The Business

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Dr Asim allowed to travel abroad for treatment

KARACHI: An accountability court of Karachi on Tuesday again allowed former petroleum minister Dr Asim Hussain to fly abroad on medical grounds. Dr Asim has been allowed to fly London and remain there for a month for his medical treatment. The court has directed the former federal minister to return to the country latest by August 25. It is pertinent to mention here that Dr Asim Hussain was permitted to go abroad for medical treatment by the NAB court on November 17, 2018. —Online

Man accused of financing RAW arrested in Karachi

KARACHI: The Counter-Terrorism Wing of Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Tuesday rounded up a man who was accused of financing state enemies through an established hawala and hundi network in Karachi. The arrested man was identified as Junaid, who is allegedly a member of the international hawala and hundi racket and manager of a money exchange company. The FIA officials said that the officials of FIA's counter-terrorism wing have arrested Junaid during a raid conducted in Dohraji area of the me-

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet.

FBR allows 2pc IT on chemicals, dyes raw materials

KARACHI: The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has given relief to commercial importers by allowing them to pay 2pc income tax instead of 5.5pc due to anomalies of chemicals & dyes raw material, which was included in part 3 (finished goods).

Pakistan Chemicals and Dyes Merchants Association (PCDMA) had pointed out in the federal budget 2020-21 that the raw materials of chemicals & dyes were shifted from Part 2 (raw material) to Part 3 (finished goods). As a result, the income tax rate for commercial importers rose sharply from 2% to 5.5%.

In a statement, Amin Yousuf Balgamwala, chairman PCDMA & former director of Karachi Stock Exchange, said that he sought the help of FPCCI president Anjum Nisar to solve these issues which are finished goods. In response, Anjum Nisar contacted senior FBR officials and urged them to remove the anomalies and FBR officials assured to look into the matter.

"FBR has issued a notification after the efforts of Anjum Nisar, according to which the matter of the inclusion of the raw material of chemicals & dyes from Part 2 (raw material) to Part 3 (finished goods) has been handed over to the budget anomalies and until the committee decides, commercial importers will have to pay 2% income tax instead of 5.5%, While under section 81, a pay order of 3.5% has to be submitted which will be returned after the decision is taken. These pay orders will not be cash", he said.

Pakistan Chemicals and Dyes Merchants Association (PCDMA) chairman hoped that the FBR's anomalies committee would reconsider the issue and re-incorporate the raw materials of chemicals & dyes in Part 2 (raw materials) and restore the income tax rate of 2% for commercial importers, which will provide cheap raw materials to the industries.

ICCI urges FBR to expedite payment of refunds

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry has called upon the FBR authorities to expedite the payment of refunds in compliance with the commitment of the Prime Minister of Pakistan as undue delay in the payment of outstanding income tax, sales tax and customs duty refunds was creating liquidity issues for the business community and affecting the promotion of business activities.

He said that income tax refunds of business community were pending with FBR since 2014-15 and despite the commitment of the government and SBP to clear them, their payment was being delayed, which was unjustified.

Muhammad Ahmed Waheed said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had taken a very positive step by announcing a relief package to address the issue of refunds, but still a large accumulated amount of refunds was stuck up with FBR which was a major issue for the business community. He said that field officers of FBR have done assessment of many refund cases, processed them and issued their RPOs (refund payment orders), but still taxpayers have not received them, which was unfortunate. He said that trade and industrial activities were adversely affected by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic due to which business community was facing great financial problems and it was the right time for FBR to clear all outstanding refunds for addressing the liquidity issues of business community. However, undue delay in payment of outstanding refunds was increasing the financial woes of the business community that would further affect businesses and trigger more unemployment.

Pakistan-China mega project of digital connectivity goes functional

China-Pakistan Fiber Optic Project (CPFOP), a mega project of digital connectivity between the two countries has gone functional from Khunjerab to Islamabad.

China-Pak optic fiber cable will be laid on three important routes of CPEC including Railway. In next phase it will be laid from Islamabad to Karachi and Islamabad to Gwadar under digital highway plan.

The China-Pakistan Fiber Optic Project (CPFOP) will accelerate the pace of bilateral information technology exchange.

FPCCI suggests strategy to benefit local industry

KARACHI: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry has urged the government to redesign the Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and Preferential Trade Agreements (PTAs) with a view to promote the domestic industry of Pakistan, as the government has suffered revenue loss of over Rs. 45 billion during FY 2019-20 due to these agreements signed with different countries.

Moreover, the general exemption on imports from China under this agreement has caused revenue loss of Rs 26.86 billion during this period. FPCCI President Mian Anjum Nisar suggested that Pakistan should have entered into Free Trade Agreements and Preferential Trade Agreements with only those countries where it has a clear and mutual competitive advantage.

He recommended the government to include maximum finished goods which can be exported to China on tariff line offered by China to ASEAN countries. He demanded that the concerned stakeholders should also be taken on board while framing and finalizing the recommendations in this regard. Referring to the data of the Federal Board of Revenue, he stated that the government has suffered revenue loss of Rs 45.020 billion during current fiscal year due to the FTAs and PTAs signed with different countries.

