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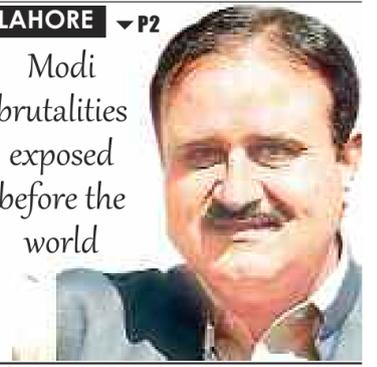
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ECC approves SSGCL, FFBQL gas agreement

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Hafeez Shaikh has chaired the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet.

On the recommendation of the Ministry of Housing and Works, the ECC allowed the Ministry to utilize its own funds equal to Rs. 377.21 million for renewal of lease of Garden West (Pakistan Quarters), Karachi. Petroleum Division placed a summary before ECC regarding renewal of Gas supply Agreement (GAS) between Sui Southern Gas Company Limited and Fauji Fertilizer Bin Qasim Limited.

After detailed discussion, the ECC approved with a condition that renewal would be allowed on "as and when available basis" for five years. SSGCL may restore the

gas supplies to M/S Fauji Fertilizer till December, 2021 or until a uniform rate for the whole fertilizer sector is formulated after rationalization of tariffs (whichever is earlier).

The ECC considered and approved another summary by the Petroleum Division for re-allocation of gas from Saqib-1A Well located in District Ghotki, Sindh Province to M/S Sui Southern Gas Company Limited from its previous allocation to SNGPL (as approved earlier by the ECC dated 06-10-2009). The price of gas will be as per the applicable Petroleum policy.

Petroleum Division also moved a summary for removal of Dividend Distribution cap on Mari Gas Company Limited (MPCL) under Gas Pricing Agreement as the company is being considered for priva-



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong presents a souvenir to a health worker as he receives a dose of the Chinese-made Sinopharm Covid-19 vaccine, at the National Command and Operation Centre.

■ *Senate polls under current system will promote horse trading: SC*

Govt tables bill to change Senate elections procedure

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: An amendment bill, aimed at changing the procedure of Senate elections, has been tabled in the National Assembly. The opposition protested against the bill and tore up copies of the agenda.

The opposition also accused Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser of bias and said that the opposition has been cast aside in parliamentary proceedings for the past two years. Members said the House belongs to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, not PTI. Federal Law Minister Barrister Farogh Naseem introduced the bill for 26th amendment in the constitution during Wednesday's session. "This amendment is being introduced to allow Senate elections through open ballots and to allow dual nationals to run in the elections", he said.

The Law Minister requested the opposition members to go through the constitution as there was nothing unconstitutional about amending it.

On the occasion, copies of the agenda were torn up by the opposition members. PML-N leader Ahsan Iqbal said

that the government was targeting members of the opposition. "Our mics get turned off, every elected Member of Parliament has the right to speak", he added. Ahsan Iqbal said the Speaker is not supposed to side with any party, he is the Speaker of the whole house.

"We do not like to protest in the House, we want proceedings to be constitutional", he said. "We have strong reservations about this," he said, referring to the proposed 26th amendment.

The former Interior Minister said the opposition is integral to the process of democracy and that running any government requires patience and tolerance.

Another report adds: The Supreme Court (SC) while hearing the Presidential Reference for holding Senate election through open ballot remarked that election under current system would promote horse trading, an amended should be made in the Article 63A to punish those who vote against the party.

The Court remarked that if there is no disqualification for voting against the party, then what is the problem. During the hearing, Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Gulzar Ahmed remarked that the

conduct of Senate election under the existing system meant that the buying and selling of members would continue.

In a statement to the court, the attorney general said the government believed the amendment to the Election Act was sufficient. It was feared that the entire Senate election would be annulled. He sought the opinion of the court so that legal issues would not arise later, adding that the vote of a member of the Assembly is the trust of the people and the party. Justice Umar Ata Bandial while giving remarks raised the question that a lot has been changed in the 18th amendment, the secret ballot of the Senate has not been changed, what was the reason for this.

In his answer the Attorney General said that this was my concern. Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan said that why the Senate elections are secret, what the argument in support of this is. During the reference hearing, Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed said that on what basis they would oppose the open ballot. Opposition to the open ballot is intended to keep the current system running. The operation of the existing system means that the buying and selling of members continues.

