and profitability. With the launch of PakRos and the collective commitment of government institutions, financial partners, exporters, academia, and farmers, Pakistan stands poised to significantly enhance its aquaculture output—building on the existing USD 450 million export base and unlocking the potential for an additional USD 1 billion through Giant Freshwater Prawn production. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2026, Page 2*)

4.3 # Livestock

SCF concludes training programme on Climate-Smart Livestock Management

Sindh Community Foundation (SCF) has successfully concluded a four-day training program on Climate-Smart Livestock Management for Income Generation, aimed at strengthening the livelihoods of rural women farmers in climate-affected areas of District Sanghar. A total of 50 women farmers from eight villages participated in the training, which was organized with the support of the Asian Venture Philanthropy

Network (AVPN) under its Asia Gender Equality Fund – Round 2. The initiative focused on equipping women with practical skills to improve livestock productivity, protect animal health, and enhance household incomes amid growing climate challenges. (*Business Recorder, February 9th, 2026, Page 2*)

Agri, livestock sectors: PM for expanding collaboration with Turkiye

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif emphasised the potential for expanding collaboration between Pakistan and Turkiye, particularly in the agricultural and livestock sectors, highlighting numerous opportunities for mutual progress. Talking to a four-member visiting delegation led by Abdulkadir Karagoz, Chairman of Turkiye’s Agricultural Technologies Cluster (TUME), the PM reaffirmed Pakistan’s commitment to strengthening its historic ties with Turkiye and enhancing economic cooperation.

“A strengthened partnership in the agricultural and livestock sectors is crucial for both nations,” Sharif added, commending Turkiye’s success in modern agricultural technology as a model for Pakistan. Chairman Karagoz briefed the PM on Turkiye’s experience in implementing cutting-edge agricultural technologies to boost productivity. He expressed a strong desire to deepen cooperation in agriculture and livestock sectors between the two countries. Both sides agreed that fostering stronger ties between their business communities would be essential for accelerating economic growth. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2026, Page 1*)

5 # TRADE

Jan exports up 34.96% MoM, 3.73% YoY

After five months of sluggish performance, Pakistan’s exports rebounded in January 2026, registering a year-on-year increase of 3.73 percent and a month-on-month rise of 34.96 percent, reaching USD3.06 billion in the first seven months of the 2025-26 fiscal year. The improvement was driven by a sharp surge in exports alongside a significant decline in imports, according to provisional data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics’ (PBS) monthly summary of foreign trade for January 2026, total exports amounted to USD2.9 billion, up from \$2.27 billion in December 2025.

On a year-on-year (YoY) basis, however, the trade deficit contracted by only 6.61 percent from USD2.918bn in January 2025, as both exports and imports showed mixed performance. On MoM exports in January 2026 surged to USD3.061bn crossing the USD3 billion mark for the first time in Pakistan’s trade history registering a strong 34.96 percent MoM increase compared to December, signalling a notable recovery in outbound trade. Imports, meanwhile, declined to USD5.786 billion, down 4.85 percent MoM, resulted in significantly narrow the monthly trade gap. The YoY comparison revealed modest improvements in Pakistan’s external trade position.

Exports increased 3.73 percent YoY from USD2.951 billion in January 2025, while imports decreased by 1.41 percent YoY from USD5.869 billion, resulting in a lower trade deficit of \$2.725 billion. The data showed that during the first seven months of FY26, exports totalled USD18.195 billion, reflecting a decline of 7.09 percent YoY, while imports witnessed an increase of 9.42 percent YoY to USD40.233 billion. As a result, the cumulative trade deficit widened significantly to \$22.038bn, reflecting an increase of 28.22 percent increase compared to the same period last year. Despite the positive monthly performance in January, the data emphasizes ongoing structural challenges for Pakistan's trade sector. (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2026, Page 1*)

Smuggling hinders legal trade, says top Balochistan official

The provincial government is providing all necessary support and facilities to the business community engaged in legal trade, import, and export, but illegal trade and smuggling remain major hurdles in prompting lawful business in the province. Balochistan Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Muhammad Hamza Shafqaat made these remarks during a meeting with business leaders and office-bearers of the Quetta Chambers of Commerce and Industry (QCII). He disclosed that the government is making every effort to promote trade with Iran and, within a month or two, the Iran border will operate on a passport-based system, making travel without a valid passport impossible. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 3*)

Trade gap with Mideast narrows in July-Dec

Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed 3.92 per cent in the first half of 2025-26, driven by a slight decline in imports and exports to the region. In absolute terms, the trade deficit contracted to \$7 billion in July-December FY26 from \$7.285bn over the corresponding 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 the preceding year. Exports to the Middle East fell 6.06pc to \$1.502bn in 6MFY26 from \$1.599bn over the corresponding months of last year. In FY25, exports to the region fell 1.52pc to \$3.107bn from \$3.155bn in the same preceding year.

At the same time, Pakistan's imports from the Middle East saw a decline of 4.29pc to \$8.502bn in 6MFY26 from \$8.884bn over the corresponding period last year. In FY25, imports rose 5.64pc to \$17.081bn from \$16.169bn in the preceding year. Pakistan has recently signed a free trade agreement with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to minimise its trade imbalance with the region. The demand for Pakistani products dropped in the UAE during the period under review. Exports to Saudi Arabia fell 7.28pc to \$337.927m in July-December FY26 from \$364.465m over the same period last year. The imports from the kingdom saw an increase of 6.19pc to \$1.919bn against \$1.807bn in the preceding year.

Exports to the UAE declined 6.06pc to \$1.023bn in 6MFY26 from \$1.089bn over the last year. Major export products, include rice, bovine carcasses, men's and boys' cotton

ensembles, guavas and mangoes. Imports increased by 13.24pc to \$4.327bn from \$3.821bn over the corresponding months of last year. Exports to Bahrain stood at \$25.159m in 6MFY26 against \$26.757m in the corresponding period last year, a decline of 5.97pc. Imports rose 61.29pc to \$130.432m in 6MFY26 from \$80.866m last year. Exports to Qatar fell 14.28pc to \$51.005m from \$59.503m over the corresponding period last year. Imports also dipped 9.83pc to \$1.476bn from \$1.637bn. Export to Kuwait rose 9.71pc to \$65.147m in 6MFY26 against \$59.385m. However, imports surged 19.82pc to \$649.206m from \$809.734m. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 9*)

Trade gap widens 42pc with nine countries to \$9bn

Pakistan's trade deficit with nine regional countries swelled by 41.37 per cent to \$9.001 billion in the first seven months (July-January) of FY26, up from \$6.367bn in the corresponding period last year. The widening gap reflects a fall in Pakistan's exports to regional markets, driven largely by reduced shipments to China, followed by Afghanistan and Bangladesh. Trade with Afghanistan, including exports, has remained suspended since October 10, 2025. Exports to India posted a slight increase in percentage terms, though the rise was minimal in dollar value. Meanwhile, shipments to Bangladesh and Sri Lanka declined during the period under review, according to the latest figures released by the State Bank of Pakistan. The trade deficit with the nine countries widened by 29.42pc to \$12.297bn in FY25 compared to \$9.502bn in the preceding year.

The value of Pakistan's exports to the nine countries — Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Iran, Nepal, Bhutan and the Maldives — declined by 16.86pc to \$2.307bn in 7MFY26 compared to \$2.775bn a year ago. In FY25, exports to these nine countries recorded a modest increase of 1.49 per cent, rising to \$4.401 billion in July to June, up from \$4.336 billion in the corresponding period a year earlier. Contrary to this, imports surged 23.69pc to \$11.31bn in 7MFY26 from \$9.14bn. Imports surged 20.66pc to \$16.698bn in FY25 from \$13.838bn over the same period of the previous fiscal year. Further analysis showed that imports from China grew by 24.58pc to \$11.097bn in 7MFY26 from \$8.907bn over the same period last year. In FY25, imports from China stood at \$16.312bn, up by 20.79pc from \$13.504bn a year ago. The bulk of imports in the region are sourced from China, followed partially by India and Bangladesh.

Pakistan's exports to China fell by 1.02pc to \$1.467bn in 7MFY26 from \$1.482bn in the preceding year. Imports from India dipped by 9.44pc to \$122.56m in 7MFY26 from \$135.35m. In FY25, import from New Delhi increased to \$220.58m from \$206.89m in the preceding year. Meanwhile, exports remained at \$2.926m, slightly increased from \$0.404m. Exports to Afghanistan dipped 59.07pc to \$228.96m in 7MFY26 from \$559.52m last year. Imports stood at \$6.36m in 7MFY26 against \$15.21m in FY25, a plunge of 58.18pc. Pakistan's exports to Bangladesh declined by 10.48pc to \$417.62m in 7MFY26 from \$466.55m over the last year. In FY25, exports to Dhaka increased by

19.08pc to \$787.35m from \$661.19m. Imports grew 14.02pc to \$42.17m in 7MFY26 from \$49.05m over the last year. Exports to Sri Lanka dipped by 28.89pc to \$184.48m in 7MFY26 from \$259.43m over the last year. The imports from Sri Lanka rose by 11.63pc \$38.57m in 7MFY26 from \$34.55m over the last year. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2026, Page 9*)

Trade gap widens, CA hits USD1.1bn deficit

Pakistan's external account pressures intensified in the first seven months of fiscal year 2026 as a 5.5 percent contraction in exports coupled with a 9.8 percent surge in imports significantly widened the trade deficit, pushing the current account into a USD1.1 billion deficit despite an 11.3 percent increase in workers' remittances This was revealed in Finance Division's 'Monthly Economic Update and Outlook February 2026' released. In January 2026, the current account recorded a surplus of USD121.0 million, bringing the aggregate position during July-January 2026 to a deficit of USD1.1 billion, compared to a surplus of USD0.6 billion recorded last year. Goods & services export recorded at USD23.9 billion compared to USD24.1billion last year, of which goods export stood at USD18.3 billion. Goods & services import recorded at USD44.4billion compared to USD40.0 billion last year, where goods imports were USD36.7 billion.

Trade deficit of goods & services increased to USD20.5 billion from USD15.9 billion last year. Finance Division data noted that the FDI totalled USD517.4 million during July-January fiscal year 2026, down from USD1.483 billion in the corresponding period of fiscal year 2025. However, improvement was witnessed in January 2026 as it increased to USD310 million against USD140.6 million in January 2025. Main sources of net inflows were from China (USD495.5 million) and Hong Kong (USD188.4 million). Sector-wise, power (USD541.8 million) and financial services (USD462.0 million) attracted the most FDI. Private and public FPI recorded net outflows of USD287.6 million and USD176.4 million, respectively. As of February 13, 2026, foreign exchange reserves stood at USD21.3 billion, including USD16.2 billion with the SBP.

Goods & services export recorded at USD23.9 billion compared to USD24.1 billion last year, of which goods export stood at USD18.3 billion. Services export were primarily driven by IT services that increased by 19.8 percent to USD2.6 billion. Goods & services import recorded at USD44.4 billion compared to USD40.0 billion last year, where goods imports were USD36.7 billion. Trade deficit of goods & services increased to USD20.5 billion from USD15.9 billion last year. Cumulative cement dispatches grew by 10.6 percent in Jul-Jan fiscal year 2026 and reached 30.6 million tonnes. During the Rabi season 2025-26, wheat has been sown on an area of around 23.1 million acres, compared to the target of 23.8 million acres, with targeted production at 29.7 million tonnes. (*Business Recorder, February 28th, 2026, Page 1*)

5.1 # Export

Pakistan exports 0.78m tonnes of furnace oil

Pakistan exported around 0.78 million tonnes of furnace oil during July-December FY26, as local demand from the power sector and industry remained subdued. The strong export performance underscores how refiners are increasingly relying on international markets to offload surplus furnace oil amid falling local usage. Industry officials said furnace oil consumption in Pakistan has been on a declining trend for several years due to a policy-driven transition away from expensive and environmentally unfriendly fuels. (*The News, February 1st, 2026, Page 17*)

Minimum export value of fresh mango pulp fixed

The Directorate of Customs Valuation, Lahore, has fixed the minimum export value of fresh mango pulp (all types) from Pakistan. In this regard, the directorate has issued Valuation Ruling No. 1 of 2026. The Customs Export Value for mango pulp would be the Minimum Export Price for all foreign destinations. (*Business Recorder, February 4th, 2026, Page 12*)

Exports to Europe rise 4.5pc

Exports to European countries recorded a year-on-year growth of 4.5 per cent in the first half of fiscal year 2025-26, driven primarily by increased shipments to southern, eastern and northern European states. Pakistan's export could worsen following a recent agreement between India and the EU, as New Delhi remains Islamabad's main competitor in the European textile market. Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar highlighted that Pakistan has successfully completed four biennial GSP+ reviews and reaffirmed the country's commitment to fully meeting its obligations under the scheme.

Official data showed that export earnings from the EU rose to \$4.638 billion during July-December, up from \$4.438bn, showed the State Bank of Pakistan data. Western Europe — including Germany, the Netherlands, France, Italy, and Belgium — accounts for the largest share of Pakistan's exports to the EU. Exports to the region slightly increased by 0.23pc to \$2.195bn in 6MFY26, up from \$2.190bn.

