HAAL AHWAL

Selected News on Food and Agriculture

March, 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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Roots for Equity

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Particular	March, 2026 (PKR)		
	1st	31st	Max Rate
USD[1]	282	280	282
Gold[1] (1 Tola)	552,880	476,986	552,880
Silver[1] (1 Tola)	9,822	7,449	9,822
Petrol[2] (1 Litre)	266.17	321.17	321.17
Diesel[2] (1 Litre)	280.86	335.86	335.86
Kerosene[2] (1 Litre)	188.73	433.40	433.40

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

Back

ADB: Asian Development Bank

AGP: Auditor General of Pakistan

AJK: Azad Jammu & Kashmir

BMI: Body Mass Index

CAAS: Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences

CAREC: Central Asia Regional Economic Corridor

CARs: Central Asian Republics

CCUS: Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage’

CDC: Centre for Disease Control

CDWP: Central Development Working Party

CPEC: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPI: Consumer Price Index

CPPL: Colgate Palmolive Pakistan Limited

CRR: Cash Reserve Requirement

DCFA: Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association

DMCs: Developing Member Countries

DPC: Drug Pricing Committee

DRAP: Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan

EAD: Economic Affairs Division

EFF: Extended Fund Facility

EIA: Energy Information Administration

ESSD: Earth System Science Data

FCA: Federal Committee on Agriculture

FDI: Foreign direct investment

FRDLA: Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act

FFC: Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited

FFL: Fauji Foods Limited

FMCGs: Fast Moving Consumer Goods

FPCCI: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry

FTA: Free Trade Agreement

G7: Group of Seven

GATT: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

GCC: Gulf Cooperation Council

GDP: Gross Domestic Product

GIS: Geographic Information System

GLOF: Glacial Lake Outburst Flood

HBWWF: Home-Based Women Workers Federation Pakistan

HSD: High Speed Diesel

IDA: International Development Association

IFIs: International Financial Institutions

IMBIE: Ice Sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise

IMF: International Monetary Fund

IMO: International Maritime Organisation

IPCC: Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

IsDB: Islamic Development Bank

ISO: Imamia Students Organisation

IWT: Indus Waters Treaty

JIP: Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan

LDDB: Livestock and Dairy Development Board

LMIS: Livestock Management Information System

LNG: Liquefied Natural Gas

MMCFD: Million Cubic Feet a Day

MNFS&R: Ministry of National Food Security and Research

MoF: Ministry of Finance

MPC: Monetary Policy Committee

MSP: Minimum Support Price

MWM: Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeen

NDAP: National Drought Action Plan

NDCs: Nationally Determined Contributions

NHA: National Highway Authority

NIH: National Institute of Health

NOAA: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NPC: Naya Pakistan Certificates

NSIDC: National Snow and Ice Data Center

OMCs: Oil Marketing Companies

PARC: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council

PAT: Profit after Tax

PBS: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics

PCGA: Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association

PEF: Pressure Enhancement Facilities

PERA: Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority

PFA: Punjab Food Authority

PIK: Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research

PMA: Pakistan Medical Association

PMD: Pakistan Meteorological Department

PMEX: Pakistan Mercantile Exchange

PMO: Prime Minister's Office

PPH: Postpartum Haemorrhage

PPMC: Power Planning and Monitoring Company

PSDP: Public Sector Development Programme

PSMA: Pakistan Sugar Mills Association

PSX: Pakistan Stock Exchange

PTC: Pakistan Textile Council

PVMA: Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association

RSF: Resilience and Sustainability Facility

SAB: Sindh Abadgar Board

SAI: Sindh Abadgar Ittehad

SAU: Sindh Agriculture University

SBP: State Bank of Pakistan

SDPI: Sustainable Development Policy Institute

SECP: Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan

SFA: Sindh Food Authority

SHT: Sindhi Hari Tehreek

SPDC: Seed Production Development Center

SUP: Sindh United Party

UAE: United Arab Emirates

UNCCD: United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

UNEP: United Nations Environment Programme

WAPDA: Water and Power Development Authority

WGMS: World Glacier Monitoring Service

WHO: World Health Organisation

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NEWS EXCERPTS
NATIONAL NEWS

AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Leaders of the Sindhi Hari Tehreek (SHT) have accused the ruling elite of deliberately destroying Sindh's agriculture sector to pave the way for corporate farming and hand over farmlands to the corporate sector.
- Sindh cabinet approved Sindh Agriculture Women Workers Rules, under which equal wages and maternity facilities will be provided to women farm workers.
- The cabinet also approved the issuance of the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Card, while an endowment fund of Rs 500 million will be established for the welfare of women workers.
- As the wheat harvest reaches its peak across Sindh, farmers and cultivators are spiraling into a deepening financial crisis. The cost of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and machinery has risen sharply, farmers have been unable to recover fair prices for two consecutive years.
- Last year, the federal and Punjab governments declined to procure wheat, citing the IMF conditions, This forced desperate farmers to sell for as low as Rs2,000 per 40 kg, well below the cost of production. Within two months, that same wheat was trading at over Rs4,000."
- Despite the federal government announcing a support price of Rs 3,500 per 40 kg for the current season, Sindh's procurement—originally scheduled for March 15—has yet to begin.
- Currently, wheat in Sindh is reportedly being traded at nearly Rs 1,000 below the official support price.
- Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has approved the launch of a major project to construct 358 underground storage tanks across the province for rainwater drainage and groundwater recharge.
- Breach in a cofferdam at Sukkur Barrage and subsequent reduction in irrigation water supplies of canals have affected early sowing of cotton.
- Farmers are facing severe difficulties as the wheat crop is at a critical stage and urgently needs water.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- A parliamentary panel was informed that organic matter content in Pakistan's soils has fallen to critically low levels, raising concerns about long-term agricultural productivity.
- Healthy soil should contain at least two per cent organic matter under international standards, the level in Pakistan has dropped to below 0.5 per cent.

- The committee reviewed 15 proposed PSDP projects of Rs 20.5 billion of MNFS&R for the fiscal year 2026-27.
- Pakistan currently lacks a genome reference facility for crops and livestock.
- A USD 13m potato seed supply centre to be established with cooperation of Korea.
- A senior official of Livestock and Dairy Development Board presented a Rs300m project to develop a rural industry in G-B based on livestock wool and hair.
- Urea sales plunged 28 percent year-on-year and rose 15 percent month-on-month to 250,000 tonnes in February.
- Pakistan's listed fertiliser sector recorded the profitability of Rs141.1 billion in 2025, up by 10 percent year on year (YoY) due to an increase in urea offtakes, higher other income, and lower other charges.
- Escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, coupled with disruptions to Qatari gas exports and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have triggered a profound shock across global fertilizer markets.
- The government anticipates no shortage of fertilisers for current Rabi and forthcoming Kharif crops despite the fact that the escalation of conflict in Iran and the Middle East has sharply increased risks to global energy, fertiliser and agrifood systems.

AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

- While futures trading in precious metals continues at the Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), the first trading in agricultural products is expected to start in the coming months.
- All necessary formalities related to the trading of rice, maize and sugar have been completed.
- Pakistan produced 5.607 million bales during 2025-26 season, a marginal 1.5 per cent increase over last year but a staggering 45pc short of the official target.
- Sindh province has surpassed Punjab in cotton production, claiming the top position among cotton-producing provinces for first time.
- Wheat crop, a crucial contributor to the country's food security, is facing a significant threat due to an early and intense heatwave.
- Provincial cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved Hybrid Wheat Procurement and Strategic Reserves Policy 2026 as the framework for future wheat procurement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- The policy envisages a gradual transition from a state dominated procurement model towards a market based wheat economy.
- Pakistan is increasingly dependent on imported pulses, spending nearly USD 1 billion annually — a troubling indicator of deep structural weaknesses in the country's agricultural policies and practices.
- Pulses occupy barely five percent of Pakistan's total cropped area.

- The federal government is planning to procure 6.5 million tons of wheat to ensure food security in the country.
- Government has fixed a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs3,500 per 40 kg to stabilize the market and protect farmers.
- Estimated national wheat production for current year stands at around 29m tons.
- In Punjab, 11 prequalified companies will begin purchasing up to three million metric tonnes of wheat directly from the farmers at an estimated rate of around Rs3,500 per 40kg.
- Outlining the Sindh government's wheat procurement strategy for current season, a cabinet sub-committee has decided to procure one million metric tons of wheat from April 1, fixing Rs3,500 per 40 kilograms as support price for the commodity.
- For the first time, wheat procurement in Sindh will be conducted exclusively through registered Hari Card holders.
- Approximately 330,000 registered farmers
- Ongoing rainy spell in country in Punjab and Sindh will negatively impact on the wheat crop which is ready for harvesting but the situation is under control and the production likely to remain in the range of 27.5 to 28.5 million tonnes.
- Mango crop was badly damaged by recent rains and hailstorm
- FCA set the wheat production target at 29.678 million tonnes in order to meet domestic requirements as well as sustain strategic reserves.

TRADE

- The war in Middle East will severely hamper Pakistan's trade with the region, as both exports and crucial imports have come to a halt.
- Imports fell 1.68pc to $5.25bn in February from $5.34bn over the corresponding month of last year.
- In the first eight months of 2025-26, the import bill grew by 8.06pc to $45.51bn, up from $42.11bn in the corresponding period last year.
- The trade deficit swelled 24.98pc to $25.04bn in July-February 2025-26, up from $20.04bn over the corresponding period last year.
- The trade deficit for FY25 widened by 9pc to $26.27bn, up from $24.11bn in the preceding year.
- Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed by nearly three per cent during the first eight months of 2025-26, as the ongoing conflict in the region begins to weigh on commercial activity and bilateral engagement.
- The ongoing Middle East conflict is poised to potentially reduce Pakistan's direct exports to Gulf Cooperation Council countries by USD 1.5bn to USD 2bn, while imports — predominantly energy — could decline by USD 3bn.
- Export proceeds fell 8.76pc to $2.27bn in February from $2.49bn a year ago.
- In first eight months (July-February), export proceeds recorded negative growth of 7.30pc, falling to $20.46bn from $22.07bn in corresponding period last year.

- During the July–February period, agriculture and food exports stood at USD 3.58 billion, which is 32 percent lower compared to the same period last year.
- Pakistan's trade deficit has widened to USD 24.98 billion in the first two months of FY26.
- The trade deficit during first eight months was recorded at USD 25.042bn against the deficit of USD 20.037bn last year, showing an increase of 24.98pc.
- Pakistan's exports to European countries experienced a modest year-on-year growth of 1.32 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26.
- Export earnings from the European Union increased to $5.436 billion in July-January, up from $5.365bn during the same period last year.
- Rice exports declined by 35.38pc in February despite government subsidies.
- Exports of non-textile goods plunged 16.6 percent to $8.25 billion in the first eight months of FY26 from $9.89bn a year ago as shipments of agricultural produce and value-added products suffered steep declines.
- The agriculture sector bore the brunt of the slowdown, with export earnings tumbling 34.4pc to $3.39bn in 8MFY26, down from $5.17bn a year earlier.
- Pakistan's exports to major Western European markets are experiencing a consistent decline.
- Decline occurs as European Union has signed a FTA with India, and amid initial concerns that Pakistan might be excluded from the GSP+ scheme.
- Pakistan's growing reliance on pulses import is costing nearly $1bn annually.
- Pakistan's total cropped area is about 22.51 million hectares, but pulses cover only 1.16 million hectares, which is just five per cent of the total crop area.
- Pakistan's food import bill surged 18.41 per cent to $6.410 billion during the first eight months of 2025-26 from $5.413bn in the same period last year.

CORPORATE SECTOR

- Pakistan has the capacity to produce 12m tonnes of sugar annually. By exporting 6m tonnes, the country could earn $4bn, with an additional $1bn coming from ethanol exports.
- Amid rising concerns over consumers' falling purchasing power and 44.7pc of people living below the national poverty line as per the World Bank threshold.
- Nestlé Pakistan posted revenue growth of 3pc to Rs199bn in 2025 from Rs193bn in 2024, accompanied by an increase in PAT to Rs17.2bn from Rs15bn.
- Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited reported a robust 20.4pc growth in net sales to Rs40.5bn in 2025, up from Rs34bn in 2024.
- Revenue from contracts with customers of Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan Limited marginally plunged to Rs104 billion in 2025 from Rs107bn in 2024, but PAT soared to Rs2.7bn from Rs2.2bn.

- Fauji Foods Limited (FFL) delivered its highest-ever sales revenue of Rs29bn in 2025, representing a robust growth of 23.4pc over the previous year.

INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

- Foreign assistance to the country from July 2025 to January 2026 has reached USD 5.17 billion compared to the USD 4.58 billion of the corresponding period of last year, which reflects an increase of 12.77 percent.
- Foreign direct investment (FDI) fell by 33 per cent to $1.195 billion during first eight months of current fiscal year (FY26).
- Foreign assistance inflows to the country reached USD 5.862 billion between July 2025 and February 2026, up from USD 4.953 billion during the same period last year, showing an increase of 18.35percent.

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

- Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to extend about $10 billion in financing to Pakistan over the next five years under its Country Partnership Strategy 2026-30 (CPS 2026-30), launched.
- About 47pc of Pakistan's land is arable, compared to 10.7pc globally and 12.7pc in Asia.
- KPK has sustained significant damage and losses from flooding over the years, with approximately $2.3 billion in cumulative damages from major flood events in 2010, 2022, and 2025 alone.
- World Bank has developed a roadmap to modernise the wheat sector in Pakistan, titled 'Wheat Sector Modernisation Roadmap', recommending focused interventions in five priority areas.
- Only 38pc of the seed is supplied through the formal sector while remainder comes from informal sources, mainly farm-saved seed.

POLICY

- Government has decided to continue its policy of deregulating medicine prices despite concerns over rising costs, saying the move had ensured a steady supply of medicines and ended frequent shortages, convincing authorities to keep the current system unchanged.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- Country's total debt stocks, including both domestic and external debt liabilities, reached Rs79.322tr by end of January 2026. This reflects an increase of Rs1.434tr, or 1.84pc, compared with Rs77.888tr recorded in June 2025.
- From June 2024 to June 2025, the total public debt increased from Rs71.25 trillion to Rs80.52tr mainly due to an increase in interest payments.

- Debt per capita also increased from Rs294,098 in FY24 to Rs333,041 in FY25.
- Total public debt-to-GDP ratio increased to 71.7pc by the end of FY25 from 67.6pc in FY24, the total debt of the government increased to 64.3pc of GDP in FY25 against 61.8pc in FY24.
- The country's federal fiscal deficit was contained at 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) against a target of 6.8 percent.
- Public debt stood at 70.7percent of GDP, highlighting fiscal discipline and strengthening debt management frameworks.
- External debt increased by 6 percent year-on-year (YoY), reaching USD 91.8 billion as of end-June 2025, reflecting a rise of USD5 billion.
- Consumer inflation accelerated to seven percent in February from 5.8pc in January.
- Inflation between July and February was recorded at 5.46pc in 2025-26, the lowest since 5.85pc over the corresponding months 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.
- Food inflation in February increased by 4.4pc in urban areas and 6.8pc in rural areas.
- Non-food inflation reached 8.3pc in urban areas, and 7.7pc in rural regions.
- In February, core inflation — excluding volatile food and energy components — stood at 7.1pc in urban areas and 8.3pc in rural areas.
- SBP expecting inflation to remain above 7pc during remaining months of FY26 and into FY27, citing risks from volatile food prices, potential adjustments in domestic energy tariffs, & uncertainties arising from ongoing geopolitical tensions.
- Core inflation increased to around 7.6 percent.
- The government has increased the price of kerosene oil by Rs40 per litre.
- Kerosene, commonly described as the poor man's fuel, has become the most expensive consumer product at Rs358 per litre and has seen the highest increase among all fuels since March 7.

ENVIRONMENT

- The PMD cautioned that pollution resulting from the recent US-Israeli attacks on Iran's oil sites could worsen air quality in the western parts of the country.
- Pollen levels in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad have climbed to the dangerous levels.
- Pakistan Meteorological Department has recorded 14,695 pollen particles per cubic metre of air in Islamabad's H-8 sector.
- A research finds the presence of microplastics in two specimens of fish collected from Panjnad and Taunsa barrages and warned that these hazardous particles are being consumed by those eating the river fish in south Punjab.

- Pakistan was ranked the world's smoggiest country in 2025, with concentrations of hazardous small particles known as PM2.5 up to 13 times higher than the recommended World Health Organisation (WHO) level.
- In total, 130 out of 143 monitored countries and territories failed to meet the WHO guideline.
- Bangladesh and Tajikistan were second and third on the most polluted list.
- Last March, the United States shut down a global monitoring programme that compiled pollution data collected from its embassy and consulate buildings, citing budget constraints.
- Obesity is a growing challenge for public health sector in Pakistan.
- Prevalence of obesity among adults in Pakistan is 23 percent as of 2022, a dramatic 16.4 percent rise in the preceding 10 years.
- In 2019, healthcare costs related to obesity totalled USD3.41bn, equivalent to 1.1 percent of the country's GDP. The obesity cost is threatening to double to USD7.6 billion (Rs2.13 trillion) by 2030 if urgent measures are not taken.
- Nearly 38 million Pakistanis, which accounts for one in three individuals, are living with obesity.
- Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents has been rising by an estimated 10.6 percent annually since 2010.
- Several essential medicines including advanced immunotherapy drugs used in cancer treatment, vaccines and other life-saving therapies are currently not available in Pakistan due to the federal government's delay in fixing and notifying their prices despite recommendations by DRAP).
- The country is projected to see nearly 25,000 to 50,000 new end-stage renal disease patients this year alone who will require life-saving dialysis or transplantation.
- Up to 80 per cent of the population lacks access to safe drinking water.
- Water is contaminated with heavy metals — such as high contents of arsenic and lead — hard minerals as well as pathogens.
- The Pakistan Medical Association has once again raised alarm over the severe shortage of essential paediatric tuberculosis as well as cancer medications.
- The data shared by WHO shows that the disease affects over 669,000 people and causes 51,000 deaths annually in Pakistan.
- In Pakistan, every day, over 1,800 new cases arise and 140 people die from tuberculosis.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Pakistan's climate action plan submitted to United Nations before COP30 in Brazil lists controversial 'Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage' (CCUS) technology as one of the approaches to address climate change and decarbonise in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement.

CLIMATE DISASTER

- Pakistan has developed a national drought action plan in an attempt to transition from a reactive to a proactive risk-based approach for drought management, as climate change is making droughts frequent and severe, leading to water stress.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

- Since the members of the global trade body began agriculture negotiations in 2000, the value of agriculture trade has ballooned fivefold, rising from $300 billion to $1.49 trillion in 2024, according to the WTO.
- Barriers to agricultural trade have also decreased considerably, with the average tariff applied to agriculture products falling from 13 per cent in 2005 to 5.7pc in 2023.
- No major agreement is expected, but countries were seeking consensus on a declaration on agriculture, trade and global food security, aimed to lay the groundwork for future negotiations.

AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

- Some French farmers are planning to switch sowings from maize to sunflower, which requires less fertiliser and energy, as they face a challenging year marked by soaring costs.
- Farmers in France, like their counterparts in other countries, are grappling with rising fuel, gas, and fertiliser prices, exacerbated by US-Israeli war on Iran.

TRADE

- US will provide reinsurance for losses up to USD20 billion in the Gulf region to help provide confidence for oil and gas shippers during the war on Iran.
- The head of the UN's maritime body urged "practical measures" to protect trade ships threatened by the Middle East war, as he opened an emergency meeting amid fears for thousands of stranded ships and seafarers.
- Meanwhile at least 21 ships have been hit, targeted or reported attacks since the start of the conflict.
- The UN's maritime body called for the creation of a safe shipping "corridor" in the Gulf to evacuate stranded vessels and seafarers, after an emergency meeting that also condemned Iran.
- Middle East war could weigh heavily on already slowing global trade, the WTO warned, with merchandise trade volume potentially growing just 1.4 percent this year, compared to 4.6 percent in 2025.

- WTO talks collapsed without reaching an agreement on a reform plan or extending a moratorium on e-commerce, adding further pressure on the trade body, which is becoming increasingly marginalised by economic nationalism.
- High-level WTO talks in Cameroon ended early with no significant agreements and a failure to extend a years-long ban on customs duties for e-commerce, after deep divisions blocked a deal.
- China's trade with North Korea rose 22 percent to USD418.7 million in January and February.
- Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak instructed the energy ministry to draft a resolution banning petrol exports from April 1.

SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

- An extra 45 million people could face acute hunger if the Middle East war rages on beyond June, swelling the number worldwide to a "terrible" high, the United Nations warned.
- With a nearly 320 million people — already a huge number — currently acutely food insecure.
- In Sudan, meanwhile, nearly half the population — more than 21m people — faces acute hunger amid a brutal civil war that has displaced millions and left entire areas inaccessible to aid workers.
- The Iran war does not only endanger aid routes, it threatens much larger ripple effects. Rising shipping costs lead to higher food prices, particularly for import-dependent African and Asian countries.
- United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has said that the prolonged disruption to trade through Strait of Hormuz triggered by US/Israeli attack on Iran could create cascading impacts across energy markets, fertiliser supply chains and global agrifood systems, raising production costs, tightening agricultural supply and increasing food prices worldwide.
- It is estimated that global fertiliser prices could average 15 to 20pc higher during the first half of 2026 if the US/Israel war against Iran continues, the FAO says.
- Early signals in international markets indicate that prices for major food commodities such as wheat, rice, and vegetable oils have started to increase.
- The world wastes food on a staggering scale, as every year over one billion tonnes of edible food — nearly one-fifth of all food available to consumers — is thrown away, impacting both people and the environment, undermining food security and climate resilience, and compromising progress towards a zero-waste, circular future.
- Hundreds of millions of people face hunger, 13 per cent of food is lost before it reaches retailers, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said.

- In 2022, the world wasted an estimated 1.05 billion tonnes of food across the retail, food service, and household sectors combined. This amounts to 132 kg per capita per year, of which 79 kg per capita was wasted in households.
- $1 trillion was the annual cost of food loss and waste to the global economy.
- Food loss and waste generate 8-10pc of global greenhouse gas emissions and are a major source of methane, which is over 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in the short term.
- The IMF blog said low-income countries were at particular risk of food insecurity, given higher food and fertilizer prices, and might need more external support at a time when many advanced economies were scaling back their international assistance.
- Venezuelan inflation soared to 475 per cent in 2025, the highest in the world, driven by a tightening of US sanctions in the lead-up to the ouster of leader Nicolas Maduro.

CLIMATE CHANGE

- "Over the past 10 years, the estimated warming rate has been around 0.35C per decade, depending on the dataset, compared with just under 0.2C per decade on average from 1970 to 2015," the study found.
- Between 1901 and 2018, the global average sea level rose by about 20 centimetres.
- Mountain glaciers alone lost about 9.18 trillion tonnes of ice between 1976 and 2024.
- Ice loss is accelerating as the planet warms, and the extreme heat of the past three years -- the hottest ever recorded -- offers little reason for optimism.
- The 11 hottest years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2025.
- Arctic sea ice is headed for one of its smallest winter peaks on record.

NATIONAL NEWS LISTING

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NATIONAL NEWS

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Agriculture and food security sectors: Provinces, G-B and AJK ordered to boost consultations

PM Shehbaz Sharif directed provincial governments, along with administrations of Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), to strengthen the consultation process surrounding a newly unveiled strategic roadmap aimed at boosting the agriculture and food security sectors. The prime minister, while chairing a high-level meeting on the affairs of the Ministry of National Food Security & Research, described agriculture and food security as “key pillars of the national economy,” emphasising the critical role these sectors play in stabilising the country’s economic framework.

The prime minister also called for sustained engagement with scholars trained in agricultural research from China, instructing officials to maintain regular consultation with these experts to guide reforms within Pakistan’s agricultural sector. During the meeting, officials gave a detailed briefing on the Prime Minister’s Strategic Roadmap for Agriculture and Food Security, which they described as structured around five core pillars. The stated objective of the initiative is to establish a stable, competitive, and resilient agricultural and food system capable of meeting the needs of the country’s growing population. Under the roadmap a series of measures would be implemented to enhance food security, expand private sector participation in agricultural exports, and prioritise climate-resilient crops.

