

962 COVID-19 positive cases reported in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: Around 3,914 COVID-19 suspects have so far been brought to the quarantine facilities of the district, out of which 962 cases were tested positive who were provided the required treatment and 242 discharged after recovery. According to daily situation report issued by Directorate of Public Relations (DPR) Punjab, 372 COVID-19 confirmed patients were admitted in different hospitals of the city including 149 belonged to Rawal Town, 67 Pothohar town, 88 Rawalpindi cantt, 23 Gujar Khan, 32 Taxila, 4 Kahuta, 3 Kalar Syedan and 6 from Murree, "he said. —APP

The Business

Lahore, Monday, May 11, 2020 Ramazan 17, 1441

Another aircraft carrying 17 ton COVID-19 safety equipment arrives

ISLAMABAD: An aircraft carrying 17 ton important medical supplies and personal protective equipment (PPE) arrived here on Sunday from China. A spokesman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) said the aircraft, sixth in a series of consignments, has arrived Islamabad from Beijing. The equipment included 24 X-ray machines and parts, 371,000 virus collection tubes (VTMs) for testing and one million masks of various nature for COVID-19 patients. China were being transported to Pakistan by Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircrafts. —APP

Cement exports decrease 5.06pc during first three quarters

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cement from the country witnessed decreased of 5.06 percent during the first three quarters financial year 2019-20 as compared to the corresponding period of last year.

The country exported cement worth US \$210.073 million during July-March (2019-20) against the exports of US \$221.258 million during July-March (2018-2019), showing negative growth of 5.06 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of cement grew by 7.30 percent from 5,206,393 metric tons to 5,586,355 metric tons, according to the data. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the cement exports also increased by 4.92 percent during the month of March 2020 as compared to the same month of last year. The cement exports in March 2020 were recorded at \$16.150 million against the exports of \$15.392 million in March 2019, the PBS data revealed.

On month-on-month basis the export of cement decreased by 32.11 percent in March 2020 as compared to the exports of \$23.790 million in February 2020.

Tea imports shrink 15.61pc to \$376.240m in 3 quarters

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The tea imports into the country witnessed decline of 15.61 percent during the first three quarters of the current fiscal year (2019-20) as against the same period of last fiscal year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The tea imports into the country were recorded at \$376.240 million during July-March (2019-20) as against imports of \$445.816 million in July-March (2018-19), according to latest PBS data. In terms of quantity, the tea imports witnessed decline of 8.68 percent during the period under review by going down from the imports of 170.311 metric tons last year to 155.528 metric tons during the current year. The imports of overall food commodities during the period under review declined by 7 percent as these decline from \$4261.355 million last year to \$3963.258 million during the current year. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the tea imports into the country decreased by 0.69 percent during the month of March 2020 compared to the same month of last year. The tea imports into the country in March 2020 were recorded at \$51.872 million compared to the imports of \$52.231 million in March 2019. On month-on-month basis, the food imports increased by 5.36 percent in March 2020 when compared to the imports of \$49.234 million in February 2019, the PBS data revealed.

It is pertinent to mention that the country's merchandise trade deficit witnessed significant reduction in first ten months (July-April) of current financial year and declined by 25.68% as compared to the corresponding period of last year. During the period under review country's exports registered about 3.92% decrease, whereas imports witnessed sharp decline of 16.50%, the PBS reported.

PR completes 95pc rehabilitation work of Sibbi-Khost section

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has completed around 95 percent rehabilitation and restoration work on Sibbi-Khost section having length of 132.50 kilometers and rest would be completed soon.

The department was facing several problems in completing rehabilitation and restoration work of Sibbi-Khost section due to law and order situation, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP.

He said the project was in progress under Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) through M/S National Logistics Cell (NLC), where rehabilitation of bridges, railway stations and short embankments have been completed and laying of track was in progress.

The section was scheduled to be completed in last, but due to slow development work, the department was not able to complete rehabilitation work on time, he added.

The official said the Ministry of Railways has actively pursued the revival of Pakistan Railways infrastructure and had undertaken steps to rebuild the Sibbi-Khost section.

He said eight bridges of Pakistan Railways were destroyed by extremists resulting non-availability of the suitable transportation facility to natives.

