

'Iran inclusion in CPEC jolt to India'

ISLAMABAD: FM Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said India wanted to isolate Pakistan but it has now become isolated. "Inclusion of Iran in CPEC and peace in Afghanistan will benefit all. This is a jolt to India. India wanted to isolate Pakistan but it itself has been isolated", he said this in a statement issued here Friday. He observed Indian opposition is now criticizing Modi government. Several Indian soldiers were killed and injured during tension between China and India. NEPAL parliament has presented demands through resolution. No warmth in the relations between India and Bangladesh. —APP

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60pc health workers dissatisfied with response to virus: Survey

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Islamic Medical Association and Gallup has published the results of a new survey on Friday according to which 60% of healthcare workers in Pakistan are dissatisfied with the country's response to novel coronavirus. The same survey stated that 39% of the healthcare workers are happy with the country's strategy in battling the pandemic. Among those who expressed dissatisfaction with the response to the COVID-19 challenge, 65% are doctors and health professionals from KP and Balochistan. —APP

Hammad opens pre-launch of RCCI Expo

RAWALPINDI: Hammad Azhar, Industries and Production Minister inaugurated the pre-launch of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (RCCI) Virtual International Rawal Expo 2020.

On this occasion, the minister assured his ministry's full support to the expo. He said that through digital platform, domestic and local products can be better advertised. He welcomed the initiative of expo being organised amid Covid-19. He lauded RCCI for coming with an innovative idea of Virtual expo and expressed hope that others will follow the same. This is in line with PM Imran Khan vision of Digital Pakistan, he added.

Earlier, RCCI President Saboor Malik briefed the minister about the expo and other activities of the chamber. The Virtual International Rawal Expo will run from August 7 to 16th. What is special about the virtual platform is that there is no time limit for participating in the exhibition. Any stall holder or visitor will be able to participate on the online platform at any time in 24 hours. Companies from various sectors will be able to display their products. Senior Vice President Noshervan Khalil Khan, Vice President Hamza Sarosh, Group Leader Sohail Altaf and Chairman Rawal Expo Nasir Mirza was also present on the occasion. —DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Senator Shibli Faraz with press officers posted to various Pakistan embassies.

Ministry decides not to deport Cynthia Ritchie

ISLAMABAD: The Interior Ministry has decided not to deport US citizen Cynthia Ritchie.

The Ministry has taken this decision on PPP application seeking deporting US Blogger. Ministry has filed a copy of this decision in Islamabad High Court (IHC). Interior ministry has said in its decision according to security agencies report Cynthia has not been found involved in illegal and anti-state activities.

Interior ministry has given clean chit to US blogger Cynthia Ritchie. IHC has directed interior ministry to provide copy of the decision to the parties concerned. The ministry decision says foreigners visas were extended till August 31, therefore, Cynthia Ritchie can live in Pakistan till August 31 according to law.

Cynthia has filed a separate application seeking extension in her visa too. Action will be taken on her application regarding further extension after August 31 as per law. It may be mentioned that Cynthia Ritchie had done several tweets against PPP leadership including Benazir Bhutto. PPP had resorted to IHC for legal proceedings against her. —Online

Usman Buzdar going nowhere, says Shibli

ISLAMABAD: Information Minister Shibli Faraz has said there is no substance in the reports on Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Usman Buzdar exit from his office.

In his twitter message information minister said "Usman Buzdar is going nowhere. All such speculations are baseless and based on malafide intent. Earlier the reports were making rounds that Prime Minister Imran Khan had nodded yes on removing Usman Buzdar from his slot. The information minister has refuted such reports. —Online

Wheat crisis engulfing country, warns FPCCI

KARACHI: President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, FPCCI's Businessmen Panel Sr. Vice Chairman, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Friday said the most devastating wheat crisis is engulfing the country.

Apart from the influential mafia, the concerned departments are also responsible for messing up the wheat market through wrong decisions which is unfortunate, he said.

Mian Zahid Hussain said that at one hand government is trying to reduce the wheat and flour prices while on the other it is imposing taxes on the flour mills. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said the incompetent food bureaucracy is pushing the country into another crisis as federal and provincial governments have failed to achieve the wheat procurement target.

