

Govt utilising all available sources for water reserves: Vawda

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Water Resources Faisal Vawda has said that the government is utilizing all available resources for construction of new water reserves in the country. In his message on the occasion of World Water Day being observed on Sunday, the minister said all out efforts were being made to bring improvement in water resources sector besides enhancing storage capacity, said a statement issued here. —Online

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PRGMEA calls for formulation of robust economic plan

SIKOT: Regional President of International Apparel Federation (IAF) and Chief Coordinator Pakistan Ready-made Garments Manufacturers and Exporters Association (PRGMEA) Ijaz A Khokhar Sunday said that trade and commerce activities had adversely been affected by the Covid-19. Talking to APP on Sunday, he said that it is our moral and national obligation that we support government and enable it handle the Covid-19 issue effi-



ISLAMABAD: A view of an empty Jinnah Avenue as capital's administration imposes Section 144 amid coronavirus outbreak throughout the world.

SAARC chamber proposes joint coronavirus fund

■ Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan should contribute \$2m in fund

ISLAMABAD: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (CCI) President-designate Iftikhar Ali Malik Sunday, making a strong pitch for SAARC nations to jointly combat coronavirus, proposed setting up a COVID-19 emergency fund with India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh with initial amount of USD 5 million each as the best way to deal with the pandemic is by coming together, and not growing apart.

In a statement on Sunday, Iftikhar Malik said while Maldives, Nepal, Bhutan and Afghanistan should contribute USD 2 million in this proposed coronavirus fund and this is important for South Asian countries to focus on collaboration, not confusion, and preparation, not panic.

He said this could be based on voluntary contributions from all of us. "Looking ahead, we could create a common research platform, to coordinate research on controlling epidemic diseases within our South Asian region," he said, adding "we share common regional concerns on COVID-19. While hoping for best, we have to prepare for worst."

He said it was the time now that South

Asian countries come forward with commitment and determination setting an example to the world, and contribute to a healthier planet putting all kinds of skirnish on the backburner as corona virus is a common threat for human beings.

He said the good thing is that governments in South Asian countries are implementing measures to stop the virus from spreading any further, but they face many difficulties in containing the pandemic. "Unlike Western countries that have a proper quarantine mechanism in place at airports and other places — and medical facilities available to patients while all countries in South Asia lack preparedness to tackle the situation. "A possible spread of the coronavirus in these countries could prove to be catastrophic," he added.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said coronavirus has become the real threat for both human beings and economy and some nations and territories that had seen success in controlling the virus or slowing its arrival, including South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan, have seen new spikes, amid fears people returning from abroad are import-

ing the virus.

He said the government would make all efforts to combat and will actively coordinate for necessary emergency funding from both the local and international sources to ward off any negative impacts of coronavirus on livelihoods, jobs, especially the industry.

Appreciating Prime Minister Imran Khan for taking exigent measures against coronavirus in Pakistan, Iftikhar Malik said the good thing is that the government was making all-out efforts to deal with the deadly virus. He also urged all segments of the society to come forward and play their role in containing the spread of novel coronavirus.

He said like other countries in the world, Pakistan's initial economic losses in different sectors of the country's economy have been estimated at Rs1.3 trillion. These losses are going to be incurred on account of drop in the GDP growth because of reduction in services sector, including airline business and others, FBR's revenue loss, massive decline in imports, exports, reduction in remittances, disruption in food supplies and

Japan strats process for importing Pakistan's skilled manpower

ISLAMABAD: The Japanese government has initiated process of importing skilled manpower from Pakistan in 14 different sectors aimed to providing employment opportunities for Pakistanis labor force, Minister and Deputy Head of Mission, Embassy of Japan in Pakistan Yusuke Shindo told.

Sharing strategy and action plan with APP here, he said that this application have been invited from skilled Pakistanis, who can submit their application along with their particulars by April 27 for recruitment in relevant sectors.

The candidates would have to go through Japanese language test in July 2020 before their final selection for recruitment, he said adding that the test would be conducted here at National University of Modern Languages (NUML).

The diplomat said that three different categories were part of plan including Technical Intern, 'Specified Skilled Workers' and highly skilled professional.

He said that in Japanese Market, Pakistan has a huge share in importing 3, 45 000 skilled manpower from 10 countries of the world.

