

PIA, Askari Bank launch Askari-PIA co-brand credit card

KARACHI: PIA and Askari Bank launched one of the most promising and innovative Askari-PIA co brand credit card in a modest ceremony due to COVID SOPs. It was revealed in the statement released here on Saturday. PIA & Askari Bank, being two market leaders in their respective industries have both long been associated with Pakistan's national identity and it was only natural that they join forces to create a unique value for their consumers. —APP

The Business

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Construction work of 54 km highway starts in Gwadar

GWADAR: The construction of road from Nigwar Sharif to Suntsir' at Gwadar has been initiated and will be completed with an estimated cost of Rs1256 million under Omani Grant Project. The provincial government has initially released an amount of Rs 200 million for the purpose to ensure best road infrastructure in the province. Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Major (R) Abdul kabeer Khan has inaugurated the construction work of 54 km long highway. —APP

PM to address global climate summit on 12th

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will address World Climate Action Summit on December 12 to highlight environment friendly policies of Pakistan.

PM Imran Khan has accepted British invitation to attend the summit which is being co-hosted by United Nations and United Kingdom. According to the UN, the December 12 summit is intended to increase momentum ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) to be held in Glasgow in November 2021. —DNA

PDM to decide future strategy on 8th

LAHORE: Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) leadership will meet on December 8 in Islamabad to deliberate on political options including resignations from assemblies, conducting long march or holding negotiations with the government.

Recommendations in this regard have been summoned from Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and other members ahead of PDM's Lahore rally.

Another report adds: The PDM will take an important decision on December 8 in connection with no trust move against Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and Speaker National Assembly (NA) Asad Qaiser.

Sources said the decision for moving vote of no confidence resolution against PM and speaker NA will be taken from the platform of PDM. All the options for sending the government home will also come under consideration. Sources said Opposition leader Mian Shabbaz Sharif is supporting the plea that vote of no confidence be moved against the speaker NA before PM. However PPP is of the view that no confidence move will be meaningless if it is tabled without home work and without required number of members of assembly. Sources said that during the meeting, the opinion from Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari will also be sought on the matter of no trust move. —Agencies

Pakistan Citizen Portal, a gift from PM: Shibli

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Senator Shibli Faraz Saturday said the Pakistan Citizen Portal, which connects people to public sector departments, was a gift for nation from Prime Minister Imran Khan, who was committed to empower the masses.

In a series of tweets, he said, "Any citizen can take up their issue with the department concerned without visiting the offices. Imran Khan has won the hearts of people by promoting transparency and giving them direct access for their grievance redressal."

Shibli said the people's empowerment was an ultimate goal of Prime Minister Imran Khan, adding people were getting their problems resolved at their door-steps for the first time in history of Pakistan.

"Prime Minister is personally monitoring complaints' registration and redressal mechanism," he added. —Online

Babar pays tribute to Major M Akram (NH)

RAWALPINDI: Director General (DG) Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) Major General Babar Iftikhar has paid rich tribute to Major Muhammad Akram (Shaheed), Nishan-e-Haider(NH), on his 49th martyrdom anniversary.

The Director General ISPR, in a tweet, paid tribute to Maj Akram Shaheed (NH) for his supreme sacrifice. "Displaying valour against all odds, he heroically repulsed innumerable attacks by enemy inflicting heavy losses in battle of Hilli," Director General ISPR added.

He said that "Such exemplary courage is hallmark of defenders of motherland".

Coronavirus claims 44 lives

ISLAMABAD: The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 8,303 on Saturday, as Pakistan has reported 44 deaths in the last 24 hours by the novel coronavirus.

According to the statistics issued by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) the number of positive cases has surged to 413,191, as 3,119 persons have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours. Till now 180,904 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 122,293 in Punjab, 48,683 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 17,392 in Balochistan, 31,992 in Islamabad, 7,219 in Azad Kashmir and 4,708 in Gilgit-Baltistan.