Rs250b tax cases decided in last quarter, says FBR

ISLAMABAD: Gearing up efforts for resolving tax cases pending at various judicial forums, Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) has said that tax cases involving over Rs250 billion have been decided at the various judicial forums during the quarter ended December 2020.

In a statement on Wednesday, the FBR said that as a result of these ongoing efforts, in the last quarter (ending December, 2020) 934 tax cases have been disposed of by the high courts and the Supreme Court with the revenue involved amounting to Rs81.7 billion.

Moreover, 1,240 cases with the revenue involved of Rs168.5 billion have been decided by the Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue (ATIR) during the same period. The FBR said that it is making all-out efforts by taking several steps to improve the disposal of tax litigation cases pending in different appellate fora including Commissioners Inland Revenue

(Appeals), Appellate Tribunal Inland Revenue, High Courts and the Supreme Court of Pakistan. The FBR has launched the simplified process at the first Appeal i.e. Commissioners Appeals level by implementing the e-filing of appeals since January 01, 2021.

Through e-filing, taxpayers can simply file appeals against an appealable order, online, without hassle of going to their respective field office. Even prior to launching of E-filing, disposal of cases have been surpassing the assigned targets as per the performance agreement.

For the period from July to December, 2020, the target of disposal assigned to the CsIR (Appeals) was 7,818 appeals against which a total of 17,768 appeals were disposed of which is in excess of the target by a huge margin. Similarly on FBR's request, special benches for hearing of tax cases have been constituted by Sindh High Court, Lahore High

Court and Islamabad High Court for early hearings and speedy disposal of tax related cases. In addition to that a new policy has been introduced for the induction of competent lawyers so that government revenue is not left at the stake of amateur lawyers.

It is also informed for the benefit of taxpayers that the institution of ADRC (Alternate Dispute Resolution Committee) has also been mobilised by virtue of which taxpayers' are encouraged to get their cases settled through these committees in a much lesser time and without incurring litigation cost. So far on application by the taxpayers' 18 committees have started working for resolution of cases. By virtue of a major facilitative change in law vide Finance Act-2020, an applicant taxpayer, in order to apply for resolution of case by ADRC, is not required to withdraw his case pending in any other appellate forum. —

PSX gains 353 points to reach 44 months high

KARACHI: The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with a bullish trend on Wednesday as the benchmark KSE-100 Index stormed past the 47,000-mark during the session for the first time since August 03, 2017.

The KSE-100 Index remained positive throughout the session and touched the intraday high of 47,123.8 points. The index closed at 46,933.63 points with an increase of 353.29 points (+0.76 percent), a highest level since August 03, 2017. Among other indices, the KSE All Share Index gained 190.99 points to close at 32,358.96 points and All Share Islamic Index gained 264.8 points to close at 23,073.43 points.

A total of 438 companies traded shares in the stock exchange, out of them shares of 236 closed up, shares of 184 closed down while shares of 18 remained unchanged. Overall volume increased by 148.25 million to 616.31 million shares, while market capitalisation increased by Rs46.49 billion. The total number of trades increased by 26,201 to 202,267. The value traded increased by Rs6.24 billion to Rs29.50 billion. Among scrips, KEL topped the volumes with 59 million shares, followed by PRL (39.9 million) and HASCOL (32.7 million). —*TLTP*

Broadsheet Commission begins probe

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Broadsheet Commission headed by Justice (ret'd) Azmat Saeed has started its work despite objections of the opposition. The secretariat established in the Federal Shariah Court has become functional.

According to sources, Justice (ret'd) Azmat Saeed, head of the Broadsheet Inquiry Commission, reached the secretariat and looked into the matter. It may be noted that he has been given the power to form committees consisting of officers and experts for investigation. The Broadsheet Commission will complete the inquiry in 6 weeks. The Commission of Inquiry will examine the selection, appointment process and contracts of the Broadsheet and the International Assets Recovery (IAR).

The Commission will also examine the reasons and implications of the cancellation of contracts with Broadsheet and IAR in 2003. The Commission has also been entrusted with the task of identifying the reasons and implications of Pakistan's payments to Broadsheet in 2008.

The commission headed by Justice (ret'd) Azmat Saeed will also determine the financial loss to the country as a result of closing various cases. The Broadsheet Inquiry Commission will have the power to summon any person for investigation.

