

Building own house of low-income groups has become a reality: Murad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Communications and Postal Services Murad Saeed on Sunday said that building own house was no longer a dream, as it had become a reality. In a tweet, he said that for low-income people, building a house through the construction relief package of the Prime Minister was now very easy. He thanked PM Imran Khan for launching the historic initiative. He said even those were criticizing this historic who had promised 'Roti, Kapra and Makan' for 50 years but looted and plundered the national resources. —

The Business

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'Schemes in progress to uplift agriculture sector'

MULTAN: Secretary Agriculture Punjab Wasif Khurshid on Sunday said that government was spending billions of rupees on different schemes to promote agriculture sector and bringing economic prosperity among farming community. He said that the Punjab government was spending Rs 21.27 billion on establishment of model agricultural markets across the province. The step would help promote agriculture and empower farmers economically, said Secretary Agriculture Punjab Wasif Khurshid in a statement issued here. —APP

OEC portal registers over 50,000 expelled overseas workers

ISLAMABAD: More than 50,000 Pakistani workers, who have lost their overseas jobs in the wake of coronavirus pandemic, have registered themselves with the Overseas Employment Corporation's (OEC) portal in search of job opportunities, training in modern skills and financial assistance.

The portal was launched by the OEC last month to facilitate the returning emigrants in locating jobs in the country and abroad after documenting their data.

The Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) has started implementation of the action plan for re-employment of the expelled overseas Pakistani workers, said a senior officer of the ministry.

Talking to APP, he said lists of at least 37,189 workers had been shared with officials of the Ehsaas and Kamyab Jawan Programmes. The ousted skilled workers would be provided technical and financial assistance under the Kamyab Jawan and Ehsaas programmes, while Technical and Vocational institutions of the country would also be engaged in that regard, he added.

Earlier, in a statement, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on OP&HRD Sayed Zulfiqar Abbas Bukhari said it was imperative to create job opportunities for the skilled workers, returning to the country after losing jobs in their host countries. Efforts were afoot to offer financial assistance to such workers under the Ehsaas Programme, he said, adding, "We realize the problems of the returning workers in the trying times." He said special initiatives were being taken to facilitate Pakistani labourers and jobless, following the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan. "The safe repatriation and provision of livelihood to the Pakistani manpower is among the top priorities of the government," he said. —APP

'Govt adopts effective strategy to combat COVID-19'

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Focal Person on coronavirus Dr Faisal Sultan on Sunday said the government had adopted an effective strategy to combat COVID-19 that resulted in reduction of corona cases in the country.

Addressing a press conference, Dr Faisal said present facts and figures of the disease show a declining trend of coronavirus at all level due to prompt response of the government on the directions of Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Expressing satisfaction over current COVID-19 situation, he said this was all made possible due to team efforts and efficient work of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

He said the main focus of the strategy was to control the disease on one hand and maintain business activities of small and poor traders on the other hand. He added that such strategy was successfully implemented to get results.

He said all concerned federal and provincial and public and private institutions played a remarkable role under NCOC against the disease. He also acknowledged the role of frontline health workers including doctors and nurses.

Dr Faisal Sultan said all possible measures were adopted to control COVID-19 to avoid further load on already burdened health system of the country.

He said strategies were made to control corona keeping in view the global information, focusing on data with integration of local data in a scientific way. He added input from concerned stakeholders was also considered to avoid any missing aspect.

He said more than 100 laboratories were established in all provinces including federal capital to provide best testing facility at public and private level.

He added that the testing capacity was gradually increased with the passage of time and there was no issue of testing capacity.

He made it clear that the government had not decreased the daily testing capacity but actually the testing figure was declined due to improving the corona situation. —APP



ISLAMABAD: Vice President of Central Secretariat Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Zahid Hussain Kazmi calls on Prime Minister Imran Khan at the PM Office. —Online

FPCCI demands cut in electricity tariff

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) President Mian Anjum Nisar has asked the government to reduce electricity tariff to the competitive level of regional countries on permanent basis, as NEPRA's accumulated cut of Rs3.09 per unit just for three months under a monthly fuel adjustment formula is not an enduring solution to ease industrial cost of production.