Furthermore 3,137 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab, 2,991 in Sindh, 1,399 in KP, 169 in Balochistan, 334 in Islamabad, 175 in Azad Kashmir and 98 in GB.

Pakistan has so far conducted 5,713,341 coronavirus tests and 41,115 in the last 24 hours. 352,529 coronavirus patients have recovered in the country whereas 2,441 patients are in critical condition. There are now 52,359



MIANWALI: Dr Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety visits Ehsaas Kafalat payment site.

ICCI suggests revising building bylaws for construction sector

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has urged that CDA should amend its building bylaws in consultation with ICCI, developers, builders and other stakeholders in order to give boost to construction activities in the federal capital as its existing bylaws were not conducive for the construction industry to boom. He said that PM's construction package was valid up to December 31, 2020 and urged that the government should consider extending it for one year that would enable the investors to take maximum benefit of it and generate more economic activities across the country.

He said this while addressing a delegation of Traders Welfare Association, G-11 Markaz, Islamabad that visited ICCI led by President Aftab Gujjar. Abdul Rehman Khan Vice President ICCI, Qaiser Shah Secretary General TWA G-11 Markaz, Ch. Nadeem ud Din PTI Coordinator Is-

lamabad Administration and Convener Islamabad Task Force, Zafar Iqbal Gujjar President, TWA G-10/4, Islamabad, Khalid Chaudhry and others were also present at the occasion.

Land reforms needed to lift agriculture sector

The Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) on Saturday said the agriculture sector cannot progress in absence of meaningful land reforms delayed since decades.

Land reforms were initiated in the 70s after which this critical has been ignored by all the governments which has inflicted heavy damage on the agriculture sector and resulted in food security issues.

The fall of agriculture has not only squeezed the income of farmers but also eroded the buying power of masses while the gulf between landed elites and farmers is expanding, said Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President PEW.

He said that almost 23 percent of agricultural land in Pakistan is owned by one

percent rural nobility while 43 percent land is owned by farmers having few acres.

Dr. Murtaza Mughal said that all the schemes are designed to suit aristocracy while majority of the farmers are left on the mercy of climate, different mafias and loan sharks.

He said that the budget for research and development is insignificant, output is almost zero while only two crops, wheat and sugar enjoy support price.

The powerful sugar lobby has increased the area under cultivation of sugarcane by 14 percent since 2004-05 while Cotton's area under cultivation has been decreased by 26 percent exposing the entire textile chain and millions of jobs at risk.

The failure of authorities has left Pakistan with no option but to import 2.5 million tonnes of wheat, 0.5 million tonnes of sugar and five million bales of cotton which will cost billions of dollars and may stoke a balance of payment crisis, he feared. —Agencies

LCI, Commissioner's office join hands to work in markets

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Lahore chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCI) has evolved a new methodology in collaboration with top government functionaries to overcome infrastructure related challenges.

In a marathon meeting at commissioner's office with Commissioner Lahore Division Zulfiqar Ahmed Ghuman in the chair, it was decided that all provincial government departments would join hands with LCCI in its initiative to turn Lahore into showcase of the world.

LCI President Mian Tariq Misbah, Senior Vice President Nasir Hameed Khan and Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry also spoke on the occasion while the representatives of other Government Departments including LDA, Municipal Corporation, TEPA and WASA were also present in the meeting.

It was also decided that the markets of Lahore would be jointly visited by the LCCI Officials and the representatives of various Government Departments. In these visits, the team of Rescue 1122 would identify the places for the installation of Water Hydrants and WASA team will connect these Hydrants with the water pipes.

LCI and Commissioner Office Lahore would ensure strong collaboration and hold regular meetings in the future in which all the concerned Government Officials would be present to track the progress on various issues hindering the development of Lahore.

The Commissioner informed the LCCI delegation that various initiatives are being taken for the development of Lahore.