Exports to northern Europe rose by 4.82pc to \$373.006 million in 6MFY26 from \$355.860m in the corresponding period of the previous year. Shipments to southern Europe increased by 9.16pc to \$1.667bn in 6MFY26 from \$1.527bn. Within the region, exports to Spain grew by 11.35pc to \$807.45m from \$725.11m, while exports to Italy increased by 7.51pc to \$612.88m from \$570.08m. However, exports to Greece declined by 9.03pc to \$64.45m. Exports to eastern Europe rose 10.51pc to \$403.576m in 6MFY26. Before Brexit, Pakistan's largest export destination was the UK. In the post-Brexit period, exports to the UK slightly decreased by 0.27pc to \$1.096bn in 6MFY26 from \$1.099bn a year earlier. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 9*)

Textile exports show slight revival in January

Pakistan's textile and clothing exports recorded a paltry growth of 3.14 per cent in January from a year ago, signalling a revival in the export proceeds from the sectors. The export proceeds from the sector recorded a negative growth since October. Exports fell by 8.56pc in December 2025, 2.57pc in November, and 0.57pc in October. The January slight increase revives hopes of a rebound in exports from the sector, as reflected in data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Official data showed that textile and clothing exports rose to \$1.738bn in January from \$1.685bn in the same month last year.

The data showed exports of readymade garments surged 9.64pc in value and 10.68pc in quantity during January FY26, while knitwear dipped 8.55pc in value and 18.03pc in quantity. Bedwear increased 6.88pc in value and 8.72pc in quantity. Towel exports surged 14.09pc in value and 6.41pc in quantity in January FY26, whereas cotton cloth went up slightly 0.02pc in value and 3.09pc in quantity, respectively. Yarn exports surged 12.88pc YoY in January FY26. Exports of made-up articles, excluding towels, increased by 8.77pc, while tents, canvas, and tarpaulin declined by 18.37pc in January. The import of synthetic fibre decreased 46.98pc, and the arrival of synthetic and artificial silk yarn dipped by 22.46pc in January FY26. The import of raw cotton declined by 46.98pc during the month under review compared with a year ago. However, the import of second-hand clothes grew 28.86pc during the month under review. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 9*)

Rice export rebate scheme revised

The Ministry of Commerce has further amended a rebate scheme on local taxes and levies to address concerns of larger rice exporters and make it more competitive on the international market. A notification released fixed specific rates under the Duty and Taxes Remission for Export (DLTL) scheme for various rice brands. The scheme will come into effect retrospectively from Jan 23. The government has allocated approximately Rs15 billion for the subsidy scheme. According to the notification, the commerce ministry has removed the ceiling cap price of \$1,275 per tonne FOB.

As a result of this decision, according to sources, rice exporters will receive 9pc of the FOB value of \$750 or above. This will encourage over-invoicing by Basmati exporters with offices abroad in Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the US, the EU, and the UK. Contrary to this, Indian exporters are currently offering Basmati rice at prices below \$300 per tonne, with a price range of \$900 to \$975 per tonne to foreign importers. There are apprehensions that the DLTL incentive is being misused by Basmati exporters and that domestic prices have already inflated. "Our growers have already sold their Basmati paddy at a price range of Rs5,500 to Rs6,000 per 40 kg," the sources further said. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 9*)

Non-textile exports dip 17pc in July-January

Exports of non-textile products dipped by 17.32 per cent to \$7.286 billion in the first seven months of the current fiscal year from \$8.812bn, largely attributed to a steep reduction in exports of agricultural produce and value-added shipments. The contraction reflects mounting pressure on key sectors, especially agriculture-based products, which have struggled with lower volumes and weaker external demand. Analysts suggest that without a rebound in value-added products, overall export performance may remain under pressure in the coming months.

However, paltry growth was recorded in leather, footwear, and engineering products in 7MFY26 compared with a year ago, according to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The agriculture sector bore the brunt of the slowdown, with rice exports suffering the steepest setback. During the first seven months of FY26, the value of rice exports plunged by 40.51pc to \$1.305bn on a year-on-year basis. The decline was not limited to prices alone. Export volumes also fell sharply, dropping 32.94pc YoY to 2.439 million tonnes. The decline was observed across basmati and non-basmati varieties. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 9*)

NA body informed: Border closure, Russia ban cut potato exports by 50pc

Closure of border with Afghanistan and ban by Russia has reduced the exports of potatoes by almost 50 percent, causing lot of problems for the farmers who are desperately looking for buyers. This was stated by Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain at a meeting of the National Assembly Committee on Food Security and Research. The Minister said that Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have agreed to buy surplus potatoes from Pakistan and hopefully the export of potatoes to these countries will begin in March.

He said that the government is exploring options to export potatoes to Central Asian states through China and Iran. He said this year, 13 million metric tonne of potatoes were produced out of which 4 million metric tonne surplus potatoes will be exported to Central Asian states and other countries. Rana Tanveer said that the Department of Plant Protection (DPP) compiled a consolidated list of 36 countries where Pakistani potatoes have export access and the government is looking at ways and means to export surplus potatoes to these countries.

The minister said that committee already been formed under the chairmanship of Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar who with consultation with Ministry of Commerce, National Logistic Cell and his ministry looking for ways and means to help the farmers who're trying to find buyers internationally and domestically. To a query, senior official of Ministry of National Food Security said that Russia imposed a ban on Punjab potatoes citing alleged Potato Tuber Moth and Tomato Wilt virus. He said the DPP contested the prohibition, presenting national prevalence, pest-status records, and accredited lab diagnostics showing absence of the cited pests/pathogens.

During the meeting, the Ministry of National Food Security and Research also presented PSDP of PKR 16.94 billion for the financial year of 2026-27 with foreign component of PKR 4.05 billion and it include 13 projects. The Committee expressed concern over the recurring nature of agricultural crises, noting that similar challenges have affected rice, wheat, sugarcane, and now potatoes. Members emphasized that these crises reflect systemic weaknesses in planning, coordination, and market forecasting within the agricultural sector. (*Business Recorder, February 24th, 2026, Page 1*)

Exports to US rise 3.47pc

Pakistan's merchandise exports to North America grew 3.07 per cent to \$3.916 billion in the first seven months of 2025-26 compared to \$3.799bn in the corresponding period last year. The export rebound was largely fuelled by a slight increase in shipments to the United States, signalling a strengthening trade relationship between Islamabad and Washington. Nearly 94pc of Pakistan's exports to North America were destined for the US market, with the remainder primarily directed toward Canada.

In FY25, exports to North America recorded a 9.97pc rise to \$6.415bn from \$5.833bn in FY24. The rise is primarily due to a surge in textile and clothing exports to the US, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. Exports to US rose 3.47pc to \$3.690bn in 7MFY26 from \$3.566bn a year ago. In FY25, exports to the US rose 10.72pc to \$6.028bn from \$5.444bn in the preceding year. Exports to Canada shrank 2.64pc to \$226.28m in 7MFY26 from \$232.42m a year ago. In FY25, exports stood at \$386.106m against \$389.220m in FY24, indicating a decline of 0.80pc. However, imports from North America surged 29pc to \$1.821bn in 7MFY26 from \$1.411bn a year ago. Imports recorded a 26.98pc rise to \$2.588bn in FY25 from \$2.038bn, with maximum arrivals from the US.

Under the new agreement, Pakistan will import additional \$2.5bn worth goods from the US to balance the trade deficit in the current fiscal year. In the same region, Pakistan's export to Latin America stood at \$37.14m in 7MFY26 against \$45.78m a year ago, a fall of 18.87pc. Export to Latin America dipped 7.52pc to \$73.521m in FY25 against \$79.502m in the preceding year. Exports to Central America edged up to \$103.54m in 7MFY26 from \$102.92m. The shipments to key Mexican market fell to \$76.55m from \$78.85m a year ago. According to the SBP data, exports to South America — Argentina, Brazil, Uruguay, etc — rose 18.46pc to \$238.52m in 7MFY26 from \$201.34m a year ago. (*Dawn, February 26th, 2026, Page 9*)

5.2 # Import

Oil imports fall

Pakistan's oil import bill also showed a negative growth of 4.39pc in 7MFY26, reaching to \$9.046bn from \$9.461bn in the same period last year. The slight decrease reflects a slump in demand, particularly for petroleum products. Data shows a 1.81pc decline in the value of petroleum products, but a 7.72pc rise in quantity in 7MFY26. Crude oil

imports increased by 8.22pc, with a 16.91pc rise in quantity, indicating that local refineries are processing more crude oil. On the other hand, imports of liquefied natural gas and liquefied petroleum gas fell by 26.20pc and 4.98pc, respectively, reflecting reduced demand for energy products. The imports of the telecommunication group surged by 30.78pc year-on-year, mainly due to an increase in mobile phone imports in 7MFY26. The import of mobile handsets increased by 31.36pc to \$1.139bn during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, compared with \$867.68m over the corresponding period last year. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 9*)

Food exports hit steep decline as imports surge

Pakistan's food import bill surged to \$5.502 billion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, marking a 19.27 per cent increase from \$4.613bn in the corresponding period last year, largely driven by higher arrivals of sugar and edible oil. In contrast, exports of raw food items plunged 35.21pc to \$2.988bn in 7MFY26, compared with \$4.613bn a year ago. Export volumes declined across nearly all major food categories, except meat. The steepest decline was recorded in rice exports, including both basmati and non-basmati varieties.

The increase in food imports underscores the country's growing dependence on foreign supplies amid persistent domestic production and supply constraints. The surge was largely fuelled by higher purchases of sugar, edible oil and tea to meet local demand. According to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, palm oil accounted for the largest share among imported food items, followed by pulses, tea, soyabean oil, and sugar. Pakistan imported 308,741 tonnes of sugar during the July-January period, representing an unprecedented year-on-year increase of 13,494.93pc, up from 2,271 tonnes in the same period last year.

In terms of value, sugar imports rose sharply to \$174.614m, up from \$2.181m in 7MFY25, a surge of 7,906.15pc, according to official trade data. The dramatic rise comes in response to the government's decision to allow sugar imports in a bid to address domestic shortages and stabilise market prices. Retail sugar prices have been fluctuating between Rs160 and Rs190 per kg in various cities, prompting authorities to step in and ease supply constraints through imports.

The value of palm oil imports surged 24.69pc to \$2.350bn in 7MFY26, up from \$1.885bn a year ago. In terms of quantity, import of palm oil rose 15.63pc to 2.182m tonnes from 1.887m tonnes in the corresponding period last year. This growth indicates higher consumption of edible oil and ghee in Pakistan. However, the arrival of pulses fell 21.89pc to \$492.095m from \$630.019m in 7MFY25. Similarly, soyabean oil imports plunged 42.27pc to \$94.991m from \$164.550m. The import bill for all other food items rose 34.37pc to \$1.672bn. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2026, Page 9*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

CSR integral to modern business strategy: Qaiser

Corporate Social Responsibility has become an integral part of modern business strategy, and that investment is not merely about economic indicators but about improving lives, creating jobs, reducing poverty, and strengthening social stability, said Board of Investment (BoI) Minister Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh. Speaking at the annual CSR Summit, minister emphasised that businesses today are key partners in social progress alongside economic growth. He underlined that investment in human resources is the key to poverty reduction and economic stability. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 9*)

6.1 # Corporate Lobby

Cotton collapse and corporate grip

The governments portrayal of the Seed (Amendment) Act, 2024 as a benign reform to modernise Pakistan's seed sector conceals a deeper project of neo-colonisation. Beneath the language of efficiency and innovation lies a systematic transfer of control over seeds from farmers and public institutions to monopoly capital. This legislation did not emerge from democratic deliberation or public demand; it was passed quietly, with little parliamentary debate, no consultation with farmers, and minimal media scrutiny. Such silence is not accidental. It reflects a governance model dictated by colonial powers.

This trajectory did not begin in 2024. The Seed (Amendment) Act of 2015 laid the groundwork for privileging private companies over public research institutions and farmer-led seed systems over a decade ago. It systematically excluded farmer-saved and locally-bred varieties. Closely aligned with the World Trade Organisation and Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights regimes, these laws reframe seeds not as a shared heritage but as proprietary commodities. They marginalise and criminalise age-old practices of saving and exchanging seeds that farmers across South Asia have relied upon for centuries to ensure resilience, biodiversity, and food security.

Farmers on the frontline of seed dependency

The consequences of these laws are borne most heavily by small and landless farmers, who constitute the backbone of Pakistan's rural economy. For a tenant farmer in southern Punjab or a small cotton grower in Sindh, seed choice is no longer guided by agronomic suitability or local ecological knowledge. It is dictated by what multinational or domestic private companies choose to sell and at what price. Each season, farmers are compelled to purchase new seed, often bundled with specific chemical fertilisers and pesticides, locking them into cycles of dependency, indebtedness, and vulnerability. Nowhere is this crisis more evident than in the collapse of Pakistan's cotton sector. Cotton production has plummeted from around 14 million bales in 2014-15 to just 4.9m bales in 2022-23.

Farmers across cotton-growing districts report that genetically modified Bt cotton varieties, marketed as high yielding and pest-resistant have failed catastrophically under

local conditions. Rising temperatures driven by climate change, evolving pest resistance, and poor-quality seed have devastated yields. In Bahawalnagar, Rahim Yar Khan, and Sanghar, farmers describe fields ravaged by whitefly and pink bollworm despite escalating pesticide use, leaving them with mounting input costs and little to harvest. For these farmers, crop failure is not an abstract statistic. It means selling livestock to repay loans, pulling children out of school, reducing food consumption, and, in many cases, abandoning farming altogether.

