

PM visits late Dr Ijaz Ahsan's family for condolence

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday visited the residence of founding member of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Dr Ijaz Hassan in Lahore to condole over his demise with the bereaved family. The prime minister expressed his condolence with deceased's brother Barrister Aitzah Ahsan and other family members and offered Fateha for the departed soul. He also paid tribute to the services of late Dr Ijaz Ahsan as the founding member of the PTL. —APP

The Business

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PPP chief telephones Khaqan Abbasi to inquire his health

ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Saturday telephoned former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and inquired about his health. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi was tested positive of COVID-19 couple of days ago, said a press release issued by the party secretariat. Bilawal Bhutto expressed concern over the spread of COVID-19 pandemic in the country and urged the government for taking action according to the advice of doctors and health experts. —APP

Textile industry demands reduction in turnover tax

— Apparel sector totally ignored in budget: PHMA

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers Association (PHMA) has termed the budget a hoax, stating that the value-added textile apparel exporters and manufacturers have been ignored totally, as no major incentives have been suggested in the budget for them.

With charged emotions, the members of the apparel sector assembled at the PHMA zonal office and expressed serious concerns over the new budget, protesting over the absence of any support for the ailing textile sector and its dwindling exports.

PHMA Vice-Chairman Shafiq Butt said that Pakistan's export has declined massively due to the outbreak of coronavirus throughout the world. The country's exports have reduced to \$957 million in April 2020 from \$2.089 billion in the same month of the previous year showing massive decline of 54.19 percent.

In view of declining exports, the government must have announced some relief to support the export sector, he said and added that PHMA had suggested the authorities to revive zero-rated status to the export-oriented industry to resolve the liquidity crunch due to stuck up refunds.

The textile industry was also demanding a reduction in the turnover tax, enabling the industry to compete with regional competitors.

He said that PHMA had also demanded of the continuation of energy package for export industry to ensure the provision of electricity at 7.5 cents per kWh and gas at \$6.5 per MMBTU in next budgetary year but no recommendation of exporting sector was entertained by the government in Budget.

Shafiq Butt said that budget has become a bitter pill for the businessmen who are finding it difficult to swallow it. The withdrawal of zero-rated facility dismayed the exporters, while cost of production are continued to rise.

The all members of the PHMA had been dismayed since the withdrawal of zero-rating facility. He said despite firm assurance by the authorities that it would be an uphill task to get refund of 17 percent sales tax from Federal Board of Revenue. He said the textile sector would be ruined as a result of this step.

He quoted the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which had recently projected that Pakistan's exports and imports both would reduce due to the economic shocks from the rapid propagation of the COVID-19 outbreak. Exports are estimated to reduce by \$1.86 billion to \$23.732 billion during FY21. Similarly, imports are projected to decline by \$4.64 billion to \$48.291 billion during the outgoing financial year.

WCOP hails Pakistan's National Budget 2020-21

The Business Report

LONDON: The World Congress of Overseas Pakistanis (WCOP) has appreciated Pakistan government for presenting a National Budget for fiscal year 2020-21, without imposing new taxes, despite a difficult situation due to COVID-19 pandemic in the country.

"I think this budget is the best effort in the current scenario replete with uncertain future. No taxes have been added and construction industry has been promoted that could play a vital role in taking off the economy in post COVID-19 time", Arif Anis Malik Executive Director of WCOP (UK) told mediamen while commenting Pakistan's national budget 2020-21 here on Sunday.

Arif Anis Malik further said that Pakistan's recent Fiscal Budget 2020-21 was the most difficult since its inception as coronavirus has wreaked havoc with the national economic management.

"Not only Pakistan but even the G8 countries were feeling the bite of the pandemic and I think this budget was the best efforts in current scenario replete with uncertain future", he remarked.



BEIJING: Chinese students of a primary school attend their class implementing all SOPs to contain coronavirus.

Pak to start making COVID-19 diagnostic kits soon, says Fawad

— Kits approved by DRAP for commercial use and is likely to bring down cost of corona tests

By Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has developed indigenous COVID-19 diagnostic kits that have been approved by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) for commercial use and is likely to bring down the cost of coronavirus tests in the country, said Fawad Chaudhry Federal Minister for Science and Technology.

"We were mostly importing COVID-19 test kits from China. Now our scientists have developed our own Polymerase Chain Reaction equipment," he said in an interview with Arab News.

Chaudhry informed that the kit was developed by experts at the National University of Science and Technology with more than 90 percent accuracy which was about 20 percent better than the imported tests. "It is a totally domestic kit and will help us reduce our import bill," he added.