LCI President Mian Tariq Misbah said that development of markets mean development of economy as major part of business community is doing business in markets and is a major source of revenue for the government.

He said that the long standing issue of parking plazas needs urgent resolution through the joint efforts of Government and the private sector. He said that LCCI has already identified sites in Lahore for the construction of parking plazas. He urged the government to start construction of Parking Plazas on priority basis. He further said that the Encroachment problems need urgent attention of the Government Departments as encroachments also contribute in parking issues.

LCI Senior Vice President Nasir Hameed Khan and Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry said that the security issues in the major markets of Lahore would be addressed by the Government by deploying more security personnel and taking other measures.

They said that the issue of the hanging electricity wires in the markets poses a great threat to the safety of people. The LESCO Officials would also be taken on board in the market visits to resolve this issue.

The LCCI office-bearers said that the old LCCI building which is of historic importance, is in a deteriorating condition and would be renovated through joint ef-

orts of Government and private sector, they added.

FCCI wants focus on further accelerating exports, remittances

As the Pakistan's trade deficit has expanded by 14.70 percent to \$2.06 billion in Nov 2020, the apex chamber of the country has urged the government to focus on further accelerating exports and remittances, as the imports that were previously on a declining path, have now started picking up, indicating the growing economic activities but at the same time signaling the widening of the trade deficit too which is not good for the economy.

FCCI President Mian Anjum Nisar stated that the economic managers were boasting of their performance on the plea of current account balance, which has witnessed a surplus for the fourth consecutive month in October, rising to \$382 million. It is to be noted that back in Sept 2020 the current account had remained in surplus for the third month in a row at \$73 million, making a history with a 17-year high surplus in the July-Sept quarter compared to a deficit of \$1,492 million of last year's same time on the back of 29 percent rise in exports and nine percent improvement in remittances.

"But it should be kept in mind that the surplus emerged on the back of a sustained increase in remittances and a smaller trade deficit, as since the start of this fiscal year in July, the cumulative current account surplus has reached \$1.2 billion, reversing the \$1.4bn deficit recorded in the same period last year.

UN favours Indian farmers' peaceful protests

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations has said that the Indian farmers have the right to peaceful protest and that the authorities should allow them to demonstrate.

"People have a right to demonstrate peacefully, and authorities need to let them do so," UN Secretary-General's Spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in response to a question about the growing demonstrations around New Delhi by farmers protesting against the new legislation sponsored by the right-wing government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi that they said would curb their earnings and benefit big corporations.

According to media reports, tens of thousands of Indian farmers have been camped for over a week on highways leading into New Delhi, demanding the rollback of new laws that will change the way they have sold crops for decades at government-regulated agricultural markets, to pave the way for free market trade.

After being refused permission to hold their protest in the heart of the capital, farmers have parked their tractors and trucks stacked with food rations, mattresses and blankets behind heavily barricaded highways guarded by police. They are spending the cold winter nights inside their trucks or in the open — fully prepared for a prolonged standoff with the government.

In New York, hundreds of American-Sikhs staged a protest demonstration near the Indian consulate on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the General Counsel of the United States -based Sikhs for Justice (SFJ), Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, said in a statement that the New York rally was the start of a series of pro-farmer and pro-independence rallies outside Indian missions across North America and Europe. —DNA

Sherbaz Khan Mazari passes away at 90



The Business Report

LAHORE: Veteran politician Sardar Sherbaz Khan Mazari passed away on Saturday at the age of 90, his family said in a statement.

"The Mazari family is deeply grieved to announce the passing away of our cherished elder, Sardar Sherbaz Khan Mazari," it said.

"A devoted and loving patriarch, fiercely dedicated to his country, loyal to his friends — he commanded respect for his unwavering integrity. He was much revered by his tribe, where his sense of justice prevailed in resolving conflict through tribal faislas (decisions)," the statement added.