Moreover, the health consequences are immediate and severe. Households cut back on protein, fruits, and vegetables, leading to rising malnutrition, anemia among women, and stunting in children. For women, cotton also yielded wood a fuel for cooking and decreased crop has created another level of physical and economic hardship on them. Chronic indebtedness and repeated crop losses fuel mental health crises, including depression, anxiety, and farmer suicides that remain largely undocumented. Bt cotton failures have driven heavier chemical use, resulting in respiratory illnesses, skin diseases, and long-term neurological harm in rural communities. At the national level, the collapse of cotton has reduced export earnings from textiles, intensified pressure on foreign exchange reserves, and deepened Pakistan's debt dependency demonstrating how seed policy directly shapes macroeconomic instability.

Corporate concentration and market power

These local crises are inseparable from global market dynamics. Worldwide, just four transnational corporations Bayer/Monsanto, Corteva, Syngenta, and BASF control between 60-75 per cent of the proprietary seed market and dominate genetically engineered seed sales. In Pakistan, this concentration has translated into private and multinational firms supplying over 90pc of cotton seed. Farmers increasingly report that traditional or public sector varieties are unavailable or actively discouraged. When crops fail, corporations face no accountability; the risk is fully socialised onto farmers, symbolising classic colonial relations.

Seed, sovereignty, and survival

Agriculture is inseparable from national sovereignty, and seeds are its foundation. When seed systems are surrendered to corporations, a country's ability to feed itself becomes contingent on external interests. Policies passed without public scrutiny that prioritise corporate profits over farmers' rights signal not reform, but surrender. This is neocolonialism in its contemporary form exercised not through armies, but through patents, contracts, and laws.

The ongoing genocide in Gaza offers a stark and painful lesson. The deliberate destruction of farmland, olive trees, water infrastructure, and food systems has shown that food sovereignty is inseparable from national survival. A population denied control over its food is rendered defenseless. To surrender agriculture and seed sovereignty is to place a nation at the mercy of imperial powers and global markets. Protecting seed

and food sovereignty is therefore not merely about farmers rights. It is about safeguarding Pakistan's food security, economic independence, and dignity. Seeds must remain in the hands of those who cultivate them. Anything less is not modernization it is dispossession. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2026, Page Business & Finance 2*)

6.2 # Fertilizer Company

Govt mulling imposing cess on fertilizer companies

The government is reportedly considering imposition of cess on fertilizer companies to recoup windfall profits, which will be ring-fenced for benefit of farmers. A committee has been constituted to discuss and consider different options for the imposition of a cess on the fertilizer sector. On recommendations of the committee and the ECC, federal cabinet approved gas allocation for fertilizer plants in December 2025, transitioning fertilizer production to a Mari-based standalone gas supply system. The decision aims to ensure the long-term sustainability of domestic fertilizer production, safeguard national food security, protect farmers from price volatility, and strengthen overall economic stability. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2026, Page 1*)

6.3 # Food Company

Tetra milk firms accused of price gouging

The Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) expressed strong concern over the unchecked price hikes by packaged or tetra milk companies, which are burdening consumers, and appealed to government to immediately regulate the dairy sector in the larger public interest. In a statement, the PBF said unchecked pricing and lack of oversight in the dairy sector were severely burdening consumers amid persistent inflationary pressures. It said the dairy products were an essential daily requirement for households across Pakistan, yet “the sector operated without effective regulatory control, allowing companies to charge excessively high prices”.

The PBF reported that tetra milk was currently being retailed at Rs360-Rs380 per litre. In contrast, actual cost of milk procurement, even after adding logistics, transportation, and handling charges, does not exceed Rs180 per litre. “This massive price gap reflects unjustified profit margins that cannot be defended through processing or packaging costs and represents clear exploitation of consumers,” it said. It noted that the regional price comparisons exposed serious distortions in Pakistan's dairy market.

“In neighbouring countries such as India and Bangladesh, tetra milk is available at prices equivalent to Pak-Rs250 to Rs270 per litre, despite similar packaging standards and production inputs,” it said, adding that this comparison clearly indicated that milk prices in Pakistan were artificially inflated due to weak regulation and market dominance by a few large companies. The forum also pointed out that leading dairy companies operating in Pakistan had reported annual revenues ranging from Rs60 to Rs100bn in 2025, reflecting extraordinary profitability at a time when ordinary citizens were struggling to meet basic food expenses. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 9*)

PAA with Coca-Cola's help launches tree-plantation initiative at IIAP

Reinforcing its commitment to environmental stewardship, Pakistan Airport Authority (PAA) launched a major tree plantation initiative at Islamabad International Airport Pakistan, with support from Coca-Cola Pakistan. Under the initiative, climate-resilient, indigenous trees will be planted across designated areas within the airport complex, further strengthening Islamabad's green cover and supporting the Government of Pakistan's national environmental drive. In 2024, Coca Cola Foundation supported Recharge Pakistan Project, which aims to transform the country's approach to flood and water resource management by implementing solutions across local watershed sites in Indus Basin river system. (*Business Recorder, February 18th, 2026, Page 4*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Hike in foreign investors interest in Balochistan: CM Bugti

Balochistan CM Sarfraz Bugti has said that there has been a significant increase in foreign investors' interest in Balochistan, reflecting growing confidence in province's economic potential and investment environment. Outlining the government's economic vision, Mr Bugti said that the provincial administration is fully committed to promoting investment and creating new economic opportunities. He emphasised that attracting both local and foreign investment is the top priority of the provincial government. The CM revealed that Saudi investors have shown particular interest in energy, minerals, agriculture, and infrastructure sectors which hold immense potential for sustainable development and long-term growth in province. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2026, Page 5*)

FDI plunges 41pc to \$981m

Foreign direct investment (FDI) plunged year-on-year by 41 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26. Data issued by the State Bank showed that the confidence of foreign investors further declined compared to previous year, as their investment during July-January FY26 fell to \$981 million from \$1.660 billion in the same period of the previous fiscal year. Experts believe foreign investment will remain under pressure, as regional situation is not conducive to foreign investors, and the country is also facing terrorism.

The government is struggling to attract foreign investors but failed to achieve any positive results. The State Bank data showed that the highest FDI inflows came from China at \$495.5m; however, this was lower than last year's \$857m. Other significant inflows were from Hong Kong (\$188.4m), the UAE (\$126m), and Switzerland (\$124m). The inflow of FDI improved in January, reaching \$173.3m, but the largest inflow this month was from China, contributing \$73m. However, the largest outflow was to Norway, with disinvestment totalling \$365m during the July-January period. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 9*)

June-July 2024-25: Agreements worth USD10.643bn signed

The federal government during June-July 2024-25 has signed new agreements worth USD10.643 billion with multilateral and bilateral development partners, says a report

titled Foreign Economic Assistance (FEA) released by the Economic Affairs Division (EAD). According to FEA report, the commitments consist of USD5.061 billion from multilateral development partners, USD1.289 billion from bilateral development partners, and USD4.294 billion from foreign commercial banks. Out of these commitments, 40 percent was committed for budgetary support/balance of payment to strengthen foreign exchange reserves and stabilize the exchange rate, 15 percent as program financing, 25 percent project financing, and 20 percent commodity financing.

From July-June 2024-25, disbursements of USD12.144 billion were mainly under the project and program loans/grants from multilateral development partners, bilateral development partner sand international financial institutions (IFIs). The ADB, World Bank and IsDB have been the largest contributors amongst the multilateral development partners, contributing USD2.130 billion, USD1.769 billion, and USD739 million, respectively. On the bilateral side, China emerged as the largest contributor to the total disbursement during the specified period, disbursing USD584 million, followed by Saudi Arabia with USD221 million in disbursements.

As of 30th June 2025, Pakistan's total external public debt amounted to USD91.795 billion. The government paid USD13.320 billion during the period July-June 2024-25 on account of debt servicing of external public loans. Of this, principal repayments were USD9.729 billion and interest payments were USD3.591 billion. Furthermore, the net transfers to the government's external public debt resulted in a positive balance, amounting to USD1.713 billion indicating an increase in the external public debt stock. Sectoral distribution of the disbursements under project financing i.e., USD3.541 million represents the sectoral priorities of the government and mirrors the sectoral composition of the active portfolio of the total project assistance in the country. (*Business Recorder, February 19th, 2026, Page 12*)

Profits and dividend outflows jump 26pc

The outflow of profits and dividends on foreign investments rose by 26 per cent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, even as foreign direct investment (FDI) declined by 41pc over same period. Although IMF has recently appreciated Pakistan's economic performance, it did not address the mounting pressure on the external account due to heavy debt servicing and rising interest rates on commercial borrowings. The State Bank's latest data shows that profit and dividend outflows on foreign investment during July-January FY26 increased by 26pc to \$1.677 billion compared to \$1.328bn in the same period of FY25.

The increase reflects a relatively relaxed policy by the central bank regarding profit repatriation. Financial sector observers believe that, following loan agreements with the IMF, the government came under pressure not to hold back profit payments. In FY24, profit outflows were largely restricted. Of the total outflow during July-January FY26, \$1.618bn was repatriated against foreign direct investment, while \$60m was paid on

portfolio investment. In January alone, profit outflows amounted to \$119m. Outflows from the food sector declined to \$142m during the first seven months of FY26 compared to \$263m in the corresponding period of FY25. However, FDI inflows dropped sharply to \$981m during July-January compared to \$1.66bn in the same period last year, a decline of 41pc. Pakistan's external financing options have also narrowed, as the government has been unable to materialise its plan to raise \$250m through Panda bonds. Moreover, rising regional uncertainty is expected to make commercial borrowing more expensive, though the government may still resort to such borrowing to meet debt servicing needs. The rollover of \$12bn in external obligations remains unresolved. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2026, Page 9*)

Foreign companies repatriate \$1.6bn in seven months

Foreign companies operating in Pakistan repatriated more than USD 1.6 billion in profits and dividends during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (FY26), reflecting improved business activity and eased payment flows. Data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) showed that repatriation of profit and dividend by the foreign investors rose by 26 percent during this fiscal year. Cumulatively, foreign investors repatriated USD 1.678 billion in profits and dividends during July-January of FY26, compared with USD 1.329 billion in the same period last year (FY25). This represents an increase of USD 349 million in returns on both Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and Foreign Portfolio Investment (FPI).

According to the SBP, returns on FDI recorded a strong growth of 28 percent during the first seven months of the current fiscal year, rising by USD 353 million. Foreign investors repatriated USD 1.618 billion in FDI returns during July-January FY26, compared with USD 1.265 billion in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal year. During the period under review, repatriation under FPI stood at USD 60 million, slightly lower than USD 64.1 million recorded in the same period last year. On a monthly basis, foreign investors repatriated about USD 118.7 million in January 2026, including USD 118.5 million in FDI returns and a minor outflow of USD 0.2 million in portfolio investment returns. (*Business Recorder, February 21st, 2026, Page 1*)

7.1 # Country / Region

Saudi Arabia eyes Pakistan's rice sector

Saudi Arabia has shown interest in investing in corporate farming in Pakistan's rice sector to ensure a stable, reliable supply of rice through structured, long-term arrangements between the two countries. The issue came up for discussion in a meeting between Commerce Minister Jam Kamal Khan and Assistant Minister of Investment of Saudi Arabia Ibrahim Al-Mubarak. The meeting reviewed and advanced bilateral cooperation in trade, investment, and joint engagement in regional markets.

An official announcement released after the meeting noted that the Saudi side expressed interest in pursuing corporate farming in the rice sector. It was observed that Pakistan

already meets the required quality standards, and that investment in corporate-scale farming, mechanisation, storage, and logistics could support steady rice exports to Saudi Arabia. More broadly, discussions on agriculture and food security focused on cooperation in rice, fodder (including alfalfa), meat, and selected agricultural products. Both sides also examined the potential role of Saudi financing institutions in supporting export-linked agricultural and infrastructure projects in Pakistan, particularly those structured around guaranteed offtake arrangements with Saudi Arabia.

The meeting also reviewed corporate farming and mechanisation as long-term responses to productivity constraints, including in crops such as cotton, where declining yields and high labour input costs have weakened competitiveness. A central focus of the discussions was the joint exploration of regional markets, particularly Central Asia, Africa, and ASEAN, which were identified as high-growth regions offering substantial opportunities for collaboration. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2026, Page 9*)

Austrian cos urged to invest in various sectors

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif underscored Pakistan's commitment to boosting bilateral economic cooperation with Austria while highlighting the country's vast potential in key sectors such as renewable energy, agriculture, mining, and human resource development. Addressing the Pakistan-Austria Business Forum in Vienna, the prime minister said that Pakistan was an agrarian country and that more than 60 percent of the population lived in rural areas, calling upon Austrian expertise to enhance value addition in citrus and other produce for export markets. He also invited Austrian investors to explore opportunities in mining, tourism and engineering sectors. (*Business Recorder, February 17th, 2026, Page 1*)

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Asian Development Bank to support AI adoption in Pakistan's health sector

The Asian Development Bank will provide technical assistance to Pakistan to enhance understanding and accelerate the deployment of artificial intelligence (AI) applications in health services. The ADB has approved regional technical assistance amounting to \$950,000 to help Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia reap the benefits of AI for service excellence in health. The assistance will assess AI applications in health promotion, screening, diagnosis, and treatment, and will develop a roadmap for AI adoption. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 5*)

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Development Policy

Development spending reaches 27pc in 7 months

The utilisation of Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) funds has inched up to 27 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26, up from 21pc a month earlier. As of Jan 31, ministries and divisions have sanctioned an amount of Rs338.2 billion against

which Rs272.8bn has reported expenditure”, Ministry of Planning and Development said in its Monthly Development Outlook for February. This works out to 27pc of the Rs1 trillion annual PSDP allocation. The utilisation, however, remains well behind the disbursement schedule approved by the government, but is relatively higher than last year. PSDP expenditure in the first seven months of the last fiscal year had stood at Rs220bn, accounting for 20pc of the Rs1.096tr. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 9*)

PSDP projects: MoITT proposes Rs71.84bn allocation

The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) has proposed a massive Rs 71.84 billion allocation for 20 development projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2026–27 — a more than threefold increase from the Rs 22.227 billion earmarked in the current fiscal year. (*Business Recorder, February 14th, 2026, Page 1*)

CDWP clears six uplift projects worth Rs160bn

Central Development Working Party (CDWP) has cleared six development projects, costing Rs 160 billion. CDWP approved two development projects with a cumulative cost of Rs 8.5 billion and recommended four major projects amounting to Rs 151.7 billion to ECNEC for final approval. (*Business Recorder, February 14th, 2026, Page 1*)

Rs555.5bn allocated for PSDP projects

The Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives has authorised Rs555.5 billion (55.55 percent) for development projects under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2025-26 against Rs 1 trillion budgeted allocation during July-January, while actual expenditures stood at Rs 272.78 billion (27.28 percent). Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives authorised 15 percent of funds for first quarter, 20 percent for second quarter, 25 percent for the third quarter, and 40 percent for fourth quarter under PSDP. (*Business Recorder, February 28th, 2026, Page 1*)

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

Govt debt rises Rs641bn in first half of FY26: SBP

Federal government’s total debt stocks rose by Rs641 billion during the first half of this fiscal year (FY26), mainly due to a rise in domestic borrowing, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. According to SBP, overall federal government debt stocks (including domestic and external) stood at Rs78.529 trillion at the end of December 2025, up from Rs77.888 trillion in June 2025. The increase was mainly driven by growth in domestic debt, which rose by Rs891 billion, or 1.6 percent, during July-December FY26. Domestic debt climbed from Rs54.472 trillion at the end of June to Rs 55.363 trillion in December 2025. In contrast, external debt declined during the same period.

