

PIA resumes Islamabad, Chitral flights after 1.5 years

KARACHI: The PIA has resumed flight operation between Islamabad and Chitral that had been suspended for 1.5 years due to the spread of coronavirus pandemic. The national carrier has resumed flight service between Islamabad and Chitral after 1.5 years and announced that Rs5,920 will be charged for one-side trip. For Chitral, two flights will be operated from Islamabad twice in one week, said the PIA spokesperson. —Online

The Business

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NAB decides to include Maryam in assets case inquiry

LAHORE: The NAB has decided to include PML-N vice president Maryam Nawaz in assets case inquiry. An important head way has been made during the inquiry in assets case against PML-N leader Safdar. The NAB has said evidence has been found about Maryam being benami dar of Safdar. He has purchased 109 acre land in Sundar, 377 kanal 12 marlas in village mall, 62.2 kanal in village Baddu and 14.01 kanal on Raiwind road in the name of Maryam. —APP

REAP statement against India on Basmati accepted

By Our Special Correspondent

LAHORE: The reasoned statement submitted by Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) against India on Geographical Indication (GI) of Basmati has been accepted by the European Commission the other day.

The REAP filed the reasoned statement in opposition to India's claim of GI of Basmati after sending the Notice of Opposition on December 7, 2020. After reviewing both of these documents, the European Commission has declared the Notice of Opposition and the Reasoned Statement of REAP admissible in the case. European Commission's acceptance has made REAP a party to the case. Now, REAP can advocate for the protection of Pakistan's G.I. rights over Basmati directly.

With the admissibility of REAP as a party, the case of Pakistan in EU has reached its third stage where all the contesting parties will engage in consultations with each other. The time period for the parties to engage in negotiations is three months. In this case, the negotiations will last, tentatively, till May 6, 2021. This is a pre-trial phase, whereby, parties are encouraged to reach an amicable solution.

SECP asks Cos to implement gender diversity policies

ISLAMABAD: In order to foster a beneficial and comfortable working environment for Pakistani women, the SECP, has asked listed companies to formulate and implement gender diversity policies to attract and retain talented women.

Pakistan figures fairly low in the Global Gender Gap report index, prepared by the World Economic Forum and there is a strong need to encourage women participation in the workforce, developing in-demand skills and creating opportunities for women to advance into leadership roles within the corporate sector. The SECP has always been a strong advocate for gender equality, internally and in its regulated sectors and firmly believes that gender diversity in decision making has a proven correlation with enhanced financial performance of the corporate sector and the overall growth of the economy. —DNA

Women's Day observed

ISLAMABAD: The International Women's Day was observed Monday in Pakistan as well to acknowledge women's outstanding contributions in various fields.

This year's theme for the day was: "Women in leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 world." This day celebrates the tremendous efforts by women and girls around the world in shaping a more equal future and recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides celebrating women's achievements, the day also aims to raise awareness about women's equality, lobby for accelerated gender parity and raise funds for female-focused charities.

To mark the day, different seminars, conferences and events were organised in the country to highlight the significance of the role of women in the society. In his message pertaining to Women's Day, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said during the testing times of the COVID-19 pandemic. —Online

Senate session convenes today

ISLAMABAD: The government has convened a session of the Senate on Tuesday (tomorrow) at 4:00 PM. Prime Minister's Adviser for Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan has sent the summary for the session.

"Still three days are needed to complete the number of working days required under the constitution for the Senate." "The constitutional requirement will be completed by March 11," Babar Awan said. "The new Senate year will begin after election of new senators and the chairman," Awan further said.

Earlier, a meeting of the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs, finalized the Senate calendar for the next year. The session was chaired by Prime Minister's Adviser for Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan. The meeting



ISLAMABAD: A view of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) meeting held to decide about the long march.

Reforms introduced in labour laws, says Secy labour

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Provincial Secretary Labour and Human Resource Department Ahmed Javed Qazi has said that important reforms have been made in the labour laws under the directions of Prime Minister and Chief Minister.

He was speaking at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry on Monday. LCCI President Mian Tariq Misbah and Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry also spoke on the occasion while DG Punjab Employees Social Security Institution M. Hanif Rana, Commissioner PESSI, other officials, former LCCI Vice President Kashif Anwar and Executive Committee Member Sheikh Sajjad Afzal were also present. Ahmed Javed Qazi said that amendments have been made in the Labour Act. He said that no penalty will be imposed on those industries that will pay their actual outstanding contribution till June 30th, 2021. He said that in this regard a relief of Rs.5.5 billion has been given to the industry under this amnesty scheme. He said that inspection will be held only 20% industry through transparent balloting.