Water governance initiatives and coordinated research efforts are also planned to modernise agricultural practices. Steps to improve public nutrition will be supported through the creation of a central dashboard to monitor commodity storage, protection, mechanisation, and overall supply chain efficiency. The roadmap also outlines the digitisation of agricultural regulation and the introduction of both farm and non-farm credit schemes to provide farmers with greater access to capital. Officials further highlighted plans to boost the nutritional value of crops and promote bio-fortified foods, alongside the launch of targeted packages to support agriculture in the country’s ten most underdeveloped districts. An agri-graduates utilisation scheme is also set to be rolled out to encourage agricultural research and strengthen human capital in the sector. *(Business Recorder, March 6th, 2026, Page 1)*

Hari Tehreek slates govt for ‘destroying agriculture’

Leaders of the Sindhi Hari Tehreek (SHT) have accused the ruling elite of deliberately destroying Sindh’s agriculture sector to pave the way for corporate farming and hand over farmlands to the corporate sector. Speaking at SHT’s ‘Hari Abadgar Conference’ in Warah town, its central committee president Comrade Ghulam Mustafa Chandio, stated that the systematic collapse of the agriculture sector amounts to the economic massacre of farmers and growers across the province. They said that as the wheat crop has arrived in the market, the government-traders nexus has artificially driven down the procurement prices. A similar fate had earlier befallen rice, cotton, tomatoes, and onions. At the same time, prices of pesticides, fertilisers and seeds have skyrocketed, leaving farmers in a state of severe financial and psychological distress.

The conference also condemned the Sindh government for challenging a Sindh High Court ruling in Supreme Court, recalling that the ruling that had directed the government to introduce pro-farmer reforms in Tenancy Act. Government effectively obtained a stay order stalling the entire process. The conference passed several resolutions, one of them demanded immediate increase in the support price of crops and reduction in the input costs. The encroached lands, both cultivable and developed, should be distributed among landless farmers, another resolution said. The other resolutions asked government to do away with the corporate farming plan and grabbing of farmers' lands in its name, establishment of peasant courts peasants' colonies, and educational facilities for farmers' children. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 15)*

1.1 # Agricultural Policy

Aggregation, value addition key to unlocking agribusiness export potential

Engineers, agribusiness experts, and entrepreneurs are increasingly collaborating to develop innovative solutions that can reduce agricultural wastage and expand Pakistan's export potential, said Suleman G Abro, Founder and CEO of the Sindh Agricultural and Forestry Workers Coordinating Organisation (SAFWCO), during a ceremony highlighting the EU-backed Growth for Rural Advancement and Sustainable Progress (GRASP) programme. He emphasised that aggregation bringing together produce from multiple farmers, organizing it systematically, and linking it with processing and export markets is central to the initiatives being implemented. "Modern agricultural machinery and improved farming techniques are also helping farmers increase productivity and improve quality of their produce," said. Programme focuses on strengthening linkages between farmers and industry, enabling agricultural produce to be processed rather than wasted when market demand fluctuates. *(Business Recorder, March 16th, 2026, Page 4)*

1.2 # Farmer

Cabinet okays rules to provide equal wages, maternity facilities to women farm workers

The Sindh cabinet approved the Sindh Agriculture Women Workers Rules, under which equal wages and maternity facilities will be provided to women farm workers. Sindh Senior Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon said that legal measures had also been included to protect women from harassment and discrimination, and such a measure is being taken for the first time in Pakistan. The cabinet also approved the issuance of the Benazir Women Agriculture Workers Card, while an endowment fund of Rs 500 million will be established for the welfare of women workers. The rules have been developed with technical assistance from the International Labour Organisation. The senior minister said that the rules formally recognised women's contributions in farming, livestock and fisheries, ensuring equal wages, maternity benefits and protection against harassment and discrimination. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 15)*

Wheat farmers face financial ruin amidst procurement delays, market exploitation
As the wheat harvest reaches its peak across Sindh, farmers and cultivators are spiraling into a deepening financial crisis. Burdened by soaring input costs and a failing government procurement system, agricultural leaders warn that the backbone of the province's economy is on the brink of collapse. Irfan Khan Jatoi, president of the Sindh Abadgar Board (SAB) Larkana, stated that while the cost of seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and machinery has risen sharply, farmers have been unable to recover fair prices for two consecutive years.

Mr. Jatoi alleged that wheat prices — which previously ranged between Rs4,000 and Rs4,800 per 40 kg — are being deliberately suppressed through collusion between traders and certain government officials. This allows middlemen to purchase grain cheaply before prices are artificially inflated once the commodity reaches the open market. "Last year, the federal and Punjab governments declined to procure wheat, citing the IMF conditions," Jatoi noted. "This forced desperate farmers to sell for as low as Rs2,000 per 40 kg, well below the cost of production. Within two months, that same wheat was trading at over Rs4,000."

Procurement delays in Sindh

Despite the federal government announcing a support price of Rs 3,500 per 40 kg for the current season, Sindh's procurement—originally scheduled for March 15—has yet to begin. Jatoi claimed this delay is a calculated move to allow traders to acquire the harvest at sub-market rates. Currently, wheat in Sindh is reportedly being traded at nearly Rs 1,000 below the official support price. *(Dawn, March 26th, 2026, Page 15)*

1.3 # Land

Jamshoro politician, brother and others acquitted in land fraud case
The Special Anti-Corruption (Provincial) Court acquitted Malik Changez Khan, his brother, cousins and others in 15-year-old cases pertaining to land fraud and forgery in Jamshoro district. The accused were charged with acquiring around 1,000 acres through fraudulent means in Thana Bula Khan, district Jamshoro. The cases were registered against them in 2011 and 2013. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 15)*

Man killed by brothers over land dispute
Two brothers allegedly axed their third brother to death over a property dispute in Chak 202 JB in Bhowana tehsil. As per details, brothers Murtaza and Shah Nawaz wanted the share of inherited agricultural land of their third brother Mustafa as he had no male child and his wife had also died. On the day of the incident, Murtaza resisted when the

accused brothers snatched his CNIC to get land transferred in their name. Over this, they started beating him with punches, kicks and attacked him with an axe and he died on the spot. The Langrana Police registered a case against the accused on the complaint of the mother of the victim and the killers. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 8)*

621,000 acres of forest area mapped thru satellite imagery in Punjab
The Punjab forest, wildlife and fisheries department has digitally mapped 621,000 acres of forest area, using satellite imagery, to ensure more effective monitoring and planning in the province. "The forest department has prepared a 100-year digital forest inventory, developed through Geographic Information System (GIS), remote sensing and satellite imagery," a forest department senior officer told. *(Dawn, March 27th, 2026, Page 2)*

1.4 # Water

$60bn Indian plan for river storage raises alarm
Around $60 billion in investment by New Delhi on storage projects along the two major western rivers — the Jhelum and Chenab — flowing from India-held Kashmir could soon become a lethal weapon against Pakistan, potentially causing both floods and droughts. At a recent federal-provincial dialogue on water storage projects, Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chairman retired Lt Gen Muhammad Saeed reported that India's $60bn investment plan was estimated to increase New Delhi's storage capacity on these rivers to 55-60 days, up from around 15 days at present.

"Such capacity could cause drought in Pakistan, given a nearly two-month window to stop normal flows, particularly when crops need crucial water downstream," a participant at the briefing told. "Conversely, India can trigger floods at will during monsoon or heavy rainfall by releasing stored water, something it has been doing recently even with its existing 15-day storage capacity," he added. Therefore, Pakistan must urgently build large reservoirs as preparedness measures to capture floodwaters for use when India disrupts flows, and to hold substantial quantities in case of sudden discharges to avoid devastation. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 3)*

Water concerns
Recent reports that India plans to invest $60bn in increasing its water storage capacity on Jhelum and Chenab rivers confirm official concerns that New Delhi is weaponising the shared resource against Pakistan. The increase in storage capacity from roughly 15 days to nearly two months will expand India's holding ability on the rivers allocated to Pakistan under the Indus Waters Treaty, giving it unprecedented leverage over downstream flows. In an agrarian economy like ours, where sowing cycles rely on predictable river discharge, even brief interruptions can cause lasting damage. A 55- to 60-day window to regulate flows could enable India to create artificial scarcity during critical crop cycles, especially during the low-flow winter months. The reverse scenario is as alarming. During monsoon surges, large upstream storage gives India the capacity to release accumulated water in concentrated volumes, flooding downstream regions.

Although the IWT has survived wars and diplomatic ruptures since it was signed in 1960, India's decision to place it "in abeyance", followed by a series of contentious steps, has unsettled a framework long valued for its predictability and stability. Against this backdrop, the recent directive by the Court of Arbitration instructing India to share specific project-related data for the dams it is building on Pakistani rivers has significance beyond procedural compliance. It is also a reminder that the IWT's dispute resolution mechanisms remain active, even amid strained Pakistan-India ties. It reinforces the principle that transboundary river management cannot be altered through unilateral political decisions. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 6)*

Farmers' body concerned over reduced flows in canals
Sindh Abadgar Ittehad (SAI) president Nawab Zubair Talpur has expressed concern over the reduction in water flows in the Nara and Rohri canals following damage to the cofferdam at Sukkur Barrage. He said that substandard material was being used for the repair of Sukkur Barrage's gates, during which the cofferdam was damaged. As a result, water flows in the Rohri and Nara canals had been reduced, which was affecting the agriculture sector. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 15)*

Maryam launches major groundwater recharge initiative
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has approved the launch of a major project to construct 358 underground storage tanks across the province for rainwater drainage and groundwater recharge. It will be treated through treatment plants and reused for irrigation purposes. In addition, 328 wastewater treatment plants will be established across the province. Development schemes worth Rs59 billion will be implemented in 485 villages under the Model Village Project, while work has already started in 200 villages. Cleaning of wastewater ponds and installation of wastewater treatment plants will be undertaken, and treated water will be supplied to agricultural fields for irrigation. *(The News, March 8th, 2026, Page 12)*

Breach in cofferdam at Sukkur Barrage affects early sowing of cotton
Breach in a cofferdam at Sukkur Barrage and subsequent reduction in irrigation water supplies of canals have affected early sowing of cotton. Reduced flows caused shortage in water supply to mango orchards which were witnessing fruit setting. Similarly, vegetables were affected in the present scenario. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 15)*

SUP fears revival of canal plan
Leaders and workers of the Sindh United Party (SUP), Larkana chapter, took out a rally to observe International Rivers Day. Addressing the participants, Dr Mazhar Mughal, Saddar Bhatti and others expressed their 'love for the Indus River'. They said it must be realised that Sindh's agricultural economy is entirely dependent on its rivers. They warned that "the recently foiled conspiracy to create canals with Indus water might resurface. If such a plan was revived, the response from people of Sindh would be stronger than it was seen previously. *(Dawn, March 15th, 2026, Page 15)*

Crop sowing delayed due to want of water
Authorities concerned failed to ensure timely release of irrigation water from the Lower Swat Canal's that had badly affected crops sowing season. Water in Lower Swat Canal's water channel under Malakand Irrigation was not released, causing distress to local farmers. Farmers are facing severe difficulties as the wheat crop is at a critical stage and urgently needs water. Sugarcane also requires water, and tobacco cultivation is being delayed. *(Business Recorder, March 16th, 2026, Page 2)*

At UN, Pakistan condemns India's weaponisation of water
Pakistan strongly criticised India at the United Nations for politicising water and unilaterally suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), calling the move a direct threat to its agriculture, livelihoods, and regional stability. Speaking via video message at a high-level UN event on World Water Day, Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Dr Musadik Malik said India's decision to place the treaty "in abeyance" undermines decades of cooperation and violates international law. "For us, water is nature. Water is humanity. Water is our civilisation. For us, water is agriculture," Dr Malik said, emphasising that 25-30 per cent of Pakistan's GDP and nearly half of its workforce depend on agriculture, which is entirely linked to water availability. *(Dawn, March 23rd, 2026, Page 3)*

PPP opposes Farmers' Alliance demand for new canals
Pakistan Peoples Party leadership has voiced strong opposition to the Kissan Ittehad's recent demand for the construction of new canals in the Punjab province, warning of serious consequences for the agricultural sector. PPP Central Punjab Secretary Information, Shahzad Saeed Cheema, in a statement, criticized the proposal, terming it "agricultural suicide" if implemented within the existing irrigation framework. Extending an olive branch, he invited the Kissan Ittehad leadership for dialogue at the PPP's provincial office and said the party was open to convening an all-parties conference to deliberate on the matter. *(Business Recorder, March 28th, 2026, Page 2)*

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Long-term agri productivity: Critically low levels of organic matter content in soils raising concerns
A parliamentary panel was informed that organic matter content in Pakistan's soils has fallen to critically low levels, raising concerns about long-term agricultural productivity. Officials of Ministry of National Food Security and Research (MNFS&R) told the Senate Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research that while healthy soil should contain at least two per cent organic matter under international standards, the level in Pakistan has dropped to below 0.5 per cent. Dr Tariq Sultan of the ministry said a comprehensive soil fertility improvement plan based on bio-fertilizers and compost had been proposed in Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the MNFS&R for the fiscal year 2026–27 to address the issue.

He explained that bio-fertilizers could help mobilise fixed phosphorus in soil, reduce reliance on chemical fertilisers, and enhance crop yields. He stressed the need to transfer biotechnology solutions directly to farmers to boost productivity. The committee reviewed 15 proposed PSDP projects of Rs 20.5 billion of MNFS&R for the fiscal year 2026-27. Dr Ramzan informed the meeting that Pakistan currently lacks a genome reference facility for crops and livestock. "To bridge this gap, a project to establish a Genome Reference Facility is being developed. The facility would enable DNA certification of Pakistani crops, improving traceability and facilitating international registration." He added that Basmati rice would also be formally registered through DNA profiling once the facility becomes operational.

A senior official of MNFS&R informed the committee that a Controlled Environment Facility is being planned in Gilgit-Baltistan to boost fruit exports from the region. The project will be executed under a public-private partnership model, with 80 percent financing from the government and 20 percent from the local community, he said, adding the estimated cost of the project is Rs800 million.

Dr Ramzan also shared details of a USD 13 million potato seed supply centre to be established with the cooperation of Korea. The project will be funded through a Korean grant and aims to ensure the availability of certified, high-quality potato seed in the country. A senior official of the Livestock and Dairy Development Board (LDDB) presented a Rs300 million project to develop a rural industry in G-B based on livestock wool and hair. Officials from the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) informed the committee about a Rs745 million initiative to develop new date palm varieties. A tissue culture laboratory will be set up to support the development and propagation of improved varieties.

The committee was further informed that Phase-II of the Olive Value Chain Project will be completed by June 2026, after which Phase-III will commence. The next phase aims to establish cluster-based commercial olive orchards on 40,000 acres and graft 300,000 wild olive trees, along with providing comprehensive training to farmers. The officials of MNFS&R informed the committee that projects related to livestock & Horticulture development were discussed, including an initiative for improving indigenous breeds and disease control, and a Rs 8,000 million project for the development and export of camel milk powder will be established in Balochistan and Thar.

The Ministry further presented projects on strengthening the National Agri-Food Laboratory network (Rs 490 million), expanding cotton cultivation in potential districts of Balochistan (Rs 808.250 million), building reference genomes and AI-driven crop improvement (Rs 786.816 million), and establishing a Controlled Atmosphere storage facility for fruits in G-B under a public-private partnership model. *(Business Recorder, March 5th, 2026, Page 15)*

2.1 # Agricultural Study & Research

Foreign experts to be engaged in agriculture sector policy making

The government will engage foreign experts to strengthen governance and strategic oversight in the country's agricultural sector and scientists from the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS) will be included in the board of scientific advisory committee of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC). The formation of the Scientific Advisory Committee was announced, with 50 percent foreign specialists from CAAS and other international institutions, ensuring that the country's research system is aligned with the best global practices. *(Dawn, March 12th, 2026, Page 5)*

PM approves restructuring of agricultural research council

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved restructuring of Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), and directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to make reorganisation plan with a timeline for implementation. Chairing a meeting on matters relating to PARC, PM Shehbaz directed that PARC should be developed in line with the research on agriculture being carried out by the Chinese Academy Agricultural Sciences (CAAS).

The five disciplines are 'Genome-Based Research in Field and Horticultural Crops' to develop climate-resilient varieties and high-yield hybrids; 'Genetic Improvement and Health Management of Livestock' with the objective of improving breeds, advanced diagnostics, and vaccine development; 'Climate-smart solutions for land, water and energy with objective of precision irrigation, soil health restoration and renewable energy; 'Artificial Intelligence Technology in Agri and Food System' to build big data, AI, precision equipment, farm automation & robotics. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 3)*

2.2 # Fertilizer

Urea sales fall 41pc in two months

Urea sales plunged 28 percent year-on-year and rose 15 percent month-on-month to 250,000 tonnes in February. The MoM recovery reflects normalisation in buying activity after exceptionally weak offtake in January, which followed heavy advance purchases in December 2025 (1.36m tonnes), keeping overall demand relatively soft. Sales of urea during January-February stood at 468,000 tonnes, down by 41pc.

Muhammad Abdur Rafay of Topline Securities said discounts offered by selected manufacturers remained same in February, with Engro Fertiliser offering Rs100-150 per bag, same as previous month. Meanwhile, Fauji Fertiliser did not offer any discounts for the second consecutive month. Total DAP sales in February were 79,000 tonnes, as compared to 40,000 tonnes in February 2025. In 2M2026, total DAP sales were 118,000 tonnes, up by 17pc YoY. The closing inventory of DAP was around 273,000 tonnes in February. Mr Rafay says urea sales to remain stable in 2026, with easing seasonal demand and aggressive discount-led push sales. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 9)*

Urea, DAP supply lines open

Reviewing the current demand and supply situation of urea and DAP in a regionally challenging environment, government announced that it is fully prepared to implement alternative supply mechanisms to ensure fertilisers reach farmers under any circumstances. Chairing a meeting of the Fertiliser Review Committee, Rana Tanveer Hussain, Minister for National Food Security and Research, stated that agricultural productivity and food security will remain safeguarded despite external challenges.

He assured farmers that the government is closely monitoring the market and they will not face any undue burden. Minister emphasised importance of seamless coordination between manufacturers, distributors, and provincial authorities to ensure uninterrupted supply chains. He said government is committed to protecting agriculture from regional disruptions and will continue to take proactive measures to stabilise the fertiliser market, ensuring that farmers' needs are fully met both now and in long term. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 9)*

Fertiliser companies' earnings rise in 2025

Pakistan's listed fertiliser sector recorded the profitability of Rs141.1 billion in 2025, up by 10 percent year on year (YoY) due to an increase in urea offtakes, higher other income, and lower other charges. The net sales of the sector clocked in at Rs981.6bn in 2025, up by 7pc YoY amid higher Urea and DAP off takes, Muhammad Abdul Rafay of Top Line Securities said. During 2025, Urea offtakes soared by two per cent YoY with 6.7 million tonnes, whereas, while DAP off takes decreased by 18pc YoY with 1.34m tons during the period, he said. The gross margins of the sector slightly declined to 31pc in 2025, mainly due to discounts offered by companies. The sector's finance cost rose by 9pc YoY, reaching Rs24.8bn in 2025. Moreover, fertiliser sector companies disbursed Rs111.8bn, up 72pc YoY, to their shareholders as dividends during 2025. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 9)*

Middle East crisis escalates urea prices

Escalating geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, coupled with disruptions to Qatari gas exports and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, have triggered a profound shock across global fertilizer markets. The Gulf region, accounting for nearly one-third of global urea exports, has witnessed a sharp contraction in production and logistics, leading to severe supply constraints and unprecedented price escalation.

According to the industry circles, international urea prices have surged to USD 740–750 per ton, reflecting compounded effects of feedstock shortages, shipping disruptions, and heightened market uncertainty. For import-dependent economies, particularly in South Asia, the crisis has translated into delayed shipments, tightened availability, and significantly elevated procurement costs. For Pakistan, where urea constitutes a critical input for staple crops such as wheat and rice, implications are substantial. Current estimates place landed cost of imported urea between PKR 13,700 and 14,700 per bag, compared to domestic price of approximately PKR 4,400 per bag. *(Business Recorder, March 20th, 2026, Page 10)*

Govt sees no fertiliser shortage for Rabi, Kharif crops

The government anticipates no shortage of fertilisers for current Rabi and forthcoming Kharif crops despite the fact that the escalation of conflict in Iran and the Middle East has sharply increased risks to global energy, fertiliser and agrifood systems, according to the Ministry of National Food Security and Research. Pakistan's fertiliser sector demonstrates strong supply-demand alignment, with production meeting 90 to 95 per cent of total urea demand and imports bridging the remaining gap, the ministry claims, adding that growth in fertiliser consumption of 2pc to 5pc annually reflects increasing agricultural productivity.

A situation report, prepared by the ministry, says with stock buffers ranging between 5 to 10pc of seasonal demand, both Rabi 2025-26 and Kharif 2026 are expected to remain free of shortages. However, continued gas supply of 700 to 800 million cubic feet a day (MMCFD) will remain critical to sustaining this stability, the report says. Quoting latest data on fertilisers, the ministry says overall, the fertiliser data reflects a stable, growing, and well-managed fertiliser ecosystem supporting agricultural economy. The data shows urea availability during the current Rabi season exceeded 3.5m tons against demand of about 3.3m tons, resulting in a surplus of 150,000 to 200,000 tons. Similarly, availability of DAP remained above 700,000 tons against the demand of around 650,000 tons. *(Dawn, March 23rd, 2026, Page 1)*

Fertiliser constraints

As the Gulf conflict continues, the disruption in global fertiliser markets has again exposed the weaknesses of Pakistan's farm input security. While domestic capacity has insulated Pakistan from the worst effects of the urea shock, the same cannot be said for diammonium phosphate, where reliance on imports leaves the farm economy vulnerable. Local production in the case of urea has helped farmers avoid reducing fertiliser use, which would have meant lower output and higher food prices. DAP is a different story. Pakistan produces only around 0.7m tonnes annually but needs more than 2m, a gap it fills almost entirely through imports from the Middle East. In normal conditions, this reliance is manageable, though pricey. In the current disruption, it is a critical fault line. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 6)*

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

PMEX to begin trading in rice, maize, sugar

While futures trading in precious metals continues at the Pakistan Mercantile Exchange (PMEX), the first trading in agricultural products is expected to start in the coming months. PMEX Chief Executive Khurrum Zafar said that all necessary formalities related to the trading of rice, maize and sugar have been completed. "The trading of rice is scheduled for the coming months, and the sugar will be at the counter from next quarter," he added. He was addressing the gathering of all relevant stakeholders and invited the banks and traders from Islamabad and the surrounding region to invest in commodities on the regulated, modern platform. He added that 125-year-old 'mandi' based system should be converted to a modernised setup operating in a digital ecosystem. "We need to create an impact on the lives of the farmers, who suffer from the price distortion cycles," the CEO said. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 9)*

Experimental Latif Farm of SAU: Wheat, mustard seed mature; ready for harvest

The wheat and mustard crops cultivated for obtaining quality seed at the experimental Latif Farm of Sindh Agriculture University (SAU) have matured and are ready for harvest. The Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Altaf Ali Siyal inaugurated the wheat harvesting and mustard threshing process. During crop cultivation, farmers face several challenges such as water scarcity, uncertified seeds, unexpected rainfall and other difficulties, and despite these challenges, farmers often fail to obtain satisfactory profits. He emphasized that farmers in Sindh need to bring changes in the traditional agricultural system. In this regard, he added that the seed production development center (SPDC) was providing certified basic and pre-basic seeds to farmers in Sindh. In addition, training workshops were being organized for farmers, agricultural experts and students. *(Business Recorder, March 16th, 2026, Page 4)*

3.1 # Cash Crop

5.6m cotton bales produced

Pakistan produced 5.607 million bales during 2025-26 season, a marginal 1.5 per cent increase over last year but a staggering 45pc short of the official target, marking one of the largest production gaps in recent history. According to data released by the Pakistan Cotton Ginners Association (PCGA), country produced 5.607m bales against the 10.2m bales target set by the Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA), which had allocated 5.553m bales for Punjab and 4.627m bales for Sindh and Balochistan combined.