The stock of external debt fell by Rs251 billion, from Rs23.417 trillion in June 2025 to Rs23.166 trillion by the end of December 2025. On a year-on-year basis, the federal government’s total debt stock increased by 9.6 percent or Rs6.882 trillion during

calendar year 2025, rising from Rs71.641 trillion in December 2024 to Rs78.529 trillion in December 2025. According to State Bank of Pakistan Governor Jameel Ahmad, the country has repaid about USD6 billion in external debt since the start of the current fiscal year. A further USD4.5 billion is scheduled to be repaid in the remaining months of FY26, up to June 2026. (*Business Recorder, February 12th, 2026, Page 1*)

‘Rs0.6m spent on meeting of every Senate body’

A parliamentarian revealed that an amount of Rs0.6 million from the national exchequer was spent on a meeting of every Senate standing committee, lamenting that such expenditures are wasted because of officials’ lack of preparedness. The meeting was informed that Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) has not submitted draft of proposed PSDP projects for the upcoming financial year 2026-27 as it yet not finalized despite the expiry of January 31 deadline for submission before the committee. (*Business Recorder, February 12th, 2026, Page 2*)

Government borrowing increases five times

Government borrowed almost five times more from banks in the first seven months of FY26 than in same period last year, reflecting growing spending despite higher revenue collections. The government’s appetite for more bank money has shot up, leaving little room for the private sector to borrow. The private sector is not performing well enough to spur economic growth, given persistent tight monetary policy despite low inflation. The data issued by the State Bank showed that government borrowed Rs1,912 billion in 7MFY26 from the commercial banks compared to Rs408bn a year ago.

However, the government ended FY25 with total borrowing of Rs5.4 trillion, indicating most of the borrowing was carried out in the second half of that fiscal year. The situation is even worse this year, as the government has already borrowed about Rs2tr, and if the pace continues, the total would surely exceed the Rs5.4tr borrowed in FY25. It must be alarming, since the government had borrowed Rs8.5tr in FY24 to meet rising current expenditure. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 6*)

10.1 # Food

‘Junk food causes host of health problems among children’

Highlighting the health risks children face from junk food, senior paediatricians at the conclusion of a conference criticised parents for offering food loaded with unhealthy fats to children at a very young age, emphasising that this trend is contributing to host of health problems in them. They were speaking on the final day of the annual national conference, titled “Bridging Gaps, Building Futures: Equity and Access in Paediatric Care”, which was organised by the Paediatric Association of Pakistan (PPA)-Sindh.

Multiple infections weaken the child’s immunity further. “In such situations, doctors are forced to prescribe antibiotics. It’s not the medicines rather infections making the child weak and immunocompromised,” he said, stressing need to scale up vaccination

coverage. Experts also pointed to a lack of breastfeeding practices that compromised the child's immunity at a young age. Mother's milk provided ideal nutrition to babies and contained important antibodies, which protected the child from infections. The conference's scientific sessions focused on key child-health challenges, including preventive pediatrics, vaccination, nutrition, neonatal care, infectious diseases, and emerging trends in paediatric medicine. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2026, Page 14*)

No major change in flour price despite full supply from food dept

The retail flour price recorded a little drop despite adequate release of wheat by the food department, though mostly to roller flour mills, for Rs8,000 per a 100kg bag. The Sindh food department has notified the ex-mill price at Rs1,040 and the retail price at Rs1,070 per 10kg only on Jan 26 under a directive of the provincial chief secretary following a surge in flour price. However, the price of flour produced by chakkies in and outside Hyderabad is still stands Rs130-135 per kg. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2026, Page 15*)

Five food officials sacked for 'misappropriating' wheat stocks

Five food inspectors have been sacked and many other officers suspended for misappropriating wheat stocks during the process of releasing the commodity to roller flour mills last month, it was officially stated. Some of them have been arrested by the Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE). Show-cause notices have been issued to many others as well for causing nearly Rs480m loss to the provincial kitty, by issuing wheat to non-functional flour mills. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 15*)

SFA carries out crackdown against chemically -adulterated milk

In an operation to safeguard public health, Sindh Food Authority (SFA) carried out a decisive crackdown against chemically adulterated milk in Malir district. During the operation, approximately 1,000 liters of unhygienic and adulterated milk were destroyed on the spot. (*Business Recorder, February 10th, 2026, Page 4*)

Pakistan's food system failing to deliver healthy products: UN

The food system of Pakistan is producing enough calories, but not enough healthy, nutritious and diverse foods, findings of United Nations claimed. The analysis led by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of United Nations further claimed deep structural imbalances in food availability that undermine nutrition, public health, and long-term development outcomes. Results of the analysis were presented at the National Results Dissemination Workshop on the Integrated Roadmap for Sustainable Food Systems Transformation in Pakistan.

The analysis said while Pakistan's overall food energy availability is adequate, the national food supply falls short of what is needed to support healthy diets in line with the National Food-Based Dietary Guidelines of 2018. Significant gaps persist in the availability of key food groups, including fruits and vegetables, pulses and legumes. These shortages directly weaken efforts to address malnutrition, micronutrient deficiencies, and diet-related diseases. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2026, Page 3*)

Senate panel raps food ministry

The Ministry of National Food Security and Research has not yet finalised budgetary proposals under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for 2026-27, and the Senate Standing Committee at its meeting, expressed strong displeasure, and asked the ministry to finalise proposals at the earliest. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2026, Page 9*)

Broken food system

Pakistan grows enough food to fill stomachs. It does not grow enough to nourish bodies. That stark conclusion, drawn by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and other UN partners, should jolt policymakers out of complacency. Calories, the analysis shows, are not the same as nutrition. And Pakistan's food system, though energy-sufficient, is structurally skewed against healthy diets. The findings, presented at a national workshop on sustainable food systems, expose deep imbalances. Cereals, grains, sugar and edible oils are produced and consumed in excess of what dietary guidelines recommend.

Meanwhile, fruits, vegetables, pulses and other nutrient-rich foods remain in short supply. The result is a cereal-heavy plate that may ward off hunger but quietly fuels malnutrition and disease. This imbalance is visible across both rural and urban Pakistan. Grains dominate consumption patterns everywhere, particularly in rural households. Milk is the second most consumed food group. Yet fruit intake is consistently low, and protein sources beyond dairy — including meat, poultry, eggs and pulses — remain inadequate. Pulses, which could serve as an affordable protein alternative, are not consumed in sufficient quantities to compensate for limited animal-source foods.

Worryingly, analysis highlights rising consumption of free sugars and fats, especially in rural areas where inexpensive, energy-dense foods fill the gap left by more diverse diets. Sales of processed foods have nearly doubled in recent years, signalling a rapid dietary transition with grave public health consequences. Pakistan now faces a double burden of malnutrition. Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies persist even as obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases surge. Diabetes alone affects an estimated 34.5m people. Non-communicable diseases account for 58pc of all deaths nationwide.

Cardiovascular disease claims nearly 400,000 lives annually. These numbers represent a mounting fiscal and human crisis. The FAO-led roadmap is right to call for a strategic reallocation of subsidies and incentives. Public money should not disproportionately support the overproduction of cereals and sugar while fruits, vegetables and pulses remain unaffordable for many. Targeted taxes on sugar and sugary beverages, coupled with reinvestment in nutrition programmes, deserve serious consideration. Food policy is health policy. If Pakistan continues to measure success in tonnes of wheat rather than quality of diets, it will keep producing enough calories — and too much disease. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 6*)

Balochistan food dept abolished

The government of Balochistan has abolished Food Department with immediate effect and established a new Commodities Management Department in its place. Notification stated that administrative control of Economics and Marketing Wing of the Agriculture and Cooperative Department has been transferred to the newly created Commodities Management Department. However, market committees will continue to operate under the Agriculture and Cooperative Department. The Directorate of Food has also been dissolved. The government has approved the establishment of a Consumer Protection Directorate and a Commodities Management Directorate under the new department. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 5*)

Revenue officials foil 40-ton flour smuggling bid, expose alleged nexus in Taxila

An alleged nexus between officials of the food department and the flour smuggling mafia was exposed when local revenue authorities foiled a bid to smuggle 40 tons of wheat flour from Punjab to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), preventing illegal transportation of a subsidised essential commodity. The Taxila food department has been under the spotlight for the past few weeks, with several officials reportedly arrested for allegedly facilitating flour smugglers. Some were removed from service or transferred after being found guilty in departmental inquiries for allegedly being in league with the smuggling network. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2026, Page 4*)

Raw milk, chicken meat can act as reservoirs of resistant bacteria, warn experts

Serious concern has been expressed over the growing threat of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) spreading through food in Pakistan. This revelation came during a two-day national conference on foodborne AMR held in Islamabad, which was organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Pakistan of United Nations in collaboration with the Ministry of Food and Drug Safety of the Republic of Korea and national partner institutions. The research experts from Karachi, while sharing their study, revealed that raw milk and chicken meat sold in Karachi were found to be contaminated with dangerous antibiotic-resistant bacteria. (*The News, February 22nd, 2026, Page 14*)

Flour supplied under Ramazan package in Taxila, Wah flagged as unhealthy

A Large quantity of substandard and rotten flour was supplied to the masses under the Ramazan subsidy scheme in Taxila and Wah. Officials in the Punjab Food Department in Lahore confirmed that one flour mill was sealed and a heavy fine imposed on the management in this regard. Consumers said what was meant to provide relief to low-income families during the holy month had instead sparked widespread anger, raising serious questions about monitoring, transparency and accountability. Residents from various localities reported that flour bags purchased from officially designated Ramazan subsidy stalls were unfit for human consumption. According to consumers, the flour emitted a foul odour, had a dull greyish colour and contained visible impurities.

Some families claimed that upon opening the bags at home, they discovered stale flour and, in certain cases, insect infestation. The dough prepared from the flour reportedly turned dark and sticky, producing bread with a bitter taste and unpleasant smell. The locals said that the Ramazan subsidised flour scheme was introduced to ease the burden of inflation on poor families. However, the alleged supply of substandard and rotten flour has overshadowed the initiative, leaving residents of Taxila and Wah demanding accountability and urgent corrective measures to restore public confidence. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2026, Page 4*)

10.2 # Food Scarcity

Progress on project to prevent stunting among children reviewed

The Benazir Nashonuma Programme (BNP) — a key initiative for stunting prevention that targets pregnant and lactating women and infants — has demonstrated a 6.4 percentage-point reduction in stunting among children aged 6-23 months, along with significant improvements in maternal dietary diversity and a reduction in low birth weight. This was revealed in a meeting between Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and World Food Programme (WFP) Pakistan Country Director Coco Ushiyama at the CM House. According to midline evaluation conducted by AKU, the programme has demonstrated a 6.4 percentage-point reduction in stunting among children aged 6-23 months, along with significant improvements in maternal dietary diversity and a reduction in low birth weight. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 14*)

School meals drive in vulnerable Karachi districts

The WFP country director briefed CM Shah on the five-year, \$40 million School Meals Programme. The initiative, titled “Kal Ki Bunyad (Foundation for the Future)”, will target 100,000 students in 614 government schools in Malir and Keamari districts of Karachi. The programme aims to improve children’s nutritional status through daily school meals, strengthen literacy outcomes using the Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) approach, rehabilitate WASH facilities and institutionalise a sustainable provincial school meals model. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 14*)

Sindh govt, USDA allocate USD80m to school meals programme

The Government of Sindh and United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA’s) McGovern-Dole International Food for Education and Child Nutrition Program launched the Sindh School Meals Program, which leverages US-provided commodities to deliver daily cooked meals and take-home rations to more than 200,000 students across nearly 1,300 primary schools in Sindh. With a USD 80 million funding from the USDA, the initiative will be implemented by Save the Children and the World Food Programme (WFP), in coordination with Sindh’s Planning and Development Department, School Education and Literacy Department, and provincial Food and Health departments, contributing to improved enrolment, attendance, and foundational learning. (*Business Recorder, February 19th, 2026, Page 4*)

10.3 # Inflation

Inflation rises 5.8pc in January

Consumer inflation rose to 5.8 percent in January from 5.6pc in December, driven largely by an increase in the prices of non-perishable food items, according to official figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). The response comes a week after the central bank kept its policy rate unchanged at 10.50pc, warning that inflation could remain above its 5-7pc medium term target range for a few months, even as economic activity gathers pace and rising imports widen the trade deficit. On a month-on-month basis, inflation increased by 0.4pc compared to the previous month. The average inflation stood at 5.24pc during July-January FY26, the lowest compared to 6.50pc over corresponding period of last year because of high base effect of last year.

