

LHC acquits seven accused in Shaukat Aziz attack case

RAWALPINDI: The Lahore High Court Rawalpindi Bench on Wednesday acquitted seven accused convicted in a case regarding attack on former PM Shaukat Aziz. The Lahore High Court bench announced its verdict after hearing arguments from prosecution and defense counsel. Earlier, an anti-terrorism court in 2006 had awarded death sentence to four accused including Qari Ahmed Khan, Maulvi Sadeeq, Noor Badshah, Muhammad Salman and awarded rigorous imprisonment to others. —APP

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RCCI donates latex gloves, sanitizers to Rescue-1122

RAWALPINDI: The RCCI on Wednesday donated latex gloves, hand sanitizers and masks to Rescue 1122 to prevent the Corona epidemic. RCCI President Nasir Mirza handed over hand sanitizers, gloves and masks to the representatives of Rescue 1122 at Commissioner's Office Rawalpindi. Commissioner Rawalpindi Captain (retd) Mahmood, RCCI Vice President Shahraiz A Malik, Executive Member Alam Chughtai and Rescue 1122 officials were also present on the occasion. —Online

SC rejects Bahria Town's plea to delay payment

By Our Staff Correspondent

KARACHI: The Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected an application of Bahria Town (Pvt) Ltd Karachi (BTLK) seeking a three-year delay in the payments of the total Rs460 billion that it had agreed to pay for purchasing prime land in Karachi.

In its plea filed on Tuesday, BTLK had sought freezing of the payment plan issued by the SC in view of pandemic-related recession, requesting that the payment of Rs2.5bn monthly installments be deferred for three years — till September 2023.

A three-judge bench headed by Justice Ijazul Ahsan heard the application filed by senior counsel Syed Ali Zafar on behalf of the BTLK and its owner Malik Riaz Hussain.

The BTLK counsel argued in the court today that businesses the world over had been devastated due to the coronavirus pandemic and according to economic reports, hundreds of thousands of people had been rendered jobless. Justice Munib Akhtar asked the lawyer to explain what losses Bahria Town, and not other businesses, had suffered due to the pandemic. Justice Ahsan too made a similar direction, telling the counsel: "The government is saying that the economy has come back on track. Bahria Town should show its own figures, not of the world."

Shahbaz whom I know is supporter of talks: Rashid

ISLAMABAD: Interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad has said 'we are ready to go for talks with all political parties.'

"Interior ministry is ready to hold talks with all political parties at political level", he said this while talking to media men after his visit to FIA headquarters here Wednesday.

"Shahbaz Sharif whom I know is supporter of talks. PPP has not been carved out through gate No 4. I being political worker understand it better", he held. The PDM has given time of January. I say them just come now. PML-N members of national and provincial assemblies will hand over their resignations to Shahbaz Sharif. But Shahbaz Sharif is not in favor to give resignation. Shahbaz Sharif whom I know supports talks process. PPP has democratic traditions; he said this while responding to a question.

Replying to a question he said "I make it clear Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan is not going anywhere. He will complete his five years tenure. They are at liberty to mount Islamabad as all the avenues leading to Islamabad are clear. The weather of Islamabad has turned chilly. They should come now instead of January. I will serve them Kashmiri tea.

I have asked FIA to make the department people-friendly. Orders have been issued to make 2000 appointments in cyber wing. Funds amounting to Rs 2 billion have been provided. He pointed out 400 people are on ECL at present. —Online

Iconic star Firdous Begum passes away

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: One of Pakistan's most renowned iconic versatile film actresses Parveen known as 'Firdous Begum' has passed away on Wednesday due to brain hemorrhage. She was 75.



According to details, Firdous Begum's death confirmation comes from her family sources that she has suffered brain haemorrhage on Monday and was admitted to an ICU in a local hospital.

Firdous Begum, who played the role of Heer in the famous Lollywood film, had remained a top actress in her era, private TV channels reported. Real name Parveen, Firdous Begum is considered one of the most classy film actresses of her time. She is one of the few actresses, who not only performed in a number of films but also left a mark through their performances. Originally from Lahore, she started her film career in Fanoos (1963) as a supporting actress introduced by Nausad, while the main leads were played by Komal and Salman Peerzada.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Dr Abdul Hafeez Sheikh chairs the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.

BIE project to be developed under PM's vision

By Our Special Correspondent

LAHORE: Bahawalpur Industrial Estate (BIE) is the first of its kind project in South Punjab under the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to bring the less-developed areas of the country into the mainstream. It will usher in a new era of development in this region.

This was stated by the Chairman Punjab Industrial Estates Development & Management Company (PIEDMC) Syed Nabeel Hashmi while talking to a delegation of Bahawalpur Chamber of Commerce and Industry, headed by its President Tanveer Mahmood, late Tuesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Chairman PIEDMC Syed Nabeel Hashmi applauded the decision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and said that this estate would help alleviate poverty and backwardness from this area.