However, Punjab produced only 2.693m bales, 51.5pc below its target, while Sindh and Balochistan produced 2.915m bales, 37pc short of their target. In a notable development, despite having a 17pc lower production target than Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan outperformed Punjab by approximately 7.6pc in actual output. Textile mills purchased 5.188m bales from ginning factories during the year, while exporters bought 100,078 bales. Total remaining stocks with ginners, exporters, traders, and farmers may be around four lakh bales, of which only about 125,000 bales are believed to be quality cotton. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 9)*

Cane support price fixed in 2022 to stay: SHC

While dismissing a petition seeking directive to fix sugar cane support price, Sindh High Court has observed that since the provincial government has not decided to change the minimum cane price fixed in 2022, old price will continue to remain in field. SHC has also noted that since federal government has entered into certain financial commitments with International Monetary Fund, Sindh government has not notified minimum price of sugar cane for the crop of 2025-26. *(Dawn, March 7th, 2026, Page 13)*

Cotton production Sindh surpasses Punjab

Pakistan's cotton industry has recorded a 1.5 percent increase in final production this season, with total output reaching 5.607 million bales. A notable development of this season is that Sindh province has surpassed Punjab in cotton production, claiming the top position among cotton-producing provinces for first time. Cotton prices remained stable in market, though overall trade volume stayed limited. Analysts note that market activity has been sluggish, with both buyers and sellers adopting a cautious approach amid prevailing economic uncertainties. *(Business Recorder, March 9th, 2026, Page 5)*

Domestic cotton prices up as imports suspended due to war

Domestic cotton prices witnessed a sharp surge during the past week, rising by Rs500 per maund to reach around Rs17,000, as limited availability of quality cotton in the local market and the suspension of cotton imports due to global war conditions have tightened the supply. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 2)*

3.2 # Food Crop

Ex-food official held in Rs350m wheat scam

A former district food controller was arrested amid an inquiry into the misappropriation of wheat stocks worth over Rs340m in department's Baqrani warehouse. Niamatullah Jeser was arrested and produced in Special Anti-Corruption Court to obtain his physical remand for six days. About 34,500 wheat bags worth around Rs340.53m were found missing from the warehouse. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 15)*

Early heatwave threatens wheat yields

Wheat crop, a crucial contributor to the country's food security, is facing a significant threat due to an early and intense heatwave. Before forecast of an imminent heatwave, the healthy wheat production of 22.5 million tonnes was officially expected from 16.5 million acres of land in Punjab. However, now, given the changing climate, around 22.1 to 22.3 metric tonnes of production is estimated. *(The News, March 1st, 2026, Page 17)*

KP approves wheat procurement and strategic reserves policy

Provincial cabinet of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has approved Hybrid Wheat Procurement and Strategic Reserves Policy 2026 as the framework for future wheat procurement in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The policy envisages a gradual transition from a state dominated procurement model towards a market based wheat economy, supported by indicative pricing mechanisms to promote price stability. It also provides for the maintenance of strategic reserves to safeguard food security and encourages enhanced private sector participation in wheat procurement, storage and trading. The policy is expected to significantly reduce the fiscal burden on the provincial exchequer over time.

The Cabinet also approved the proposal to take up wheat procurement related liabilities amounting to Rs 38.042 billion with federal government for adjustment against PASSCO liabilities of Rs 41.97 billion, with the remaining balance of Rs 3.928 billion to be settled in favour of PASSCO. Similarly, the cabinet also approved Rs4.065 billion to meet critical human resource requirements in the health sector. *(Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2026, Page 2)*

Adulterated wheat bags seized in raid

The local administration in a raid seized a large number of wheat bags being dispatched to different flour mills from the Government Food Centre, on a tip-off that earth was being mixed in grain to add weight. As per officials, initial investigations showed that earth was mixed with the wheat to meet weight requirements. More than couple weeks ago, a Punjab Enforcement and Regulatory Authority (Pera) team had raided the same food centre and found the official concerned involved in mixing earth with wheat. During the raid, the in charge of the food centre was caught, but later managed to escape from the custody. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 2)*

Pulse production crisis

Despite being an agrarian economy, Pakistan is increasingly dependent on imported pulses, spending nearly USD 1 billion annually — a troubling indicator of deep structural weaknesses in the country's agricultural policies and practices. Pulses such as lentils, chickpeas and beans are a vital source of affordable nutrition for millions of low-income households. Yet a country with vast agricultural potential is relying more and more on foreign supplies to meet this basic dietary need. These concerns were highlighted at a recent seminar on "Developing Competitive and Inclusive Value Chains of Pulses in Pakistan," jointly hosted by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute and the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research.

Discussions underscored how far sector has fallen behind. Despite their nutritional and economic importance, pulses occupy barely five percent of Pakistan's total cropped area. Even more worrying is steady shift of farmers away from pulse cultivation toward more commercially attractive crops. The productivity gap in pulse farming also tells an important story. While the national average yield is around 553 kilograms per hectare, progressive farmers are achieving yields of up to 1,500 kilograms per hectare. *(Business Recorder, March 23rd, 2026, Page 4)*

'Federal govt is planning to procure 6.5m tons of wheat'

The federal government is planning to procure 6.5 million tons of wheat to ensure food security in the country. As per government's plan, it will pay storage charges to private entities. Officials said that a total of 21 firms have been pre-qualified, and procurement will be awarded to multiple bidders offering the lowest rates to ensure transparency and avoid reliance on a single entity. Each firm must demonstrate a minimum financial solvency of Rs1 billion, and an upper procurement limit has been set.

The panel was informed that the government has fixed a Minimum Support Price (MSP) of Rs3,500 per 40 kg to stabilize the market and protect farmers. Approximately 40 percent of total production enters the market, while the remainder is retained by farmers for their own consumption. The estimated national wheat production for the current year stands at around 29 million tons. The Committee urged Ministry to expedite the process, noting that harvesting in Sindh begins earlier than in other regions and that farmers there are currently selling wheat at significantly lower rates, around Rs2,700 per 40 kg. It cautioned that delays would primarily benefit middlemen rather than farmers. *(Business Recorder, March 27th, 2026, Page 2)*

11 companies in Punjab to start wheat purchase from farmers in first week of April

To stabilise wheat procurement and support farmers, in Punjab, 11 prequalified companies will begin purchasing up to three million metric tonnes of wheat directly from the farmers from first week of April under a government-backed scheme. Sources said that initial phase of the wheat procurement drive would commence in South Punjab and the purchased wheat would be stored in warehouses of Punjab government. These companies will purchase wheat directly from the farmers at an estimated rate of around Rs3,500 per 40kg, raising expectations of better returns for growers. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 2)*

Sindh to buy one million tonnes of wheat at Rs3,500 per 40kg

Outlining the Sindh government's wheat procurement strategy for the current season, a cabinet sub-committee has decided to procure one million metric tons of wheat from April 1, fixing Rs3,500 per 40 kilograms as support price for the commodity. The rate was fixed in line with a decision of the federal government that had set the procurement price at Rs3,500 per 40 kilograms in February. Minister Makhdoom Mehboub said that procurement will commence from April 1 across 109 designated procurement centres established throughout the province.

He highlighted that, for the first time, wheat procurement in Sindh will be conducted exclusively through registered Hari Card holders, ensuring transparency, accountability and direct benefit to farmers. He informed that approximately 330,000 registered farmers will benefit under this initiative. In a significant policy shift, the government will not issue bardana (gunny bags) this year. Instead, farmers will bring their own bardana and will be provided an incentive of Rs60 per bag, which will be disbursed through Sindh Bank directly to their accounts. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 13)*

Though rains cast shadow on wheat crop, situation under control: officials

Ongoing rainy spell in country in Punjab and Sindh will negatively impact on the wheat crop which is ready for harvesting but the situation is under control and the production likely to remain in the range of 27.5 to 28.5 million tonnes, government officials and experts told. The wheat crop in Punjab and Sindh is ready for harvest and though the ongoing rainy spell is harmful yet given that February was very dry and relatively hot the soil has absorbed the rainfall," Dr Anjum Buttar, Member Punjab Agriculture Research Board told this correspondent. He emphasised that the Punjab farmers' loss till now is not likely to exceed one percent of their total production.

Khalid Khokar Chairman Pakistan Kissan Itthehad concurred and stated that so far rains had hardly done any serious damage to the wheat crop in Punjab. He said the farmers are likely to achieve the target of 22.5 million tonnes set by the Punjab government. However he said that the mango crop was badly damaged by recent rains and hailstorm adding that the extent of the damage to mango crop would be quantified once the rainy spell is over. He contended that the ongoing rainy spell has positively impacted on sugarcane and cotton crop.

Federal Committee on Agriculture (FCA) set the wheat production target at 29.678 million tonnes in order to meet domestic requirements as well as sustain strategic reserves. He acknowledged that both provincial governments of Sindh and Punjab achieved their targets. The meeting fixed the production targets for gram, potato, onion, and tomato at 39300, 8916000 and 2788000 and 659000 thousand tonnes respectively. The Committee estimated sugarcane production at 84.7 million tonnes. Rice production for 2025-26 is estimated at 9.417 million tonnes and mung bean production is estimated at 150.8 thousand tonnes. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 2)*

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

4.1 # Fishery

Call for urgent action to free fishermen languishing in Indian jails

A representative organisation of fishermen has expressed serious concern over the continued detention of Pakistani fishermen in Indian jails, calling for urgent government steps for their immediate release. `Ramazan has passed and Eidul Fitr is approaching. But, unfortunately, dozens of Pakistani fishermen remain imprisoned in Indian jails. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 14)*

Sindh governor approves law raising fines for illegal fishing

The Sindh government has increased fines for illegal fishing activities, with penalties now reaching Rs100,000 as Governor Nehal Hashmi approved the Sindh Fisheries (Amendment) Bill 2026. Livestock and Fisheries Minister Muhammad Ali Malkani said that the law was amended to deter environmental violations and promote sustainable fishing practices. Mr Malkani said the fines had been increased to curb the menace of illegal fishing. As per the amended law, fines for violations have been increased, with a maximum penalty of up to Rs100,000 for fishing law violations. Operating a processing plant or factory without a licence will now result in a fine of Rs50,000, while authorities will also take strict action against those involved in illegal buying and selling of fish. The amendments also address environmental concerns, setting penalties for pollution and discharge of factory waste into water bodies. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 13)*

4.2 # Livestock

KP launches modern LMIS to improve livestock sector

Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has formally launched a modern Livestock Management Information System (LMIS) to strengthening service delivery and improves transparency in the livestock sector of the province. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Sohail Afridi formally inaugurated Livestock Management Information System. Through LMIS, livestock service delivery has been integrated into a centralized digital platform linking farmers, veterinary hospitals, mobile veterinary units, field staff, and research institutions through a unified digital interface. It was further informed that livestock vaccination, treatment, and artificial insemination services will be digitally tracked and monitored to ensure efficiency and accountability.

For the first time in province, a comprehensive geo tagged database of livestock farmers and animals will be developed. Digital records will be maintained on the basis of animal breed, age, and gender, while the procurement and utilization of medicines and vaccines will also be monitored through the system. Under the new framework, animals will be identified through QR codes, and a real time disease surveillance mechanism will be established to enable early detection and rapid response, thereby strengthening disease prevention and control. *(Business Recorder, March 1st, 2026, Page 3)*

5 # TRADE

Middle East war to hamper Pakistan's external trade

The war in Middle East will severely hamper Pakistan's trade with the region, as both exports and crucial imports have come to a halt following the cancellation of flights and suspension of shipping operations. The business community is in shock, as their exports to the Middle East will remain suspended until the conflict subsides. The UAE is the second-largest trading partner of Pakistan, while the country imports most of its oil from the Middle East. Pakistan also imports liquefied natural gas (LNG) from Qatar. Iran had earlier warned that in event of war, the Strait of Hormuz would be closed, which means oil supply from the Middle East will come to a halt. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 9)*

Trade with UAE, KSA

Trade with the UAE in FY25 was $10.1bn, with Pakistan's exports to the country stood at $2.1bn, leaving the balance of trade clearly in favour of the UAE. Pakistan's exports to Saudi Arabia in FY25 stood at $700m. Data for calendar year 2024 showed that imports from Saudi Arabia was $4.5bn. Pakistan's export is already facing a stagnant situation despite the government's ambitious plan to boost exports to $60bn within three years, one year of which has already passed. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 9)*

Trade deficit

According to the PBS data, imports fell 1.68pc to $5.25bn in February from $5.34bn over the corresponding month of last year. Month-on-month, imports decreased 9.51pc. In the first eight months of 2025-26, the import bill grew by 8.06pc to $45.51bn, up from $42.11bn in the corresponding period last year. The import rose 6.57pc to $58.38bn in July-January FY25 from $54.78bn over the previous year. The trade deficit narrowed 4.63pc to $2.98bn in February from $2.85bn over the corresponding month of last year. The trade deficit swelled 24.98pc to $25.04bn in July-February 2025-26, up from $20.04bn over the corresponding period last year. The trade deficit for FY25 widened by 9pc to $26.27bn, up from $24.11bn in the preceding year. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 4)*

Pakistan-China trade through Khunjerab 'in full swing'
Trade activity between Pakistan and China through the Khunjerab Pass is in full swing, with exports from Pakistan to China and Central Asian states increasing this year. However, local traders have expressed concerns over the non-implementation of PM's announcement regarding tax exemptions on imported items for local consumption. Pakistan Customs Collector Gilgit-Baltistan Shahid Jan told that 1,774 consignments imported from China through the Khunjerab Pass were cleared at Sost Dry Port up to March. He said Pakistan Customs collected Rs10.16 billion in revenue at Sost from these consignments. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 3)*

Trade gap narrows to $9.04bn in July-January
Pakistan's trade deficit with the Middle East narrowed by nearly three per cent during the first eight months of 2025-26, as the ongoing conflict in the region begins to weigh on commercial activity and bilateral engagement. The full impact on Pakistan's exports is yet to unfold. In absolute terms, the trade deficit with the Middle East decelerated to $9.047 billion in July-February FY26 from $9.299bn a year ago, according to data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY25, the trade gap with the region widened 7.37pc to $13.974bn from $13.014bn in FY24.

Exports to the Middle East fell 1.07pc to $2.122bn in 8MFY26 from $2.145bn over the corresponding months of last year. There are predictions that exports will fall further if the war continues. In FY25, exports to the region fell 1.52pc to $3.107bn from $3.155bn in the preceding year. At the same time, imports, mainly petroleum products, slipped 2.41pc to $11.169bn in 8MFY26 from $11.444bn a year ago. In FY25, imports rose 5.64pc to $17.081bn from $16.169bn in FY24. The demand for Pakistani products dropped in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during the period under review. *(Dawn, March 24th, 2026, Page 9)*

Border trade with Iran carries on despite Middle East war
Border trade, including the supply of Iranian oil, LNG and electricity, has continued between Pakistan and war-torn Iran through the Makran region despite massive attacks by the US and Israel on key installations, including energy infrastructure. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 3)*

ME conflict disrupts Pakistan's trade to GCC states, other regions
The ongoing Middle East conflict is poised to potentially reduce Pakistan's direct exports to Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries by USD 1.5 billion to USD 2 billion, while imports — predominantly energy — could decline by USD 3 billion. The conflict has destabilised Mideast and thus has disrupted Pakistan's direct and indirect trade to the GCC countries and other regions. It could destabilise Pakistan's local

production and global exports. At the same time, high energy prices could increase Pakistan's import bill by USD 4.5 billion. It could increase Pakistan's current account deficit and external debt. *(Business Recorder, March 27th, 2026, Page 1)*

5.1 # Export

Onion exports plunge as India floods market

Onion export volume has plunged to around 10 per cent of last year's levels, as India's bumper harvest floods international markets and crowds out Pakistani shipments. Sindh and Balochistan contribute roughly a third of total output between June and November, forming the backbone of exports. Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa add another 27pc during off-peak periods. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 2)*

Exports contract 8.76pc in February

Pakistan's merchandise exports slipped back into negative territory in February, reversing a brief recovery seen a month earlier and raising fresh concerns about the outlook for overseas shipments amid escalating tensions in the Middle East. In absolute terms, export proceeds fell 8.76pc to $2.27 billion in February from $2.49bn a year ago, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. On a month-on-month basis, export proceeds dipped by 25.63pc in February.

Negative growth in exports has continued since August of the current fiscal year, except in July, when proceeds grew by 16.43pc year on year. Export earnings posted negative growth, with proceeds declining by 20.41pc in December. This follows a 14.54pc drop in November, 4.46pc in October, 3.88pc in September, and 12.49pc in August, reflecting persistent pressures on the country's external trade performance. However, in January, exports posted a modest 3.3pc growth.

In the first eight months (July-February), export proceeds recorded negative growth of 7.30pc, falling to $20.46bn from $22.07bn in the corresponding period last year. Last month, the government announced several measures, including a reduction in energy rates, to minimise pressure on the country's trade performance. Currently, the exporters are grappling with subdued global markets and the high cost of doing business in the country. The textile exporters have already complained about contractions owing to the high cost of doing business. In FY25, export proceeds rose 4.67pc to $32.106bn against $30.675bn in the preceding year. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 9)*

Textiles: Jul-Feb exports rise 0.3pc YoY

Pakistan's textile exports during the first eight months (July–February) of the financial year 2025–26 registered a slight increase of USD 32 million, or 0.3 percent, reaching USD 12.249 billion on a year-on-year (YoY) basis. Data obtained from the Pakistan Textile Council (PTC) revealed that, on a month-on-month (MoM) basis, textile exports in February 2026 declined by USD 102 million compared to January, reflecting a negative growth of 7 percent. Exports stood at USD 1.315 billion.

According to PTC's analysis, "Trade Outlook of Pakistan - July–Feb 2025–26," the textile sector is maintaining cumulative stability but is facing a monthly slowdown. During the July–February period, agriculture and food exports stood at USD 3.58 billion, which is 32 percent lower compared to the same period last year. The manufacturing and energy sectors showed positive growth of 0.2 percent, reaching USD 3.995 billion on a YoY basis. The mining sector exports recorded a growth of 22 percent, amounting to USD 567 million.

Pakistan's exports to the Middle East increased by 7 percent to USD 2.37 billion. Exports to the USA rose by 2 percent to USD 3.97 billion, while exports to South America registered an increase of 11 percent. While the country's textile exports to the following markets have witnessed a declining trend: the European Union (EU) by 2 percent and remained at USD 6.01 billion, the UK 3 percent decline, the ASEAN region 44 percent decline, Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan 53 percent reduction, South Asia 18 percent reduction, and Africa 11 percent reduction.

Pakistan's trade deficit has widened to USD 24.98 billion in the first two months of FY26, with exports down and imports up, despite marginal increases in the textiles and apparel sector and the agriculture and food sector. The country's exports reached to USD 20.462 billion during July–February of the current fiscal year (2025–26), Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) said. According to the PBS data, the exports showed a decline of 7.30 percent as compared to exports of USD 22.073 billion during the July–February period of the last fiscal year (2024–25). On the other hand, imports into the country increased by 8.06 percent, rising from USD 42.110 billion last year to USD 45.504 billion during July–February (2025–26).

Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the first eight months was recorded at USD 25.042 billion against the deficit of USD 20.037 billion last year, showing an increase of 24.98 percent. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the exports in February 2026 decreased by 8.76 percent to USD 2.272 billion compared to USD 2.490 billion in February 2025. The imports also witnessed a decrease of 1.61 percent, declining from USD 5.339 billion to USD 5.253 billion during the same period. On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country decreased by 25.63 percent when compared to USD 3.055 billion during January 2026. The imports also decreased by 9.51 percent compared to USD 5.805 billion in January 2026, the PBS reported. *(Business Recorder, March 4th, 2026, Page 1)*

Paltry growth in exports to EU

Pakistan's exports to European countries experienced a modest year-on-year growth of 1.32 per cent in the first seven months of 2025-26, mainly due to increased shipments to southern and eastern European nations. Official data showed that, in absolute terms, export earnings from the European Union increased to $5.436 billion in July-January, up from $5.365bn during the same period last year, according to figures compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan. In FY25, exports to the EU increased by 7.44pc to $8.863bn, up from $8.249bn in the preceding fiscal year. In FY24, exports declined by 3.12pc to $8.240bn despite its GSP+ status, which allows duty-free entry into most European markets. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 3)*

Qatar to import Pakistani rice

Qatar expressed interest in increasing rice imports from Pakistan as part of efforts to strengthen the country's food security amid the ongoing regional conflict. Rice remains an important component of Qatar's national food strategy and food security programme. *(Dawn, March 13th, 2026, Page 9)*

Export containers pile up at ports as Gulf shipping stalls

The export sector is facing severe disruption as shipping lines have halted vessel movements to the Middle East, leaving hundreds of export containers stranded at local ports. Saquib Fayyaz Magoon, senior vice president of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI), said the sudden suspension of vessel operations had brought export logistics to a standstill, putting exporters at risk of substantial financial losses. *(The News, March 15th, 2026, Page 17)*

PM orders plan for export of 'surplus food items' to Gulf nations

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has issued directives for the formulation of a strategy to export surplus food items to Gulf nations while ensuring that the country's nutritional needs are not affected. According to Prime Minister's Office (PMO), PM Shehbaz noted that disruptions in global supply chains increased the export potential of Pakistani products in regional markets. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 1)*

Rice exports plunge despite subsidies

Rice exports declined by 35.38 percent in February despite government subsidies, prompting exporters to question the effectiveness of the support scheme. Exporters said the subsidy programme had pushed up domestic prices, making Pakistani rice less competitive in international markets and undermining intended benefit of government's cash support. The government has announced a 3 per cent duty drawback on local taxes and levies for coarse rice and a 9pc duty drawback for basmati exports. Under the scheme, the government has allocated approximately Rs15 billion to provide rebates on local taxes and levies for rice exporters.

Official figures compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics show that basmati rice exports declined by 19.21pc in value and recorded negative growth of 27.98pc in quantity in February. The export of coarse rice also registered a decline of 42.50pc in value and 32.94pc in quantity during the month under review. The figures indicate that the subsidy scheme introduced by the Ministry of Commerce failed to arrest the decline in exports. *(Dawn, March 17th, 2026, Page 9)*

Pakistan's non-textile exports shrink 17pc

Exports of non-textile goods plunged 16.6 percent to $8.25 billion in the first eight months of FY26 from $9.89bn a year ago as shipments of agricultural produce and value-added products suffered steep declines. The downturn underscores mounting pressure on key sectors, particularly agriculture, where lower volumes and weakening external demand have eroded earnings. By contrast, only marginal gains were recorded in leather, footwear, and engineering products 8MFY26, according to data compiled by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The agriculture sector bore the brunt of the slowdown, with export earnings tumbling 34.4pc to $3.39bn in 8MFY26, down from $5.17bn a year earlier. The simultaneous drop in both value and volume of farm commodities highlights the twin pressures of softer international prices and waning demand in major markets. In contrast, non-agricultural exports managed a modest 2.96pc uptick, rising to $4.86bn from $4.72bn over the same period last year. Within this segment, engineering goods posted a 5.05pc increase, led by stronger shipments of industrial machinery, transport equipment, electric fans, auto parts, and rubber tyres. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 9)*

Food commodities: Govt decides to boost exports to war-torn Gulf

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif directed authorities to strengthen coordination with Gulf countries to ensure a steady supply of essential food items, emphasising that Pakistan has a strategic role to play in regional food security amid global supply chain disruptions. Chairing a high-level review meeting on export of key food commodities to Gulf countries and the country's maritime operations, Sharif stressed that Pakistan must leverage its agricultural abundance to support Gulf states without compromising domestic food needs. *(Business Recorder, March 26th, 2026, Page 3)*

Exports to Europe stagnate amid challenges

Pakistan's exports to major Western European markets are experiencing a consistent decline despite GSP+ status, sparking concerns over diminishing demand for Pakistani goods. The decline occurs as European Union has signed a free trade agreement (FTA) with India on Jan 27, a major textile competitor of Pakistan, and amid initial concerns that Pakistan might be excluded from the GSP+ scheme, which offers duty-free access for certain products. Official data compiled by the State Bank of Pakistan showed that exports to European countries recorded a marginal year-on-year increase of 0.95 per cent to $6.122 billion during the July-February period of 2025-26 compared to $6.064bn a year earlier. The slowdown is mainly driven by a decline in shipments to northern and western European states. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 9)*

5.2 # Import

Rising reliance on pulses' import eats away $1 billion annually: experts

Expressing deep concern over Pakistan's rising import of pulses, experts at a seminar in Islamabad, called on the government to bring about urgent policy reforms and value chain development to revive the production of pulses and strengthen the country's food system. At a seminar on 'Developing Competitive and Inclusive Value Chains of Pulses in Pakistan', experts warned that Pakistan's growing reliance on pulses import is costing nearly $1bn annually, which is a stark reflection of declining domestic production and widening food and protein crisis. Providing an overview of sector, pulses expert Dr Shahid Riaz Malik said Pakistan's total cropped area is about 22.51m hectares, but pulses cover only 1.16m hectares, which is just five per cent of total crop area. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 4)*

Food imports rise to $6.41bn in July-February

Pakistan's food import bill surged 18.41 per cent to $6.410 billion during the first eight months of 2025-26 from $5.413bn in the same period last year, mainly due to increased arrivals of sugar and edible oil. In contrast, exports of raw food items plunged 34.38pc to $3.394bn in 8MFY26, compared with $5.173bn a year earlier. Export volumes declined across most major food categories, except for meat. The most pronounced decline was seen in rice exports, including both basmati and non-basmati varieties.