He said that 94 percent companies are paying their contribution through online that has made the things more transparent and help to eliminate the malpractice. He

said that Marriage grant has been increased to two lac from one lac. He said that the children of industrial workers can apply online for scholarships.

He further informed the house that awareness kits have been introduced to get rid of accidents in industry and government has hired sectoral experts to facilitate the industry. He said that labour will be given houses on ownership basis in the housing societies against easy installments. LCCI President Mian Tariq Misbah said that Punjab Employees Social Security Institution (PESSI) should redefine itself as only a "Service Provider" which essentially means that it should have no role whatsoever in Tax Collection. The responsibility for collection of all Labour Taxes in Punjab should be given to Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA).

He said that the number of labour taxes pertaining to Industries and businesses in Punjab can be reduced considerably by clubbing EOBI, PESSI, WPPF and WWF. The Departments like PESSI, Labour and EOBI can then get their respective shares from the consolidated collection. Since EOBI is collected by the Federal Government, the Government of Punjab should coordinate with Federal Government in this regard. The LCCI President said that the frequency of tax payments of various

labor taxes (like EOBI, PESSI) should be reduced to once a year. Currently, the frequency of Tax payments of EOBI and PESSI is 12 times a year.

He said that to reduce cost of Labour and its transportation and enhance competitiveness of our Industry, the Industrial Units should be allowed to utilize 10% of their land for establishing their own Labour Colonies. Government should also take the initiative of establishing Labor Colonies in partnership with Private Sector through a proper Public Private Partnership arrangement.

Mian Tariq Misbah said that the current labour laws (under Punjab Industrial Relations Act 2010) allow 25% of Trade Union members to be outsiders (those who are not actually employed as labourers in the particular establishment). This law should be reviewed as external involvement in Trade Union activities results in exploitation of labour force and in certain cases, creates law and order problems.

Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry appreciated the reforms introduced by the Punjab government and Punjab Labour Department. He hoped that Punjab Labour department will keep a good liaison with the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry.

ICCI to promote sports for revival of sports businesses

ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the sports was an important source of generating economic activity as the global industry was valued at over \$500b, therefore, he urged that the Sports Committee of ICCI should focus on promoting various sports activities for achieving beneficial results for the economy. He said that the progress of many industries was linked with sports, therefore, promotion of sports would boost their growth. He said this while presiding over a meeting of ICCI Sports Committee.

Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that ICCI Sports Committee should accelerate efforts for promoting all sports including cricket, hockey, tennis, badminton, kabaddi judo and others. He said that the Sports Committee should develop strong liaison with Pakistan Sports Board and other Sports Associations to explore opportunities for boosting sports activities in the region.

He said that ICCI has recently organised a very successful international cycling gala

as part of promoting healthy sports activity and the Sports Committee should plan multiple sports events in coming days. He assured that ICCI would extend its full cooperation to the Committee in such pursuits. Zareef Khan, Convener of ICCI Sports Committee briefed the ICCI President about the plan of his Committee for sports activities that would be organized in the coming days. He said that the Sports Committee would organise a cricket match in near future while many other sports events would also be organized in coming months.

Reforms measures being taken to ensure transparency: AGP

AGP Javed Jehangir has said that the Department of Auditor General of Pakistan (DAGP) has set the process of reforms in motion including setting up of Audit Management Information System (AMIS) competency center and Specialized Audit unit for specific sectors to meet challenges and to ensure transparency and to improve the

Addressing a batch of Probationary Officers of 47th Specialized Training Pro-

gram on the eve of their passing out ceremony held at Pakistan Audit & Accounts Academy Lahore, the Auditor General of Pakistan congratulated all the 24 probationary officers who had completing 10 months long STP for their attainments in terms of impressive achievements and splendid results, according to a press release issued by the AGP office on Monday.

Javed Jehangir said that the Probationers of 47th Batch were entering into service at the time when the pre-requisite of professionalism for working in an IT environment had to be fulfilled on their part.

This digitization and e-governance also affected other process flows and had thus ushered in the age of disruptive technologies. Therefore officers of Pak Audit & Accounts service are obligated to focus on their continuous professional development, learning new skills for assimilating audit techniques commensurate with emerging audit areas and working environments to prove themselves as productive members

PN holds exercises with navies of Japan, Russia & US

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship Alamgir with embarked helicopter participated in bilateral exercises with Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force Ship Ariake, Royal Oman Navy Ship Khassab, Russian Federation Navy Ships Stoiky & Kola and United States Navy Ship John Paul Jones in Gulf of Aden and North Arabian Sea. Exercises were aimed to enhance interoperability and augment collaborative efforts to ensuring maritime security in the region.