"Likewise, it will bring down the cost of COVID-19 tests to one third of what it is."

The minister also sounded hopeful about developing domestic ventilators within the next few weeks since clinical trials of four machines have already entered their final phase.

"Once these trials are over, we will ask commercial entities to start manufacturing these ventilators. In most of the countries, including the United States, motor companies are manufacturing ventilators. Therefore, we are also bringing motor companies into it. I hope we will be able to produce more than 100 ventilators in the first three months," he said.

Chaudhry informed that the Ministry of Science and Technology had predicted that Pakistan would hit the COVID-19 peak in June.

"We are at the peak right now," he continued. "However, it is hard to determine

it in terms of numbers or duration since this virus spreads exponentially. Once it gets going, stopping it becomes quite difficult."

The minister said the coronavirus pandemic would remain at its peak for more than two months in Pakistan. "That is usually the time this virus takes to reach the peak," he explained. "It will take about the same duration of two to three months to slow down the infection rate."

Asked if a strict lockdown was the only way to control the spread of the virus, he reiterated his government's position and maintained that smart lockdown was the only way forward.

"You cannot lockdown the whole country for an indefinite period," Chaudhry said. "It is a country of 220 million people. A complete lockdown will trigger the shortage of food and other necessary items, making life difficult for many people in a country like Pakistan."

Smart lockdown imposes in Muzaffarabad, Capital

By Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: After a surging rise in COVID-19 spread across the country, various parts of the country were put under complete lockdown with large number of positive cases reported in those areas where Muzaffarabad city was under complete lockdown with 200,000 population, two Sectors of Islamabad G-9/2 and G-8/3 were locked with approximately 50,000 population.

The test, trace and quarantine (TTQ) strategy developed by the government helped to impose smart lockdowns with the chunk of affected population home quarantined for reducing the contagion outbreak.

The smart lockdown had been imposed in various parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Sindh, Gilgit Baltistan and the federal capital.

The data provided by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) revealed that the core objective of the TTQ strategy was to identify coronavirus spreading hotspots and cluster areas, imposing smart lockdown in the affected places, quarantining of positive and suspected patients, contact tracing of the COVID-19 patients, optimization of healthcare facilities at all levels, augmentation of testing capacity, boosting healthcare capacity to avoid it getting overrun

with the increasing number of patients and meticulous monitoring through technology and trained workforce.

The strategy was developed with the assistance of Pakistan Army which was one of the best and productive solutions to be adopted to contain the increasing risk of pandemic outbreak through smart lockdowns.

The strategy managed to build up a strong and grass roots level network of trained community activists and leaders to mobilize the masses to fully comply with safety guidelines and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to contain the risk of the contagion.

As many as 66 districts administrations among 1500 Union Councils were engaged in collaboration with the rural support programmes (RSPs). The available data showed that Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK)'s 8 districts had 127 local support organizations (LSOs) functional at the basic tier of rural union councils under the ambit of National Rural Support Programme (NRSP). Similarly, Balochistan provinces' 11 districts had 223 LSOs under NRSP and BRSP, Gilgit Baltistan (GB)'s 9 districts had 58 LSOs under Agha Khan RSP, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) had 5 LSOs under NRSP working, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 7 districts had 141 LSOs under various RSPs operational and Punjab's 14 districts had 406 LSOs.

"Under these RSPs collaboration around 20 million people would get benefit from community awareness and education programmes and relief activities to control the coronavirus epidemic."

Since the strategy was launched across the country after completing its pilot phase, around 2,117 community awareness raising sessions were carried out in the shortest span of time across the country. However, 13,700 mosque announcements were made, about 17,813 information providing pamphlets, brochures and leaflets were distributed, few suspected cases were also identified with the help of this strategy and were referred to the respective health departments, 4,918 face-masks were also distributed along with safety gloves whereas 3,430 families were provided soaps for hand-washing.

It merits mention here that under the NRSP collaboration in ICT around 80 women and 20 men were trained as community activists that signifies the commitment of the masses especially women to spearhead social efforts to contain the risk of outbreak through education and awareness.

Moreover, RSPN has established a monitoring system for this initiative and its format was shared with the NCOC where the information would be provided to NCOC weekly and fortnightly on this format.

2,287 new corona cases emerge, 15 more patients died: Murad

By Our Staff Correspondent

KARACHI: As many as 2287 new cases of coronavirus were detected when 1,1197 tests were conducted while 15 more patients died lifting the death toll to 831 in Sindh.

This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement issued here from CM House on Sunday.