According to the reports, figures reveal that the general exemption on import from SAARC countries caused revenue loss of Rs 231 million during this period. The general exemption on import from SAARC countries under SAFTA Agreement has revenue impact of Rs1.602 billion. Similarly, the general exemption on import from SAARC countries under SAFTA Agreement caused revenue loss of Rs 15 million.

The general exemption on import from China under the FTA has revenue impact of Rs6.911 billion during 2019-20. The general exemption on import from Malaysia under PTA caused revenue loss of Rs 2.517 billion during this period. Under the exemption on import from Indonesia under Pak-Indonesia PTA caused revenue loss of Rs3.65 billion.

Mian Anjum Nisar suggested the government to devise a strategy in the light of impact on domestic industry, convincing other countries to liberalize their import policy by reducing tariff lines and easing sensitive list for Pakistan merchandise. He said that during the first phase of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with China, Pakistan's trade deficit had improved from 2.9 billion dollar to over 12 billion dollars over the last decade.

He suggested that Pakistan should have entered into Free Trade Agreements and Preferential Trade Agreements with only those countries where it has a clear and mutual competitive advantage.

FPCCI President said that local cost of production is already high on account of high tariff of electricity and gas, coupled with import duties on inputs, making the local production uncompetitive.

He said that Free Trade Agreements signed with different countries without taking the real stakeholders onboard, are damaging the local industry, as imports of several products under Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with these countries are subject to zero percent import duty.

On the other hand, local processors are unable to export their products to these countries as they are absolutely uncompetitive owing to hosts of reasons, he said. If imports are not checked immediately, the entire industry in general and the emerging industrial sectors in particular will suffer a serious setback, he warned. If relaxed import policy continues billions of rupees investment in domestic industry will be shattered, he added. *—DNA*

Eight more projects to be included in CPEC

ISLAMABAD: The government would propose eight new projects relating to transport infrastructure for inclusion in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework for 2020-21 for discussion in the relevant Joint Working Groups of Pakistan and China which would subsequently be presented for approval in the 10th meeting of Joint Coordination Committee on CPEC to be held this year.

According to official documents, in the transport Infrastructure sector of CPEC, remarkable progress has been achieved so far. On the Eastern alignment, Sukkar-Multan (M-5) Motorway has been successfully completed, however, Sukkar-Hyderabad (M-6) section has been proposed on PPP mode. While, on the western alignment, Hakla-D. I Khan section is under construction and Zhob-D. I Khan segment and Zhob to Quetta has already been approved by the government.

The document added that Orange Line Metro Train, Lahore and Havelian-Thakot highway projects have been substantially completed. Whereas government to government JWG on Transport Infrastructure will prepare proposals of Realignment of Thakot-Raikot Section in the current fiscal year of 2020-21. **—APP**

Senior journalist abducted from Islamabad

The Business Report

ISLAMABAD: Senior journalist Matiullah Jan was reportedly abducted from Islamabad's Sector G-6 on Tuesday, according to his family.

Speaking to media, Jan's wife said that his car was found parked outside a school in Sector G-6 of the capital with one of his mobile phones inside the vehicle. He was due to appear in the Supreme Court this week after it took suo motu notice of an alleged contemptuous tweet by the journalist.

As the news of his disappearance drew attention of journalists and international rights bodies, a tweet was posted on Matiullah Jan's account at 3:17pm — purportedly by his son — which read: "Matiullahjan, my father, has been abducted from the heart of the capital [Islamabad]. I demand he be found and the agencies behind it immediately be held responsible. God keep him safe."

Meanwhile, Information Minister Shibli Faraz also confirmed the journalist's abduction during a post-cabinet meeting presser later in the evening. "This much is established that he [Jan] has been kidnapped," said Faraz. "We will try to find out where he is and how he can be recovered. This is the responsibility of the govt and it will fulfil it," he added.

NAB freezes assets of Shahid Khaqan, Miftah Ismail

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) on Tuesday frozen the moveable and immovable assets of former PM Shahid Khaqan Abbasi and former finance minister Miftah Ismail in LNG case.

According to details, both Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders have been stopped from transferring ownership of vehicles and property. The anti-graft watchdog has also stopped transfer of already sold vehicles of Abbasi. On the other hand, the accountability court has reserved its decision on plea of Abbasi to allow the transfer of the vehicle.

The accountability court in June had directed the National Accountability Bureau to file a supplementary reference against former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminal case.

Earlier, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) granted bail to former finance minister Miftah Ismail and former Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) case. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Miftah Ismail, ex-PSO MD Imranul Haq and others are facing charges of corruption over awarding a LNG import contract allegedly at exorbitant rates in 2015, which caused a big loss to the national exchequer.

NAB sources said that Abbasi, in 2013, had awarded a LNG import and distribution contract to the Elengy Terminal in violation of the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority

One killed, six injured in Turbat blast

QUETTA: At least one person was killed while six others received injuries in an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) blast that occurred in Turbat district of Balochistan on Tuesday.