The average annual inflation for FY25 dropped sharply to 4.49pc from 23.41pc in the previous year, aided by a high base effect, declining food prices, and lower transport costs. Inflation had previously fallen into single digits in August 2024 — at 9.6pc — for the first time in over three years. The government has projected an inflation target of 7pc for the current fiscal year. Food inflation in January increased by 3.3pc in urban areas and 4.7pc in rural areas. On a month-on-month basis, the food inflation dropped 0.2pc in urban areas while it increased by 0.4pc in rural areas, respectively. The non-food inflation reached 7.4pc in urban areas and in rural regions it stood at 6.9pc. This marks that non-food inflation is still very high. Core inflation, excluding volatile food and energy components, stood at 7.2pc in urban areas and 8.3pc in rural areas. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 9*)

Dec CPI inflation stands at 5.6pc YoY

Consumer Price Index-based inflation stood at 5.6 per cent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in December 2025, compared to 6.1 per cent in the previous month and 4.1 per cent in December 2024, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Data released by the PBS further showed that on a month-on-month (MoM) basis, CPI declined by 0.4 per cent in December 2025, compared to an increase of 0.4 per cent in the preceding month and a rise of 0.1 per cent in December 2024. CPI inflation Urban, increased by 5.8 percent on year-on-year basis in December 2025 as compared to an increase of 6.1 percent in the previous month and 4.4 percent in December 2024. On MOM basis, it decreased by 0.4 percent in December 2025 as compared to an increase of 0.5 percent in the previous month and a decrease of 0.1 percent in December 2024. (*Business Recorder, February 3rd, 2026, Page 1*)

Retailers hike rates of essential items as Sindh gov't issues Ramazan price lists

While rates of everyday use items have already gone up in markets, city administration has fixed the prices of essential commodities for Ramazan. However, no serious effort appears to have been made to check soaring rates. The majority of retailers, especially fruit vendors, always ignore the official price list, terming it “unrealistic”. As a result, end users pay more than the double official rate. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 13*)

Ramazan inflation hits household budgets

Short-term inflation, measured through the Sensitive Price Index (SPI), rose 5.19 per cent year-on-year in the week ending Feb 19, reflecting higher retail prices of perishable food items and energy products in the domestic market. The SPI-based inflation has now increased for 29 consecutive weeks, underscoring persistent pressure on household budgets. The continued upward movement has largely been driven by a sharp rise in the prices of vegetables and other perishables, as well as higher electricity and petrol rates. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2026, Page 9*)

No relief for consumers as official efforts fail, food prices soar in Karachi

Despite the city administration's issuing a price list for essential commodities, retailers continue to sell items at blatantly higher rates in Ramazan. The situation exposes officials' efforts to contain skyrocketing price hike. Consumers are paying the price due to the officials' ineffective measures. Pushcart fruit vendors and vegetable sellers sell items without having any official price lists. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2026, Page 13*)

10.4 # Poverty

Poverty & economic inequality escalate in 7-year span: Ahsan

Planning and Development Minister Ahsan Iqbal said that Pakistan's poverty rate has increased under the 2024–25 estimates, with national poverty rising from 21.9 percent to 28.9 percent, while rural poverty saw a sharper increase from 28.2 percent to 36.2 percent and urban poverty from 11 percent to 17.4 percent. "Poverty and economic inequality have increased during last seven years due to irresponsibility and changing economic policies.

Trends indicate a rise in income inequality across Pakistan between 2018-19 and 2024-25, with provincial patterns also reflecting this upward shift. Punjab increased from 28.4 to 32 percent, Sindh recorded a rise from 29.7 to 35.9 percent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa moved from 24.8 to 29.4 percent, and Balochistan, though starting from a lower base, rose from 21 percent to 26.5 percent," the minister said while launching the Poverty and Inequality Estimates 2024-25. He said that the period between financial years 2019 and 2025 has been marked by an exceptionally challenging global and domestic economic environment shaped by multiple shocks.

He said that COVID-19 crisis triggered a significant contraction in economic activity, followed by a global commodity super-cycle that translated into domestic inflation reaching multi-decade highs, eroding real incomes. Additionally, the minister said that the geopolitical situation further disrupted supply chains. "These pressures were further intensified by severe climate shocks, notably devastating floods of 2022, which caused losses estimated at USD30.1 billion, and then in 2025, with losses of USD2.9 billion, significantly affecting livelihoods, agricultural produce, and critical infrastructure, thus increasing poverty risks," he said. He emphasized the importance of achieving a higher growth rate and fostering wealth creation to alleviate poverty in country.

He said there is a need to increase the country's exports. He said that the provinces are not devolving resources at the district and grassroots levels to reduce poverty. He said they should pay attention to their less developed areas. He said, "The total development budget was Rs 4,000 billion in 2018. Out of this, the federal government had Rs 2,000 billion and the provinces also had Rs 2,000 billion. Now, the federal government has Rs 1,000 billion, while the provinces have Rs 3,000 billion. The provinces now have three times more development budget than federal government. The federal government has a formula to distribute resources, but the provinces do not have any such system to distribute resources at the grassroots level."

He said that PSDP allocations declined from 2.8 percent to 0.9 percent of the total budget in recent years. He pointed out that provinces now hold a larger share of PSDP resources compared to the federation and called for comprehensive provincial strategies to address poverty. "Provincial-level poverty reduction efforts directly impact national poverty indicators," Speaking about regional differences, Ahsan Iqbal said that unequal distribution of resources within provinces increases poverty and inequality. He warned that terrorism often grows in districts where there is widespread poverty and neglect.

He said that strict reform measures, including subsidy reductions under IMF agreements, contributed to rising poverty levels. He criticized previous government for promoting excessive imports and consumer-driven growth, noting that imports surged to USD80 billion, resulting in a USD50 billion trade deficit. Reaffirming government's commitment to achieving a "Zero Poverty" goal, the minister said targeted development of potential districts through the establishment of small industrial units would remain a key priority in coming years. (*Business Recorder, February 21st, 2026, Page 1*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Karachiites suffer as 40pc garbage left uncollected: PDP

Hapless citizens of the megacity, Karachi, suffer silently as the corrupt administration and its negligent private contractors have failed to effectively collect solid waste, leaving almost 40 percent of it to rot in streets causing diseases and distress, said Pasban Democratic Party (PDP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor. He said not only billions of rupees from the taxpayers' money are wasted on inefficient garbage collection systems, but the citizens also have to spend a considerable portion of their income for treatment of vector borne diseases arising from the rotting garbage. Megacity struggling with disease outbreaks, polluted water, and urban decay. Uncollected trash has become a breeding ground for mosquitoes and rodents, fuelling epidemics of typhoid, dengue, malaria, and gastrointestinal illnesses. (*Business Recorder, February 23rd, 2026, Page 7*)

11.1 # Biodiversity

Govt secures \$3m GEF funding for marine biodiversity: minister

Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry announced that Pakistan has secured \$3 million from Global Environment Facility to conserve marine biodiversity

and accelerate the transition to sustainable and regenerative fisheries management. In a statement, the minister said project, titled ‘Conserving Marine Biodiversity by Accelerating Transition to Sustainable and Regenerative Fisheries Management Practices’, will be executed by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. It was proposed by ministry through the Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination and developed in consultation with stakeholders, in line with national priorities and global environmental commitments.

Of the total allocation from the GEF Trust Fund, \$1.2 million will support biodiversity interventions, while \$1.8 million will address land degradation linked to coastal and marine ecosystems, GEF finances initiatives in biodiversity, climate change, international waters, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and sustainable forest management. It serves as a financial mechanism for major international conventions, including UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Convention on Biological Diversity. Highlighting challenges facing fisheries sector, which contributes about 1.0pc to Pakistan’s GDP, Chaudhry said the industry is grappling with overfishing, high post-harvest losses and illicit practices that strain marine resources. (*The News, February 15th, 2026, Page 17*)

11.2 # Health

Nipah virus no immediate threat to citizens: AKUH experts

While rejecting fears concerning the possible spread of Nipah virus in Pakistan, experts at a roundtable conference underscored the need for building healthcare readiness and prioritising implementation of infection control protocols. Zoonotic virus, which is an infectious agent that jumps from animals to humans, causing disease, currently poses no direct threat to Pakistan. (*Dawn, February 5th, 2026, Page 14*)

‘Country sees over 185,000 cancer cases annually’

Highlighting their concerns over the growing burden of cancer cases in the country, in a statement released in connection with World Cancer Day 2026, the Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) has called upon the government to develop a centralised registry to effectively fight the dreadful disease. According to the association, this year’s theme — United by Unique — marks a critical shift in oncology: acknowledging that while cancer is a collective burden, the path to a cure is deeply individual. “Pakistan currently reports over 185,000 new cancer cases annually. These are not just statistics, they represent diverse biological profiles and socio-economic realities that require a move away from ‘one-size-fits-all’ healthcare. (*Dawn, February 6th, 2026, Page 14*)

Patient care at outsourced hospitals in KP suffers due to payment delay

Patient care at 13 outsourced government hospitals continues to suffer as the private organisations running these facilities haven’t received due payments since July last year due to the ongoing up-gradation work at the accountant general office. Officials told that the health department had released Rs413 million to the hospitals outsourced to private organisations under the public-private partnership initiative but the amount had yet to reach the recipients, causing services at the hospitals to decline.

They said department had been contracting out under-performing hospitals to private organisations through the Health Foundation (HF) to improve patient care. The officials said the HF had so far outsourced 19 hospitals for which the government issued a budget on a quarterly basis subject to verification of their performance by the committees comprising officials of health department, district administration and HF. They, however, said 13 of the hospitals had been awaiting the July-Sept payments, to the financial hardship of employees. *(Dawn, February 8th, 2026, Page 8)*

Nearly 1m fail to get polio drops amid increase in refusal cases

While around a million children were missed during the year's first nationwide polio campaign, Karachi stood out among the cities with most number of refusal cases. A total of 53,000 refusals were reported from across the country, with 58 per cent reported from Karachi alone, during the vaccination drive, which concluded on Feb 5 in most cities but ran till Feb 8 in Sindh. During the campaign, polio drops were administered to more than 44.3m children, marking a significant milestone in Pakistan's continued efforts to eradicate polio. *(Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 1)*

PMA presents bleak picture of country's health status

The PMA launched its annual report highlighting how the country is still grappling with its fundamental health challenges, including high neonatal and maternal mortality, contaminated water killing scores of people every year and environmental degradation, now presenting itself in the most severe form — toxic air — affecting almost the entire country. The report titled 'Health of the Nation 2026' was launched at the PMA House.

Pakistan loses 675 newborns and 27 mothers daily from preventable conditions. Poor quality water is responsible for nearly 40 percent of annual deaths in the country, also carrying the heaviest burden of Hepatitis C globally and breast cancer (in Asia) as well as the highest rates heart disease in South Asia. Poor quality water contributes to about 30 percent of all diseases reported nationwide while diarrhoea remains the leading cause of death among infants and young children. Every fifth Pakistani suffers from a water-related illness, adding immense pressure to the already burdened healthcare system.