Data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed that palm oil accounted for the largest share of imported food items, followed by pulses, tea, soyabean oil and sugar. Pakistan imported 308,887 tonnes of sugar in 8MFY26, representing an unprecedented year-on-year increase of 12,118.61pc from 2,528 tonnes in the same period last year. In terms of value, sugar imports surged 7,028.25pc to $174.713 million in 8MFY26 from $2.451m a year ago, indicated official trade data.

However, imports of pulses decreased by 21.89pc to $492.095m from $630.019m in the same period last year. Soyabean oil imports value plunged 47.17pc to $106.372 million 17pc from $201.352m in 8MFY25. The import bill for all other food items rose 38.07pc to $2.006bn in the 8MFY26 from $1.453bn a year ago. The value of imports increased 4.72pc to $437.985m from $418.259m. The import of milk, cream and milk food for infants grew by 3.63pc to $94.408m in July-February, up from $91.105m last year despite the tax introduced in the budget. *(Dawn, March 15th, 2026, Page 9)*

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Sugar industry seeks export freedom

The sugar industry claims it can generate $5bn annually from sugar and ethanol exports if the government removes what it describes as stifling regulations and reinstates bio-ethanol blending policies. Speaking at a press conference, PSMA Chairman Chaudhry Zaka Ashraf and other representatives stated that Pakistan now has a substantial surplus of over one million tonnes of sweetener. They warned that delayed export permissions are causing serious financial losses and that the country is missing out on vital foreign exchange. Industry leaders argued that without any additional investment, Pakistan has the capacity to produce 12m tonnes of sugar annually. By exporting 6m tonnes, country could earn $4bn, with an additional $1bn coming from ethanol exports. A key issue remains the abolished ethanol blending policy. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 9)*

6.1 # Fertilizer Company

Gas supply for urea production: Fertiliser makers partner with Mari Energies

Fauji Fertiliser Company Limited (FFC), in collaboration with Engro Fertilisers Limited and Fatima Fertiliser Company Limited, has executed key project agreements with Mari Energies Limited for the development of Pressure Enhancement Facilities (PEF) at the Mari gas field in Daharki, Sindh. A disclosure made in accordance with the Securities Act, 2015 and shared with the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) marks a significant step by the country's leading fertiliser producers to secure long-term indigenous gas supplies, a critical feedstock for urea manufacturing. *(Business Recorder, March 25th, 2026, Page 2)*

6.2 # Food Company

Mixed 2025 for food giants amid economic strain

Amid rising concerns over consumers' falling purchasing power and 44.7 percent of people living below the national poverty line as per the World Bank threshold, the foreign and local manufacturers of food products enjoyed quite a stable 2025 in terms of sales. However, manufacturers believe the business environment remains challenging despite macroeconomic stability, improving foreign exchange reserves, and ongoing IMF engagement.

As most companies do not disclose quantity of goods in their financial reports, they prefer reporting sales figures in rupees, which fluctuate depending on price changes of the goods. Nestlé Pakistan posted revenue growth of 3 per cent to Rs199 billion in 2025 from Rs193bn in 2024, accompanied by an increase in PAT to Rs17.2bn from Rs15bn. The growth was driven by a strong second half of the year, which saw a 14.3pc increase in top-line revenue.

Unilever Pakistan Foods Limited reported a robust 20.4pc growth in net sales to Rs40.5bn in 2025, up from Rs34bn in 2024, mainly driven by strong volumetric performance across all product segments, with Knorr Noodles leading the growth. However, Profit after Tax (PAT) fell to Rs5.9bn from Rs6.97bn in same period.

Revenue from contracts with customers of Friesland Campina Engro Pakistan Limited marginally plunged to Rs104 billion in 2025 from Rs107bn in 2024, but PAT soared to Rs2.7bn from Rs2.2bn. The combined impact of improved commercial execution and cost optimisation resulted in an expansion in gross margin of 70 basis points and growth in operating profit of 16pc compared to 2024, company said. Whilst the implementation of the 18pc sales tax on packaged milk in 2024 continues to be a challenge for industry, FrieslandCampina remains resilient and continues to build on the strong foundations of its business by strengthening brands and reinforcing consumer trust in the safety and nutritional value of packaged dairy.

The turnover of Colgate Palmolive Pakistan Limited (CPPL) surged by 5.1pc to Rs82bn during July-December 2025 from Rs77.7bn in the same period of 2024 due to higher sales volume, while PAT fell by 10.2pc to Rs8.7bn from Rs9.7bn. The decline was attributed to increased trade investments and reduced interest income. CPPL said that Pakistan's economy shows early signs of improvement, though consumer spending remains subdued. Fauji Foods Limited (FFL) delivered its highest-ever sales revenue of Rs29bn in 2025, representing a robust growth of 23.4pc over the previous year. Cost optimisation and a high-margin portfolio allowed the company to increase its gross margin by over 22pc. The company earned PAT of Rs1.15bn, showing a jump of 76pc over 2024.

While the national economy experienced a "calm after the storm," marked by a sharp decline in inflation to 4pc and a historic current account surplus, the formal dairy sector faced its own headwinds. Ismail Industries Limited (IIL) achieved gross sales of Rs61.5bn during July-December 2025, representing a 4.1pc increase over the corresponding period last year, supported by stable domestic demand across core Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) categories and a continued focus on distribution and product availability. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 9)*

Coca-Cola receives two awards at 15th International Summit

Coca-Cola Pakistan received two awards at the 15th International Summit on Corporate Social Responsibility in Karachi, recognizing its work in water stewardship and sustainability innovation. The company was presented with the Excellence in Water Stewardship Award and the Innovation in Sustainability Award. The awards were presented by the summit's chief guest, Syed Mustafa Kamal, Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, and received by Dr Faisal Hashmi, Senior Director of Public Affairs, Communications, and Sustainability at Coca-Cola Pakistan. Speaking at the event, Dr Hashmi said the recognition reflected the company's ongoing efforts to contribute to Pakistan's sustainability objectives. *(Business Recorder, March 26th, 2026, Page 3)*

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Jul-Jan foreign assistance up 12.77pc to USD5.17bn YoY

Foreign assistance to the country from July 2025 to January 2026 has reached USD 5.17 billion compared to the USD 4.58 billion of the corresponding period of last year, which reflects an increase of 12.77 percent. According to data released by the Economic Affairs Division (EAD), the multilateral and bilateral loans and grants in January 2026 remained USD 626 million compared to USD 1.47 billion in December 2025. According to data in January 2026, the country has received USD104.11 million on account of bilateral loans and grants, of which USD 100 million in loan from Saudi Arabia. On account of multilateral loans in January a total USD133.33 was received of which the ADB provided a USD 56 million loan, the IRBD USD 30.59 million, the IDA USD 28.69 million, and the AIIB USD 13.78 million.

In the July-January 2025-26, the total bilateral loans and grants stood at USD 931.88 million, of which USD 33.24 million stood as grants and USD 898.64 million as loans; whereas multilateral grants and loans amounted to USD 2.127 billion in the review period, of which USD 33.97 million stood as grants and USD 2.092 billion as loans. A major amount of grants came from Japan (USD 15.33 million), followed by China (USD 10.57 million), Saudi Arabia (USD 3.31 million), and Germany (USD 2.79 million). In the seven months of 2025-26, the total bilateral loans amounted to USD 931.88 million. This includes Chinese guaranteed loans of USD 72.28 million and USD 72.28 million from China, USD 71.15 million from Denmark, USD 26.73 million from France, and a major loan of USD 708.70 million received from Saudi Arabia.

The total multilateral grant received during the July-January period amounted to USD 33.97 million. Of this, USD 18.96 million came from the IBRD, USD 9.86 million from the IDA, USD 2.72 million from IFAD, and USD 2.41 million from the Asian Development Bank. The total multilateral loans in the same period reached USD 2.092 billion. The ADB was the top lender with USD 622.18 million, followed by the IDA with USD 598.22 million, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) short-term loan of USD 483.78 million, IBRD USD 240.01 million, IsDB USD56.13million, and IFAD provided USD 18.67 million. Pakistan also received USD144.42m from SCB, London, and USD 209.51m from the IMF. *(Business Recorder, March 12th, 2026, Page 1)*

FDI inflows drop 33pc in July-February

FDI fell by 33pc to $1.195bn during first eight months of current fiscal year (FY26), with inflows largely dominated by China. It is important to note that State Bank’s data reflects pre-war situation and does not capture the potential impact of conflict on foreign investment. The 33pc decline in FDI — even before the war began on Feb 28 — is seen as disappointing for the government, which has been seeking to attract large-scale foreign investment across sectors ranging from industry and agriculture to services.

According to the State Bank, FDI in February stood at $213m, of which $140m, or 66pc, came from China. During July-February FY26, total FDI amounted to $1.195bn compared to $1.793bn in same period last fiscal year — a decline of $598m, or 33.3pc. China’s contribution stood at $635m, accounting for 53pc of total inflows, highlighting Pakistan’s heavy reliance on Chinese investment. Arab countries, currently facing war-related pressures, did not respond to Pakistan’s investment incentives even before the conflict began. After China, highest inflows came from Switzerland with $141.4m, followed by UAE with $139m and UK with $74m.

Analysts believe Pakistan may not receive significant investment from the Middle East in coming months, or even years, as war could have long-term economic consequences for those countries. While UK has been among few notable contributors, the economic uncertainty in Europe may limit its appetite for risk, particularly when investing in a country located close to conflict-hit Iran. *(Dawn, March 17th, 2026, Page 9)*

Outflow of profits rises, FDI plunges

Pakistan continued paying profits and dividends on foreign investments despite the war in the region, while profit outflows increased by 10.5 per cent in the first eight months of the current fiscal year (FY26). The government's performance on the external front has been satisfactory, sending abroad $1.726 billion as profits on foreign investments during July-February FY26, an increase of $164 million or 10.5 per cent. Foreign investments have drastically fallen during FY26. The FDI during July-February fell by 33.3pc, or $598 million, to $1.195bn.

Sources in the financial sector believe Middle Eastern countries are unlikely to invest due to the war. It is also difficult to predict how long FDI will continue, as the conflict in the region is still escalating. The highest profit outflow was for the UK, which rose to $444m in 8MFY26, down from $496m in the same period last year. China recorded the second-highest profit outflow, reaching $433m, up from $140m in the same period last year. China remains the largest foreign investor in the country. Other significant profit recipients were the US ($160m), the Netherlands ($155m), and the UAE ($120m). Sector-wise data shows the highest outflow of $422m for the power sector, up from $244m in the same period last fiscal year. The financial sector received $374m, compared to $192m last year. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 9)*

Jul-Feb foreign assistance inflows up 18.35pc to USD5.862bn

Foreign assistance inflows to the country reached USD 5.862 billion between July 2025 and February 2026, up from USD 4.953 billion during the same period last year, showing an increase of 18.35 percent. According to data released by the Economic Affairs Division (EAD), the multilateral and bilateral loans and grants in February 2026 remained USD 692 million compared to USD 625.7 million in January 2026.

According to the data, in February 2026, the country received a total of USD 106.33 million on account of bilateral loans and grants, of which USD 101.98 million was a loan from Saudi Arabia and USD 3.87 million from Japan. On account of multilateral loans, in February, Pakistan received a total of USD 246.94 million loans, of which ADB provided a USD 38.18 million loan, IRBD USD91.88 million, IDA USD 113.95 million, and AIIB USD 3.16 million. In the July-February 2025-26, the total bilateral loans and grants stood at USD 1.038 billion, of which USD 36.38 million stood as grants and USD 1.001 billion as loans; whereas multilateral grants and loans amounted to USD 2.373 billion during the period under review, of which USD 54.01 million stood as grants and USD 2.319 billion as loans.

A major amount of grants came from Japan (USD 18.10 million), followed by China (USD 10.57 million), Saudi Arabia (USD 3.31 million), and Germany (USD 3.16 million). In eight months of 2025-26, the total bilateral loans amounted to USD 1.001 billion. This includes Chinese guaranteed loans of USD 269.42 million and a USD 61.71 million loan from China, USD 71.15 million from Denmark, USD 25.97 million from

France, and a major loan of USD 708.46 million received from Saudi Arabia. The total multilateral grant received during the July-February period amounted to USD 54.01 million. Of this USD 26.03 million came from the IBRD, USD 10.76 million from the IDA, USD 2.72 million from the IFAD, and USD 14.50 million from ADB.

The total multilateral loans in the same period reached USD 2.319 billion. ADB was the top lender, with USD 648.25 million, followed by IDA with USD 711.27 million, the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) short-term loan of USD 483.78 million, IBRD USD 324.64 million, IsDB USD 56.13million, AIIB USD 76.11 million, and IFAD provided USD 18.67 million. Pakistan also received USD 144.42 million from SCB London and USD 209.51 million from the IMF. *(Business Recorder, March 26th, 2026, Page 1)*

7.1 # Country / Region

China aerospace firm eyes $10bn investment

The Chinese Aerospace Development Industry Investment Group has expressed its keen interest in investing up to $10 billion in Pakistan across various sectors, including mining and minerals, advanced technology industries, and industrial development. They also highlighted their interest in collaborating with Pakistan on skill development initiatives, emphasising their long-term vision of contributing to Pakistan's economic growth and technological progress. *(Dawn, March 6th, 2026, Page 9)*

Chinese firms plan to invest $2.6bn in Balochistan

Chinese companies are planning to invest about $2.6 billion in the manufacturing and around $14 million in mineral sectors of Balochistan. Chinese delegation briefed the Senate deputy chairman that Chinese investors are keen to invest in minerals, agriculture, transport, tourism and other sectors over the next five years. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 5)*

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

8.1 # Asian Development Bank (ADB)

Pension system reforms: Pakistan floats programme to secure USD500m ADB loan

Pakistan has proposed a programme to secure a USD 500 million loan from Asian Development Bank (ADB) to support reforms aimed at making the country's public sector pension system more financially sustainable and transparent. The program is currently under proposed status and will be financed through ordinary capital resources of the ADB. *(Business Recorder, March 14th, 2026, Page 1)*

ADB gives 'final chance' to $360m Central Asia Regional Economic Corridor project

ADB has granted a final one-month extension for the disbursement of a $360 million loan for the embattled Central Asia Regional Economic Corridor (Carec) Tranche-III project, which has already been delayed by around a year due to issues with the National Highway Authority (NHA). *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 3)*

ADB unveils $10bn five-year financing plan

Asian Development Bank (ADB) is expected to extend about $10 billion in financing to Pakistan over the next five years under its Country Partnership Strategy 2026-30 (CPS 2026-30), launched. The CPS sets out "a roadmap to support the country's transition to sustainable and inclusive growth through private sector-led development," the Manila-based lending agency said. "The five-year strategy will focus on three pathways: enabling private sector development, advancing inclusion and empowerment, and enhancing resilience and sustainability," it said.

About 47pc of Pakistan's land is arable, compared to 10.7pc globally and 12.7pc in Asia. The country is also rich in critical minerals. Highlighting improving economic performance, the ADB said Pakistan's economy has stabilised and returned to growth after repeated boom-and-bust cycles. GDP expanded by 3.1pc in FY25, up from a 0.2pc contraction in FY23. Average inflation declined sharply to 4.5pc in FY25 from 23.4pc in FY24, falling below the State Bank of Pakistan's target range of 5-7pc. The current account balance also improved, shifting from a deficit of 4.7pc of GDP in FY22 to a surplus of 0.5pc in FY25 — the first since FY11 *(Dawn, March 19th, 2026, Page 1)*

ADB strategy

The ADB's new five-year country partnership strategy comes at a moment when Pakistan's economy, though showing signs of fragile stabilisation, is still vulnerable to internal and external shocks. The pledge of $10bn in financing through 2030 signals continued multilateral confidence while underscoring Pakistan's heavy reliance on external support to sustain even modest growth. The strategy is well aligned with Pakistan's long-standing economic challenges as the programme sets out "a roadmap to support the country's transition to sustainable and inclusive growth". Its emphasis on sustainable private sector-led development, inclusive growth, export competitiveness and sustainability, and climate resilience reflects a recognition that macroeconomic stabilisation is necessary but not sufficient. Financing priorities will be reinforced by cross-cutting themes of good governance and institutional strengthening, gender equality and social inclusion, digital transformation and regional cooperation and integration. The focus on integrated solutions by combining policy reforms with financing and technical support shows that Pakistan's challenges are institutional and cannot be addressed through capital inflows alone. *(Dawn, March 23rd, 2026, Page 6)*

8.2 # International Monetary Fund (IMF)

IMF's EFF & RSF: SLA clears path for USD4.5bn disbursements

The IMF team and the Pakistani authorities have reached a staff-level agreement on the third review under Pakistan's Extended Fund Facility & second review under Resilience and Sustainability Facility. The staff-level agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board. Upon approval, Pakistan will have access to about USD 1.0 billion (SDR 760 million) under the EFF and about USD210m (SDR 154 million) under the RSF, bringing total disbursements under the two arrangements to about USD4.5 billion.

The staff-level agreement is subject to approval by the IMF Executive Board. Upon approval, Pakistan will have access to about USD1.0 billion (SDR 760 million) under the EFF and about USD 210 million (SDR 154 million) under the RSF, bringing total disbursements under the two arrangements to about USD4.5 billion. The authorities' policy priorities include: maintaining a prudent fiscal stance, advancing fiscal structural reforms, achieving energy sector viability, deepening structural reforms, building resilience to climate change. *(Business Recorder, March 29th, 2026, Page 1)*

8.3 # World Bank

World Bank to provide $250m for KP resilience, disaster readiness

The World Bank is expected to approve a loan of $250 million to Pakistan for resilience, early action, and disaster preparedness in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), one of country's most flood-prone regions. Loan, provided by International Development Association (IDA), aims to improve flood resilience in selected areas of the province. It is expected to be approved by World Bank's executive board in June this year. KPK has sustained significant damage and losses from flooding over the years, with approximately $2.3 billion in cumulative damages from major flood events in 2010, 2022, and 2025 alone. More recently, 2025 monsoon triggered localised riverine, glacial, and flash flooding, resulting in 509 fatalities. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 3)*

World Bank develops roadmap to modernise wheat sector in Pakistan

World Bank has developed a roadmap to modernise the wheat sector in Pakistan, titled 'Wheat Sector Modernisation Roadmap', recommending focused interventions in five priority areas that are aimed at stimulating private sector investment and redirect resources towards core public goods for greater returns, increased farmer incomes, and job creation. The five targeted actions highlighted in a technical paper spelt out closing the productivity gap between Pakistan and other comparable wheat producers; increased investment in agricultural research and development; empowering the farmers with small holdings so that they can reach their full potential; improving institutional coordination and transparency to ensure market stability; and managing strategic grain reserves efficiently by moving away from large, costly storage facilities.

The average wheat yield in Pakistan is 50pc lower than Egypt, 25pc lower than Ukraine, 10pc lower than India and around 35pc lower than Indian state of Punjab. The actual versus potential wheat yields indicate a substantial productivity gap. The average yield of 3,200kg per hectare also remains 60pc lower than the yield potential of improved varieties of around 7,500kg per hectare, which some progressive farmers have been able to achieve in selected areas. The seed supply system is largely informal and faces several challenges. Key challenges include cumbersome certification and registration processes, strict and costly import regulations, and the widespread availability of low-quality seed. Only 38pc of the seed is supplied through the formal sector while remainder comes from informal sources, mainly farm-saved seed. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 3)*

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Developmental Policy

Afridi announces Rs200bn uplift package for Hazara

CM KPK Muhammad Sohail Afridi has announced a special comprehensive development package worth Rs 200 billion for Hazara Division. He directed that Rs 50 billion from this package be specifically allocated for tourism related projects. The meeting also included detailed consultations regarding the preparation of the upcoming Annual Development Programme, and a comprehensive review of the developmental needs of the division was undertaken. *(Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2026, Page 3)*

11 projects worth Rs123bn cleared

CDWP approved 11 development projects with a total estimated cost of over Rs123 billion. The meeting of the CDWP approved seven projects with a total cost of Rs15.174bn and recommended four others worth Rs108.16bn to Ecnec for approval. Three power sector-related projects were presented at the meeting to secure foreign funding. CDWP also approved a revised "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Irrigated Agriculture Improvement Project" at a cost of Rs50.956bn, which was also recommended to Ecnec. The project is proposed to be financed through World Bank funding of $171m (80pc of the total cost) and farmers' contribution of 20pc. *(Dawn, March 6th, 2026, Page 9)*

PSDP 2025–26: Rs558.12bn authorised against budgeted Rs1trn

Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives authorized Rs 558.12 billion (55.8 percent) for development projects under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) 2025–26 against Rs 1 trillion budgeted allocation during July–February, while actual expenditures stood at Rs 361.27 billion. These figures came a few days after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced a 20 percent cut in the development budget for fourth quarter for both the federal government and the provinces as part of austerity measures. *(Business Recorder, March 12th, 2026, Page 1)*

9.2 # Neo – Liberal Policy

Despite rising prices, govt sticking with drug deregulation

Government has decided to continue its policy of deregulating medicine prices despite concerns over rising costs, saying the move had ensured a steady supply of medicines and ended frequent shortages, convincing authorities to keep the current system unchanged. The review concluded that policy, introduced in late 2023, would continue to govern pricing of non-essential medicines, while essential and life-saving drugs would remain under government price controls. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 3)*

9 passenger trains to be outsourced soon: minister

Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi announced that nine passenger trains of Pakistan Railways will be outsourced soon. The minister was informed that Pakistan Railways is moving forward with its plan of outsourcing of passenger trains with the objective of further improving services for passengers and the government move is expected to bring an annual income of Rs5billion to Pakistan Railways. *(Dawn, March 6th, 2026, Page 3)*

PIA: Govt likely to fetch Rs45bn thru sale of remaining 25pc shares

Government is likely to fetch around PKR 45 billion through sale of PIA's remaining 25percent shares, which would increase the total sales proceeds of PIA to approximately PKR55 billion. Secretary Privatisation Commission said that the financial close of the privatisation transaction is expected to be completed by the end of April. He said that the consortium headed by Arif Habib is looking for a new management and CEO, while after the approval of the cabinet committee Fauji Fertilizer Company will also be included in the consortium. *(Business Recorder, March 17th, 2026, Page 12)*

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

SBP governor confident about 3.75-4.75pc growth and 5-7pc inflation

Despite ongoing regional conflict and global economic uncertainty, Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Jameel Ahmad expressed confidence that the country would achieve economic growth of 3.75-4.75 percent and keep inflation within the 5-7 percent range during the current fiscal year. Briefing Senate Standing Committee on Finance, the SBP governor said Pakistan's external debt and liabilities have swelled to USD138 billion — including USD103 billion in public external debt. He also admitted that exports have declined by 7 percent. He acknowledged that central bank bought USD24 billion from the market during the last three years, which helped stabilise the exchange rate and strengthen external buffers. He emphasised that the reserves were not built through additional external borrowing. *(Business Recorder, March 5th, 2026, Page 1)*

Central govt debt up over Rs1.4trn in 7 months

Pakistan's central government debt increased over Rs1.4 trillion during the first seven months of the current fiscal year (FY26), largely driven by a rise in long-term domestic borrowing. According to data released by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), country's total debt stocks, including both domestic and external debt liabilities, reached Rs79.322 trillion by end of January 2026. This reflects an increase of Rs1.434tr, or 1.84 percent, compared with Rs77.888tr recorded in June 2025. The sharp rise in central government debt was mainly driven by increased domestic borrowing to finance fiscal deficit.