Flour mills were allowed to procure wheat only after the government went out of the cash which has not helped the food security situation. The former minister noted that the government has decided to import fifteen million tonnes of wheat but so far not a single kilogram of wheat has been imported. The private sector has acquired 122 permits to import 72500 tonnes of wheat but none has opened LCs while the authorities continue to work on snail pace without realizing the gravity of the situation. —Online

CAA clearing flying licenses, a victory: PALPA

KARACHI: The Pakistan Airlines Pilots Association (PALPA) has said clearing the flying licenses of pilots by Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) is victory of pilots' stance.

The PALPA said in a press release issued here aviation minister and PIA administration caused harm to the pilots working in national airlines and other countries. Declaring the flying licenses of pilots suspicious by the government led to undermine the credibility of PIA, PALPA said. The statement said DG CAA has himself acknowledged CAA has issued valid licenses. Pilots licenses issue was presented in the media and social media in wrong way. ATPL license of any pilot in Pakistan is neither fake nor dubious and our stance has been accepted today. —APP

Withdrawal of power subsidy to hit 18m consumers: FPCCI

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President, Mian Anjum Nisar, has opposed the government's move of power subsidies' withdrawal just for the revival of the stalled IMF programme, demanding rather substantial reduction in energy rates in line with the drastic fall in international oil prices.

FPCCI President said that the change in subsidies regime, amid increasing financial miseries on account of COVID-19, would hit at least 18 million consumers out of a total 27 million electricity connection holders across the country, as the cost of doing business has already increased manifold, leading to slowdown in economy and unemployment in the country.

He called for taking decisions after consultation with the stakeholders in this regard, instead of depending solely on the available fiscal space. Resisting the hike of almost 110% in gas prices, he endorsed the decision of OGRA for rejecting the demand of gas utilities to increase gas prices rather reducing the rates by almost 6% for consumers, which is a good step.

He said that the gas companies had recently sought the huge surge in gas tariff by up to Rs622 per mmbtu, putting an additional burden of Rs290 billion on industrial as well as domestic consumers, leading to further jump in cost of production. He said that instead of covering losses and enhancing the efficiencies, the gas utilities of Sui Southern Gas Company and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines

Limited were planning to shift their burden to the consumers. The Ministry of Petroleum, through a letter, had already directed the gas companies to reduce UFG losses from 6.3% to 4%, cut profit from 20% to 15%, besides reducing transmission and distribution losses but the directives were not followed, he argued.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that exporters and manufacturers are already greatly burdened and crushed due to rising tariffs of electricity, gas, water and other essential sources of power, leading to high costs of doing business in Pakistan as compared to our competing countries. He said that change in subsidies regime would significantly increase burden of Punjab based consumers due to increased theft and losses in other three provinces.

According to reports, the government has already cut the power subsidies by 36 percent in the budget as against last fiscal year's allocation of Rs226 billion because the government has allocated only Rs150 billion for power subsidies this year.

The electricity subsidies allocations in the budget are 60% less than the demand made on the basis of current concessional regime of agriculture tube-wells and exporters. FPCCI president called upon the government to take concrete measures and formulate effective policies to reduce the cost of doing business so as to jack up the country's exports. The government should merge all taxes, duties and contribution etc and introduce one-window operation for one-time payment of all dues he suggested.

He said that the gas prices were required

to be reduced further to pass on the benefit of lower international oil rates to consumers since the producer prices of gas were directly linked to global oil prices.

He said that the energy prices were retreating across the world but the gas prices were not being reduced in Pakistan.

Facilitation desk of Pakistan customs inaugurated at ICCI

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has taken another positive step for the facilitation of its members by establishing a Facilitation Desk of Pakistan Customs in its premises, which was inaugurated by Dr. Arslan Subcutageen, Member (Legal & Accounting - Customs) and Syed Muhammad Tariq Huda, Member (Customs Operations) of FBR in a ceremony held at ICCI.