An alarming development has been the rise in X-DR typhoid in Karachi and parts of interior Sindh. This extensively drug resistant strain of Salmonella Typhi, the bacteria that cause typhoid fever, is spread through contaminated water and food. Overuse and unregulated purchasing of antibiotics have accelerated resistance to first-line treatments, making this disease significantly harder to manage and highlighting urgent need to address water contamination at its roots. *(Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 13)*

Couple's five kids suffer from 'mysterious' disease

Five children of a couple have been suffering from a mysterious skin disease that has covered their all body parts. The patients are now losing their eyesight as well, according to the couple. He had taken his children to various health facilities but the disease could not be diagnosed. He said the children were even taken to the Gambat

Institute of Medical Science (GIMS) in Khairpur, but without any positive results despite the best efforts made by doctors. Mr Lashari said that he had to sell all his household articles and other belongings after running out of money as the cost of prolonged treatment was heavy. The disease has remained undiagnosed so far, he said. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2026, Page 15*)

Illegal factory producing high-dose medicine uncovered

A joint operation by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (Drap) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has uncovered an illegal pharmaceutical manufacturing unit in Karachi's Ahsanabad area producing high-dose tramadol tablets and capsules of 225mg and 250mg. The raid was carried out following intelligence reports about clandestine production of formulations that have been banned in Pakistan. Under current regulations, only 50mg and 100mg of tramadol are permitted for controlled medical use. Drap had called registrations for higher-dose formulations last year after international agencies and several African governments raised concerns that Pakistan-origin tramadol was fuelling illicit markets abroad. (*The News, February 22nd, 2026, Page 15*)

Lyari resident bitten by stray dog becomes year's fifth rabies victim

Another case of rabies has been reported in the city after a 75-year-old resident of Lyari was brought to Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) after developing symptoms of the deadly disease. Doctors at the JPMC said the patient had been bitten by a stray dog around three months ago and is now exhibiting hydrophobia (fear of water) and photophobia (sensitivity to light), both hallmark signs of advanced rabies infection. The patient has been placed under medical supervision and is receiving palliative care. (*Dawn, February 24th, 2026, Page 13*)

Septuagenarian, minor girl die of rabies in Karachi

The city saw two deaths from rabies, raising the total number of mortalities from the deadly viral disease to six in the province. The dog-bite victims — 75-year-old Naimat Gul hailing from Lyari and 10-year-old Lata from Mirpurkhas — had been admitted to the Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC) and the Indus Hospital. So far, this year, the Indus Hospital has seen over 3,000 dog bite cases and four rabies cases. Two rabies cases have been reported at JPMC. Last year, 22 people lost their lives to rabies. Over 41,000 dog-bite cases were reported at three tertiary care hospitals: over 16,000 at the Indus Hospital, over 12,000 at JPMC and over 13,000 at the Civil Hospital Karachi. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2026, Page 13*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

1pc of GDP lost to climate damage: Musadik

Pakistan is losing close to 1 percent of its gross domestic product every year to climate-related damage from floods, heatwaves and infrastructure destruction, despite contributing less than 1 percent to global emissions. Speaking at fourth Pakistan Climate Conference, organised by the Overseas Investors Chamber of Commerce and Industry

(OICCI), Climate Change Minister Musadik Malik stressed the need to fight climate challenges with the same intensity as fight against terrorism. The stress was underlined by stark statistics: the human toll has already surpassed that of past conflicts. Over the last four floods alone, 6,000 people have died, and 19,000 have been disabled or injured, while more than 40 million have been displaced.

Economically, Pakistan celebrates growth rates of 3-4pc, only for floods to wipe out nearly 10pc of GDP, erasing years of progress in a single season. From record 53°C heatwaves to floods that displaced millions last year and the accelerated melting of more than 13,000 glaciers, he said the crisis could no longer be treated as an environmental issue or a corporate social responsibility exercise, but as an existential economic challenge. Pakistan's updated climate commitments under Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) 3.0, which target a 50pc emissions reduction by 2035, would require an estimated \$565.7bn in investment, underscoring the scale of the transition ahead. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 9*)

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earthquake

Sindh, Balochistan jolted by quake

Several towns were shaken after a moderate earthquake struck northern Kirthar range along the inter-provincial border, triggering several aftershocks but causing no reported casualties or major damage. An initial 3.8-magnitude tremor, followed by a stronger 5.6-magnitude quake. The main shock occurred at a depth of about 13km, with its epicentre near the Sindh-Balochistan border, northwest of Shahdadkot. At least three aftershocks, ranging between 3.4 and 4.3 in magnitude, were recorded. The tremors were felt in several districts of central and northern Balochistan, including Khuzdar, Nasirabad, Jhal Magsi, Sibi, Dera Bugti and surrounding areas, prompting residents to rush outdoors. Local administrations said survey teams found no major damage or loss of life, though minor cracks were reported in some mud houses. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2026, Page 3*)

Balochistan's Washuk shaken by 3.4-magnitude earthquake

An earthquake of 3.4 magnitude jolted Washuk and surrounding areas, a border town near Pak-Iran border in the Rakhshan division. According to the Seismological Centre, the earthquake measured 3.4 on the Richter scale. The epicentre was located 29 kilometres north of Washuk, and the quake originated at a depth of 15km. The district administration said no casualties or major damage were reported from any part of Washuk district. Earlier, multiple tremors were also felt in Khuzdar and nearby areas, where the magnitude was recorded at 5.6. Tremors have been reported in various parts of Sindh and Balochistan over the past two days. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2026, Page 5*)

Strong quake shakes KP, Afghanistan

A 5.6 magnitude earthquake jolted large parts of KPK; however, no casualties were reported. PDMA said that quake originated at a depth of 73 kilometres in the Hindu Kush region in Afghanistan. The earthquake also rocked eastern Afghanistan, including the capital Kabul. The quake struck a mountainous area around 130 kilometres northeast of Kabul, the United States Geological Survey said, which put the magnitude at 5.8. The epicentre was near several remote villages. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2026, Page 3*)

Earthquake shakes Balochistan's Kalat

A 3.5-magnitude earthquake was felt in a vast area of Kalat district, causing panic among residents of the district headquarters. Quake occurred at a depth of 11 kilometres, with its epicentre located about 45 kilometres south of Kalat. No loss of life or property damage was reported. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 5*)

Quake rattles Islamabad, Attock

A 4.4-magnitude earthquake rattled Islamabad along with other areas, including Attock and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Swabi. As per the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, the epicentre of the quake was at a depth of 14 kilometres at a distance of 11 kilometres northeast of Burhan area in Attock. The quake hit for the second time in 24 hours. Earlier, a 5.6-magnitude earthquake struck parts of KP and Punjab with tremors felt in several cities, including Peshawar and Islamabad. The last quake's epicentre was located in Afghanistan's Hindu Kush region at a depth of 73 kilometres, the seismological centre said. (*The News, February 22nd, 2026, Page 12*)

15 # RESISTANCE

MWM protests across Sindh against Pakistan's inclusion in Trump's peace board

Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) staged protest demonstrations across Sindh after congregational prayers, opposing the Pakistan government's participation in the Peace Board on Palestine initiated by US President. Demonstrations were held in Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas, Nawabshah and several other cities where protesters organised rallies and chanted slogans against the government's decision while expressing solidarity with Palestinian people. Participants carried banners and placards bearing slogans in support of Palestine and condemning US policies. In Karachi, the MWM organised protests outside various mosques, while a major demonstration was held outside the Khoja Jamat Mosque. (*The News, February 1st, 2026, Page 16*)

Jamaat power show calls for end to 'systemic exploitation of Karachi'

The Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) staged a power show in the metropolis and warned the federal and Sindh governments that the city's long-neglected issues could no longer be ignored. Several small rallies from different parts of Karachi converged near the Nursery bus stop on Sharea Faisal to participate in the JI's "Let Karachi Live" march. The participants, including women and children, carried party flags and placards and, chanting slogans against the PPP government and city administration over the Gul Plaza

tragedy. Both tracks of Sharea Faisal were filled with people even before the start of the speech by JI chief Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman. One track was reserved for women and another for male participants of the rally. (*Dawn, February 2nd, 2026, Page 13*)

Tangi residents protest occupation of school by ‘influential people’

Local residents staged a demonstration against the alleged occupation of a girls primary school by some influential people in Fauziabad area of Tangi tehsil here. The protesters alleged that cattle heads were being tied in the school building and classrooms were being used as cattle pen. The protesters said that the government-run school was built in 1990, where four teachers were currently teaching about 350 girls, but due to occupation of the building, educational activities had been disturbed, putting student’s educational future at great peril. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 8*)

College teachers stage protest for better facilities

A large number of college teachers staged a protest rally, demanding immediate implementation of the five-tier service structure formula, direct recruitment on vacant posts, increase in house rent, conveyance and medical allowances and measures to improve condition of colleges. The rally, organised by Sindh Professors and Lecturers Association (SPLA), Karachi region, was taken out from the Govt S.M. Arts and Commerce College and turned into a protest sit-in when it reached at the Sindh Secretariat. Carrying banners and placards and raising slogans in favour of their demands, the protesters criticised official indifference over their protest movement that had been continuing across the province for over a month. “It’s unfortunate that the education minister hasn’t made any contacts. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 14*)

Torghar residents protest prolonged closure of snowbound roads

Residents of Torghar took to streets, demanding reopening of roads that have remained blocked since the first snowfall of the season last month in several parts of the district. “Roads have been closed to all kinds of traffic for the past two weeks due to heavy snowfall, causing acute shortages of food, medicines and other essential items. If the government does not clear the roads, we will continue our protest for an indefinite period,” a protester said. (*Dawn, February 7th, 2026, Page 8*)

Protests held in GB against Tarlai Imambargah attack

Thousands of people took to streets in Gilgit-Baltistan to protest against suicide bombing at Imambargah Khadijatul Kubra in Islamabad a day earlier. A shutdown strike was observed in Skardu, where a police inspector, Bahadur Ali from Ghanche, who embraced martyrdom in the incident, was laid to rest. The strike was observed on the call of Anjuman-i-Imamia Baltistan. Shopping malls, shops, and trade activities remained suspended for several hours. Thousands of people staged a protest sit-in at Yadgar-i-Shuhada, Skardu, and other areas of Baltistan.

Protest demonstrations were also held in Kharmang, Shigar and Ghanche areas of Baltistan. Moreover, protesters blocked the Karakoram Highway at Danyor for several

hours. Demonstrations were held at Shaheed Zamir Abbas Chowk and other areas in Gilgit. The protesters chanted slogans against the government and terrorists, demanding protection for citizens. Four people from Gilgit-Baltistan, including the police inspector, were among the victims of the Islamabad blast, while several others from GB were injured. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2026, Page 4*)

UoP teachers boycott classes today

Peshawar University Teachers' Association (Putra) will boycott classes and other official duties from today (Monday) against the alleged failure of the university administration to convene long-delayed selection board meetings for faculty promotions. Association warned that the vice-chancellor of the university would be solely responsible for any consequences arising from the situation. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2026, Page 9*)

Strike observed across Balochistan amid clashes

A nationwide wheeljam, and shutdown strike called by opposition alliance Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP) was also observed across Balochistan, Quetta as violent confrontations erupted between police and demonstrators in the capital while law enforcement used baton charges and teargas to disperse crowds protesting the 2024 election results. The clashes, which saw dozens of political figures and activists arrested, were part of a province-wide strike that crippled daily life across Balochistan. (*Business Recorder, February 9th, 2026, Page 5*)

Protesting Peshawar varsity teachers want vacant positions filled

Teachers of University of Peshawar went on strike against the university administration for its failure to fill 220 vacant positions, adversely affecting studies of students. The protesting teachers said that they would continue complete boycott of classes and other official duties including conducting examinations and taking part in admission process and official meetings. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 8*)

QAT holds march against 'anti-Sindh' policies

A large number of people took part in a march led by Qaumi Awami Tehreek (QAT) President Ayaz Latif Paliyo in Radhan town. It was organised against federal and provincial governments' policies affecting interests of Sindh, "massive plunder by the rulers" and moves to divide the province. The participants started their march from the Radhan railway crossing and, after passed through various roads, assembled in the railway station ground for a public meeting. (*Dawn, February 11th, 2026, Page 15*)

Progressive students hold march for demands

The Progressive Students' Collective (PSC) organised a student solidarity march from Nasser Bagh to Punjab Assembly. The march raised demands, including the restoration of student unions, addressing the institutional causes behind rising student suicides, establishment of anti-harassment committees on campuses, withdrawal from the so-called Gaza Peace Board, and the release of all political prisoners across the country.

Students from various educational institutions of Lahore, along with individuals from different walks of life, participated in the march.

The march began at 1pm from Nasser Bagh and reached the Punjab Assembly at 4pm. On reaching the Punjab Assembly, PSC's cultural wing, artist assembly, performed a theatre play, followed by a monologue titled "Lalkar" (The Call) presented by the head of artist assembly, Laiba Imran. The performances highlighted the issues faced by students in universities, particularly female students.

PSC Central Secretary General Eqbal Khan said that an oppressive system prevailed across country and a similar authoritarian structure existed on campuses whose purpose was just to control the students through fear. He demanded the immediate end to the securitization of educational institutions, stating that no student could study under the shadow of a gun. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 4*)

Protesters block Quetta-Zhob Highway in Balochistan's Khanozai

Tribal elders and local residents blocked Quetta-Zhob Highway in the Khanozai area, halting traffic to protest establishment of new districts and the merger of Karezat with other districts. Protest leaders erected barricades on the highway, causing significant disruptions. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 5*)

Police accused of 'disappearing' two young boys

A large number of villagers, including children, staged a demonstration against police excesses and the alleged forced disappearance of two young boys from the village of Ali Muhammad Pitafi in Khanpur Mahar, Ghotki District. Protesters raised slogans against the police, accusing them of harassment and creating an atmosphere of fear in the region. The protesters stated that it was due to a conflict within the Pitafi community that three tribesmen had been killed. They claimed that they had no connection to those murders, but the police had wrongfully implicated them in the cases. They alleged that Khanpur Mahar police conducted daily raids on their houses and took away grain, solar panels and other household valuables. (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 15*)

Entry restricted to Red Zone ahead of protest rallies in capital

The capital police restricted entry to Red Zone, as protest rallies were announced against the suicide attack at an imambargah a week ago and by opposition parties over vision loss of jailed PTI founder Imran Khan. Meanwhile, hundreds of people staged a protest demonstration over the suicide attack at Imambargah Khadijatul Kubra at Tarlai during on Feb 6 in which 38 worshippers were martyred and over 160 injured. The participants demanded immediate arrest of elements involved in the suicide attack. The protestors were holding placards of martyrs and banners inscribed with different slogans, including "why our killers are free?" (*Dawn, February 14th, 2026, Page 4*)

KP councillors stage sit-in to demand funds, powers

Local government representatives staged a sit-in outside provincial assembly building, demanding funds and powers. Local Council Association, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter, organised demonstration. Mayors of city councils, chairpersons of tehsil, village and neighbourhood councils and large number of councillors gathered at the Jinnah Park. Later, the protesters marched on Khyber Road and staged a sit-in outside the provincial legislature. The protesters closed both lanes of the busy Khyber Road, resulting into heavy traffic congestion across the city, which was already grappling with the protests of ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf. (*Dawn, February 14th, 2026, Page 8*)

Violence as police break up JI rally near Sindh Assembly

Clashes broke out as workers of Jamaat-i-Islami (JI), attempting to stage a sit-in outside the Sindh Assembly, were met with a police blockade, triggering baton charges and tear gas shelling that sent protesters scattering through adjoining streets and heightened tensions in the city's Red Zone. Scores of JI workers attempted to stage a sit-in outside Sindh Assembly, demanding sweeping changes to the city's local government system and the resignation of Karachi Mayor Murtaza Wahab. JI announced that it would stage sit-ins on 10 spots in the metropolis today in protest over police brutality. The sit-ins would be held at Sharea Faisal, Shahrah-i-Pakistan, Superhighway, National Highway, Mauripur Road, Shahrah-i-Korangi, Shahrah-i-Orangi and other important arteries of the mega city. (*Dawn, February 15th, 2026, Page 13*)

Rally demands end to anti-labour policies, laws

A workers' rally demanded immediate withdrawal of Labour Code and other controversial policies and laws. It urged government to launch meaningful consultation on any labour law reforms. The rally was jointly organised by the National Trade Union Federation Pakistan (NTUF), Home-Based Women Workers Federation (HBWWF), and other organisations. A large number of workers, along with representatives of political, social and human rights organisations, participated.