Offering his condolences, activist and lawyer Jibran Nasir called Mazari a political leader of "rare integrity with many contributions towards initiating the democratic process in Pakistan.

PSEB to set up 40 tech parks

FAISALABAD: The Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) is currently running 14 software technology parks, while in next phase another 40 parks would be set up in different cities including Faisalabad, said Muhammad Akbar, Senior Manager Infrastructure PSEB in a meeting held here on Saturday.

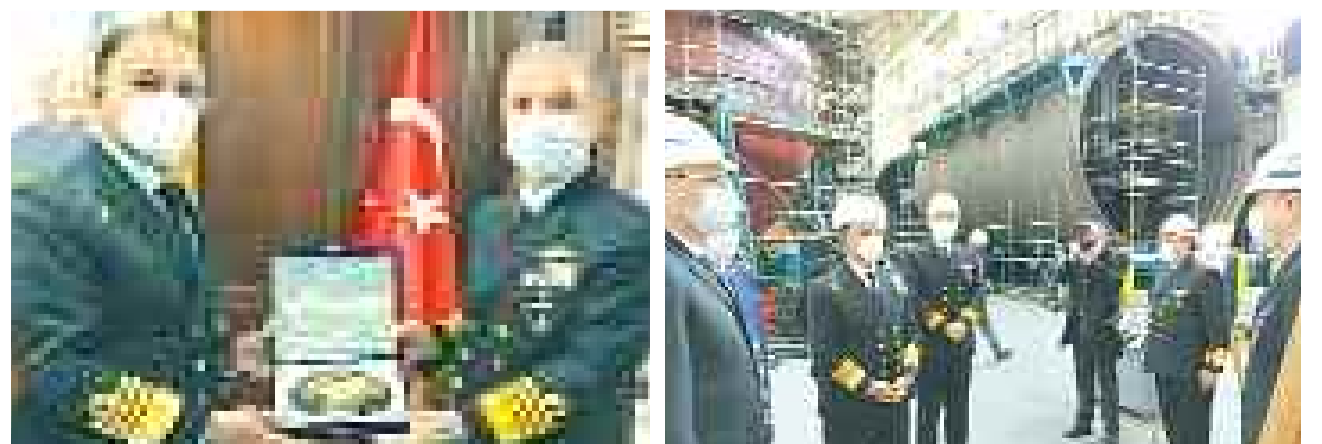
During meeting with President FCCI Engineer Hafiz Ihtesham Javed, Muhammad Akbar explained in detail the performance of software technology parks already operating in Islamabad, Lahore, Rawalpindi and Karachi and told that Ministry plans to set up 40 new parks in next phase. He said that the government was making hectic efforts to develop Information Technology (IT) and in this connection basic and fundamental structure was being provided to the Information Technology companies. —APP

Admiral Niazi calls on commander Turkish fleet, visits naval shipyards

By Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi is on an official visit to Turkey. During the visit, the Naval Chief called on Commander Turkish Fleet Admiral Erçument Tatlıoğlu at Fleet Headquarters, Golcuk and visited Naval Shipyards.

Upon arrival at Turkish Fleet Headquarters Golcuk Naval Base, the Naval Chief was received by Commander Turkish Fleet, Admiral Erçument Tatlıoğlu. The Admiral was given comprehensive briefing regarding Turkish Fleet Command. Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi also called on Golcuk Naval Shipyard Commander, Rear Admiral (LH) Mustafa Saygili and Istanbul Naval Shipyard Commander, Rear Admiral (LH) Erdinc Yetkin separately and visited both the Shipyards where he was briefed about under construction Pakistan Navy Mil-



gem projects. Later, Chief of the Naval Staff called on CEO ASFAT, Esad AKGUN and was apprised about developing capabilities

& capacities of military factories and shipyards. It is expected that the recent visit of the Naval Chief will further enhance and ex-

pand Naval collaboration and defence ties between the two countries in general and both Navies in particular.