Yusuke Shindo said the Government of Pakistan (GoP) had nominated, National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC) and National University of Technology (NUTECH) for carrying out necessary service including recruitment of candidates in collaboration with Japanese counterparts.

He also emphasized that the Japanese embassy in Islamabad had not hired any other promoter or facilitator for continuing the process of labor import from Pakistan, instead of these two above mentioned institution nominated by Pakistan's government.

Senior diplomat said that the process of recruitment would continue every

Cooperation (MoC) signed between Japan and Pakistan in December 23, 2019 in Islamabad.

He made it clear that there was no particular quota for any of these 10 countries around the world and hoped that Pakistani would get maximum benefits from this huge opportunity in the Japanese market.

Mentioning the skilled and language proficiency for all three categories, he said that purpose of first category of 'Technical Intern Training' program is to transfer technical skills, techniques and knowledge to foreign countries including Pakistan, through an experience of 'On Job Training (OJT) to contribute to the human resources development in Pakistan.

For this program, he said that Japan and Pakistan has also signed Memorandum of Cooperation on February 2019 in Tokyo.

He informed that the foreign national, who have successfully completed 'Technical Intern Training' are exempted from tests that are normally required for other two categories.

While giving information regarding the second category of 'Specified Skilled Workers', he said that for this program both sides had signed the Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) in last December 23 and through this agreement foreign national have to prove their necessary level of skill and Japanese language proficiency by appropriate means such as passing skills and language test in different 14 skilled sectors accordingly.

This is a status of residence for foreign nationals with higher skill compared with the 'Specified Skilled workers.

Currently only two fields, Construction industry, Shipping and ship machinery industry were applicable and candidates should prove necessary skills

gory of highly skilled covers a variety of fields including engineering, specialist in humanities and international services. The status of residence is permitted for foreigners, who have higher expertise, techniques such as academic background or career history with a contract with public and private entity in Japan.

Japanese envoy said that Information Technology (IT) software engineer are included in this status of residence.

According to MoC signed between both sides, the agreement will open new avenues for Pakistanis to work in 14 Japanese sectors, including nursing care, building clinic, agriculture, fisheries, hotel management, food and beverages, aircraft maintenance and airports ground handling staff, shipbuilding, material processing, industrial machinery, constructions, car mechanic, electronics and electronic machinery in cards to import skilled labor force.

Yusuke Shindo said that in current scenario, Japan was facing shortage of labor force, "We need to import skilled laborers from 10 countries including Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and other Association of South East Asian Nations (ASAIN).

He also praised the Pakistani workers who were working in Japan, saying that they were more skilled and working with full commitment and honesty.

He said that professional skills and proficiency in Japanese language would be must for workers to work in Japan under this policy.

Senior diplomat said that Japan and Pakistan have enjoyed historical diplomatic and economic relation, where Japan has always supported Pakistan in every situation.

Replying to a question, the ambassador said that Pakistan and Japan are looking for increasing bilateral cooperation in agricultural-based industry and value addition as Japan has already an-

Alvi reiterates support to IOJ&K people

ISLAMABAD: While paying homage to the founding leaders on Pakistan Day, President Dr Arif Alvi expressed unshakable support with the people of Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir who had been subjected to an inhuman lockdown and communication blockade for over seven months.

"I assure the people of Jammu and Kashmir that Pakistan will stand shoulder to shoulder with them and will continue its moral, political and diplomatic support for their legitimate right of self-determination," the president said in a message on Pakistan Day being commemorated on March 23.

The president said that March 23rd was an important landmark in the history of our nation as on this day in 1940, the historic Lahore Resolution was passed which united the Muslims of the sub-continent for a greater objective.

The Muslims of the subcontinent through their collective will, expressed unwavering resolve to carve out a separate homeland for themselves wherein they could lead their lives in accordance with their own religion, traditions, values and culture. Today, he said, they were paying homage to the Father of the Nation Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. —APP

Twin cities witness decline in traffic, public turn out after COVID-19 fear

ISLAMABAD: The twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad has witnessed a decline in traffic and public turnout in markets, bazaars and major thoroughfares on intercity routes after novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

The major arteries of IJP Road, Murree Road, 9th Avenue, Expressway and others were less inhabited by automobiles plying within the twin cities.