Although revenue collection has improved during the current fiscal year, it remains insufficient to fully meet government expenditures. On the domestic front, debt stocks increased by 2.7pc, or Rs1.506tr, during July-January of FY26. Domestic debt reached Rs55.978tr by the end of January 2026, compared with Rs54.472tr in June 2025, as the federal government accelerated fresh borrowing from local sources to meet its financing requirements. In contrast, external debt recorded a slight decline. The country's external debt stocks fell by Rs73 billion to Rs23.344 trillion by the end of January 2026, down from Rs23.417 trillion in June 2025. *(Business Recorder, March 6th, 2026, Page 1)*

Significant tariff escalation has adversely affected industrial competitiveness, agri productivity: AGP

The Auditor General of Pakistan (AGP) has observed that significant tariff escalation has adversely affected industrial competitiveness and agricultural productivity, leading to reduced consumption by productive sectors and under-utilisation of installed capacity. In its latest report titled "Reverse Impact of Post-2015 Generation Expansion on Industry and Commercial Sector," Audit (Power) stated that, as envisaged in the Strategic Plan for the Privatisation of Pakistan's Power Sector (1992), one of the core objectives of power sector reforms was to enhance capital formation while improving efficiency through competition, rationalising prices, and ensuring that electricity supply supports economic growth without imposing unsustainable financial burdens. *(Business Recorder, March 18th, 2026, Page 1)*

Monetary expansion surges 4.5pc

Monetary expansion rose to 4.5 per cent during the first eight and a half months of the fiscal year, compared to just 0.5pc last year, reflecting doubling of government borrowing and excess liquidity in the banking system. Monetary expansion refers to an increase in overall money supply within the economy, driven primarily by government's heavy borrowing from banks and a cut in the Cash Reserve Requirement (CRR) by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). *(Dawn, March 27th, 2026, Page 9)*

Pakistan's public debt surges to Rs80.52tr

Government admitted before parliament that country's public debt increased, debt-to-GDP ratio worsened, and per capita debt rose in 2024-25 despite fiscal consolidation and improved macroeconomic conditions. As a consequence, government also testified before National Assembly that it had been in perpetual breach of Fiscal Responsibility and Debt Limitation Act (FRDLA) for many years, and violation continued into FY25.

"From June 2024 to June 2025, the total public debt increased from Rs71.25 trillion to Rs80.52tr mainly due to an increase in interest payments. Accordingly, the debt per capita also increased from Rs294,098 in FY24 to Rs333,041 in FY25," the Ministry of Finance (MoF) reported in its two simultaneous fiscal policy and debt policy statements laid before National Assembly. It said FRDLA 2005 required a debt-to-GDP ratio of "60pc in 2017-18 with a reduction of 0.5pc every year till 2022-23 and 0.75pc every year till 2032-33 to reduce ratio to 50pc and thereafter maintaining it at 50pc or less".

However, the ministry reported that total public debt increased both in percentage and absolute terms. It said the total public debt-to-GDP ratio increased to 71.7pc by the end of FY25 from 67.6pc in FY24. Likewise, the total debt of the government increased to 64.3pc of GDP in FY25 against 61.8pc in FY24. The government breached the law not only in these two years but earlier as well. The MoF said the government debt-to-GDP ratio should have been lower than 56.75pc and 56pc in FY24 and FY25, respectively. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 9)*

Circular debt set to touch Rs1.9trn mark

Pakistan's power sector circular debt is set to approach Rs1.9 trillion up from Rs1.689 trillion recorded during the first six months (July–December), 2025-26, sources in the Power Planning and Monitoring Company (PPMC) told. Circular debt stock stood at Rs1.889 trillion as of February 28, 2026. Of this, liabilities related to power projects established under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) reached an all-time high of Rs543 billion. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

Fiscal deficit contained at 6pc of GDP, NA told

The country's federal fiscal deficit was contained at 6 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) against a target of 6.8 percent, National Assembly was informed, with revenue collection remaining close to budget targets. Fiscal Policy Statement for January 2026 offered a comprehensive review of the country's macroeconomic indicators, including total expenditures, net revenue receipts, fiscal deficit, public debt, and debt per capita, comparing them with established benchmarks and national economic priorities. Public debt stood at 70.7percent of GDP, highlighting fiscal discipline and strengthening debt management frameworks. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

As of end-June 2025: External debt up 6pc to USD 91.8bn YoY

External debt increased by 6 percent year-on-year (YoY), reaching USD 91.8 billion as of end-June 2025, reflecting a rise of USD5 billion. However, during the first quarter of fiscal year 2026, it declined slightly by 0.4 percent (USD0.35 billion) to USD91.4 billion. A total domestic debt increased by Rs 7,312 billion, reaching Rs 54,472 billion as of June 2025, showing an increase of 16 percent on a YoY basis, which was still lower than 22 percent during the same period of last fiscal year (2024). The domestic debt declined by 2 percent during the first quarter of the current fiscal year 2026 to stand at Rs 53,424 billion due to the government's proactive decisions to retire from the State Bank of Pakistan, amounting to Rs 1 trillion.

According to the Debt Policy Statement January-2026, which was tabled in the National Assembly, a major increase in the external debt came from multilateral development partners (including the IMF), which increased by 8.7 percent, almost USD 4 billion. Borrowing from commercial banks by USD 1.6 billion, largely due to a USD 1 billion loan secured against an ADB Policy-Based guarantee. The Debt Policy Statement further described that more than half of Pakistan's external debt (56 percent as of September 25) is from multilateral development financial institutions, including the IMF. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

10.1 # Food

There are stocks of ghee, edible oil for two months: PVMA chief

Chairman of the Pakistan Vanaspati Manufacturers Association (PVMA), Sheikh Umer Rehan has assured that Pakistan currently holds sufficient stocks of ghee and edible oil to meet domestic demand for at least the next two months, dismissing concerns about any potential shortage in the country. *(Business Recorder, March 10th, 2026, Page 2)*

Rana Tanveer speaks at SPDI seminar: 'Competitive, inclusive value chain for pulses critical for ensuring food security'

A competitive and inclusive value chain for pulses is critical for ensuring food security, and only a 30 percent improvement in the sector could significantly cut the country's pulses imports. Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Rana Tanveer Hussain stated this while speaking at a seminar, "Developing Competitive and Inclusive Value Chains of Pulses in Pakistan", as the chief guest. The seminar was organised by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Pulses fall among the cheapest sources of protein and an important crop for sustainable agriculture, the minister said, adding that strengthening the sector would directly benefit farmers and ensure national food security. He said, "Pakistan currently produces around 0.7 to 0.8 million tons of pulses annually against a national requirement of about 1.6 million tons, which shows a major production gap that forces the country to import pulses." *(Business Recorder, March 13th, 2026, Page 2)*

Crackdown on sale of adulterated milk planned in Karachi

The city administration has decided to launch a crackdown on the sale of adulterated milk in collaboration with the Sindh Food Authority (SFA). Various officials presented their findings on milk quality complaints, revealing that samples from different districts were found to be adulterated. The meeting emphasised prioritising efforts to curb the sale of milk violating health standards. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 13)*

1,100 litre adulterated milk disposed of

Punjab Food Authority (PFA) disposed of 1,100 liter adulterated milk and imposed fines while checking milk trucks in the Bhakkar area. According to the sources, the PFA food safety team checked milk trucks and recovered 1,100 litres of adulterated milk which was disposed of. A milk truck was also imposed a heavy fine. The authority said that milk transport vehicles were being checked on a daily basis and strict action was being taken against those supplying substandard milk. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 8)*

Closure of Strait of Hormuz poses threat to global foods security: Bostan

ECAP Chairman Malik Muhammad Bostan highlighted that the suspension of traffic through the strategic maritime chokepoint has severely crippled the fertilizer supply chain. "The disruption of this route is not merely an energy crisis; it is a direct threat to global agriculture," Bostan stated. He noted that the Gulf region is a primary supplier of urea and other essential fertilizers to major economies, including China, the US, Australia, and Indonesia. With the planting season underway in Northern Hemisphere, a shortage of nutrients could lead to significantly lower yields for staple crops such as wheat, rice, corn, and soybeans. *(Business Recorder, March 20th, 2026, Page 7)*

10.2 # Food Scarcity

A common childbirth procedure threatens life in anaemic women, study shows

A multi-country study recently published in an international journal has linked episiotomy — an obstetric procedure routinely carried out in many developing countries, including Pakistan — with an increased risk for life-threatening bleeding in women with anaemia. Led by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and centres in Nigeria, Pakistan, Tanzania and Zambia, study — Episiotomy and postpartum haemorrhage (PPH) in women with moderate or severe anaemia: a cohort analysis of data from the WOMAN-2 Trial — is the first to explore the impacts of episiotomy on women with anaemia.

According to the study published in the Lancet Global Health, having an episiotomy –– a surgical cut that widens the vaginal opening during childbirth — doubles the risk of PPH (severe bleeding after childbirth) in women with moderate or severe anaemia. The research involved data from over 15,000 women who took part in the WOMAN-2 Trial from 2019-2023. Over a quarter had an episiotomy during childbirth. The World Health Organisation does not recommend the routine use of episiotomy in non-instrumental births, as its risks outweigh potential benefits. Researchers now suggest there is an increased risk of severe bleeding resulting from this procedure, as 40 per cent of the PPH cases in women who had an episiotomy in the trial were attributed to tearing — double that of the women who did not.

Data also revealed many first-time mothers participating in the trial received an episiotomy — with 81 per cent of women from Pakistan and 63 per cent of women from Nigeria receiving one. First-time mothers in Zambia and Tanzania had rates of 29 per cent and 15 per cent respectively. Mothers who had given birth before were less likely to have an episiotomy. Globally, the study says, episiotomy rates vary between countries. For example, rates in first-time mothers in 2022 in France and Sweden were 9 per cent and 10 per cent respectively, and in the UK it was 20 per cent in 2023.

Talking about maternal health challenges, she said over 80 percent pregnant women in Pakistan suffer from anaemia, though government figures put the prevalence of the blood disorder in pregnancy at 50 per cent. “Despite progress, we lose 27 mothers every day to largely preventable causes, including PPH (the chief cause) followed by hypertension and infections.” *(Dawn, March 15th, 2026, Page 13)*

10.3 # Inflation

Inflation hits 18-month peak at 7pc in February

Consumer inflation accelerated to seven percent in February from 5.8pc in January, largely driven by higher prices of perishable food items and energy, according to official figures released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. The continued rise in monthly inflation, measured through the Consumer Price Index (CPI), reinforces the State Bank of Pakistan’s caution that price pressures may temporarily move beyond its comfort zone as domestic demand strengthens. The finance ministry also reported that inflation will remain in the range of 6pc to 7pc in February, citing a surge in demand and a slowdown in supply lines.

The SBP kept its policy rate unchanged at 10.50pc in response to rising inflation, warning that inflation could remain above its 5pc to 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 0.3pc compared to the previous month. Inflation between July and February was recorded at 5.46pc in 2025-26, the lowest since 5.85pc over the corresponding months last year. This lower rate is also due to the high base effect from 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. The government has projected an inflation target of 7pc for the current fiscal year. Economists describe the current trend as disinflation — a slowdown in the pace of price increases, not a general decrease as in deflation — though the cost of living remains high for many households.

Food inflation in February increased by 4.4pc in urban areas and 6.8pc in rural areas. On a month-on-month basis, food inflation dropped 0.8pc in urban areas and 0.5pc in rural areas. Non-food inflation reached 8.3pc in urban areas, and 7.7pc in rural regions. This indicates that non-food inflation remains very high. In February, core inflation — excluding volatile food and energy components — stood at 7.1pc in urban areas and 8.3pc in rural areas. The central bank has kept the policy rate at 10.5 per cent unchanged, effective from December 16, 2025. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 9)*

Petrol, HSD prices hiked by Rs55 per litre

Federal government announced a massive increase in the price of petrol and high speed diesel (HSD) by Rs 55 per litre for one week with effect from March 7, 2026. Since March 1, 2026, the price of petrol has increased from USD78 per bbl to USD106.80 per bbl and HSD from USD88 per bbl to USD150 per bbl. After an increase, the price of petrol is now available at Rs. 321.17 per litre while HSD for Rs. 335.86 per litre. *(Business Recorder, March 7th, 2026, Page 1)*

Transporters hike fares by up to 20% across the board

Following a massive increase of Rs55 per litre in petroleum product prices, transport fares across the board have risen by up to 20%, as goods transporters, passenger buses, private taxi operators, Pakistan Railways, as well as airlines have increased their fares. *(Business Recorder, March 8th, 2026, Page 1)*

Development Outlook Report: Higher energy prices to increase inflation

The Ministry of Planning has warned the recent escalation in tensions in the Middle East and Persian Gulf could lead to higher energy prices, which may push up inflation and weaken export competitiveness due to rising production and freight costs. In its Monthly Development Outlook, the ministry stated growing tensions in the Middle East and Persian Gulf have increased volatility in global energy and financial markets, creating potential risks for Pakistan's external sector. Average inflation eased during July-February FY2026, although a temporary spike was observed in February 2026 due to electricity price adjustments. *(The News, March 8th, 2026, Page 12)*

Karachi citizens brace for price shock as milk rates set to cross Rs300

While the recent petrol price hike has sent shockwaves across the country, a unilateral rise in fares by transporters and an announcement by fresh milk sellers to increase prices in the city have added to concerns, with experts warning that the cost of daily essentials is likely to skyrocket in the coming days. The Dairy and Cattle Farmers Association (DCFA) has already demanded a significant hike in the price of milk and is pushing for an increase to Rs300 per litre due to rising petrol prices and production costs. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 13)*

Inflation to remain above 7pc till FY27: SBP

The evolving geopolitical situation and recent surge in international and domestic oil prices have uncertain the inflation outlook, with the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) expecting inflation to remain above 7 percent during the remaining months of FY26 and into FY27, citing risks from volatile food prices, potential adjustments in domestic energy tariffs, and uncertainties arising from ongoing geopolitical tensions. According to SBP's monetary policy statement issued after the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting, as expected, headline inflation rose to 7.0 percent y/y in February, largely due to phasing out of low base effect from food and energy prices, along with rationalisation of fixed charges on households' electricity bills. Meanwhile, core inflation increased to around 7.6 percent. *(Business Recorder, March 10th, 2026, Page 1)*

'Poor man's fuel' becomes the most expensive

The government has increased the price of kerosene oil by Rs40 per litre and approved Rs23 billion in price differential subsidy for payments to oil marketing companies (OMCs) to keep the prices of two other products — petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD) — unchanged for the week ending March 20. The subsidy will be paid to the oil companies because petrol and diesel prices were supposed to increase by Rs49 and Rs75 from March 14 on the back of an increase in the international market. With fresh price notification, Kerosene, commonly described as the poor man's fuel, has become the most expensive consumer product at Rs358 per litre and has seen the highest increase among all fuels since March 7. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 1)*

10.4 # Poverty

Three children die in hut fire

Three children, including two siblings, were burnt to death when their huts caught fire in a village near Qazi Ahmed. The bodies were shifted to Taluka Hospital Qazi Ahmed for medico-legal formalities. Later, corpses were handed over to families. The children belonged to the Mengwar community from Tharparkar. They were in Qazi Ahmed for harvesting of wheat crop from a field. *(Dawn, March 26th, 2026, Page 15)*

Slum areas facing water shortage, heaps of garbage: PDP

Slum areas of the megacity, Karachi, face acute shortage of water, heaps of uncollected garbage and overflowing gutters as the authorities concerned have turned their blind eye to these hapless localities, said PDP Chairman Altaf Shakoor. He said in the sprawling megacity of Karachi, home to over 20m people, a stark reality defines daily life: the city works for some—and fails millions. Nowhere is this failure more visible than in its vast slum settlements, where millions live without reliable water, sanitation, or basic municipal services. What should be routine civic provision has turned into a daily struggle for survival.

He said across all slums, Goths and katchi abadis, access to clean drinking water is not just irregular—it is uncertain and, for many, unaffordable. Residents receive piped water once every few days, if at all. In numerous localities, infrastructure exists only on paper, crippled by decades of neglect, leakages, and illegal connections. The result is a cruel paradox: in a coastal city, the poorest go thirsty. He said into this vacuum steps tanker mafia, operating openly in the absence of meaningful regulation. Water, a basic human necessity, is commoditized and sold at prices that strain already fragile household budgets. Families are forced to choose between essential needs—food, medicine, or water. For many, the idea of safe, affordable water has become a distant promise rather than a basic right. *(Business Recorder, March 30th, 2026, Page 3)*

11 # ENVIRONMENT

Karachi among most vulnerable cities, moot on climate change told

Escalating climate risks, extreme heat, urban flooding, coastal exposure, infrastructure stress and rising global decarbonisation pressures were seen as no longer being isolated environmental issues during the 'Urban Climate Forum: From Systematic Climate Risk to Readiness' organised by Karachi Centre for Climate Change and Sohail University. While discussing climate risk hotspots, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Aisha Humera Moriani, said that Karachi stands out as one of the most vulnerable mega cities due to its coastal location, dense population and weak governance structures. Heatwave is one of the most visible impacts of climate change. *(Dawn, March 27th, 2026, Page 13)*

11.1 # Atmosphere

'Rain clouds may carry Iran oil pollution to Pakistan'

The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) cautioned that pollution resulting from the recent US-Israeli attacks on Iran's oil sites could worsen air quality in the western parts of the country, while rain, wind and thunderstorms are expected in the upper parts from late night on March 9 to March 12. Iran, Pakistan's western neighbour, has been embroiled in a war with United States and Israel since the latter's February 28 strikes. The PMD has also warned of the risk of Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) in Gilgit-Baltistan and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, as well as possible hailstorms in the twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 1)*

Pollen levels in Rawalpindi, Islamabad climb to dangerous levels

Pollen levels in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad have climbed to the dangerous levels with Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital warning that the seasonal surge is driving a rise in painful eye allergies across region. Pakistan Meteorological Department has recorded 14,695 pollen particles per cubic metre of air in Islamabad's H-8 sector. Counts in G-6 and E-8 stood at 5,510 and 5,391, respectively. Paper mulberry, the dominant allergen, accounted for 14,558 particles and was classified as very high. The pollen season typically runs from mid-March through April. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 4)*

11.2 # Biodiversity

'Hazardous level of microplastics' found in fish specimens

A research conducted at the Cholistan University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (CUVAS), Bahawalpur, finds the presence of microplastics in two specimens of fish collected from Panjnad and Taunsa barrages and warned that these hazardous particles are being consumed by those eating the river fish in south Punjab. According to the researcher, Dr Qazi Adnan Ahmed, Assistant Professor at the Zoology Department, the microplastics are first consumed by Rohu and Malli fish and adds that, "Now, we too eat microplastics when we consume these fish types."

Microplastics are synthetic polymer particles smaller that 5mm, which contaminate ecosystem, food and water worldwide. Dr Qazi told that for the past few years, he and his student Syed Muhammad Moeen have been conducting research on microplastics pollution in south Punjab's rivers. According to him, the worst case was of Malli fish collected from Taunsa Barrage. He says that an average 13.67 microplastics particles in the fish. He says these particles come from broken bottles, bags and other plastic waste dumped improperly. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 2)*

Pakistan submits 7NR on biodiversity to UN body

Pakistan has submitted its Seventh National Report (7NR) on biodiversity conservation to the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, a United Nations-led global body. Report highlights country's progress in ecosystem protection, forest conservation, and the implementation of international biodiversity commitments. It also outlines efforts to align national policies with the Kunming–Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets 23 global targets to halt and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030.

The report will contribute to the global assessment of collective progress under the framework, scheduled during the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP). The review will take place at COP17 of the Convention on Biological Diversity, from

October 19 to 30 in Yerevan, Armenia. Around 125 countries, nearly two-thirds of the 196 parties to the convention, have submitted their seventh national reports ahead of the global stocktaking process on conservation and protection of biodiversity globally. *(Business Recorder, March 16th, 2026, Page 3)*

11.3 # Pollution

Pakistan ranked most polluted country in 2025, data shows

Pakistan was ranked the world's smoggiest country in 2025, with concentrations of hazardous small particles known as PM2.5 up to 13 times higher than the recommended World Health Organisation (WHO) level, research showed. Swiss air quality monitoring firm IQAir said in its annual report that 13 countries and territories kept average PM2.5 levels at the WHO standard of less than 5 microgrammes per cubic metre last year, up from seven in 2024. According to the findings of the report, in total, 130 out of 143 monitored countries and territories failed to meet the WHO guideline. Bangladesh and Tajikistan were second and third on the most polluted list.

Last March, the United States shut down a global monitoring programme that compiled pollution data collected from its embassy and consulate buildings, citing budget constraints. "The loss of the data in March made it appear there was a significant drop in PM2.5 levels [in Chad], but the fact of the matter is that we don't know," said Christi Chester Schroeder, lead author of the IQAir report. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 1)*

11.4 # Health

World Obesity Day 2026: Minister warns of severe health challenges posed by rapidly growing obesity cases

State Minister for National Health Services and Regulations Dr Mukhtar Ahmad Malik warned of the severe health challenges posed by rapidly growing obesity cases in the country, saying that the economic burden will more than double by 2030 if urgent and sustained interventions are not implemented. Obesity is a growing challenge for public health sector in Pakistan. According to WHO, prevalence of obesity among adults in Pakistan is 23 percent as of 2022, a dramatic 16.4 percent rise in the preceding 10 years.

The increasing prevalence of obesity has also had a significant economic impact on the country. In 2019, healthcare costs related to obesity totalled USD3.41 billion, equivalent to 1.1 percent of the country's GDP. The obesity cost is threatening to double to USD7.6 billion (Rs2.13 trillion) by 2030 if urgent measures are not taken. Minister noted that nearly 38 million Pakistanis, which accounts for one in three individuals, are living with obesity. He observed that women and urban populations are disproportionately affected, while childhood obesity is steadily increasing. Dr Malik emphasized that obesity is a major modifiable risk factor for non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and certain cancers, placing growing pressure on the country's health system. *(Business Recorder, March 5th, 2026, Page 15)*

First polio case of 2026 reported from Sindh

The country has reported its first case of polio for 2026, with the victim belonging to Sindh. The official said that while the country reported 31 cases in 2025, the number was less than 50 per cent compared to 2024, when 74 cases were recorded. "However, in 2023, only six cases were reported. *(Dawn, March 6th, 2026, Page 1)*

Three children die of suspected measles in Thatta village

Two young sisters and a boy died and a number of other children are suffering from suspected measles in Thatta taluka. Two of the young patients are reported to have been in a critical condition. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 15)*

Childhood obesity rising 10.6pc annually in Pakistan

Childhood obesity in Pakistan is increasing at an alarming rate. Prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents has been rising by an estimated 10.6 percent annually since 2010, placing the country among those experiencing fastest growth in childhood obesity worldwide, according to World Obesity Atlas 2026. The report states Pakistan is among the countries where obesity and excess body weight among children aged 5 to 19 years are rising most rapidly. This trend raises serious concerns about country's future burden of diabetes, heart disease, and other non-communicable diseases. Along with rapid rise in obesity, prevalence of high body mass index (BMI) among children in Pakistan is also increasing sharply, growing at an estimated 7.1pc annually, making the country one of fastest rising globally in terms of unhealthy weight gain among young populations. *(The News, March 8th, 2026, Page 8)*

Health dept issues alert as KP records 26 mpox cases

Health department has advised all public and private hospitals to remain vigilant for mpox to ensure timely isolation and testing of suspected patients after detection of more than two dozen cases in KPK during the last one year. Of the total 26 patients, 18 were men and six were women, said health officials. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 8)*

Several drugs, vaccines disappear from market due to price fixation deadlock

Several essential medicines including advanced immunotherapy drugs used in cancer treatment, vaccines and other life-saving therapies are currently not available in Pakistan due to the federal government's delay in fixing and notifying their prices despite recommendations by the DRAP. They said the Drug Pricing Committee (DPC) of DRAP had already finalised prices for a number of important medicines. However, the federal cabinet has not yet issued the statutory regulatory orders required to formally notify the prices. *(Business Recorder, March 12th, 2026, Page 4)*

Up to 50,000 new renal disease cases may emerge this year, PMA warns

Pakistan faces an escalating crisis of kidney failure, largely driven by consumption of contaminated water. The country is projected to see nearly 25,000 to 50,000 new end-stage renal disease patients this year alone who will require life-saving dialysis or transplantation. These concerns were raised by Pakistan Medical Association (PMA) in a message released in connection with the World Kidney Day. This year's theme is 'Kidney health for all — caring for people, protecting the planet'.