HBWWF general secretary Zehra Khan said that capitalists had imposed an inhumane and illegal contract system that had deprived workers of all rights. She stated that attempts were underway to grant legal status to various anti-worker forms of the contract system through a so-called 'Labour Code'. The Punjab government had passed the 'Labour Code' in the assembly without meaningful consultation, and similar undemocratic processes were being planned in other provinces, she added.

NTUF general secretary Nasir Mansoor stated that victimising workers for raising their legitimate demands reflected a capitalist approach that was the greatest obstacle to industrial development and economic prosperity. He added that the workers' rights guaranteed under national and international labour laws and conventions had not only been usurped, but those demanding their implementation were being forcibly dismissed from employment, subjected to torture in police detention cells, and arrested under

fabricated charges. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan chairman Asad Iqbal Butt stated that the police task force constituted by the Sindh government had exceeded its mandate and was continuously harassing labour representatives to protect the illegal interests of capitalists. (*Dawn, February 16th, 2026, Page 14*)

GB protesters block road against power outage, water shortage

Women staged protest and blocked the main road in Gilgit against prolonged power outages and a drinking water shortage in the Jutial area, while students of Pakistan Baitul Mal (PBM) also took to the streets over non-payment of their school fees. A large number of women staged a sit-in outside the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court and blocked the Shahrah-i-Quaid-i-Azam road in Gilgit city, protesting extended electricity outages and a lack of drinking water in Jutial. The protesting women chanted slogans against the government, alleging its failure to provide basic facilities such as electricity and clean drinking water. (*Dawn, February 17th, 2026, Page 3*)

Traders' protest causes hours-long gridlock in Rawalpindi

Road closures for construction work in different areas of the garrison city, coupled with a traders' protest on Murree Road, led to severe traffic congestion. A major protest demonstration was organised by the Rawalpindi Central Traders Association against actions being taken by Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera) force, Punjab Food Authority, District Price Control Committee, Punjab Revenue Authority, district administration against traders, including imposition of fines, sealing of business centres and cases being filed against shopkeepers. More than 200 shopkeepers gathered at Liaquat Bagh on Murree Road and stopped the traffic movement. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 4*)

Rail staff's strike disrupts operations in Rawalpindi

Passengers faced difficulties after employees of the Pakistan Railways' electric department went on strike over non-payment of travel and health allowances for the past two and a half years. The absence of electrical staff led to power plant shutdowns and issues in air-conditioned coaches, causing problems for passengers. The railway administration was compelled to operate trains across the country without regular electrical staff and, in some cases, made alternative arrangements. The strike affected trains, including Awam Express, Pakistan Express and Shalimar Express, which departed without electrical staff on board. The administration summoned sub-engineers and divisional engineers after the electric staff refused to perform their duties on the trains. (*Dawn, February 18th, 2026, Page 5*)

Lawyers observe strike against colleague's murder

The lawyers' community observed province-wide strike against the killing of a senior lawyer in Mardan a day earlier. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council (KPBC) announced to continue the strike today (Thursday) in the principal seat of the Peshawar High Court in the provincial capital and subordinate courts attached to it in adjoining

districts over the authorities' failure to arrest the culprits involved in the killing of Noor Badshah Toru. Lawyers mostly stayed away from proceedings before different courts, including the PHC. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 8*)

Protest held against killing of suspect during CTD raid

Family and relatives of a man, killed during an alleged encounter by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) a day earlier, gathered outside the Karachi Press Club to protest what they called his “extrajudicial killing” in a “fake” encounter. A large number of residents of Old Golimar, including women and children, staged a sit-in outside the KPC, demanding justice for Hamdan, one of the four killed suspects during a raid by the CTD in Shah Latif Town. (*Dawn, February 19th, 2026, Page 14*)

Makran transport strike enters fifth day

Transporters running buses and coaches between Makran and Karachi have announced that they will continue their protest until the acceptance of their demands, as the strike entered the fifth consecutive day. The prolonged strike has caused difficulties to the intending travellers, struck in the port cities of Karachi and Gwadar. The protesting Makran transporters in a meeting discussed issues being faced during their inter-provincial travel and blamed Pakistan Coast Guards for adding to their problems. (*Dawn, February 23rd, 2026, Page 5*)

Prolonged power outages disrupt life in GB

Residents in Gilgit took to the streets to protest prolonged power outages and consequent water shortages in various areas of the city, as other regions of Gilgit-Baltistan also reeled under loadshedding lasting more than 20 hours. A large number of women and children were part of the sit-in staged at Nadir Chowk in Zulfiqarabad area of Gilgit, where protesters burnt tires and chanted slogans against the government for its failure to supply electricity and water, even during Ramazan. Demonstrations were also staged in other areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2026, Page 5*)

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Angry Indian farmers want minister's ouster over US trade deal

Indian farmers slammed a new US trade deal as “a surrender to multinational agricultural giants”, calling for commerce minister’s resignation as Congress accused Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi of capitulating to US President Donald Trump over the “Epstein files” release. Congress leaders claimed an Indian minister, a businessman and individuals close to the prime minister were mentioned in the files, along with Modi.

According to a report in *The Hindu*, the Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) demanded Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal’s immediate resignation as soon as he explained the details of the bilateral pact. Leaders of the union representing apple and cotton growers said any relaxation on the import of cotton would be disastrous for the economies of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat.

SKM leaders called the framework for the interim agreement on bilateral trade a “total surrender” to America’s agriculture sector. They cited the inclusion of dried distillers’ grains, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruit, soybean oil, wine and spirits in the joint statement. The leaders warned that the animal feed market would be completely monopolised by US companies.

SKM leaders urged farmers across the country to join protest demonstrations on Feb 12 and to support a general strike of workers as a “befitting reply to the anti-people Modi government”. The leaders said Goyal’s claim that the agriculture and dairy sectors were excluded from the agreement was incorrect. “Dairy products are part of the FTAs signed with UK, New Zealand and European Union and the fresh revelations have undoubtedly proved the Commerce Minister is consciously propagating falsehood and betraying the farmers and the entire people,” statement said. (*Dawn, February 9th, 2026, Page 12*)

Indian farm unions, opposition vow to fight India-US trade pact

Indian farm unions and opposition parties have called for nationwide protests against the new India-U.S. trade framework, saying it risks hurting the farm sector by allowing more U.S. imports, although the government says key staples are protected. The agreement has become a political flashpoint, reviving memories of the 2020–21 farm law protests, when the government was forced to repeal three laws aimed at deregulating agricultural markets. The government has defended the pact, saying farmers’ interests are protected by excluding imports of grains such as rice, wheat, corn and dairy products, while growers of basmati rice, fruits, spices, coffee and tea would gain duty-free access to the U.S. market. Farm groups say the pact puts Indian farmers at a disadvantage. (*Business Recorder, February 10th, 2026, Page 5*)

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Trump administration re-approves twice-banned pesticide

US President Donald Trump's administration re-approved the use of pesticide dicamba for spraying on top of genetically-modified cotton and soybean crops, drawing swift backlash from environment groups and the Make America Healthy Again movement. The move comes despite federal courts in 2020 and 2024 striking down Environmental Protection Agency's previous approvals of the contentious weed killer. "This decision responds directly to the strong advocacy of America's cotton and soybean farmers, particularly growers across the Cotton Belt, who have been clear and consistent about the critical challenges they face without access to this tool for controlling resistant weeds in their growing crop," the EPA said in a statement.

A persistent concern about dicamba is "drift": when the chemical volatilizes in high heat it can spread for miles, poisoning other farms, home gardens as well as trees and plants. The 2020 court ruling that first overturned dicamba's approval found it caused damage across millions of acres and "has torn apart the social fabric of many farming communities." The EPA acknowledged this concern as real but said that by imposing certain restrictions, such as reducing the amount used and avoiding application in higher temperatures, it was safe. Agricultural industry giant Bayer, which acquired dicamba when it bought Monsanto, welcomed the news and said the chemical would be marketed under the name "Stryax." "With a federal registration in hand, we'll begin the process of seeking state approvals," said Ty Witten, the company's vice president of commercial stewardship, in a statement. (*The News, February 8th, 2026, Page 11*)

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

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4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

5 # TRADE

UAE non-oil trade tops \$1tr for first time, says Sheikh Mohammed

United Arab Emirates' non-oil foreign trade has surpassed \$1 trillion for the first time in its history, marking a major milestone for the Gulf state's diversification drive, Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum said. Sheikh Mohammed, who is also the UAE's vice president and prime minister, said non-oil trade reached 3.8 trillion dirhams, recording a 26 per cent increase compared with the previous year. According to the figures he shared, UAE's non-oil exports climbed to 813 billion dirhams, posting a strong 45 percent growth year-on-year. (*The News, February 1st, 2026, Page 17*)

India's \$500 billion US imports intent draws scepticism, risks widening trade deficit

India's stated intention to buy \$500 billion of U.S. goods over five years under a trade deal is drawing scepticism, with economists warning it could distort commercial

procurement and sharply reshape New Delhi's trade balance. U.S. President Donald Trump last week said he will slash tariffs on Indian goods to 18% from 50%, sparking relief in India. But he asked New Delhi to more than double its annual imports of U.S. goods in return. Bilateral trade was \$132 billion in 2024-25, with a roughly \$41 billion surplus in India's favour. Trade experts and economists questioned whether \$100 billion a year in imports was feasible without an explicit policy push that steers companies towards American suppliers. (*Business Recorder, February 12th, 2026, Page 5*)

US Supreme Court strikes down Trump's global tariffs

The US Supreme Court struck down Donald Trump's sweeping tariffs that he pursued under a law meant for use in national emergencies, handing a stinging defeat to the Republican president in a landmark opinion with major implications for the global economy. The justices, in a 6-3 ruling authored by conservative Chief Justice John Roberts, upheld a lower court's decision that Trump's use of this 1977 law exceeded his authority. The justices ruled that the law at issue - the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, or IEEPA - did not grant Trump the power he claimed to impose tariffs. (*Business Recorder, February 21st, 2026, Page 1*)

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

France tightens infant formula rules after toxin scare

France has said it will impose stricter limits on the acceptable level of a toxin called cereulide in infant formula after potentially contaminated products were recalled in over 60 countries. The infant formula industry has been rocked by several firms recalling batches that could be contaminated with cereulide, which can cause nausea, vomiting, and diarrhoea. French authorities launched an investigation into the deaths in December and January of two babies who were thought to have drunk possibly contaminated powdered milk.

At this stage investigators have not established a direct link between the symptoms and the milk consumed. The recalls have raised fresh questions about food safety challenges in the global supply chain. There is no established safety limit for cereulide in infant formula. "Protecting the health of infants is the top priority for health authorities," the French agriculture ministry said.

The French authorities have referred to a single "Chinese supplier" without naming it. This week, the European Commission asked European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) to establish a standard for cereulide in children's products. It will issue an opinion on February 2. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control said it had received reports of diarrhoea cases in infants following consumption of the products in question, but "no severe cases have been reported".

Several manufacturers, including European giants like Nestle, Danone, and Lactalis, have issued recalls of infant formula in France and dozens of countries since December.

According to World Health Organisation estimates from 2019, 23 million people in Europe fall sick from eating contaminated food every year, and an estimated 4,700 people die. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 10*)

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

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

German jobless numbers hit 12-year high, inflation edges up

The number of unemployed people in Germany hit a 12-year high, surpassing the 3 million mark, while inflation moved back above the European Central Bank’s 2 percent target, clouding the outlook for Europe’s largest economy after a stronger-than-expected end to 2025. German inflation unexpectedly nudged slightly higher in January, accelerating to 2.1 percent year-on-year, data showed. Separately, Labour Office figures highlighted the lag in jobs market from the economic stagnation of the last few years, with 177,000 more people out of work in January than in December, bringing the total to 3.08 million. The unemployment rate jumped by 0.4 percentage points to 6.6 percent in seasonally unadjusted terms. (*Business Recorder, February 2nd, 2026, Page 9*)

10.1 # Food

Israel harbouring a policy of starvation in prisons, says rights group

Five months after Israel’s Supreme Court ruled that its prisons were failing to provide enough food for Palestinian detainees and ordered conditions be improved, emaciated prisoners are still emerging with tales of extreme hunger and abuse. Samer Khawaireh, 45, said that all he was given to eat in Israel’s Megiddo and Nafha prisons was ten thin pieces of bread over the course of a day, with a bit of hummus and tahini. Twice a week some tuna. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), which was involved in last year’s landmark court case that led to the order for better treatment for prisoners, has accused the government of harboring a “policy of starvation” in prisons.