PM directs to facilitate poor slum dwellers

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to take immediate steps for the facilitation of poor slum dwellers in the surroundings of Red Zone area of Islamabad.

He gave the directions on the suggestion of a citizen on Pakistan Citizens Portal. The PM directed that free of cost transport be provided to the women, elderly and other persons carrying wood on their shoulders. On the instructions of the Prime Minister, the CDA has started providing transport service to them under which the women, children and the elderly persons will have access to Muslim colony.

Egypt ambassador meets PM Imran
Ambassador of the Arab Republic of Egypt, Tarek Dahroug, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Prime Minister reaffirmed the commitment to expand Pakistan-Egypt relations in diverse fields, including high-level exchanges, trade and economic cooperation, and education and culture. —*DNA*

Pak successfully tests ballistic Ghaznavi missile

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan conducted a successful training launch of surface-to-surface ballistic missile Ghaznavi, capable of delivering nuclear and conventional warheads upto a range of 290 kilometers. This training launch was the culminating point of the Annual Field Training Exercise of Army Strategic Forces Command.

The training launch was witnessed by Lieutenant General M Ali, Commander Army Strategic Forces Command, senior officers from Strategic Plans Division, Army Strategic Forces Command, Scientists and Engineers of the strategic organizations. Commander Army Strategic Forces Command appreciated the operational

preparedness and display of excellent standard in handling and operating the weapon system.

He also expressed full satisfaction on the training standards of participating troops, attained throughout this training activity.

President, PM of Pakistan and the Service Chiefs have congratulated all ranks of Army Strategic Forces Command, the scientists and engineers on successful conduct of today's launch.

Another report adds: Pakistan on Wednesday successfully Ghaznavi. President Alvi, PM Imran, the Service Chiefs have congratulated all ranks of Army Strategic Forces Command, the scientists and engineers on the landmark achievement. —*TLTP*

PM's uplift funds approval for lawmakers

SC warns of action if found against law

From Our Staff Correspondent

KARACHI: Taking notice of approval of development funds for members of the National Assembly and provincial assemblies by PM Imran, Supreme Court Justice Qazi Faez Isa warned that legal proceedings would be initiated if the move is found to be in contravention of the law, local media reported.

The PM had approved development grant of Rs500 million to each lawmaker on January 27 during a meeting at the Parliament House. The grants were allotted under the sustainable development goals so that the law-

makers could carry out development schemes in their constituencies. The decision was taken after long-standing demands from the lawmakers for release of development funds.

During proceedings of the case, Justice Isa summoned the AG to apprise the court of the matter.

"Is the release of the development funds by the PM in accordance with the Constitution, law and legal precedent?" he questioned. Justice Isa asked AG Jawed to update the court on the issue. Justice Isa said if the release of funds is valid according to the Constitution and the law then "the matter will be closed".



ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi exchanges views with Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Geoffrey Shaw at the Naval Headquarter.

Countrywide Covid-19 vaccination drive starts

ISLAMABAD: The National Immunisation Drive against Covid-19 formally began across the country on Wednesday.

The healthcare staffers were administered with first shots of the Sinopharm vaccine at a special ceremony organised at National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC). Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Planning and Development and NCOC head Asad Umar lauded the country's frontline health workers and said they "are our real heroes. No doubt they have put their lives at risk in their fight against Covid-19 and we pay tribute to all of them." This is the rea-

son that it was decided to administer the vaccine to the health workers in the first place, he added.

The minister appreciated China for providing the vaccine to Pakistan. He said, "China is our true friend that has always stood by us in difficult times." Asad Umar said, "It is because of the government's effective strategy and the cooperation of the people that we managed to control the spread of the pandemic." He also thanked the provincial and federal authorities for their efforts to mitigate the effects of the pandemic.

Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on National Health Services Dr Faisal Sultan said that an ef-

fective mechanism has been developed to ensure administration of anti-Covid vaccine to the people.

Briefing the media persons at the NCOC, he said that adult vaccine centres have been established across the country which currently have the capacity to administer vaccine to forty thousand people on a daily basis. He said this capacity will be further enhanced in the days to come. The special assistant said that the Sinopharm vaccine gifted by China to Pakistan is an effective and trusted vaccine. He said it is being used in China and has also been authorised in Egypt and Hungary. —*TLTP*