"Contaminated water is a primary driver of renal failure in Pakistan. Reports suggest that up to 80 per cent of the population lacks access to safe drinking water," said Dr Abdul Ghafoor Shoro representing PMA, stressing that the situation is more worrisome in rural areas, especially in Sindh and Balochistan. According to him, studies conducted in different parts of the country have shown that water is contaminated with heavy metals — such as high contents of arsenic and lead — hard minerals as well as pathogens. *(Dawn, March 13th, 2026, Page 13)*

Pakistan Medical Association concerned over acute shortage of TB, cancer medicines

The PMA has once again raised alarm over severe shortage of essential paediatric tuberculosis as well as cancer medications, warning that humanitarian crisis is getting worse with each passing day, while calling for immediate intervention. The situation is still critical. In case of tuberculosis, there is a serious risk for children developing drug-resistant disease and spreading it to other family members. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 14)*

National Institute of Health says dengue fever burden increasing every year, asks health depts to take precautionary measures

As the dengue season is going to start soon, the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) at the National Institute of Health (NIH) has issued an advisory for the prevention and control of the dengue fever. It said dengue cases had been increasing every year and suggested health departments to take precautionary measures. According to surveillance data reported to the NIH, dengue fever burden increases every year with 21,016 cases recorded in 2023, 24,182 cases in 2024 and 33,394 laboratory-confirmed cases in 2025 nationwide. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 4)*

Rs1.3bn mismanagement alleged in purchase of drugs in KP

Health department has warned of disciplinary action medical superintendents of 24 hospitals for violation of financial rules in purchase of medicines. Sources said that Rs1.355 billion was spent in violation of financial discipline by the superintendents of those hospitals for purchase of drugs. *(Dawn, March 24th, 2026, Page 8)*

Over 140 Pakistanis die every day from TB, says WHO

WHO has revealed that tuberculosis kills 140 people per day in Pakistan, it informed during World Tuberculosis Day. The government of Pakistan and WHO have reminded public that tuberculosis is curable and that early detection and treatment are vital to save lives, encouraging people to visit more than 2,000 facilities (both public and private) that offer free diagnosis and treatment across the country. The data shared by WHO shows that the disease affects over 669,000 people and causes 51,000 deaths annually in Pakistan. The country bears 73pc of tuberculosis burden in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and is fifth most affected in world. In Pakistan, every day, over 1,800 new cases arise and 140 people die from tuberculosis. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 4)*

Pharma sector: Leading Russian insulin maker to invest USD80m

Russian pharmaceutical company M/s Genetics Pharmaceuticals/M/s Zavod Medsintez LLC, producing insulin, will invest approximately USD80 million in Pakistan's pharma sector over the next six years. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 258)*

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

'False solution' hampering Pakistan's climate goals

Pakistan's climate action plan submitted to United Nations before COP30 in Brazil lists controversial 'Carbon Capture Utilisation and Storage' (CCUS) technology as one of the approaches to address climate change and decarbonise in line with the 2015 Paris Agreement. The climate goals, or the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), are submitted to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change by all countries, outlining their ambition to decarbonise economies and transition away from fossil fuels. In their third iteration, Pakistan pledged to 'phase down' coal by reducing emissions by 50 per cent, including 33pc funded by international finance, by 2035. For this task, Pakistan "requires $565.7 billion", the document read.

These climate goals were prepared through a "participatory, open and transparent approach", according to government, but they have come under scrutiny for "carbon-intensive steps" and the absence of concrete measures to address phaseout of fossil fuels – a major driver of climate change. Islamabad-based think tank Policy Research Institute for Equitable Development (Pried), in an analysis, said "open and transparent" approach did not reflect in the final NDC document. "As far as acceptance by civil society and academia is concerned, that remains limited to a few non-governmental organisations closely aligned with the government and some academics working in public sector educational institutions," it said. *(Dawn, March 4th, 2026, Page 1)*

Highest temperature of season recorded

The metropolis (Karachi) recorded its highest temperature of the season as the mercury climbed to 38.3 degrees Celsius under dry and hazy conditions, with humidity dropping to just 16 percent and warm winds sweeping through the city during the day. The PMD has forecast that hot and dry weather will continue to prevail over most parts of Sindh province over the next two days. *(Business Recorder, March 13th, 2026, Page 2)*

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

13.1 # Drought

Action plan unveiled to combat drought

Pakistan has developed a national drought action plan in an attempt to transition from a reactive to a proactive risk-based approach for drought management, as climate change is making droughts frequent and severe, leading to water stress. Federal Secretary for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Aisha Humera Moriani, while speaking at a national consultative workshop on the National Drought Action Plan

(NDAP), said drought was “no longer a distant or occasional risk” but an increasingly persistent threat driven by rising temperatures, water stress, and climate variability.

“Pakistan is already among countries facing high water risk and drought directly affects agriculture, water resources, food security, ecosystems and livelihoods,” she said, adding that past responses had largely focused on post-impact relief rather than preparedness. The climate change ministry secretary informed participants that ministry, with support from UNCCD and following extensive consultations, had developed a National Drought Action Plan. The plan was structured around key pillars, including planning and resource mobilisation, governance and policy, early warning systems, local mitigation actions and capacity building. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 1)*

13.2 # Rainfall

Lightning kills four in Shangla, Mansehra amid downpour, thunderstorm

Four people were killed due to lightning in KPK as heavy rains coupled with thunderstorms wreaked havoc in Shangla, Mansehra and Swat districts. *(Dawn, March 12th, 2026, Page 8)*

Two killed as rain continues to lash parts of KP

Two people were killed in a rain-related mishap in Dera Ismail Khan district as the rain continued to lash large parts of the province for the third consecutive day. *(Dawn, March 19th, 2026, Page 8)*

Death toll rises to 20 as stormy rains, violent gales leave trail of destruction

Karachi began limping back to normalcy amid intermittent drizzle and light rain, following a night of violent weather that left the city shaken when strong winds and heavy downpours wreaked havoc across city claiming as many as 20 lives, including two women. Over 70 people were also injured, with many of the victims struck by falling concrete debris. Many parts of the city continued to receive light rain. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 13)*

Rain and thunderstorm damage fisherfolk homes along coastal belt

The severe windstorm accompanied by heavy rain has caused widespread destruction across the coastal belt of Karachi. The situation remained particularly alarming from Mubarak Village to Lath Basti where several houses and huts lost their roofs as many walls also collapsed. Several informal settlements were left completely devastated. Strong winds led to the collapse of huts and the blowing away of rooftops of many homes. As a result of this disaster, several fisherfolk have been injured. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 15)*

Four killed as heavy rains batter Balochistan

At least four people were killed in rain- and thunderstorm-related incidents as heavy showers continued to lash 27 districts of Balochistan — including the provincial capital Quetta and Gwadar — over the past five days, causing widespread damage to mud houses and roads, particularly in the northern parts of the province. Fatalities have also been reported. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 3)*

Six killed, over 30 injured as rain wreaks havoc in Bannu

Six people were killed and 30 others received injuries as heavy downpour caused widespread devastation in Bannu district. Heavy rain in parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa turned the weather cold, causing landslides, road blockades and electricity disruption in some districts of the province. Several of the injured are reported to be in critical condition. *(Dawn, March 30th, 2026, Page 9)*

Downpour claims 11 lives across KP

As torrential rainfall continues to wreak havoc in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the second consecutive day, 11 more people lost their lives, including five in Abbottabad, and 18 sustained injuries due to the downpour, which flooded neighbourhoods and blocked roads across the province. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

4-magnitude earthquake jolts parts of Karachi

A 4-magnitude earthquake jolted several areas of the city. The data released by the National Seismic Monitoring Centre, Pakistan Meteorological Department, showed that the earthquake occurred at a depth of 10 kilometres, with its epicenter about 100kms south of Karachi, off the coast of Pakistan. *(Dawn, March 15th, 2026, Page 13)*

Landslide blocks road in Chitral

A massive landslide in the Sheikhande area of Rumbur Valley here has blocked the local main artery. A sudden shifting of the earth sent heavy boulders and debris crashing onto the road, halting vehicular traffic. *(Dawn, March 17th, 2026, Page 8)*

15 # RESISTANCE

Protesters torch Balakot police station after TikToker's killing

Charged protesters set ablaze the Balakot police station and a patrolling vehicle after a local TikToker was allegedly killed by bullets fired by a constable. The incident occurred in Boli area. Locals rushed him to a nearby health facility, where he succumbed to his injuries, triggering violent protests. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 8)*

Villagers protest sand lifting along Chenab

Scores of residents, including women and children, from three villages along Chenab River bank, staged a protest demonstration against the lifting of sand at Chak Gill village and termed it dangerous for their agricultural land and farming profession. The protesters have called upon Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz and district administration to take notice of situation as continuation of sand lifting may cause erosion of at least 2,500 acres of agricultural land of three villages. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 2)*

Women block road against closure of BISP centre in Landi Kotal

Continued closure of a Benazir Income Support Programme centre in Landi Kotal forced scores of local women to block the main Peshawar - Torkham Highway. The protesting women alleged that the centre was shut down without any specific reason. They said that they were in dire need of monetary support as they were faced with financial crises in the month of Ramazan. They alleged that they were also denied full payment of the stipend as the network operators unlawfully deducted Rs500 to Rs1,000 from their amount. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 8)*

Dismantling of public park in Larkana stopped after lawyers' day-long protest

The legal fraternity of this district erupted in protest as soon as they saw the park is being dismantled. Labourers working under city's administration emerged to start ruthlessly dismantling a portion of the boundary wall and all the structures inside the park, located alongside the railway line within the jurisdiction of the Civil Lines police station. Civil society activists also joined the lawyers protest, which was followed by a sit-in at the place. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 15)*

Protesting Lakki Marwat policemen reopen roads

Police Aman Committee, a body of serving policemen, reopened the roads to traffic after a three-day protest against a bomb blast, which targeted a police van in the Bittani subdivision. Seven policemen had lost their lives in the roadside blast, and one was seriously injured. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 9)*

Protests held over senior doctor's harassment leading to 'suicide'

The purported 'suicide note' left by chief medical officer of the Mithi Civil Hospital Dr Abdul Karim Sheikh has caused unrest among his community members and medical professionals who held demonstrations in several cities and towns. The purported suicide note, sent by him to the Sindh police chief and several media personnel, states that he was taking this extreme steps under immense mental pressure caused by his certain colleagues at the hospital and some employees. The note contained names of several doctors and employees. *(Dawn, March 17th, 2026, Page 15)*

Several booked for 'harassing Bheels'

Several suspects, including some political activists, were booked after three days of protest by minority Bheel community members, who claimed that they were physically harmed and harassed by them. The aggrieved Bheels had held a sit-in outside the Kotri police station to mount pressure on police for the registration of their FIR. They claimed that they were physically harmed by the suspects while passing through their colony. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 15)*

PDP protests against unannounced loadshedding in North Karachi

Pasban Democratic Party Karachi President Abdul Hakim Quaid led a vigorous protest demonstration against long and unannounced load shedding of electricity in North Karachi. *(Business Recorder, March 25th, 2026, Page 3)*

Women protest sentencing of Kashmiri activists in Muzaffarabad

A large number of women staged a protest demonstration against the 'wrongful' sentencing of three Kashmiri women activists imprisoned in India, urging the United Nations and international human rights organisations to press New Delhi for the immediate release of Kashmiri political detainees. *(Dawn, March 26th, 2026, Page 4)*

JI women hold protest against Asiya Andrabi's sentence

Women Wing of Jamaat-i-Islami Pakistan (JIP) staged a protest demonstration against the "illegal and unjust sentencing" of Kashmiri Hurriyat leader Asiya Andrabi and her associates by an Indian court. A large number of women participated in protest held outside National Press Club, where protesters urged international organisations to take notice of Indian court's verdict and press for justice. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 4)*

Residents protest dumping of debris in Gujar khan centuries-old pond

A contractor engaged in the construction of the Daultala–Sukho–Gujar Khan Road has been accused of dumping large quantities of concrete debris into a centuries-old water pond in Mohra Jaswal, near Daultala. This environmentally harmful and unlawful dumping has not only reduced the pond's water storage capacity but also obstructed the natural flow of rainwater into it. Cattle coming to drink water often become trapped in the hazardous concrete debris. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 4)*

Residents block main artery after leopard kills livestock

Residents of a suburban locality blocked the Jhelum Valley Road for about an hour to protest killing of their livestock in a leopard attack, before dispersing after assurances from wildlife department and local administration. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 4)*

OTCA protests against pipeline quota hike

Oil Tanker Contractors Association Karachi has lodged a strong protest with the federal government against what it describes as a "unilateral and arbitrary" increase in pipeline quota for motor gasoline, warning that it will suspend transport operations across the sector if its demands are not met. *(Business Recorder, March 30th, 2026, Page 3)*

15.1 # Anti – Imperialist Resistance

19 lose their lives as anti-US protests erupt nationwide

At least 19 people were killed and more than a hundred injured across the country as violent protests erupted following the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in coordinated US-Israeli air strikes on Tehran. The worst violence was witnessed in Karachi, where ten people died during clashes outside the US consulate, while two protesters were killed in Islamabad, and at least seven more lost their lives in Gilgit. Authorities imposed emergency security measures in several cities, including Section 144 in Punjab, Sindh and Islamabad, and a curfew in parts of Gilgit-Baltistan, as unrest spread nationwide. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 1)*

Lahore Police foil bid to storm US Consulate during protest

Hundreds of activists of Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeen (MWM) assembled outside the US Consulate in Lahore and tried to barge into the building catching the police off guards at around 11am. However, a few policemen on routine duty around the Consulate managed to push back the activists protesting the US-Israel attack on Iran. Meanwhile, the Punjab government imposed Section 144 across the province for seven days banning assembly, gathering, procession/ sit-in of four or more persons and display of arms. The order shall remain in force for a period of seven days, unless modified or withdrawn earlier. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 2)*

Protest erupts in Islamabad after Khamenei's assassination

Sudden developments were witnessed in the capital city after the news of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's assassination spread like wildfire. Two persons were reported killed and dozens more injured in clashes with law enforcement personnel. On the other hand, the district administration warned that Section 144 had been imposed in the city. "Under Section 144, all kinds of public gatherings and assemblies are unlawful. Any form of protest, demonstration, or public assembly will be considered a violation of the imposed restrictions.

A large number of protesters also staged a rally in Jand town of Attock. Citizens from different schools of thought, along with political and social figures and a significant number of youth, participated in the demonstration. The rally commenced from Baraf Khana stop and culminated at Khomeini Chowk, where participants gathered to express their concerns. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 4)*

MWM demo against US-Israel attack on Iran

The Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) strongly condemned the assassination of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei and other leaders by the United States and Israel in a joint attack on Iran, terming the air strikes a violation of international law. Demonstration and press conference held at an imambargah on Alamdar Road, Quetta. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 5)*

Police tear gas protesters rallying against US, Israeli aggression in Peshawar

Several protesters fell unconscious due to heavy tear gas shelling by police to stop them from moving towards the consulate of United States in Peshawar enraged agitators took to streets following US-Israel attack on Iran and the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The protesters, including women and children, gathered outside Peshawar Press Club and started marching towards the US consulate in the provincial capital. They were holding banners and placards inscribed with slogans against United States and Israel. They alleged that the United States and Israel were the founders of terrorism worldwide. Rallies were also held in Dera Ismail Khan, Tank and Paharpur to express solidarity with Iranian people. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 9)*

Fury and mourning grip Karachi

Spent casings of tear gas shells littered the road outside the US consulate in Karachi, which was sprinkled with charred remains of several motorcycles. The smell of gunpowder was in the air, regularly punctuated by the deep thumps of tear gas shells being fired. Hundreds of law enforcement personnel, including paramilitary forces, riot police and special units, were in area — forming security cordons, keeping protesters at bay, and even those taking refuge from the afternoon sun.

The protesters, mostly young men, were scattered, their numbers waxing and waning, but not more than a thousand. A couple of hundred angry protesters were crowded at the end of the Mai Kolachi Road, which is where the bow of the massive US consulate compound is located. Quite a few were armed with rudimentary weapons: bamboo sticks and tree branches. One even had a stone tied to a piece of cloth — an improvised bludgeon. A large number carried portraits of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, assassinated the night before in a joint US-Israeli strike. Most of them had pieces of cloth tied around their face; to conceal their identity and minimise the impacts of tear gas. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 13)*

Widespread protests held across Sindh over Khamenei's assassination

The ongoing Israeli invasion of Iran leading to the assassination of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and dozens of his relatives, close associates and an unspecified number of other people triggered widespread demonstrations and rallies across Sindh. A shutterdown was also observed in many cities and towns. A large number of people took to the streets in different cities and towns of Hyderabad, Tando Allahyar and Matiari districts to condemn the invasion and assassinations.

Hyderabad

In Hyderabad city, the protests were organised by the Shia Ulema Council which were joined by various other organisations.

Larkana

Various Shia organisations, including Majlis Wahdatul Muslimeen, Shia Ulema Council, Al-Muntazar Welfare Trust, Asgharia Students Organisation, Imamia Students Organisation and Jafaria Students Organisation staged a protest sit-in at Jinnah Bagh Chowk against the Iran invasion and Ayatollah Khamenei's assassination.

Sukkur

Protests were held against US and Israel in almost all cities and towns of Sukkur, Jacobabad, Khairpur, Ghotki and other districts amid a day of mourning.

Jacobabad

In Jacobabad city, a shutterdown strike was observed while leaders of various Shia organisations held a protest rally at DC Chowk, where the participants also staged a sit-in. Rallies were also held in other cities and towns of Jacobabad district on the call of the Shia Ulema Council, Jaffaria Alliance and other Shia organisations.

To express solidarity with Iran in this moment of grief, the Hindu Panchayat of Khanpur Mahar announced that the community would celebrate the upcoming religious festival of Holi with simplicity.

Thatta

Life across Thatta and Sujawal districts came to a standstill as people in large numbers took to the streets to condemn the Iran invasion and assassination Ayatollah Khamenei. The protests caused prolonged traffic gridlock along the National Highway.

Umerkot

Followers of various religious organisations and activists of different political parties led a sit-in at Allah Wala Chowk in Umerkot city to condemn attack on Iran and assassination of Ayatullah Khamenei along with his many associates. A large number of locals participated in the protest.

Similar rallies and sit-ins were held in Nawabshah, Badin, Naushahro Feroze, Sanghar, Dadu, Mirpurkhas and other districts. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 15)*

Two protesters 'killed', 31 injured in Islamabad

Two protesters were killed and 31 others injured in clashes with police during an anti-US demonstration. The clashes erupted with law enforcement personnel near the Diplomatic Enclave, where people had gathered to protest the attacks on Iran. *(Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2026, Page 1)*

At least 7 dead at Iran protest in Gilgit

At least seven people were killed at pro-Iran protests in Gilgit, an official told *AFP*. "At least seven people were killed in today's clashes in Gilgit," Zaheer Shah, a rescue official told AFP in a phone call, adding many more were injured. *(Business Recorder, March 2nd, 2026, Page 1)*

Funerals held for protesters killed in Skardu, Gilgit

Funeral prayers for 13 people who were killed during protests after the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, were held in Skardu and Gilgit as authorities imposed a three-day curfew in both cities to manage the prevailing law and order situation. A total of 13 people, including one security official, were killed during clashes. Six people lost their lives in Skardu, while seven were killed in Gilgit. More than 100 people were reported injured. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 3)*

Karachi inches towards normalcy as roadblocks and protests continue

An uneasy calm, blended with grief and uncertainty, prevailed in the city amid a call for a "day of mourning" by Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) over the assassination of

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, an unannounced closure of markets by traders, and a late night decision by major public and private universities to keep their institutions closed for academic activities. Protest demonstrations and sit-ins were also organised by MWM and several other groups across the city after sunset. Protest demonstrations and sit-ins were organised by MWM and several other groups across the city after sunset. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 13)*

Protests against US-Israeli aggression continue in many Sindh cities, towns

A shutterdown strike was observed in Sanghar city while more rallies were taken out in other cities and towns of Sindh to condemn assassination of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Syed Ali Khamenei and many of his close associates in US-Israeli air raids. The strike call was supported by all trade unions of the district. In various cities and towns of Sanghar, Shaheed Benazirabad and Naushahro Feroze districts, protest rallies were taken out to condemn US-Isreali aggression that left several hundred people dead and many more wounded in Tehran air strikes. *(Dawn, March 3rd, 2026, Page 15)*

Entry into Islamabad's Red Zone banned amid religious groups' protest

Religious-political parties held protest demonstrations against US-Israeli aggression against Iran after the Friday prayers amid strict security measures by the government. The nationwide protests have been announced by Jamaat-i-Islami and other mainly Shia political parties. The rally in the federal capital was organised by a new body, Ittehad-i-Ummat Forum, which includes the Shia Ulema Council, Majlis Wahdat Muslimeen and Tehreek-i-Bedari. *(Dawn, March 7th, 2026, Page 4)*

JI stages protest in Rawalpindi

Jamaat-i-Islami (JI) staged a protest rally on Murree Road against the United States and Israeli aggression on Iran and the martyrdom of the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The rally was brought on Murree Road after Friday prayers led by District emir Syed Arif Shirazi and Shia Ulema Council leader Nasir Khan, while it was attended by a large number of people. *(Dawn, March 7th, 2026, Page 4)*

Rally in Quetta against strikes on Iran

The Majlis Wahdat-i-Muslimeen (MWM) brought a protest rally from Imambargah Kalan against the assassination of Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, as well as attacks on the neighbouring country by the United States and Israel. The protesters carried banners and placards denouncing the killing of the Iranian supreme leader and civilians, and condemning US and Israeli aggression. *(Dawn, March 7th, 2026, Page 5)*

Protesters hold marches across Sindh to condemn Khamenei's assassination

A large number of people, including women, took to streets to protest against the assassination of Iran's supreme leader Ali Khamenei and the killing of 11 protesters in Karachi during a protest near the US consulate. The main event in the city was a women-only rally organised by the Dukhtaran-i-Rahbar-i-Moazzam. Carrying banners, placards and Iranian flags, the women and children chanted slogans from Mehfil Shah-i-Khurasan to Imambargah Ali Raza off M.A. Jinnah Road.

JI holds demos across city

The city chapter of the Jamaat-i-Islami also staged protest demonstrations across the city after Friday prayers. The party said that it organised protests at 100 different spots in the city where the demonstrators demanded that the government and opposition parties openly condemn the US and Israel and announce their support for Iran. It said that the leaders at demonstrations lauded Iran's courage and steadfastness in the face of aggression and terrorism by the US and Israel. They said the people of Karachi stand with their brothers in Gaza and Iran and will not leave them alone in this difficult time.

Rallies against the US-Israel blitz on Iran and assassination of its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei continued in different other areas of Sindh including Larkana, Nawabshah, Sukkur, Jacobabad, Kandhkot, Shikarpur and Ghotki districts. *(Dawn, March 7th, 2026, Page 13)*

MWM stages rally against martyrdom of Khamenei

Majlis Wahdat-e-Muslimeen (MWM) staged a protest, strongly condemning the martyrdom of the Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the aggression by Israel and the United States against Iran. A large number of protesters gathered outside the Imambargah Isna Ashri. Demonstrators, including women and children, raised slogans against the United States and Israel. *(Business Recorder, March 7th, 2026, Page 2)*

Al-Quds Day observed to express solidarity with Palestine, Iran

Al-Quds Day was observed in the twin cities and Taxila with rallies and processions held in solidarity with the people of Palestine and Iran. The main procession of Rawalpindi and Islamabad was taken out from Markazi Imambarghah G-6/2 towards D-Chowk. To avert any movement of protesters towards the Red Zone or the offices of sensitive departments, extraordinary preventive measures were taken by administration.