The prisoners are not getting more food if they ask for it. There hasn’t been any medical examination of the situation of the prisoners, and the prisoners are still hungry. Hunger, more widely, has been an issue in Gaza, where the United Nations says Israeli supply restrictions caused malnutrition among the more than two million Palestinian residents, reaching famine scale in mid-2025. (*Dawn, February 12th, 2026, Page 11*)

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Heatwave bleached half the planet's coral reefs: study

A study published showed that more than half of the world's coral reefs were bleached between 2014 - 2017 — a record-setting episode now being eclipsed by another series of devastating heatwaves. The analysis concluded that 51 percent of the world's reefs endured moderate or worse bleaching while 15 percent experienced significant mortality over the three-year period known as the “Third Global Bleaching Event”.

It was “by far the most severe and widespread coral bleaching event on record”, said Sean Connolly, one the study's authors and a senior scientist at the Panama-based Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute. “And yet, reefs are currently experiencing an even more severe Fourth Event, which started in early 2023,” Connolly said in a statement. When the sea overheats, corals eject the microscopic algae that provides their distinct colour and food source. Unless ocean temperatures return to more tolerable levels, bleached corals are unable to recover and eventually die of starvation.

The two previous global bleaching events, in 1998 and 2010, had lasted one year. “2014-17 was the first record of a global coral bleaching event lasting much beyond a single year,” the study said. “Ocean warming is increasing the frequency, extent, and severity of tropical-coral bleaching and mortality.” Australia's Great Barrier Reef, for instance, saw peak heat stress increase each year between 2014 and 2017. (*Business Recorder, February 11th, 2026, Page 5*)

Virus kills dozens of tigers in Thailand park

A deadly virus and bacterial infection have killed at least 72 tigers at a private animal park in Thailand's north in recent weeks, authorities said. The provincial livestock office in Chiang Mai said in a statement that testing detected the highly infectious canine distemper virus as well as bacteria affecting the respiratory system. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 11*)

11.1 # Health

One died from Nipah virus in Bangladesh, says WHO

The World Health Organisation said that a woman had died in northern Bangladesh in January after contracting deadly Nipah virus infection. The case in Bangladesh, where Nipah cases are reported almost every year, follows two Nipah virus cases identified in neighbouring India, which has already prompted stepped-up airport screenings across Asia. The person had no travel history but had a history of consuming raw date palm sap. All 35 people who had contact with the patient are being monitored and have tested negative for the virus, and no further cases have been detected to date, the WHO said. Nipah is an infection that spreads mainly through products contaminated by infected bats, such as fruit. It can be fatal in up to 75pc of cases, but it does not spread easily between people. (*Dawn, February 8th, 2026, Page 10*)

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

Snowstorm barrels into southern US as blast of icy weather widens

A powerful snow storm bore down on southern states as icy weather that has left more than 100 dead across a swath of the United States intensified in regions not used to subzero conditions. Heavy snows were falling in North Carolina and neighboring states, as authorities urged residents to stay off the roads and warned oceanfront structures were threatened by the storm. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 11*)

20 killed as powerful cyclone batters Madagascar

A cyclone packing violent winds killed at least 20 people as it struck Madagascar, toppling houses and causing major flooding, the Indian Ocean island's disaster authority said. Cyclone Gezani made landfall, slamming into the country's second-largest city, Toamasina, with winds reaching 250 kilometres (155 miles) per hour. The National Office for Risk and Disaster Management (BNRGC) said it recorded 20 deaths, many after houses had collapsed. Fifteen people were missing and at least 33 had been hurt, it said. (*Business Recorder, February 12th, 2026, Page 5*)

Portuguese highway collapses amid storms, floods

A viaduct on a Portuguese motorway connecting Lisbon to Porto has partially collapsed, in the wake of storms and flash floods that have swept across the country. "The speed and force of water... it's an absolutely abnormal situation," said Portuguese Infrastructure Minister Miguel Pinto Luz, who visited site after the collapse. However, the minister noted it would likely take "weeks for this infrastructure to be operational again". (*Dawn, February 13th, 2026, Page 10*)

Snowstorm blankets US northeast as New York sees travel ban

More than 40 million people were under blizzard warnings in the northeast United States, as a winter storm dumped shin-deep snow and officials in New York enforced a citywide travel ban. The so-called "Nor'easter" pummeled the region overnight, disrupting flights and leaving hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses without power. (*Business Recorder, February 24th, 2026, Page 12*)

Torrential rains leave 23 dead in Brazil

Torrential rains in southeastern Brazil have left at least 23 people dead and 47 missing in flooding and landslides. Streets turned into raging rivers, with one resident seen clinging to an electricity pole while another waved for help from a window. The deluge in the state of Minas Gerais caused a river to burst its banks, prompting flooding, landslides, and building collapses. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2026, Page 11*)

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

14.1 # Earthquake

Afghanistan quake causes no ‘serious’ damage, injuries: official

A 5.8-magnitude earthquake that rocked eastern Afghanistan including the capital Kabul has resulted in only minor damage and one reported injury, a disaster official told. The quake hit just as people in the Muslim-majority country were sitting down to break their Ramadan fast. The epicentre was near several remote villages around 130 kilometres (80 miles) northeast of Kabul, the United States Geological Survey said. (*The News, February 22nd, 2026, Page 11*)

14.2 # Landslide

Death toll from Indonesia landslide rises to 53

The death toll from a landslide on Indonesia’s main island of Java a week ago rose to 53, a rescue official said, with 10 people still missing. An intense downpour triggered the landslide that hit Pasirlangu village, in an area southeast of the capital Jakarta, damaging more than 50 houses and displacing about 650 people. The government has pointed to the role forest loss played in flooding and landslides on Sumatra island late last year, which killed around 1,200 people and displaced more than 240,000. (*Business Recorder, February 1st, 2026, Page 8*)

‘At least 200’ feared dead in DR Congo landslide: govt

The Democratic Republic of Congo’s government said it feared “at least 200 dead” in a “massive” landslide that struck a militia-held mine in the country’s east. Since its resurgence in 2021, the M23 armed group has seized vast tracts of the DRC’s resource-rich east, capturing the Rubaya mine in North Kivu province in April 2024 with Rwanda’s help. Scavengers said part of a hillside in the mining zone collapsed. A second landslide struck. (*Business Recorder, February 2nd, 2026, Page 9*)

14.3 # Volcanic Eruption

Volcano eruption sends ash 2.5kms into sky in Philippines

A volcano erupted in the central Philippines, sending a billowing plume of ash about 2,500 metres (1.5 miles) into nighttime sky. Kanlaon Volcano, one of 24 active volcanoes in the archipelago nation, has had several major eruptions in the past century — including a 1996 blast that killed three hikers who were near the summit at the time. (*Dawn, February 27th, 2026, Page 10*)

15 # RESISTANCE

Thousands join Danish march to condemn Trump ‘insult’

Between 8,000 and 10,000 people joined an emotional silent march in Copenhagen organised by Denmark’s Veterans’ Association to protest Donald Trump’s comments downplaying the role of non-US Nato troops in Afghanistan. The association had expected well over a thousand people to take part, and Danes braved subzero

temperatures en masse to support their veterans and 44 Danes who died in Afghanistan. Police said they estimated the number of demonstrators were “at least 10,000”, while organisers put the turnout at between 8,000 and 10,000. Trump sparked outrage in Denmark and across Europe on Jan 22 when he said European Nato troops “stayed a little back, a little off the front lines” during the 20-year conflict in Afghanistan. The Scandinavian country fought alongside US forces during the Gulf War as well as Afghanistan and Iraq. Gathering in Copenhagen’s Kastellet, or citadel, a brief ceremony was held at the monument to fallen soldiers before the procession began. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 10*)

Thousands rally in Minneapolis as immigration anger boils

Thousands of protesters rallied in Minneapolis in latest show of anger over US President Donald Trump’s immigration crackdown, as a prominent journalist was charged over his coverage of protests in the northern city. Crowds marched with signs blasting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), the agency leading Trump’s mass deportation drive, in response to a call for a “national shutdown” across United States.

Minneapolis has become the epicenter of the immigration policy backlash after two protesters, both US citizens, were shot dead by federal agents this month. The crowd gathered in freezing temperatures after Bruce Springsteen performed at an anti-ICE concert in the city. The US rock legend recently released “Streets of Minneapolis,” a tribute to the pair who were gunned down in separate incidents. Demonstrators also held rallies in New York & across Los Angeles, where immigration raids last year sparked protests, with thousands carrying signs outside City Hall. In Washington, federal government entered a partial shutdown following Democratic anger over the violent immigration crackdown, which derailed talks over new funding for Department of Homeland Security. (*Dawn, February 1st, 2026, Page 11*)

Germany hit by nationwide public transport strike

Subway trains, buses and trams across Germany ground to a halt in a public transport strike called by one of the country’s biggest unions in a dispute over pay and conditions. Bitter winter weather and icy pavements in large parts of the country meant that alternatives such as walking or cycling were more hazardous than usual for commuters. The Verdi services sector union is pushing for shorter shifts for public transport workers and bigger bonuses for evening and weekend shifts. It has called on almost 100,000 staff in 150 transport companies to take part in stoppage. In some states, union is also pushing for pay increases of around 10 percent. (*Dawn, February 3rd, 2026, Page 10*)

Newsmakers: Cape Town (South Africa)

Members of Extinction Rebellion stage a protest with a figure depicting South Africa’s Minister for Petroleum Resources, Gwede Mantashe, to highlight the need for the country to move away from coal production and honour its climate commitments. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 10*)

Newsmakers: Brussels (Belgium)

Demonstrators hold a rally at the entrance to the European Chemical Industry Council. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 10*)

Newsmakers: Caracas (Venezuela)

A woman demonstrates with a Venezuelan flag outside a prison to demand the release of political prisoners. Two opposition figures close to Venezuela's Nobel peace laureate Maria Corina Machado were freed from jail - one month after authorities began releasing political prisoners following the ouster of leader Nicolas Maduro. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 10*)

Anti-Israel protest 'brutally dispersed' in Australia

Sydney police used pepper spray and tear gas against thousands of protesters after a rally against a visit to Australia by Israel's President Isaac Herzog turned violent. The head of state's tightly secured, four-day visit was aimed at consoling Australia's Jewish community in the wake of the December shooting at Sydney's Bondi Beach that killed 15 people at a Hanukkah festival. But he was met with protests in Australia's two largest cities of Sydney and Melbourne, with the Sydney rally turning violent as police hit protesters and members of the media with pepper spray.

The visit has attracted the ire of a large number of Australians, who accuse Herzog of being complicit in civilian deaths in Gaza. Pro-Palestine groups have organised protests in cities and towns across the country. In Sydney, thousands gathered in a square in the city's central business district, listening to speeches and shouting pro-Palestine slogans. (*Dawn, February 10th, 2026, Page 12*)

Farmers protest over US-India trade framework, government defends pact

Thousands of Indian farmers protested across the country, alleging the government had compromised their interests in the US-India interim trade framework, while the trade minister said safeguards were in place. Farmers burned symbolic copies of the India-US trade pact in their fields and at protest meetings, saying the government moved ahead without consulting them. Opposition parties led by Congress lawmakers also staged protests outside the parliament complex, holding placards with slogans such as "Trap Deal" and "US deal will destroy farmers", and accusing the government of "surrendering" farmers' and domestic industries' interest.

The agreement has revived memories of protests in 2020-21 which forced the government to back down and repeal three laws aimed at deregulating agricultural markets. Trade Minister Piyush Goyal said most of India's farm products were kept out of the trade arrangement with the United States and that farmers' interests had been protected. Goyal accused opposition parties of misleading farmers and said key items such as dairy, poultry, rice, wheat and several fruits and vegetables were outside the deal. (*Business Recorder, February 13th, 2026, Page 11*)

Newsmakers: Washington (United State)

US Park Police officers detain a demonstrator wearing a mask depicting US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, during a protest near the US Institute of Peace building. (*Dawn, February 20th, 2026, Page 10*)

NY nurses reach deal to end six-week strike

The last remaining group of striking nurses in New York City has reached a tentative agreement with their hospital, their union said, potentially ending what the union called the largest work stoppage for nurses in city history after six weeks. Approximately 4,200 nurses at NewYork-Presbyterian will vote on a new contract that would increase salaries by more than 12 per cent over three years, protect health benefits and provide new safeguards for the use of artificial intelligence, according to the New York State Nurses Association. (*Dawn, February 21st, 2026, Page 11*)

Newsmakers: Sao Paulo (Brazil)

Brazilian natives from the Guarani ethnic group and environmental activists, with their hands painted red, protest in front of the headquarters of US agribusiness giant Cargill against dredging in the Amazon. (*Dawn, February 22nd, 2026, Page 10*)

Newsmakers: Milan (Italy)

Activists of People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals group, dressed as "Cavemen" armed with clubs and wrapped in fake fur, protest against the use of animal fur for clothing on the opening day of Milan Fashion Week. A banner carried by the protesters read: "Fur Belongs to Stone Age". The organisers of the London and New York fashion weeks have banned fur from their runways. (*Dawn, February 25th, 2026, Page 10*)

About Us

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

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

Our Mission

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

Our Vision

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

Our Objectives

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

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