With the restoration of the section, he said people of the areas would not only be facilitated by passengers and freight trains operation but certainly also improve the economic condition of the areas. To a question, regarding the availability of restaurant at Rohri Station in Sindh province, he said there was only one canteen functioning at the station, where hygienic food standards are maintained to ensure health of passengers. He said to ensure standard quality of food, random and surprise checking raids were conducted by Divisional Commercial Officer (DCO) and ACOs and found that oil of authorized company bread, rice, flour and soft drinks were being used.



ISLAMABAD: No social distancing as vendors purchase seasonal fruits from main fruits and vegetables market.

Montgomery auto market suffers Rs 1.5b loss in lockdown: Shahid Nazir

By M Jahangir Hayat

The Auto Spare Parts market at the Montgomery Road Lahore has suffered an estimated over Rs 1.5 billion loss during the COVID-19 lockdown, while over 50,000 businessmen and workers are sitting idle in their home without work.

Although we are paying the workers despite there is no work being done in the market considering it a moral obligation; however, the daily wagers are hit hard whom we could see on the market and allied roads.

These views were shared by Montgomery Road Lahore Amjum-e-Tajran President Shahid Nazir while talking to *Daily The Business* here the other day.

Following are some excerpts from his interview:

Q: How has the Lahore Auto Spare Parts been affected with the COVID-19 and the lockdown?

A: The Auto Spare Parts market at the Montgomery Road Lahore has suffered an estimated over Rs1.5 billion loss during the COVID-19 lockdown but the government has also lost billions of rupees revenue because 70 to 80 percent auto spare parts business is linked with import while over 50,000 workers are sitting idle in their home without work.

Although we are paying the lot which is employed with us considering it as our moral obligation and for sure in the next month it will be hard to pay them, the daily wagers, on the other hand, are hit hard whom we could see on the market and allied roads.

The pre-COVID-19 purchasing power of the people has already been reduced and the lockdown has added fuel to the fire.

The mechanics that are associated with the market also have their families and this way as per a rough estimate 4 to 5 lakh individuals are facing the utmost hard time of their lives.

Q: How would you be able to recover from these losses once the COVID-19 ends?

A: We have to stand up which is not an easy task. When the things will get better this is what we can say is a riddle for which currently no one knows the exact time period.

The traders' bodies and research and development departments are of the view that whole of 2020 may be a tough period for the trade and industry.



Q: What should the government do for you in this regard?

A: The government should open the businesses either big or small but under certain SOPs and we are hopeful that the government will surely open the market places.

In this regard we are committed to act upon the guidance of the government which will enable us cope with the current deterioration of the business due to the COVID-19.

We can assure that we will abide by the instruction as our people associated with Auto Spare Parts can be run with minimum staff strength.

Q: What section of Auto Spare Parts' business has been the most affected?

A: All most all sections including importers, traders mechanics and their supportive staff, daily wagers, selling of auto parts, individuals concerning with the job of fitting and fixtures in the autos have been hit hard.

We already have been facing tremendous decline in the business activities as due to the crisis the margins have declined unprecedentedly and it has become very hard to survive after the COVID-19 crisis.

Q: What will be the pattern of your working when the government will remove the lockdown?

A: Obviously, if we are allowed to open the markets will act upon the government's SOPs and run the while fighting with the pandemic.

We have already started cleaning our market, shops and reducing the seats in the show rooms and in the factories ensuring social distancing.

Being the president of Montgomery Market I would suggest all the stakeholders to ensure cent percent implementation of the government

SOPs.

We have also planned to spray the metal and jewelry so there must not be any chance of infection by the products.

Q: How are you going to meet your rental expenses of your outlets and showrooms?

A: Where there the government is involved we have requested the government to waive the rents of our outlets and the showrooms and to a great extent the government has cooperated with us but where there are the premises are owned by the private landowners we are discussing the matters and looking for the mid ways because for the private landlord are often depending upon the rental incomes and they cannot afford.

Q: What is your take on the demurrages and detention charges free days amid the natural calamity like COVID-19 as most of the auto parts business depends upon the import business?

A: The government should have to take stern action against the private port terminal operators and the shipping lines, who are defying government's directive about extending free time upto May 30 to save the import business in the country.

So far as the demurrages and detention charges are concerned the government has failed to implement its own orders as the private port terminal operators and the shipping lines have given no weightage to the directives of the government functionaries including Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Ministry of Industry and Production, chief collectors, collectors and are charging illegal demurrages and detention charges.

The business community has run as cash crunch due to the stuckup of the payment and there is no liquidation of the stocks in the godowns as well.