He said Pakistan exports cannot compete with China, Bangladesh and India where power tariffs were 7-9 cents, particularly in the post-corona economic slowdown as the country's exports have been witnessing a major setback in present days due to high cost of electricity, which has become a major stumbling block in industrial development and boosting exports.

"FPCCI welcomes the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) to provide accumulated relief of Rs 4.46 billion to the power consumers as it has decided power tariff for eight months of Nov 2019 to June 2020 for power distribution companies (DISCOs) under the formula of monthly fuel charges adjustment, but this is not a permanent solution," he stated.

Mian Anjum Nisar pointed out that NEPRA has also decided to increase in electricity rates for five months of Nov, Dec, Jan, Feb and March with accumulated impact of Rs 4.86 per unit, putting an additional burden of billions of rupees on industrial consumers.

He said that electricity is regarded as the lifeline of any economy and plays a pivotal role in socio-economic development of a country.

The demand for electricity has been rising consistently mainly due to growing industrial requirement and population explosion but unfortunately, power generation and supply have not been able to meet this rising demand of electricity.

FPCCI President said that the cost of electricity generation is also high due to faulty fuel mix which has led to massive loadshedding and power shortages in Pakistan.

He stressed the need to resolve the circular debt issue by revamping the entire power sector, including tariff setting, efficiencies of power generating units, supply chain network and payment recoveries. If this is not done, the future of energy sector would remain at stake, he warned.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that industries need low cost energy to bring down their cost of production, keeping their goods

competitive in the international market.

He said that cut in energy prices would be a great relief to the exporters as well as the local industry which have been suffering heavily because of post-corona slowdown.

He urged the power ministry to identify system constraints, communicate targets to all the concerned departments to initiate up-gradation of transmission system on war footing.

In this post-corona era, the best solution to overcome economic challenges is to promote industrial activities by slashing energy cost to revive the economic growth and sustain employment in the country, he said.

Mian Anjum Nisar said that production of hydel power has been increased while furnace oil price is constantly declining in the international markets. The authority, therefore, should not restrict the relief to few months only rather it should make decrease in the power tariff on permanent basis, he added.

He said that business-friendly policies must be adopted as other neighbouring countries of the region are giving to trade and industry. The amount specified in trade policy should be utilised for the promotion of exports by giving incentives to the trade and industry and by exploring

PTBA seeks independent commission to monitor FBR decisions, performance

Our Special Correspondent

LAHORE: An independent commission is inevitable to keep a watch on the performance and decisions of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) performance. Broadening of tax net is need of the hour to register additional 2 million tax returns.

This was stated by Pakistan Tax Bar Association (PTBA) President Aftab Nagra, SVP Habibur Rehman and Secretary Farhan Shahzad while addressing a seminar on Tax and our Direction here in Lahore.

They said that without simplification and improvement in tax system optimization of revenue cannot be achieved.

They said that the directorate of broadening of tax net has failed to deliver which needs to be reorganised besides taxing the taxed will be a grave injustice. We need to bring the untaxed into the tax net, they added. Earlier, they demanded that bringing tax and interest rate down to 5 percent is inevitable. They said that Pakistan economic condition had already been passing through



tough time and now that pandemic has erupted the economy has come to a grinding halt. They said that the government should come forward to play its role by assisting business community in shape of offering soft loans, waivers of utility bills and demurrages and detention charges.

They said that this high time to take business community as to how to come out of the crisis simultaneously making recoveries and combating the pandemic.

They said that opening of the business should be considered but not at the cost of people instead under SOPs like the whole world is heading towards that.

They also said that the continue lockdown is no way fruitful for the economy. Systematically we should fight with Corona and saving our people from the bad effects of the pandemic.

Talking about the import business they said that the private shipping lines have not extended free demurrages and detention day which is tent amount to destroy the import business in the country.

The private shipping lines and Terminals should be bridled as they have rejected the directions of even government functionaries including Federal Board of Revenue. They said that the PM should take stern notice of the disobedience of the private terminals and Shipping Lines.