He said that 11197 new tests were conducted which diagnosed 2287 cases that constituted 20.5 percent result. As far as 298,332 tests have been conducted against which 53,805 cases were diagnosed that constituted overall 18 percent positive result of the total tests, he said.

According to Syed Murad Ali Shah 15 more patients lost their lives while struggling against the virus. Now the death toll stemming from COVID-19 has reached to 831 or 1.5 percent of the total patients. He said that 27,368 patients were under treatment at present, of them 25483 were in home isolation, 96 at Isolation centers and 1789 at different hospital. He added that 573 patients were in critical condition, of them 80 have been shifted on ventilators. The CM Sindh said that 1219 patients recovered overnight and discharged from the system. The number of patients recovered so far has reached to 25,606 which showed 47.7 percent recovery rate.

Giving district-wise break up, the CM Sindh said that out 2287 cases 1499 belonged to Karachi, they include 418 South, 369 East, 242 Central, 185 Korangi, 163 West and 122 Malir.

He said that Sukkur has 68, Khairpur 49, Hyderabad 44, Ghotki 39, Matiari 38, Shaheed Benazirabad 37, Larkana 22, Sanghar 20, Mirpurkhas 15, Kashmore 14, Jamshoro 13, Sujawal 10, Thatta eight, Shikarpur and Dadu seven each, Badin four, Umarkot and Naushehroferoze three each, Kambar and Jacobabad have one each. Syed Murad Ali Shah urged people of Sindh to follow the SOP, wear masks while going out of home and avoid crowding.

Govt fails to create jobs: APBF

Terms it a bubble budget, apparently feeling good but doesn't contain substance

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has said that Pakistan needs millions of jobs annually but the government has not taken any concrete step in federal budget for job creations for the unemployed youth.

The APBF had submitted proposals with the federal government, urging it to come up with a relief-oriented budget in the face of COVID-19, but unfortunately no such announcement in this regard was made.

Commenting on the 2020-21 Budget, APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood termed it a bubble budget, apparently feeling good but does not contain substance. He condemned the economic manager's calculator approach in finalizing the budget, which focused more on revenue collection and less on the fulfillment of its major objective of giving a long-term direction to the economy.

He stated that the Forum had demanded of the government to take concrete steps in the upcoming Federal Budget 2020-21 to keep industrial wheel running especially of SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. "The government will have to make visible reduction in taxes in the budget to help revive the businesses, which are near to bankruptcies owing to prolonged worldwide lockdowns amidst coronavirus. The major focus should have been on greater relief to the documented and registered SMEs."

APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi stated this budget shows the failure of the Federal Board of Revenue as the reduction of taxpayers in active taxpayers list clearly indicates the failure of the government, he added. Terming the federal budget as a number game with no incentives for industry and more privileges for few sectors, he said that the government is non-serious to explore new avenues for revenue generation and no efforts had been taken to plug revenue leakages amounting in billions.

Ibrahim Qureshi criticized the Federal Board of Revenue for failing in broadening



QUETTA: A view of closed petrol pump due to shortage of petrol.

Global economies take a hit from COVID-19 pandemic

The Business Report

ISLAMABAD: The deadly COVID-19 continues its catastrophic journey by hitting the global economies hard bringing about serious financial downturn and negatively impacting the projected gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate of all the sound economies, including those of the developing countries like Pakistan.

With continuous rise in the health and human toll, the economic damage to different sectors across the globe has come as a major shock for all the countries.

This downward trend is said to have attributed to the total global GDP loss of \$9 trillion. This eco-

omic snapshot reflects the economic outlook of many countries.

Though Pakistan still fares well when compared with the global projected figures. According to available data, the projected change in GDP of various countries in the year 2020 as compared to 2019 would remain as follows in case no second wave of the coronavirus emerges:

UK -11.5%, France -11.4%, Italy -11.3%, Spain -11.1%, Euro area -9.1%, Russia -8%

Canada -8%, Brazil -7.4%, US -7.3%, Germany -6.6%, Japan -6%, India -3.7% and China -2.6%.

Comparing with the above numbers, Pakistan's GDP next year is estimated to stand around -0.4.

According to the Economic Sur-

vey of Pakistan, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) was estimated to have faced Rs 3 trillion loss. The GDP was expected to increase by three per cent with the support of economic policies, but it would now go down by -0.4pc.

Further reliable figures revealed that the United States' GDP during the current quarter was down by 48% and that of the United Kingdom by 20.4% in the month of April alone. The European Union's GDP, which is 20% of the global GDP, saw its sharpest decline in the last 14 years. According to the World Bank's latest report, the baseline forecast envisions a 5.2 percent contraction in the global GDP in 2020, using market ex-