According to Director General Public Relations Navy, PNS Alamgir is presently deployed to undertake Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) in Gulf of Aden and North Arabian Sea. These patrols are conducted as PN initiative to contribute toward regional maritime security and to support international efforts against the menace of maritime terrorism, piracy and narco-arms smuggling.

Pakistan Navy remains committed to play role in ensuring maritime safety and security in the region. The ongoing RMSP deployment and participation in bilateral exercises by PNS ALAMGIR are testimony of PN resolve to ensure peace and order at sea while maintaining close relations with friendly navies. —Online

Decision to sell or close 84 state-run Cos lauded

KARACHI: Chairman of National Business Group of FPCCI, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday backed the decision of the government to sell or shut 84 state-run-enterprises to save billions and get the IMF programme restored.

The government has decided to sell or shut-down 84 out of 212 companies while those reporting reduced losses could be revived through better supervision, good practices and efficient administration, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the government and IMF are under agreement to restructure and bring transparency in failed companies and go for legislation in this regard. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that a report suggests that the assets of these companies are worth Rs19 trillion, they are generating revenue of Rs4 trillion and their losses are worth Rs143 billion. —Online

Rashid vows to root out terrorism

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Monday expressed the resolve of his government to root out extremism and terrorism from every nook and corner of the country.

He was talking to journalists at Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) after inquiring about the health of two policemen who sustained bullet injuries on Sunday night when unidentified motorcyclists opened fire on them.

He appreciated the role of law enforcement agencies for sacrificing their lives to ensure the safety of masses. Rashid said Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was being reorganized from Afghanistan to launch terrorist activities in Pakistan. He noted that there were security threats in Rawalpindi, Islamabad and Karachi, but Pakistani security agencies were on high alert and ready to thwart any possible terrorist attempt.

The Minister said five terrorist were killed on Sunday by the Armed forces and they were striving hard to eliminate terrorism from the country. The families of martyred cops were being given compensation money, besides welfare package, said the Minister. —Online

Corona virus claims 22 lives

LAHORE: About 22 deaths were reported in the last 24 hours due to virus taking the nationwide tally of fatalities to 13,227 on Monday.

According to the latest figures by the NCCO 1,592 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours raising the number of positive cases to 592100. Till now 259,855 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Sindh, 177,823 in Punjab 74,027 in KP, 45,740 in Islamabad, 19,117 in Balochistan, 10,579 in Azad Kashmir and 4,959 in Gilgit-Baltistan. Furthermore 5,565 individuals have lost their lives to the epidemic in Punjab 4,426 in Sindh, 2,113 in KP,



ADEN: Pakistan Navy Ship Alamgir participate in the exercises with Japan, Oman, Russia and US Naval Ships in Gulf of Aden and Arabian Sea.

CDNS receives Rs 31 billion savings through schemes

ISLAMABAD: Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) has received Rs 31 billion through the new launches schemes investments by March 5, from registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25000 introduced by the institution.

The CDNS has introduced the new registered Premium Prize Bonds after the termination of both major Prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25000. This initiative documentation of the country's economy, senior official of CDNS told this agency here on Monday. New registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25000 were registered by State Bank of Pakistan and en-cashed only by the registered financial institution under the SBP, he said. Replying to the question, he said

CDNS has opened new avenues for public and private investment to document the country's economy and ensure transparency in the financial system. While replying to another question, he informed, "We paid the encashment of Rs 116b by March 1st to the investors against the suspension of prize bonds of Rs 25,000".

He said the federal government recently suspended the prize bonds of Rs 25,000 and had given a six-month deadline to investors to en-cash their total savings of Rs 160 billion.

The senior official of CDNS said National Savings has paid Rs 116 billion to their customers in the last three months and remaining 45 billion out of total Rs 160 billion would also be paid by May 30, 2021, he said. He informed that the govern-

ment has already canceled prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and CDNS repaid to the investors the encashment worth of Rs 258 billion in previous FY 2019-20, he said.

Replying to another question, he said CDNS has reached a fresh deposit of Rs 540 billion during the last seven months in the current Fiscal Year (FY) 2020-21.

The CDNS had compensated an amount of Rs 258 billion to its investors after the termination of major prize bonds of Rs 40,000, he said.

CDNS has set Rs 249 billion annual collection target collection from July 1 to February 28 for the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 352 billion for the previous year's 2019-20 to enhance savings and promote saving culture in the country. —APP