"IED was fitted at Honda 125 motorcycle, parked near auto shop on main Turbat road, " official sources told APP. One person standing close to bike died instantly as IED exploded while 6 others received injuries. Soon after the blast, security forces reached the site and shifted the injured to district headquarters hospital (DHQ) Turbat. The deceased was identified as Muhammad Amjad resident of Turbat and was handed over to the heirs after completion of medico legal formalities.

The injured namely Muhammed Saleem, Ubaid, Muhammad Subahn, Muhammad Naseem, Muhammad Salman and Shah Murad. Law enforcement agencies reached the site and cordoned off the entire area and started investigation. Governor Balochistan Amaullah Khan Yasinzai along with Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Jam Kamal Khan Alyani strongly condemned the incident of Turbat blast.

PM, minister condemn Turbat blast

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Tuesday strongly condemned the blast in Turbat and expressed grief over the loss of life, a PM Office statement said.

He directed the concerned authorities to provide best medical treatment to the injured and prayed for their speedy recovery. Minister for Interior Ijaz Ahmed Shah on Tuesday strongly condemned the Turbat blast and expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the loss of precious human life in the incident. **—APP**

Cement export witnesses 4.52 percent decrease

By Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The cement exports of the country witnessed a decrease of 4.52 percent during fiscal year 2019-20, against the exports of the corresponding period of last year.

The country exported cement worth $259.441 million during July-June (2019-20) against the exports of $271.728 million during July-June (2018-19), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) report.

In terms of quantity, the exports of cement increased by 10.79 percent by going up from 6,411,359 metric tons to 7,103,373 metric tons, according to the data. Meanwhile, on year-to-year basis, the exports of cement increased by 46.52 percent during the month of June 2020 as compared to the same month of last year.

The exports of cement from the country during June 2020 were recorded at $16.935m against the exports of $11.558m in June 2019. On month-on-month basis, the exports of cement decreased by 12. 27pc during June 2020 as compared to the exports of $19.303m in May 2020, the PBS data revealed.

The country s trade deficit witnessed significant reduction during the fiscal year 2019-20 and declined by 27.12% as compared to the corresponding period of last year. The exports witnessed decrease of 6.81% and reached to $21.394b against the exports of $22.958b of the same period of last year.

Private schools to open from Aug 15

The Business Report

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Private Schools' Association has said that it would open schools from August 15, defying government orders that said schools would be allowed to open from September 15 provided cases continued to decline.

At a press conference in Islamabad on Monday, the association's head, Hidayat Khan, said that coronavirus was on a downward trend and cases were declining. "Educational institutions have been closed for six to eight months, causing huge loss to students," he said, adding that the association had tried to "negotiate with the government but it did not listen".

"If the government tries to interfere in our matters, we will do a million march," he warned. Representatives from schools and associations around the country, including Dr Afzal Babar, Malik Abrar, Zahid Dar, Zufran Ilahi, Amjad Ali Shah, Sheikh Mohammad Akram. Iftikhar Ali Haider and Kashif Mirza, participated in the conference and discussed problems faced due to closure of educational institutions.

ISLAMABAD: Leader of Pakistan Muslim League-N Khawaja Saad Rafique addresses a press conference along with other party leaders at the Parliament Lodges.

OGRA issues performance report

OGRA instantly redressed 663 complaints of outlets

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Tuesday issued its Annual Report 2018-19, showing performance and the measures taken to safeguard public interest through effective regulation in the midstream and downstream petroleum sector

According to the report, the authority, during the period under review, conducted inspections at 447 fuel outlets and issued 182 show cause notices for overcharging, less filling and non-conforming quality, imposing penalty of Rs 64.57 millio

Besides, OGRA instantly redressed as many as 663 complaints received against different outlets under the 'Clean and Green Pakistan' initiative. To ensure provision of quality petroleum products across the country, the authority, through Hydrocarbon Development Institute of Pakistan (HDIP), made 460 quality checks of imported energy products and 725 quality checks for imported non-energy products.

Similarly, 368 & 1,508 quality checks were carried out at lube blending plants and oil depots respectively. Moreover, 267 quality checks were performed at oil refineries and 53 quality checks at WOP's (While Oil Pipeline) Terminal Stations. During the year 2018-19, OGRA granted nine provisional licences to construct storage facilities before establishing Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), paving the way for an investment of around Rs 4.5 billion in oil infrastructure over the next three years.

The authority also granted permission to six companies including LaGuardia Petroleum (Pvt.) Limited (Sindh), Oil Industries Pakistan (Pvt.) Limited (Punjab), Euro Oil (Pvt.) Limited (Punjab), Flow Petroleum (Pvt.) Limited (Punjab), Taj Gasoline (Pvt.) Limited (Sindh) and Hi Tech Lubricants Limited (Punjab)] to initiate marketing of petroleum products (after fulfilling their obligation of constructing oil storage infrastructure) to the extent of Region / Province specified along

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