Appointment of Fazl's brother as Karachi DC

PTI decides to move court

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday has decided to move moving court against appointment of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Fazl-ur-Rehman's brother Zia-ur-Rehman as Deputy Commissioner (DC) Karachi Central district.

According to media reports while addressing a press conference, PTI Sindh leader Haleem Adil said that the government has rejected the recruitment of Fazl-ur-Rehman's brother. After fake domiciles, fake DCs are also being hired in Sindh, he added.

The PTI leader further appealed to withdraw Zia-ur-Rehman's appointment on immediate basis. It is to be mentioned here that Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government had accepted the demand made by Maulana Fazlur Rehman and gave his brother an important post.

Zia-ur-Rehman had been transferred from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and was "posted with immediate effect and until further orders as Collector / Deputy Commissioner, Central, Karachi, vice Farhan Ghani Khan, an officer of Ex-PCS (85-19)," a notification issued Thursday read.

Government performance poor despite big borrowing

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the business community and former President ICCI Shahid Rasheed Butt on Sunday said masses and the business community are living in continued stress due poor performance of the government has eroded its popularity.

The government has borrowed \$29.2 billion during the last two years but has failed to deliver while \$15 billion will be borrowed during the current fiscal setting a new record, he said.

Shahid Rasheed Butt said that repeated crises, uncontrolled inflation, scarcity of essential basic services, substandard quality of education, sanitation and healthcare, weak economic growth and the mounting national debt has resulted in popular frustration.

He said that a large slide of the rupee has left our currency inferior in value to many other developing countries including Afghanistan and Bhutan, which has irritated masses who are questioning the wisdom behind such policies. The government is aware that it has disappointed masses and now it is struggling to regain lost ground with the help of symbolic and fancy projects that will not help it in any way, he added.

Pakistan does not need new cities, parks, artificial lakes, business centers and other fancy projects costing tens of billions but full attention on the agriculture sector so that masses can get wheat flour and other edibles at reasonable prices, he noted.

'WHO admits Pak efforts to prevent corona'

ISLAMABAD: District Health Officer (DHO), Islamabad Dr. Zaem Zia said on Sunday that it was highly appreciable that the World Health Organization (WHO) had acknowledged Pakistan's efforts to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

Talking to a private news channel he said the government was taking all measures to contain the spread of pandemic as the number of corona affected patients had significantly decreased.

Dr. Zaem Zia said that the coming Eid-ul-Adha was a test for all of us. The general public should understand their responsibility and observe precautionary measures to stay safe, he said.

The authorities would take strict action against those who were not following SOPs and government advisories properly, he added.



KARACHI: A view of a flooded road after heavy monsoon rains at North Nazimabad. —Online

Approval of conducting trials of proposed COVID-19 vaccine in Pakistan still awaited

The Business Report

ISLAMABAD: Renowned Scientist and Chairman of Prime Minister's task force on Science and Technology, Dr Atta-ur-Rahman Sunday said the approval was still awaited from Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) to conduct clinical trials of the proposed internationally recognized vaccine for COVID-19 in Pakistan.

He said the queries received from the DRAP on few matters have been addressed in time and sent back, he said while talking to APP on Sunday.

He said the application for con-

ducting clinical trials of this vaccine produced by a well acclaimed international company was submitted to DRAP for approval. The clinical trials of that vaccine have been done internationally.

Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman said, "We were in contact with several international companies for vaccine production after which one of the major international companies agreed to conduct clinical trials of their vaccination in Pakistan".

Dr Atta-ur-Rahman who is also the chairman of PM's Task Force on COVID-19 hoped that DRAP is expected to give approval of clinical trials of this vaccine shortly. The

clinical trials will be conducted in our supervision soon after approval.

He said, "It takes three to four months to complete clinical trials of a vaccine and hopefully, if DRAP grants approval within two weeks, the clinical trials will be completed within next four months. If the results of these trials come positive, then the mass production of the vaccine can be started".

Depending on the success results of this vaccine, it can be available in Pakistan between the months of December to March. As we are involved in all this process so we will get this vaccine by the company on preferential basis.