Rallies held across Gilgit-Baltistan

Al-Quds Day rallies were held across Gilgit-Baltistan to condemn Israel's atrocities against Palestinians and express solidarity with the people of Iran. Rallies were held in Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza, Nagar, Shigar, Kharmang, Astore and Ghanche, where thousands of people from all walks of life and various sects participated. Participants in the rallies chanted slogans against the United States and Israel and urged the United Nations to stop Israeli atrocities. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 4)*

US, Israeli attacks on Iran galvanise Al Quds Day protests

Rallies were held across Karachi and other parts of Sindh to observe Al Quds Day to express solidarity with the people of Palestine. A large number of people, including women and children thronged M. A. Jinnah Road to mark the day amid tight security.

Mainly organised by Imamia Students Organisation (ISO), a large number of participants marched from Numaish intersection to Tibet Centre where leaders from parties addressed the people. The people, who attended the events across the city, also demanded strong reaction from the Muslim world for immediate help to the people in Gaza and rejected the "so-called normalisation of terms with Israel" from some Islamic countries and warned the rulers of those states that their move could lead to devastating consequences. The demonstrations drew larger crowds and heightened emotions amid the US and Israeli aggression against Iran and the assassination of Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei in recent strikes. *(Dawn, March 14th, 2026, Page 13)*

Thousands attend 'Al-Quds rally' in Karachi

Thousands marched through Karachi in a major Al-Quds Day rally, expressing solidarity with the Palestinian people and registering fierce protest against the US-Israel war on Iran, as the megacity observed a provincial public holiday and came to a near-complete standstill under airtight security arrangements. *(Business Recorder, March 14th, 2026, Page 5)*

AT rally against US-Israeli aggression

Activists of the Awami Tehrik (AT) staged a protest demonstration outside the local press club against Israeli and US aggression on Iran and rising inflation in the country. Party leaders said that by attacking Iran, Israel and the US destroyed global peace and economy. Describing the rulers of Israel and the US as war criminals who massacred innocent children, they said the two countries violated international laws. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 15)*

15.2 # Aurat March

Aurat March activists detained ahead of Women's Day demonstration

Dozens of women's rights activists, including members of the Aurat March, students and journalists, were detained by police, ahead of a planned rally on occasion of International Women's Day. Police sources told that activists were taken into custody near Super Market in Sector F-6. They had planned to reach National Press Club, but a large contingent of police was already present there, which rounded up the marchers and took them to Women Police Station. According to police, a total of 44 participants were arrested, including 25 men and 19 women. *(Dawn, March 9th, 2026, Page 1)*

Women's Day observed across Sindh with call to end conflicts in Iran, Palestine

On International Women's Day, members of civil society and a large number of women from all walks of life staged rallies, seminars and marches, demanding an end to the ongoing conflicts in Iran and Palestine and a halt to the killing of women and children. While the Aurat Azadi March was held in Hyderabad. The hallmark of the day was the Mehnatkash Aurat Rally organised by the Home-Based Women Workers Federation Pakistan (HBWWF) with this year's central slogan 'Working Women: Against War and Oppression'. All speakers paid tribute to the textile women workers whose sacrifices and struggles gave birth to the tradition of commemorating this day. The struggle launched 118 years ago by working women of the textile factory for economic justice had evolved into a powerful international movement against political, gender, social and imperialist oppression, a struggle that will continue until class and gender exploitation were eradicated from society.

The rally demanded that the genocide of Palestinians be stopped and their right to an independent state be recognised. The participants also demanded release of Venezuela President Nicolás Maduro and his wife and end to all economic sanctions and blockades against Cuba. They also called upon the authorities to abolish all discriminatory laws against women, end harassment and hostile environments faced by working women in workplaces and eliminate gender-based wage discrimination and implement equal pay for equal work. A one-minute silence was also observed to pay tribute to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and those who lost their lives in Gaza. *(Dawn, March 9th, 2026, Page 13)*

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS

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1 # AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RESOURCES

Thorny talks on agriculture, fish at World Trade Organisation conference

Trade ministers from around the world began delicate discussions on the key issues of agriculture and fisheries at a high-level WTO meeting in Yaounde, with little significant progress expected. The main focus of ongoing ministerial meeting in the Cameroonian capital was desperately needed reform of the World Trade Organisation, which finds itself weakened by geopolitical strains, stalled negotiations and rising protectionism. But trade ministers were also tasked to take stock on concrete issues, in particular on agriculture and fisheries.

“India imports edible oil. India imports pulses. India imports sugar sometimes, and quite a lot of things are imported under WTO rules. That has disadvantaged Indian peasants,” said Kannaiyan Subramaniam, an Indian vegetable producer and member of the international anti-globalisation movement Via Campesina. “We don’t want WTO anymore,” he told, insisting that “free trade facilitated by WTO is not in line with the food sovereignty principles”. Since the members of the global trade body began agriculture negotiations in 2000, the value of agriculture trade has ballooned fivefold, rising from $300 billion to $1.49 trillion in 2024, according to the WTO.

Barriers to agricultural trade have also decreased considerably, with the average tariff applied to agriculture products falling from 13 per cent in 2005 to 5.7pc in 2023. Developing countries have stopped short of demanding the removal of agricultural issues from WTO discussions, but the talks remain so deeply divided that countries for several years have been unable to even agree on a programme of work.

Public food stockpiles

While some of the WTO’s 166 members want to accelerate progress on specific issues, others favour a comprehensive approach to address all outstanding agricultural matters. No major agreement is expected, but countries were seeking consensus on a declaration on agriculture, trade and global food security, aimed to lay the groundwork for future negotiations. In Geneva, where the WTO is based, African countries had requested that the text specifically mention cotton. Food security is also on the agenda, with deep disagreement over a long-standing demand from India and others for a temporary measure allowing countries to hold food stockpiles be made permanent. Such a measure remains fiercely opposed by other countries, which warn that public stocks of food distort trade.

Subsidies encouraging overfishing

A long-running fisheries issue was also up for discussion. WTO members managed to nail down a historic agreement four years ago to ban harmful fisheries subsidies after more than two decades of talks. But since then, countries have failed to finalise a second portion of the negotiations aimed at broadening ban to include subsidies that contribute to overfishing and overcapacity. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 9)*

2 # AGRICULTURAL INPUTS

Soaring costs prompt French farmers to reconsider sowings

Some French farmers are planning to switch sowings from maize to sunflower, which requires less fertiliser and energy, as they face a challenging year marked by soaring costs, the head of French grain lobby Intercereales said. Farmers in France, like their counterparts in other countries, are grappling with rising fuel, gas, and fertiliser prices, exacerbated by US-Israeli war on Iran, Intercereales Director General Benoit Pietrement said, warning that the futures of some farms in the European Union's top grain producer are at risk. "All the great plains in the north were fairly well covered (in fertilisers), but in the south, where there are more maize growers, the coverage is much lower, and I hear that farmers are replacing maize with sunflower," Pietrement told on the sidelines of a grain exports conference. *(Business Recorder, March 27th, 2026, Page 23)*

Aviation, tourism, agriculture... the economic sectors hit by the war

The war in the Middle East is impacting numerous economic sectors and not only in the region, both by direct disruptions and rising fuel prices. The Gulf region produces around 30pc of world's fertiliser, which is key agricultural input in terms of cost as well as ensuring high yields. The region is a big supplier for Asian nations, several of which have had to suspend their own output as the price of natural gas used in its production has soared. There are concerns that an extended conflict could result in shortages while high prices could force some farmers to do without. Farmers are also facing higher costs of diesel for their tractors and other equipment, as well as for gas to heat greenhouses and animal enclosures. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 136)*

3 # AGRICULTURAL OUTPUTS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

4 # SUB – AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTIONS

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

5 # TRADE

US to reinsure maritime losses in Gulf up to about USD20bn

US will provide reinsurance for losses up to USD20 billion in the Gulf region to help provide confidence for oil and gas shippers during the war on Iran, the US International Development Finance Corporation said. President Donald Trump ordered the DFC to provide political risk insurance and financial guarantees for maritime trade in the Gulf after oil and liquefied natural gas tanker transit had ground to a halt in the Straight of Hormuz waterway between Iran and Oman, where ordinarily 20 percent of global oil moves daily. *(Business Recorder, March 7th, 2026, Page 10)*

UN maritime body kicks off emergency talks on shipping

The head of the UN's maritime body urged "practical measures" to protect trade ships threatened by the Middle East war, as he opened an emergency meeting amid fears for thousands of stranded ships and seafarers. The International Maritime Organisation — responsible for regulating international shipping safety — will discuss efforts to ease the shipping crisis during the two-day gathering at its London headquarters. The IMO's 40-member council could vote on several proposed resolutions, including one to "establish a safe maritime corridor to allow the safe evacuation of seafarers and ships stranded in the Persian Gulf". However, if passed, resolutions remain non-binding.

The meeting — open to all 176 member states as well as dozens of NGOs and maritime industry bodies — comes as Iran's retaliation to Israeli-US strikes cripples commercial shipping in or near the Strait of Hormuz. That has left around 20,000 seafarers stranded on approximately 3,200 vessels west of the key maritime chokepoint, according to the latest information from the IMO. Meanwhile at least 21 ships have been hit, targeted or reported attacks since the start of the conflict.

Britain, France, Germany and a host of other countries including Gulf states have urged the IMO's council to adopt a declaration to "strongly condemn the egregious attacks" by Iran on its neighbours. Noting Iran had "threatened and attacked commercial vessels and seafarers, as well as civilian maritime infrastructure", their proposal said the attacks were "unjustifiable and must cease". *(Dawn, March 19th, 2026, Page 11)*

UN shipping body calls for 'safe maritime corridor' in Gulf

The UN's maritime body called for the creation of a safe shipping "corridor" in the Gulf to evacuate stranded vessels and seafarers, after an emergency meeting that also condemned Iran. Following two days of urgent talks in London convened due to the Middle East war, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) said the "safe maritime corridor" should be established as "a provisional and urgent measure". IMO Secretary General Arsenio Dominguez said the "humanitarian corridor" would "evacuate ships in the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz". The UN agency — responsible for regulating international shipping safety — said the focus should be on "those currently confined within the Gulf region through peaceful means and on a voluntary basis".

The IMO's 40-member council included the demand among several "decisions" that accompanied a 17-point declaration addressing various aspects of the crisis. However, such calls are non-binding. It came as around 20,000 seafarers remained stranded on approximately 3,200 vessels west of the Strait of Hormuz, according to the UN body. It says at least eight seafarers or dock workers have died in incidents in the region since the conflict began on Feb 28. Iranian attacks on ships in the region have created an effective blockade of the crucial chokepoint, through which a fifth of global crude and liquified natural gas normally transits. Alongside other strikes in the conflict, which has dramatically spiked oil prices and spooked markets. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 10)*

Iran plans tolls on shipping through Strait of Hormuz

Iranian lawmakers have proposed a plan to impose tolls and taxes on ships passing through the strategic Strait of Hormuz. Officials have said shipping conditions through the waterway will not return to those from before the Middle East war began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb 28. In recent days, Iran has allowed some vessels from countries it considers friendly to pass, while warning it would block ships from countries it says have joined the "aggression" against it.

Shipping companies are carving out other ways to get their cargos through the region. In recent days transit volumes through the Bab el-Mandeb strait off east Africa surged 280pc, and 70pc through the Suez Canal, it said, indicating that "shipping is adapting through alternative corridors." From March 1 to 19, commodities carriers made just 114 crossings, according to analytics firm Kpler — a decrease of 95pc from peacetime. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 11)*

Middle East war weighs on global trade outlook: WTO

Middle East war could weigh heavily on already slowing global trade, the WTO warned, with merchandise trade volume potentially growing just 1.4 percent this year, compared to 4.6 percent in 2025. World Trade Organization's annual global trade outlook is being released nearly three weeks into an escalating war in Middle East that is already causing soaring energy prices and reviving fears that a major economic crisis is looming.

Since US-Israeli forces launched the war against Iran on February 28, Tehran has responded with attacks throughout the Middle East and threats that have nearly halted shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, through which one-fifth of global oil supplies normally pass. *(Business Recorder, March 20th, 2026, Page 10)*

China's premier vows to expand global 'trade pie'

Chinese Premier Li Qiang said that his country was willing to help expand the global "trade pie" by further opening up, state media reported, while he slammed unilateralism from certain countries. Many of China's key trading partners have increasingly called on Beijing to reduce its soaring trade surplus owing to its impact on local competition. Its trade surged by a fifth in the first two months of the year, official data showed earlier this month, significantly outpacing forecasts. China "will steadfastly advance high-level opening up, import more high-quality foreign goods, and work alongside all parties to promote the optimised and balanced development of trade", Premier Li Qiang told business executives in Beijing. *(Dawn, March 23rd, 2026, Page 12)*

WTO reform deadlock may prompt some countries to seek other options on free trade

Failure to chart a viable reform path for the World Trade Organization at a meeting next week will nudge members to pursue other options to set rules and advance free trade, diplomats and officials told. The four-day gathering of WTO trade ministers in the Cameroon capital Yaounde comes at a critical moment for the 1995 successor body to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) launched after World War Two to govern world trade. The talks will also take place in the shadow of the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran, which has disrupted global energy supplies and threatens to seriously damage the world economy.

U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff weaponization has intensified global trade tensions, challenging the WTO's relevance amid stalled multilateral deals and a six-year paralysis of its dispute settlement mechanism. Most WTO members want reform but are divided on how to agree a roadmap, according to diplomats and internal documents seen by Reuters, and this could push trade-reliant economies to seek other solutions. *(Business Recorder, March 27th, 2026, Page 62)*

Bab al-Mandeb Strait: another key shipping route under threat

Here are facts and figures about the Bab al-Mandeb strait, a crucial passage into the Red Sea that Iran has threatened to target if US forces launch a ground assault on its territory. Known as the "Gate of Tears" in Arabic, the Strait of Bab al-Mandeb is a narrow waterway at the southern tip of the Red Sea, connecting it with the Gulf of Aden in the Indian Ocean. About 100 kilometres long and 30 kilometres wide, it separates Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula from Djibouti and Eritrea on the Horn of Africa.

With the Red Sea acting as a key link between Europe and Asia, the strait is one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. Oil tankers and cargo ships arriving from the Indian Ocean pass through it to reach the Red Sea and then the Suez Canal, where they enter the Mediterranean, and vice versa. Around 26,000 ships transited through the Suez Canal in 2023, according to a Suez Canal Authority report — but this fell to 12,700 by 2025 after Huthi rebels attacked ships in the Red Sea.

US Energy Information Administration (EIA) said 12 percent of world oil shipments passed through Bab al-Mandeb in the first half of 2023, before the Huthi attacks later that year. Data published by the EIA indicates that the volume of oil transiting through Bab al-Mandeb in the first half of 2025 was less than half of the total volumes in 2023. With Iranian forces closing off access to the Gulf via the Strait of Hormuz, exports via the Saudi Red Sea port of Yanbu meanwhile have approximately tripled to a record high of around four million barrels a day. *(Business Recorder, March 28th, 2026, Page 20)*

Minimal agreement on WTO reform in sight in Yaounde

Negotiations towards launching much-needed reform of the World Trade Organization appeared to be heading towards an agreement on last day of talks in Yaounde, although nothing was yet finalised. The conclusion of the agreement will depend on the outcome of another, thorny negotiation between India and US over duties on e-commerce, experts and diplomats said. Over four days of intense negotiations in the Cameroonian capital, trade ministers and delegates have been heavily focused on developing an action plan to revitalise a WTO weakened by geopolitical strains, stalled negotiations and rising protectionism.

The talks, taking place against a backdrop of heightened trade tensions and global economic turmoil linked to the Middle East war, were wrapping up with negotiators emerging from an all-night session with a text in hand. In the draft declaration, trade ministers "commit to work urgently and in good faith … to advance reforms", following the WTO's 14th ministerial conference (MC14) — its biennial decision-making ministerial meeting. "We instruct our officials to intensify their work with a view to providing concrete and substantive recommendations for action by MC15," the draft declaration said. *(Business Recorder, March 30th, 2026, Page 9)*

Digital trade dispute fractures WTO unity

WTO talks collapsed without reaching an agreement on a reform plan or extending a moratorium on e-commerce, adding further pressure on the trade body, which is becoming increasingly marginalised by economic nationalism. The four-day ministerial talks in Cameroon's capital, Yaounde, ended in the early hours, with Brazil blocking a bid by the US and others to extend a moratorium on duties on electronic transmissions such as digital downloads and streaming. "It marks another crack in the foundations of the WTO system," said Andrew Wilson, Deputy Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce, urging delegates to renew the moratorium before states hit digital services with new charges. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 9)*

WTO meet ends in failure

High-level WTO talks in Cameroon ended early with no significant agreements and a failure to extend a years-long ban on customs duties for e-commerce, after deep divisions blocked a deal. As a consequence, the World Trade Organization moratorium that since 1998 has exempted cross-border digital transmissions from duties expired Monday. This does not mean tariffs will automatically be imposed, but it deals a heavy blow to developed countries and the United States in particular. Trade ministers and other delegates meeting in Cameroon's capital Yaounde also failed to meet even meagre expectations on deals towards much-needed reform of the WTO and on agriculture, among other issues. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

China's trade with N Korea rises 22pc in Jan and Feb

China's trade with North Korea rose 22 percent year-on-year during the first two months of the year, customs data showed. Two-way trade values between the two nations rose 22 percent to USD418.7 million in January and February, according to China's General Administration of Customs. Beijing typically publishes the January-February data as a combined release to smooth out the effects of the lunar new year, which falls in either month. China's trade with North Korea rebounded in 2025 to pre-Covid levels, with full-year volumes reaching USD2.73 billion, near the USD2.79 billion recorded in 2019, before pandemic-era border restrictions curbed bilateral shipments. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 128)*

5.1 # Export

Russia to ban petrol exports from April 1

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak instructed the energy ministry to draft a resolution banning petrol exports from April 1, the Russian government said. The state-run Tass news agency earlier reported that the ban would remain in place until July 31. Novak said that turmoil in the global oil and oil products market, caused by the crisis in the Middle East, is leading to significant price fluctuations. At the same time, the high demand for Russian energy resources in foreign markets remains a positive factor. Crude oil processing volumes remain at last year's level, ensuring a stable supply of oil products, the government said in a statement. According to industry sources, the country exported nearly 5 million metric tons of petrol last year, or about 117,000 barrels per day. *(Dawn, March 28th, 2026, Page 11)*

5.2 # Import

New Delhi continues importing Russian oil

An Indian government source said that New Delhi was pushing ahead with imports of Russian oil, after a temporary US waiver to import crude from Moscow due to war in the Middle East. But India insists it did not need Washington's permission to do so. The illegal US-Israel war against Iran and Tehran's retaliation have upended the world's energy and transport sectors, causing a surge in global oil prices. Washington temporarily eased economic sanctions against Russia to allow Russian oil stranded at sea to be sold to India. But India is not dependent on "a short-term waiver" for such purchases, the government source in New Delhi said. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 9)*

Pakistan's arms imports 'grow 66pc with Chinese help'

As global transfers of major arms surged by nearly 10 per cent over the past five years, Pakistan's arms imports grew by 66pc in 2021–25 compared with 2016–20, with its main ally China supplying 80pc of the weapons, a Stockholm-based think tank said. China's role as Pakistan's top arms provider increased from 73pc in the previous 2016-20 period, the new report from the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute noted. In South Asia, the high volume of arms imported by neighbouring India is largely driven by its perceived threat from China and its long-running conflict with Pakistan, the main recipient of Chinese arms exports.

While Pakistan's imports soared, India remained the world's second-largest arms importer despite a marginal decrease of 4pc. India has diversified its suppliers, turning increasingly to Western nations. Russia's share of Indian arms imports dropped to 40pc in 2021-25, down significantly from 51pc in 2016-20 and nearly half its 70pc share in 2011-15. Overall, states in Asia and Oceania imported the second-largest share of arms globally at 31pc, though the region saw a 20pc drop in volume compared with 2016-20. Still, four nations from the region ranked among the top 10 global importers: India, Pakistan, Japan, and Australia. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 3)*

Maersk says ME has pressing need for food imports

The Middle East region has a "pressing need" for food imports that have been disrupted by the outbreak of war in the Gulf, the chair of the board of Danish container shipping group A.P. Moller-Maersk said. According to the World Economic Forum, Gulf Cooperation Council countries - which include Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates - import up to 85% of their food. The war that began with US-Israeli strikes on Iran last month, followed by Iranian attacks across the region and its closing of the Strait of Hormuz, has brought shipping in the Gulf to a near standstill, rippling across global supply chains. *(Business Recorder, March 26th, 2026, Page 54)*

US import prices post biggest increase in four years

US import prices increased by the most in four years in February as energy costs surged in anticipation of conflict in the Middle East, adding to signs that inflation is poised to accelerate in the months ahead. The larger-than-expected rise reported by the Labor Department also reflected strong gains in the prices of food and consumer goods. Imported capital goods prices logged their biggest increase on record, driven by an artificial intelligence investment and data center construction boom. Economists said firming inflation even before the US-Israeli war with Iran was likely to encourage the Federal Reserve to keep interest rates unchanged for a while. US central bank officials have forecast only one rate cut this year, though financial markets see the odds of a reduction fading. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 123)*

6 # CORPORATE SECTOR

Not any preferable news to be included in this month.

7 # INTERNATIONAL AID / LOAN / INVESTMENT

Mexico sends more aid to Cuba

Two Mexican navy vessels carrying almost 1,200 tons of humanitarian aid arrived in Cuba in the second such shipment in a month as the island endures intense US pressure. President Donald Trump has vowed to starve Cuba of oil after the US military ouster of autocrat Nicolas Maduro of Venezuela, which had been the communist nation´s main supplier of the commodity. Earlier this week his administration eased what amounts to an energy blockade, allowing oil shipments to private companies in Cuba but not the government or the military. *(The News, March 1st, 2026, Page 10)*

Aid flotilla arrives in Cuba as US oil blockade bites

The first boat of a flotilla carrying medical supplies, food and solar panels reached Cuba to aid the island as a US fuel blockade deepens its energy crisis. As they approached Havana's colonial-era fortification, the international activists stood on the cabin roof of the boat — symbolically renamed "Granma 2.0" as a tribute to the yacht used by Fidel Castro's guerrilla fighters to launch their revolution in 1956. They held a sign reading "Let Cuba live" while others waiting for them on the dock chanted "Cuba yes! Blockade no!" *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 11)*

8 # INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS (IFIs)

ADB unveils support for members amid ME crisis

Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced a financial support package to help its developing member countries (DMCs) mitigate the economic and financial impacts resulting from the conflict in the Middle East. "ADB will deliver rapid, flexible, and scalable assistance to help countries manage immediate pressures and strengthen long-term resilience, notably fast-disbursing budget support and trade and supply chain finance to secure the import of essential goods, now including oil," said ADB President Masato Kanda. The latest ADB analysis indicates that disruptions to shipping routes have already increased costs and delivery times, while supply risks extend beyond energy to key industrial inputs such as petrochemicals and fertilisers, with serious implications for agriculture and food production. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 9)*

9 # POLICY

9.1 # Neo – Liberal Policy

India's privatisation drive derails because of weak investor interest

India is considering shelving three planned privatisation sales amid weak investor appetite, two government sources said, a slump that has already derailed its attempt to sell a stake in IDBI Bank and is a fresh blow to the government's flagship divestment programme. The privatisation plan, delayed for years, is now facing fresh setbacks that include dwindling interest in state-run firms such as Shipping Corporation of India and HLL Lifecare, besides the collapse of the IDBI Bank stake sale last week after bids fell short of government's minimum price. *(Business Recorder, March 19th, 2026, Page 5)*

10 # SOCIO – ECONOMIC CONDITION

10.1 # Food

45m more face hunger threat from extended ME war: UN

An extra 45 million people could face acute hunger if the Middle East war rages on beyond June, swelling the number worldwide to a "terrible" high, the United Nations warned. The war, now in its third week, and its shockwaves on food and fuel costs could price families out of staple foods far beyond region, the UN's World Food Programme said. "This would take global hunger levels to an all-time record, and it's a terrible, terrible prospect," he said, with a nearly 320 million people — already a huge number — currently acutely food insecure. Meanwhile WFP faced a 40-percent cut in its resources last year, as international funding dried up.