The major Markaz (business hubs) of federal capital had fewer visitors as compared to routine week-start day. The Commercial Market of Rawalpindi, 6th and 7th Road, Raja Bazaar and many other routes within the garrison city also witnessed less traffic as compared to other days.

Talking to APP, Saman Baig a university student said the educational institutions across the country had been closed due to the impending risk of COVID-19 outbreak which had reduced traffic on roads mainly at peak hours.

"My university has also been closed and I have just visited the market to get some grocery where people were buying household items and other goods but interestingly the ratio of masses in the market was apparently less. People were found wearing pollution masks and safety gloves and had also put on masks on their kids' faces," she added.

Ms Baig regretted that she had found increased prices of hand sanitizers as an ordinary pocket size of Rs100 was sold for

Rs280 which was disappointing. However, she said ordinary hand washing soaps were also serving the same purpose to keep oneself safe from the virus. "I preferred to buy hand washing soaps that are at the moment more easily available in the market," she added.

She mentioned that pollution masks were not easily available to public in Rawalpindi where the district administration should take strict measures to provide relief to the masses.

When contacted Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) spokesperson Dr Waseem Khawaja, he said the masks were necessary for an infected person and his attendant to wear whereas it was unnecessary for normal people to keep on masks outdoors.

PEMRA advises media houses to conduct shows without gatherings

The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (PEMRA) has advised the media houses to promote "social distancing" and conduct morning, satirical/comedy shows without inviting any gathering/live audience in view of precautionary measures advised by the health experts. As it is an established fact that the virus is contagious and spreads from one person to another. Therefore, a reasonable distance i.e. one metre approximately should be maintained in order to securing oneself as well as others. —APP

USF awards contracts worth Rs 2.8b for hi-speed broadband

By Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication through Universal Service Fund (USF) has awarded six next generation broadband for Sustainable Development (NGBSD) projects worth Rs. 2.8 billion for the socio-economic uplift of people in the first six months of Financial Year 2019-20.

Through these projects, hi-speed mobile broadband access is being provided to over nine million citizens in total, residing in 4333 mauzas spread across 13 districts.

The contracts of these projects were awarded for hi-speed broadband services in Hyderabad (districts of Matari,

Tando Allahyar, Hyderabad, Tando Muhammad Khan, Badin & Sujawal), Bahawalpur (district of Bahawalpur), Rahimiyarkhan (district of Rahimiyar Khan), Bahawalnagar (Bahawalnagar), DG Khan (DG Khan & Layyah) and Tharparkar (Tharparkar & Mirpurkhas), according to performance report of USF, an organization under Ministry of IT and Telecommunication. The contracts of these projects were awarded to Telenor and PMCL (Jazz).

Through the implementation of all these projects, Ministry of IT & Telecommunication through USF is enabling citizens of Pakistan to harness dividends of the fourth industrial revolution.

All these programmes are acting as a catalyst to stimulate economic growth,

create jobs, trigger financial inclusion, decrease disparities, reduce social inclusion and enable improvements in education, health care and other social services.

They are also helping Pakistan achieve the SDGs and also creating a favorable environment for implementation of the Prime Minister's Digital Pakistan Programme, as broadband coverage has been identified as a primary pillar of the programme. In order to further spread the benefits of these projects, USF plans to award contracts for the projects in Sanghar (Umerkot & Sanghar), Muzaffargarh (Muzaffargarh & Rajanpur), Kurram (Kurram), Bolan (Kacchi-Bolan & Jhal Magsi) and Jaffarabad (Jaffarabad, Sohbatpur and Nasirabad) in the second half of the FY 2019-20.

CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19)

It just got real!

With the world badly affected by the pandemic virus, it is high time for us in Pakistan to come together as a responsible nation, and fight against Coronavirus by slightly altering your lifestyle and being cautious.

Basic Steps
Social distancing, regular hand washing, keeping a sanitizer handy when outside, and wearing a facemask may save you from catching the virus.

Remember
Coronavirus is large in size hence facemask prevents its entry. Cover your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze.

It stays on fabrics for up to 9 hours. Washing clothes, or staying exposed to the sun will serve the purpose of killing it.

Avoid touching public spaces like doors and counters, elevator buttons, etc., as your hands can carry the virus from such surfaces.

Avoid touching your mouth, eyes, and nose with unwashed hands.

Stay Alert - Stay Safe - Stay Healthy

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