He lauded the efforts of Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar, who also hails from south Punjab. His continued efforts made it possible to create this industrial estate in south Punjab. He said it will be developed on the pattern of Sundar Industrial Estate in Lahore, where all infrastructure, including electricity, roads, sewerage and other developmental facilities have been provided, keeping in view the international construction standards.

Hashmi also elaborated that the Bahawalpur Industrial Estate is a lucrative project of PIEDMC spanning over 483 acres. It will be developed keeping in view the requirements and preferences of the local region/ area. Since, there is no

planned industrial estate available in the surrounding areas, establishment of Bahawalpur Industrial estate will be a landmark project in order to uplift the overall industry of the region, generating employment for the local residents.

Main raw material production of Bahawalpur region is sunflower, cotton, mustard seed and sugarcane. Moreover, this region yields big amount of wool. Hence, Bahawalpur Industrial Estate will be a good option for industrialists from textile industry including weaving, spinning, processing and printing. Also, wool processing and weaving units have strong potential in the area. Oil extraction and solvent extraction plants will also be profitable, he concluded.

ICCI asks CDA to address markets' issues on urgent basis

The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) on Wednesday urged the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to address the issues of Melody Market in order to promote trade and business activities. ICCI President Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that Melody Market, Islamabad was an important commercial centre of the federal capital, but facing many problems due to lack of development works.

Therefore, he urged the CDA to focus on better development of G-6 Markaz, Melody Market by addressing its key issues to facilitate the traders in promoting trade activities. He said this while addressing a delegation of Traders Welfare Association (TWA), Main Civic Centre that called on him led by its President Syed Syed Adil Anis. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan

said the road from Melody Chowk to Aabpara Chowk was closed from both sides due to the security arrangements for NAB office, but closure of the road was creating a lot of problems for the traders and the commuters. He said the Supreme Court in a decision had ordered for removal of all such barriers and emphasized that CDA should remove barriers to clear the said road to streamline the traffic flow.

He assured that ICCI would cooperate with TWA, G-6 Markaz for resolving the key issues of its members. ICCI Vice President Abdul Rehman Khan and Founder Group Chairman Mian Akram Farid said that infrastructure for the fruits and vegetable market was ready in Melody Market and CDA should make it functional through advertisement.

They further urged the CDA to arrange the cutting of trees and plantation of flowers trees in the melody market for its beautification. Speaking at the occasion, Traders Welfare Association, G-6 Markaz President Syed Adil Anis and Secretary General Bilal Khan said that many streetlights in the Melody Market were out of order since long and emphasized that CDA should restore them without any further delay. They said the roads and footpaths in G-6 Markaz needed proper repairing and maintenance and urged the CDA to accelerate efforts for carpeting of roads and repairing of footpaths. They said that a filtration plant was needed in Melody Market for clean drinking water and CDA should arrange its installation.

'Sialkot airport to enhance exports, trade activities'

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that establishment of Sialkot International Airport Limited (SIAL) by the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) will enhance exports and trade activities, besides boosting the tourism sector of the country.

The President made these remarks in a meeting with the management of SIAL in Islamabad on Wednesday. While lauding the role of SCCI in establishing the country's first private aviation facility, the President said the airport will facilitate exporters and entrepreneurs and will also help accelerate economic activities in the country. He said during the Covid-19 pandemic, the government has provided a financial stimulus package to mitigate the adverse impact of the Coronavirus outbreak on the country's economy. The President also appreciated the contribution made by Sialkot's business community in promoting education and providing health facilities at the grassroots level.

Separately, President Alvi has said India does not enjoy good relations with any of its neighbouring countries including Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal because of its hegemonic designs. Addressing a seminar titled "Understanding Hindutva Mind-set and Indian Hegemonic Aspirations" in Islamabad on Wednesday, he said that Hindutva ideology has captured the entire Indian society.

The President said India is falling into pitfalls of extremism, hatred and polarization. Resultantly, it is becoming an exclusive society. He said that India is pursuing a dangerous and belligerent course which poses a threat to regional peace and security. President Alvi regretted the victimisation of minorities especially the Muslims in India. —TLTP

PARC, WFP join hands to develop agriculture sector

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) and WFP reiterated their resolve for working together and strengthening bilateral cooperation to develop and promote agriculture and livestock sectors in desert areas of the country.

Consensus to this effect was shown in a meeting of WFP and PARC Arid Zone Research Institute Umerkot, Sindh, said a press release. A delegation of WFP led by its Senior Programme Policy Officer Manuela Reinfeldt visited PARC-AZRI, Umerkot and discussed the areas of mutual collaboration in order to promote the agriculture sector in desert areas for food safety and security of people living in these areas. Director General PARC-SARC, Dr. Attaullah Khan along with other high officials were also present in the meeting and apprised the delegation about research activities conducted in the institute. While, briefing about the ongoing activities and future prospects of PARC sub-station, Dr Attaullah Khan told the WFP delegation, that PARC AZRI Umerkot was working on the reclamation of desert areas of Pakistan. —Online

PTC to set up BPO organisation hub

ISLAMABAD: The Adviser to Prime Minister for Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday informed that Pakistan Tobacco Company (PTC) has announced its plan to set up a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) organisation hub in Pakistan to service Asia Pacific and Middle East Region.