In such circumstances it is next to impossible to pay such the huge demurrages and detention charges.

We are not able to get our consignments release due to the shortage of cash. All around the globe the importers have been extended relief of demurrages and detention and the Pakistani importers should also be facilitated in the extraordinary condition when the pandemic has affected all the walks of life.

I myself have seven containers stuck up at the ports and I am unable to get them released

Aviation sector gets Rs502.971m for 15 projects

ISLAMABAD: The government has released funds amounting to Rs 502.971 million during first 10 months of the current fiscal year to execute 15 Aviation Division projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2019-20) against the total allocation of Rs1,266.505 million. According to the official data as of May 8, an amount of Rs 225 million has been provided for construction of Airport Security Force (ASF) Camp at Islamabad International Airport (IIAP), and Rs 100 million to build Rain Water Harvesting Kasana dam, which stood 100 percent of the total allocation for these projects in the PSDP. While, Rs3.532 million have been released against the allocation of Rs 23.532 million for establishment of a Specialized Medium Range Weather Forecasting Center (SMRWC) and strengthening of weather forecasting system in the country. Similarly, a sum of Rs. 30 million has been provided under a project to install Weather Surveillance Radar at Karachi, and Rs. 30 million for installation of the same facility at Multan, for which Rs. 160 million and Rs. 50 million had been allocated respectively in the PSDP. An amount of Rs10.250 million has been issued for the Reverse Linkage project between Pakistan Meteorological Department and Marmara Research Centre (MRC) Turkey (IDB), and Rs 10 million for construction of double storey ladies hostel/barrack. —APP

Zhejiang export fair begins from 12th

BEIJING: A five-day online 2020 "Zhejiang Export Commodity Online Fair" to promote Pakistan's hardware and electromechanical products will be held from May 12 to May 16, as per the Department of Commerce of Zhejiang Province, China.

The event organizer Zhejiang Samexpo Exhibition Company said, the events industry has taken a massive hit as businesses continue to withdraw from planned events, so an online fair could provide bilateral trade opportunities for Pakistan and China's enterprises through an accurate match and online negotiation, China Economic Net reported on Sunday.

It said the Pakistan-China trade fairs are moving online as the COVID-19 pandemic adversely impacted the events industry. The traditionally face-to-face communication has shifted to a screen-to-screen one.

Recently, an online investment promotion meeting for foreign investment projects was successfully held in Heilongjiang, China.

More than 30 well-known enterprises from Pakistan, Greece, Germany, Britain, the United States and other countries have been invited to participate in the remote trade fair with Chinese merchants from different cities of Heilongjiang Province. The industries related to the online meeting included biomedicine, equipment manufacturing, graphite, cultural tourism and agriculture.

On April 28, twenty-eight Pakistani enterprises involved in electro-mechanical, hardware, building materials, and epidemic prevention materials, etc. have been invited to participate in China's Shandong Export Commodities (Pakistan) Cloud Exhibition. By "one-on-one" negotiations through precise matching, 124 meetings have been held between both sides, indicating fruitful results.

Tecno, one of the leading mobile phone brands of China's Shenzhen Transsion Holdings Co., Ltd. unpacked its most awaited Camon 15 in first-ever Live Broadcast form in Pakistan this March. The Camon 15 launch event was recorded on March 15 and was broadcasted on GEO News and on more than 13 social media channels, including YouTube and Facebook. The hashtag #TecnoGrandOnlineLaunch has been trending on Twitter since the online event attracted 300,000 visitors. —APP

'Self-reliance in manufacturing a miraculous development'

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The contribution of Pakistani researchers, engineers and scientists toward attaining self-reliance in manufacturing of the essential medical equipment like masks, sanitizers, ventilators and oxygenators to fight the prevailing health crisis of COVID-19 is not only a miraculous development but evidence of having brilliant minds in the science and technology sector.

The researchers and scientists of this country, once lagging behind in the science and technology sector, are now diligently working on manufacturing of such products which can assist its people in fighting this pandemic instead of depending on the aid from other countries.

Soon after the pandemic outbreak, the researchers team of National University of Science and Technology (NUST) took lead in developing disinfecting tele-operated robots and aerial spraying drones for decontamination of spaces, robust and cost-effective testing kits for detection of Coronavirus, high-quality sanitizers for microbial control, thermal monitoring camera to detect without touching, bilingual COVID-19 self-screening app and ventilators systems for short term stabilization of the patients.

While Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) was tasked to work on manufacturing of indigenous ventilators which were in the process of licensing.

CPNE urges govt to release direct payments of dues

From Our Staff Correspondent

KARACHI: The Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE) has said the role of independent and responsible media has become more important in the context of public awareness during current crisis and there is an urgent need for all stakeholders including federal and provincial governments to reflect the situation of coronavirus, financial and other difficulties faced by the people so that they can tackle the current problems.

These views were expressed by CPNE President Arif Nizami at a meeting of Standing Committee, which was attended by Standing Committee Members from across the country through video link.

In the meeting, the Standing Committee Members have passed a resolution stating that the Federal Government, by abolishing government's advertisements quota of local and regional newspapers

and periodicals across the country, has brought these newspapers & periodicals to the brink of closure which will create more unemployment and poverty. The regional and local newspapers & periodicals are not only the backbone of responsible and strong media, but they are also providing journalism-related human resource training and manpower to mainstream media outlets and other institutions. In addition, the local media also provides basic platform to highlight local problems and issues related to economy and leadership. The government's policy to ignore regional and local media outlets can extremely damage all the country's institutions.

The CPNE said the government's advertisements are very important for all newspapers & periodicals and its distribution to only few selected newspapers will be a very unfair and undemocratic act, therefore, the CPNE has urged that the government must initiate probe of the

irregularities, corruption and looting of public exchequers in the issuance of government advertisements in the past and in this regard, a policy should be formulated on an emergency basis to address it in the future. The CPNE further claimed that the government and provinces should also realize the fact that mainstream media are covering the four or five big cities in the country, whereas regional and local newspapers & periodicals – spread all over Pakistan including districts, cities, regions – have a profound effect on entire society.

CPNE demands that 25 per cent quota of regional and local newspapers & periodicals in government advertisements should be restored and fully implemented. This step will be of great help to the local media and newspapers in playing their important role in the domain of country's journalistic, economic, social and intellectual awareness.

The CPNE, expressing concern over

the long-standing dues of government advertisements of media houses, said that thousands of media workers and their media outlets are severely affected due to this unfair practice.

Owing to the prolonged lockdown in the country and preparations of upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr, the media outlets and media workers are facing financial difficulties.

In the meeting, the CPNE requested federal and provincial governments to immediately release direct payments of their dues to media outlets so that salaries of media workers could be paid before Eid-ul-Fitr.

Any kind of indirect payment may create further problems for media workers as the indirect payments released by the governments in past to various companies never reach the media outlets.

The CPNE, criticizing over centralization of media selection of government advertisements, demands for ensuring

fair, transparent and inclusive and wide spread of distribution of government advertisements.

It said that it is not appropriate for the government to give advertisements at the mercy of one or two people of the center since this would lead to increasing human error, injustice and corruption.

The CPNE demanded that government should restore previous authority by regional PID Offices as well as concerned govt offices, departments and institutions for media selection of government advertisements.

The CPNE has demanded the governments to release the approved funds of local news agencies.

It said that the federal government was not issuing their funds for last two years despite its approval from the National Assembly.

The meeting also expressed its deep concern over the suspension of NEO TV license by the government and demanded

restoration of NEO TV so that hundreds of people connected to it could be saved from unemployment.

The meeting was attended by CPNE President Arif Nizami, Secretary General Dr Jabbar Khattak, Vice Presidents Sardar Khan Niazi, Iqram Sehgal, Muhammad Haider Amin, Anwar Sajidi, Dr Hafiz Sanaullah Khan, Senior Members Amir Mahmood, Ayaz Khan, Irshad Ahmed Arif, Ghulam Nabi Chandio, Tanveer Shaukat, Tahir Farooq, Shakeel Ahmad Turabi, Arif Baloch, Hamid Hussain Abidi, Abdul Rehman Mangrio, Maqsood Yousufi, Aijazul Haq, Abdul Khalique Ali, Akmal Chauhan, Ashraf Sohail, Bashir Ahmad Memon, Kazim Khan, Khalilur Rehman, Mahmood Alam Khalid, Muhammad Tahir, Owais Raazi, Muhammad Irfan, Sher Muhammad Khuhawar, Tazeen Akhtar, Waqas Ahiq, Zubair Khalid Mahmood, Zulfikar Ahmed Rahat, Munazza Seham and Bilquees Jahan.