The disruption to fertiliser exports through the Strait of Hormuz comes just as sub-Saharan Africa heads into a planting season, and poses a "major risk" to countries like Somalia and Kenya, he said. "In Somalia we have clear indications that we're heading into a famine: we have two consecutive droughts," he said, but WFP is struggling to assist around 700,000 people in the country and "we just don't have the funding". *(Business Recorder, March 18th, 2026, Page 12)*

War's hunger toll

The conflict between the US, Israel and Iran continues to widen with far-reaching repercussions. The UN's World Food Programme warns that if the fighting continues through June, another 45m could be pushed into acute hunger, raising the global total to unprecedented levels. With 319m people already facing acute food insecurity, the prospect of further escalation is daunting. Wars have long disrupted food systems, but the scale and interconnectedness of the modern global economy means that the shockwaves of this conflict are being felt thousands of miles away from the front lines. Since the strikes on Iran in late February, key shipping routes have been disrupted and humanitarian aid corridors obstructed.

Shipping costs have gone up by about 18pc, pushing relief agencies to reroute aid and absorb additional expenses when already under severe budgetary stress. All this comes at a dangerous time for global food security. Several regions were already on the brink. In Gaza, border closures and limited aid have deepened shortages of essential goods. Around 200 aid trucks enter daily compared to the 600 that humanitarian agencies say are required to sustain the population. In Sudan, meanwhile, nearly half the population — more than 21m people — faces acute hunger amid a brutal civil war that has displaced millions and left entire areas inaccessible to aid workers.

The Iran war does not only endanger aid routes, it threatens much larger ripple effects. Rising shipping costs lead to higher food prices, particularly for import-dependent African and Asian countries. Many of these economies are already burdened with debt, a weak currency, and climate-related crop failures. Another spike in global food prices could push millions more households into crisis. Equally troubling is the shift in global priorities. Donor countries are funnelling more resources into defence spending amid rising geopolitical tensions.

Consequently, humanitarian agencies are facing funding cuts. The WFP has already warned that several lifesaving programmes may have to be scaled back unless donors step forward. With no immediate end in sight to the conflict, the world is looking at not just a regional war, but the largest surge in hunger in modern history. Preventing such an outcome calls not only for diplomacy to stop the fighting, but also a commitment that the most vulnerable must never be left to starve amid geopolitical rivalries. *(Dawn, March 19th, 2026, Page 6)*

US-Israel war on Iran may increase food prices worldwide: UN

United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has said that the prolonged disruption to trade through Strait of Hormuz triggered by US/Israeli attack on Iran could create cascading impacts across energy markets, fertiliser supply chains and global agrifood systems, raising production costs, tightening agricultural supply and increasing food prices worldwide. While global food markets remain more stable than during previous crises, the current war underscores the vulnerability of interconnected energy and agrifood systems and the importance of coordinated international action to stabilise markets, maintain open trade routes, and protect vulnerable populations from rising food insecurity, the FAO said in its report titled, Global Agrifood Implications of the 2026 Conflict in the Middle East.

A coordinated policy response is urgently needed to mitigate these risks and build resilience. In short term, alternative trade routes, market monitoring, targeted support for vulnerable import dependent countries, and financial assistance for farmers are critical to stabilise supply chains & protect populations. Medium-term strategies should prioritise diversification of import sources, regional coordination, and contingency planning, while long-term measures must focus on domestic agricultural expansion, sustainable fertiliser production, renewable energy investments, and structural adjustments to cope with persistent price volatility and biofuel-driven demand shifts.

It is estimated that global fertiliser prices could average 15 to 20pc higher during the first half of 2026 if the US/Israel war against Iran continues, the FAO says. These developments are beginning to affect global agricultural commodity markets. Rising fertiliser costs and higher fuel prices increase production expenses for farmers and this may lead to reduced fertiliser use in many regions. Early signals in international markets indicate that prices for major food commodities such as wheat, rice, and vegetable oils have started to increase.

Meanwhile, Gulf countries themselves face structural food security vulnerabilities. Despite their energy wealth, most Gulf countries rely on imports for between 70 and 90pc of their food supply, because domestic agricultural production is limited by water scarcity and climatic constraints. Iran faces particularly severe pressures because it is both directly affected by the conflict and vulnerable to macroeconomic instability. The conflict has disrupted imports of key staples and agricultural inputs, while worsening an already fragile economic environment characterised by currency depreciation and high inflation. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 12)*

Global food waste crisis undermines climate and security, says UNEP official

The world wastes food on a staggering scale, as every year over one billion tonnes of edible food — nearly one-fifth of all food available to consumers — is thrown away, impacting both people and the environment, undermining food security and climate resilience, and compromising progress towards a zero-waste, circular future. The 'International Day of Zero Waste' is being observed today, focusing on "Food – what we eat, what we waste, and how we can move towards a more circular future". While hundreds of millions of people face hunger, 13 per cent of food is lost before it reaches retailers, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said.

In 2022, the world wasted an estimated 1.05 billion tonnes of food across the retail, food service, and household sectors combined. This amounts to 132 kg per capita per year, of which 79 kg per capita was wasted in households. In a campaign brief, the UNEP said, “Zero waste starts on your plate”, estimating that $1 trillion was the annual cost of food loss and waste to the global economy. Up to 14pc of methane emissions come from food waste alone, largely from rotting organic waste. Speaking at the event, UNEP Executive Director Inger Andersen said the consequences were far-reaching. Food loss and waste generate 8-10pc of global greenhouse gas emissions and are a major source of methane, which is over 80 times more powerful than carbon dioxide in the short term. Reducing these emissions would slow the rate of global warming by mid-century. *(Dawn, March 30th, 2026, Page 12)*

Poorest countries at risk of food insecurity

The IMF blog said low-income countries were at particular risk of food insecurity, given higher food and fertilizer prices, and might need more external support at a time when many advanced economies were scaling back their international assistance. “Although the war could shape the global economy in different ways, all roads lead to higher prices and slower growth,” the economists wrote. They noted that large energy importers in Asia and Europe were bearing the brunt of higher fuel and input prices, while countries in Africa and Asia were finding it hard to access the supplies they need, even at inflated prices. A long conflict and the associated uncertainty and geopolitical risk could keep energy expensive and strain countries that rely on imports, tensions could linger and inflation could prove hard to tame, they said.—Reuters *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 1)*

10.2 # Inflation

Venezuela suffers world’s highest inflation at 475 per cent

Venezuelan inflation soared to 475 per cent in 2025, the highest in the world, driven by a tightening of US sanctions in the lead-up to the ouster of leader Nicolas Maduro. Full-year inflation far exceeded the International Monetary Fund’s forecast of 269.9pc, figures released by the central bank showed. Accumulated inflation for the first two months of 2026 stood at nearly 52pc, the bank, which had not released inflation figures in over a year, said. It did not issue a forecast for the remainder of 2026. Venezuela’s economy was hammered last year by President Donald Trump’s campaign of maximum pressure on longtime foe Maduro.

Washington eventually deposed the authoritarian socialist leader on January 3 in a US special forces’ raid on Caracas and has since eased sanctions. Average incomes range between $100 and $300 per month, far below what Venezuelans need to meet their basic food needs, economists say. Food and drink prices alone rose by 532pc last year, while rent increased by 340pc and healthcare by 445pc, the central bank said. Before Maduro’s ouster, economists had warned of a return of hyperinflation — monthly price hikes of 50pc or more that caused economic chaos between 2017 and 2021. Memories are still acute of a record 130,000pc year-on-year rise in prices recorded in 2018, the peak of the hyperinflationary period, which pushed millions to emigrate. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 10)*

Central banks stand ready to tackle war-led inflation

Top central banks said they stood ready to tackle any surge in inflation with tighter policy, as an escalation in the Iran war put the Middle East's vital energy infrastructure in the line of fire and pushed fuel prices higher. In a rare coincidence of the monetary policy diary, central banks of the United States, Japan, Britain, Canada and the euro zone - effectively the G7 nations - convened this week, as have counterparts from several emerging economies. *(Business Recorder, March 20th, 2026, Page 1)*

11 # ENVIRONMENT

El Nino may return in 2026 and make planet even hotter

The warming El Nino weather phenomenon could form later this year, potentially pushing global temperatures to record heights. There is a 50- to 60-percent chance of El Nino developing during the July-September period and beyond, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 124)*

11.1 # Health

Argentina withdraws from World Health Organisation

Argentina formally withdrew from the World Health Organisation, the foreign minister said, following in the path of United States which took the same step earlier this year. Foreign Ministry said Argentina has now completed the withdrawal process within the timeframe stipulated by international treaties. *(Dawn, March 18th, 2026, Page 10)*

12 # CLIMATE CHANGE

Global warming has seen 'significant' acceleration since 2015, study finds

Global warming has accelerated in a "statistically significant" way since 2015, according to a study published by Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research (PIK). "Over the past 10 years, the estimated warming rate has been around 0.35C per decade, depending on the dataset, compared with just under 0.2C per decade on average from 1970 to 2015," the study found. This recent rate is higher than in any previous decade since the beginning of instrumental records in 1880. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 10)*

12.1 # Climate Crisis

Melting glaciers, ice sheets raising sea levels: where and how fast?

Melting glaciers and ice sheets are raising sea levels while the Arctic is poised to log one of its worst winters on record. Here are some key points about the planet's ice as human-induced global warming accelerates:

Where is the Earth's ice?

Nearly all of the planet's land ice — about 99 percent — is stored in the polar ice sheets, mainly in Antarctica and the Arctic, especially Greenland, glaciologist Christian Vincent said. Ice does not melt at the same rate everywhere. The loss of polar ice sheets is the main driver of sea-level rise, ahead of melting mountain glaciers and the thermal expansion of seawater, which occurs as the oceans warm due to global heating. Between 1901 and 2018, the global average sea level rose by about 20 centimetres.

Where has melting occurred?

Mountain glaciers alone lost about 9.18 trillion tonnes of ice between 1976 and 2024, according to a 2025 study in the journal Earth System Science Data (ESSD) based on satellite and ground observations. That figure is close to estimates by the World Glacier Monitoring Service (WGMS) for the period from 1961 to 2016, which likened the loss to a block of ice the size of Germany and 27 metres tall. Most of this mountain ice loss occurred in Alaska, Patagonia and the Arctic, the WGMS said. At the poles, Greenland and Antarctica together lost roughly 7.56 trillion tonnes of ice between 1992 and 2020, according to a 2023 estimate by the Ice Sheet Mass Balance Inter-comparison Exercise (IMBIE), an international collaboration between Nasa and the European Space Agency that relies on satellite observations.

What about the future?

Ice loss is accelerating as the planet warms, and the extreme heat of the past three years -- the hottest ever recorded -- offers little reason for optimism. "The rate of ice loss is now five times higher in Greenland and 25pc higher in Antarctica compared to the early 1990s," according to a 2023 study published in the journal ESSD. In Greenland, summer melting has accelerated since 1900 to levels not seen in at least 850 years, according to the latest report on the cryosphere by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). The melt season is also lasting longer, extending into late summer and even September — something rare in the past. As for mountain glaciers, about 41pc of their total ice loss occurred in the decade from 2015 to 2024, according to a study in ESSD that found the largest losses in Alaska, western North America and central Europe. *(Dawn, March 12th, 2026, Page 10)*

Warm seas drove sudden drop in Antarctic ice: study

Unusually strong winds and warm ocean water likely drove a rapid plunge in Antarctic sea ice in recent years, scientists said, shedding new light on a puzzling event. While the Arctic sea ice area has been steadily declining, the story has been very different in Antarctica, where coverage hit a record high in 2015 before flipping to a record low only two years later. Climate models struggled to explain this "unexpected and abrupt decline" of the magnitude witnessed in recent decades, wrote a global team of scientists in new research exploring this anomaly.

Understanding why matters because Antarctic sea ice is critical not just to ocean currents and local ecosystems but the climate, as its reflective surface bounces solar energy back into the atmosphere. In the journal Nature Climate Change, scientists led by Theo Spira from University of Gothenburg in Sweden said the rapid loss of sea ice was caused by forces working together rather than any single factor. In particular, they pointed to a gradual weakening of a layer of cold water beneath the surface that normally protects the sea ice from the warmer depths below. *(Dawn, March 19th, 2026, Page 10)*

Earth trapped record heat in '25; impact could last for thousands of years

The amount of heat trapped by Earth reached record levels in 2025, with consequences of such warming feared to last for thousands of years, UN warned. The 11 hottest years ever recorded were all between 2015 and 2025, UN's WMO weather and climate agency confirmed in its flagship State of the Global Climate annual report. Last year was the second or third hottest year on record, at about 1.43 Celsius above the 1850-1900 average, World Meteorological Organisation said. "The global climate is in a state of emergency. Planet Earth is being pushed beyond its limits. Every key climate indicator is flashing red," said UN Secretary General. *(Dawn, March 24th, 2026, Page 10)*

Arctic sea ice among lowest on record: US data

Arctic sea ice is headed for one of its smallest winter peaks on record, an AFP review of US data showed, as climate change shrinks the region's frozen cover and heightens geopolitical tensions. Formed when ocean water freezes, Arctic sea ice melts naturally in summer and reforms in winter, but the amount that returns has been declining due to human-induced planetary warming. The maximum sea ice extent in the Arctic reached nearly 14.22m square kilometres (5.5m square miles) on March 10, according to the data from US NSIDC. If the trend continues before winter ends later this month, it would rank among the five smallest ice covers in four decades of satellite monitoring, possibly even breaking last year's record. *(Business Recorder, March 27th, 2026, Page 62)*

Climate shocks threaten USD2.3trn global sports economy, study warns

Extreme weather threatens annual revenue growth in the USD2.3 trillion sports economy, where expansion is driven mainly by tourism tied to resource-depleting global events such as the just-concluded Milano Cortina Games, a report has shown. *(Business Recorder, March 31st, 2026, Page 128)*

13 # CLIMATE DISASTER

13.1 # Heatwave

Record-breaking heatwave grips western US

A punishing heat wave gripped western United States, with parts of the region logging record temperatures — even though it is still winter. The mercury was expected to hit 107F (41.6C) into weekend, smashing through previous high temperatures logged in March. An extreme heat advisory was in place for swathes of southern California and Arizona, with forecasters warning of dangerous effects on local populations. *(Dawn, March 20th, 2026, Page 11)*

13.2 # Rainfall

Heavy rain, storms claim 28 lives in Afghanistan

Heavy rain and storms have killed at least 28 people over the past few days across Afghanistan. Rain sweeping across Afghanistan has caused floods and landslides in multiple provinces, while more than 100 homes have been destroyed. The latest casualties follow more than 60 people being killed in snow and heavy rain that hit Afghanistan in January. Afghanistan frequently experiences deadly floods, landslides and storms, particularly in remote areas with fragile infrastructure. Among the poorest countries in the world after decades of war, Afghanistan is particularly exposed to the effects of climate change, which scientists say is spurring extreme weather. *(Dawn, March 31st, 2026, Page 12)*

13.3 # Storm

Tornados tear through central US, leave eight dead

Tornados tore central United States in a series of storms, leaving eight people dead and at least a dozen others injured, authorities said. *(Dawn, March 8th, 2026, Page 10)*

Over 10,000 US flights disturbed due to storms

More than 10,000 US flights were delayed or cancelled amid a series of storms affecting several major airports along the East Coast and some other locales. *(Dawn, March 17th, 2026, Page 10)*

Freak storms to hit war-ravaged Middle East

A Tornado Alley-style storm system is about to hit the Middle East — a virtually unheard of atmospheric setup for the region, the Washington Post reported, as areas in the Gulf region received heavy rains. Parts of the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf could be slammed by strong to severe thunderstorms, bringing potential for damaging winds, destructive hail and a few tornadoes. *(Dawn, March 25th, 2026, Page 12)*

14 # NATURAL DISASTER

Brazil's Lula visits flood zone as death toll from landslides hits 70

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva hugged weeping children and promised aid as he visited southeastern cities where 70 people have died in landslides caused by torrential rains. Thousands were left homeless after mud swept away their houses in the cities of Juiz de Fora and Uba this week, leaving desperate residents seeking loved ones under piles of sludge and debris. The tragedy is the latest in a series of extreme weather disasters in Brazil, from floods to fires and drought, many of which scientists have linked to the effects of global warming. *(The News, March 1st, 2026, Page 10)*

15 # RESISTANCE

Newsmakers: London (United Kingdom)

Protesters gather with banners and placards outside the offices of Google Deepmind at a rally organised by PauseAI UK against the unregulated development of advanced artificial intelligence systems. *(Dawn, March 1st, 2026, Page 10)*

Nationwide protests mark Greece's worst train disaster

Tens of thousands of people across Greece demonstrated in solidarity with victims of country's worst train tragedy, which claimed 57 lives in 2023 and rattled government of Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. More than a hundred gatherings were held in Greece and abroad to demand justice for the victims, most of whom were young students returning from a three-day carnival weekend. At the close of the mostly peaceful protest, riot police fired tear gas and stun grenades at small groups of youths throwing stones and bottles at them. Nearly a dozen people were arrested. *(The News, March 1st, 2026, Page 10)*

Newsmakers: Dhaka (Bangladesh)

Activists and supporters of the Jamaat-i-Islami party hold posters of Iran's assassinated supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during an anti-US and Israel protest. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 10)*

Protests in India over Khamenei's assassination

Protests broke out in different parts of India over the killing of Ayatollah Khamenei in the US-Israeli air assault unleashed against Iran. Kashmiri leader Mirwaiz Umar Farouq expressed outrage at the targeted aggression by US-Israeli forces. In the southern Karnataka state and in parts of Hyderabad protesters took to the streets to protest the death of the leading Shia cleric. Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi called the targeted killing of Ayatollah Khamenei despicable and accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of betraying India's foreign policy opposed to the violation of sovereignty of friendly countries. *(Dawn, March 2nd, 2026, Page 11)*

Newsmakers: Manila (Philippine)

People raise clenched fists and shout slogans as they take part in a protest commemorate International Women's Day near the US embassy. *(Dawn, March 9th, 2026, Page 10)*

Thousands march for women's rights and against ME war

Thousands of demonstrators took to streets in cities across world to mark International Women's Day and, in some cases, denounce the war in the Middle East. From Rio in Brazil to cities across France, Spain and other European countries, demonstrators marched to demand women's rights across a range of issues. In France, rape survivor Gisele Pelicot led a women's rights march in Paris, one of several demonstrations in French cities. Thousands also marched in cities across Spain to protest gender-based violence and call for an end to the war in the Middle East. The Paris march was one of some 150 demonstrations held to mark International Women's Day in France, with events taking place in other cities including Bordeaux, Lille, and Marseille.

Spanish protesters were denouncing both violence against women and the war in the Middle East sparked by last weekend's US-Israeli strikes. Demonstrations took place in Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia, Seville, Granada, Bilbao, and San Sebastian, among other cities. Slogans written on placards at the protests included "No to war" and "Anti-fascist feminists against imperialist war". *(Business Recorder, March 9th, 2026, Page 1)*

Small anti-war minority finds itself isolated in Israel

As most Israelis rally behind the country's second offensive against Iran in under a year, a small group of anti-war activists equipped with posters and loudspeakers have mobilised to voice dissent. According to national polls published since the joint US-Israel invasion began on Feb 28, a majority of Jewish Israelis and a broad sweep of politicians from across the spectrum support the ongoing campaign of strikes on Iran.

But over the weekend, a few dozen protesters holding placards reading "oppose the war" and "silence means consent" gathered in Tel Aviv - the second such rally in a week. The group includes left-wing activists who have objected to Israel's previous military campaigns and the occupation of the Palestinian territories. Similar small-scale demonstrations were also held in Jerusalem and Haifa over the weekend. A handful of right-wing activists staged a counter-protest at the Tel Aviv rally, which was swiftly dispersed by police. *(Dawn, March 10th, 2026, Page 10)*

Greenpeace activists storm stage at France's nuclear summit

Two Greenpeace activists broke onto the stage at the start of a global nuclear summit in France, interrupting President Emmanuel Macron and UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi as they were greeting heads of state. The protesters, dressed sharply in black suits and ties, held banners bearing the Greenpeace logo and reading "Nuclear Power = Energy Insecurity" and "Nuclear power fuels Russia's war". *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 10)*

Newsmakers: Vienna (Austria)

Fridays for Future activists protest outside Austria's federal chancellery, calling for a climate-friendly June budget without oil and gas subsidies. As crude oil prices rise, the impact goes far beyond petrol stations since the long-term costs of fossil-fuel investments are far higher due to the impact of global warming. *(Dawn, March 11th, 2026, Page 10)*

Protesters burn photos of Trump, Meloni in Rome march

Protesters burned images of US President Donald Trump and Italy's premier Giorgia Meloni in Rome during a demonstration against the government's judicial reform and the Middle East war. A few thousand people joined a march in the Italian capital, initially organised against far-right Meloni's planned reforms of the judiciary, which will be put to a referendum next weekend. It also drew critics of the US-Israel war with Iran, with protesters decrying Meloni's closeness with US President Donald Trump, even if Rome is not directly involved in the conflict. A small group set fire to posters showing Meloni and Trump together. The crowd, the majority of them trade unionists, left-wing groups and students, held aloft banners declaring "No to the Meloni government", "No to war" and "No to the referendum", alongside a smattering of Cuban, Iranian and Palestinian flags. *(The News, March 15th, 2026, Page 10)*

Hundreds turn out for pro-Palestine rally in London

Hundreds of people turned out in London for a pro-Palestinian march banned by the government after police said it was organised by a group "supportive of the Iranian regime". Interior Minister Shabana Mahmood said earlier this week she had agreed to the ban to "prevent serious public disorder" in the context of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East. It is the first time a protest march in the capital has been banned since 2012 but a static demonstration was permitted, according to the Metropolitan police. Police kept people in the annual Al Quds Day event and counter-protesters apart by allowing them to gather on opposite sides of the River Thames not far from parliament. Pro-Palestinian protesters who were directed to the south side of the river waved flags and held up placards with slogans such as "Stop Israeli war crimes," in a reference to Israel's offensive in Gaza. *(Dawn, March 16th, 2026, Page 11)*

Newsmakers: Amritsar (India)

Farmers block a road during a protest against the central and state governments, demanding a minimum support price for their crops, among several other demands. *(Dawn, March 31st, Page 10)*

Iranian players hold schoolbags in protest over slain girls

Iran's men's national soccer team wore black armbands and held schoolbags as their anthem played ahead of a match in Turkiye, in what a team official said was a protest over the killing of schoolgirls on first day of the Iran war. *(Business Recorder, March 28th, 2026, Page 62)*

Newsmakers: Paris (France)

Activists display a dead dolphin during a demonstration in the Bay of Biscay to denounce incidental catches of dolphins and other marine species in non-selective fishing nets. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 10)*

Anger over Iran war adds fuel to anti-Trump rallies in US

Demonstrators decrying President Donald Trump's policies took to city streets across United States in the third edition of the "No Kings" rallies that organisers hoped will be the largest single-day non-violent protest in US history. The two previous No Kings events attracted millions of participants. Singers Bruce Springsteen and Joan Baez headlined a rally at the state capitol in Minnesota, where upward of 100,000 people gathered in an area that became a flashpoint over Trump's crackdown on illegal immigration and the incursion of federal immigration agents into Democratic-led urban centres. Other major rallies took place in New York, Los Angeles and Washington, but two-thirds of the events were happening outside major city centres, a nearly 40 per cent jump for smaller communities from the movement's first mobilisation last June.

The No Kings movement launched last year on Trump's birthday, June 14, drew an estimated four to six million people across roughly 2,100 sites nationwide. The second mobilisation in October involved an estimated seven million participants in more than 2,700 cities, according to a crowd-sourcing analysis published by prominent data journalist G. Elliott Morris. Saturday's events came amid what organisers said was a call to action against the bombardment of Iran by the US and Israel, a conflict that is now four weeks old. *(Dawn, March 29th, 2026, Page 12)*

Anti-Trump protests launch on 'No Kings' day in US

Massive protests against President Donald Trump kicked off across United States and beyond, as millions of people vent fury over what they see as his authoritarian bent and other forms of cruel, law-trampling governance. Now they have something new to fume over – the war against Iran that Trump launched alongside Israel, with ever-shifting goals and timelines for completion. The anti-Trump mood has spilled beyond US borders, with rallies in European cities including Amsterdam, Madrid and Rome. *(Business Recorder, March 29th, 2026, Page 1)*

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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