They competed with countries like India, Bangladesh and many others to bring this new business setup to Pakistan, the Adviser said this on his official twitter account.

This has the potential to create over 3000 jobs over the next five years and will also serve as a talent incubator while enabling Pakistan to become a services export market and bring circa \$100 million/annum.

"I wish to thank British American Tobacco and Pakistan Tobacco Company for placing confidence in Pakistan" he said. Razak Dawood said that after many years, this is the first multinational company to move their Business Process Outsourcing to Pakistan.

The Adviser also informed that Canada has improved its overall travel advisory for most parts of Pakistan. He said that this will further improve once the COVID-19 restrictions are removed. He said that this will help in promoting tourism and economic activities in Pakistan. "I wish to thank the Canadian High Commission for its support in this regard" Razak said. —APP

Alvi makes good assessment on CPEC ties, says China

BEIJING: President Dr Arif Alvi has made a positive assessment on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) cooperation which has advanced despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the Chinese side fully agrees with him.

"The Chinese side fully agrees with the positive assessment made by President Dr Arif Alvi on the CPEC cooperation," Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Wednesday during his regular briefing in response to a question about the President's recent interview to the Chinese media. He said CPEC had been developing with a positive momentum since its inception in 2013, as a pioneer project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

"As we have talked about it before, China and Pakistan have been working together to fight the pandemic and despite the challenges posed by pandemic, all the

CPEC projects have been effectively moved ahead," he said. He remarked that cooperation between the two countries had provided an important support to the Pakistan's efforts to fight the pandemic and stabilize its economy. The spokesperson said, functioning of power transmission line from Mititari to Lahore help enhance power supply network in Pakistan.

About Lahore Metro Orange Line, he said with the launch of this mega transport project, Pakistan has entered in the era of subway. While commenting on Gwadar port, an important component of the CPEC, he said the port processed 26,000 tons of fertilizer for Afghanistan in two batches this month only in four days while 22,000 tons fertilizer was unloaded setting a record.

Wang Wenbin said the Chinese side would continue to work with Pakistan to implement the consensus reached by the

two leaders and continue to advance CPEC. "We will ensure steady implementation of the current projects and focus on industrial and agricultural fields," he added. He said the Chinese side would ensure that high quality Belt and Road cooperation would deliver greater benefits to the two countries and people in the region.

During the interview with CCTV, the President said Pakistan's ties with China had been strengthened as the two countries worked together to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic as well as deepen cooperation on CPEC. Dr Alvi also hailed China's assistance in tackling the pandemic in Pakistan. China had shared its experience of regular epidemic prevention and sent seven batches of medical supplies as well as two medical teams to help Pakistan, he said. Earlier this year, the Gwadar port, one of the key projects under CPEC. —APP

Govt backs SMEs under KJP

Continued from front page

He said health reforms were not meant for privatisation of the government hospitals in any manner but were solely aimed at improving their performance. He said the objective of health reforms was to operate government hospitals in line with reputable private hospitals which had reward and punishment adding no institution would succeed unless it opted for this system.

The Prime Minister said the health reforms were meant to improve management system of the government hospitals through constitution of boards of directors on the pattern of private hospitals.

The PM said the highest standard had been set by Shaukat Khanum Memorial Cancer Hospital for public and private hospitals in terms of quality treatment, maintenance and health-care service delivery and that patients

should be given utmost respect.

Another report adds: Prime Minister Imran Khan here Wednesday said the tragedy of Army Public School (APS) has united the entire nation against terrorism and the supreme sacrifices of innocent students and their teachers had paved the way towards durable peace in the country.

Addressing a function after inaugurating Peshawar Institute of Cardiology (PIC) here, the PM said the matchless sacrifices of innocent students and teachers have united the entire nation against menace of terrorism and held their sacrifices in high esteem on their sixth martyrdom anniversary observed on Wednesday.

The Prime Minister along with others participants observed one minute silence as mark of respect for all martyrs of APS and offered feteha on this occasion. The Prime Minister said he feel the pain of families of the victims of APS and ex-

pressed solidarity with them.

Universal health coverage to revolutionise healthcare system

Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday said universal health coverage under Sehat Insaf Cards in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, would eventually revolutionize the healthcare system and termed it a major step towards welfare state under sublime principles of Riyast-e-Madinah.

Addressing opening ceremony of 262-bed state-of-the-art PIC, he said Sehat Insaf Cards was a landmark initiative of the PTI Govt that could greatly facilitate thousands of poor and weak segments of the society who could not afford spending additional money for their treatment. Replying to some critical persons, the Prime Minister said in Riyast-e-Madinah, the state had the sole responsibility to look after weak and marginalised segments of the society which brought. —Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Minister Khusro Bakhtyar witnesses the signing of agreement for "Punjab Resource Improvement & Digital Effectiveness Program (PRIDE) with the World Bank. Secretary Noor Ahmed and Najy Benhassine, Country Director, World Bank signed the agreements.