With the establishment of Facilitation Desk, ICCI members would now be able to avail all Customs related services and get their issues resolved within the premises of ICCI instead of visiting various offices of Pakistan Customs. Addressing the inaugural ceremony, Dr. Arslan Subcutageen, Member (Legal & Accounting - Customs) and Syed Muhammad Tariq Huda, Member (Customs Operations) of FBR said that the facilitation desk would provide customs related services to the business community and help in resolving their issues.

They said that availability of Pakistan Customs facilitation desk in the premises of ICCI was a great facility that must be availed by the businessmen. They said close relations between businessmen and

NPMC reviews price trend of essential food items

ISLAMABAD: A meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) was held here at the Finance Division with Additional Finance Secretary (Exp) in the chair to discuss the price trend of essential food items.

The meeting was attended by the representatives from the provincial governments, Islamabad Capital Territory, Ministries of Industries, Interior, Commerce, Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, National Food Security & Research, Federal Board of Revenue, Competition Commission of Pakistan and Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The Chair advised the relevant authorities and the provincial governments to ensure smooth supply of essential food items at affordable prices and remove price disparity. The Chair further directed the CCP to play a proactive role to check carteliza-

tion and other anti-market practices.

Earlier, the meeting was informed that CPI inflation year on year was recorded at 8.6% in June 2020 over June 2019 and July-June CPI inflation on average rose to 10.7%. It was noted that inflation had been on declining trend till May 2020 but had been slightly up during the month of June 2020. It was also observed that price trend in international market was also following a rising trend on account of higher demand due to ease of lockdown conditions.

The meeting was told that the government in consultation with all stakeholders was taking proactive measures to control the general price level of daily use items at the federal, provincial and district levels. It was noticed that the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) which monitors the price movement of 51 essential items on weekly basis, had recorded an increase of 0.98%

for the week ended on 09th July, 2020.

The Chair discussed the rise in prices of poultry products with all stakeholders and also examined the demand and supply dynamics. Provincial govts and ICT were directed to take necessary measures to ensure smooth supply of poultry products at reasonable prices. The pre-Covid and post-Covid prices of face masks, sanitizers and oxygen cylinder were also came under discussion. The provinces and ICT Administration were asked to take necessary measures for provision of such items at reasonable prices. The role of middle men was also discussed in detail being responsible for increase in general price level of commodities and need to check the high profit margins. The Chair also appreciated the ICT, Sindh and Punjab governments for online delivery system of essential food items. —DNA



RAWALPINDI: A view of motorcyclist fell down on flooded road during heavy rain.

Additional gas being provided to K-Electric: Omar Ayub

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Power Division Omar Ayub Khan on Friday informed the Senate that the government was providing 290 Million Cubic Feet per day (MMCFFD) against 190 MMCFFD quota besides provision of 80 per cent Residual Fuel Oil (RFO) of total production to K-Electric to curtail power load-shedding in Karachi.

Responding to various supplementary questions during Question Hour, the minister said the K-Electric was a private company and its total power demand stood at 3400 MW. The government was ready to provide additional power to K-Electric from the national grid station but no investment was made in distribution system of the company during the past 10 years, he said.

The minister said K-Electric and

NTDC were also being pressed to set up 500 kV grid station and distribution points. He said at present, there was no shortfall of electricity as sufficient generation was available to meet with demand of electricity in the country.

Hence, no load shedding was being carried out in the country due to generation shortfall at present. However, the minister said load management was being carried out by distribution companies (DISCOS) on the basis of Aggregate Technical & Commercial losses recorded on each feeder in compliance to directives of the Federal Cabinet. Shut downs were being carried out on 11kV feeders for annual/scheduled maintenance which were duly publicized in electronic/print media. He said for load man-

agement monitoring an automatic metering system had been installed on all Grids/Feeders of the country.

The hourly schedule of load management was being fed into the system and all feeders are monitored 24/7 using this system, he added. The minister said any consumer could check its load management schedule and actual loadshedding status by using RoshanPakistan.pk website or Roshan Pakistan Mobile App.

To another question, Omar Ayub said some posts of linemen and assistant linemen were lying vacant in various DISCOs and process had already been started to fill the vacant posts. He said record over 23,000 MW was being retransmitted through distribution companies. Some 80 percent. —DNA