

Tenders of RRRP to be opened on April 12

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Capt. (R) Mohammad Mehmood Sunday said that the tenders of Rawalpindi Ring Road Project (RRRP) would be opened on April 12. According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, a committee comprising experts would be formed to review the tenders which would be announced on April 5. The decision to finalize the names of the experts would be taken on March 31. He informed that various government departments. —APP

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COVID-19 vaccination to be speed up in coming days

RAWALPINDI: The CEO District Health Authority Dr Faiza Kanwal has said that COVID-19 vaccination drive started in the first week of last month at 23 centers of the district would speed up significantly in coming days with the arrival of more vaccines. The CEO told APP that the health authority has administered 14,102 shots of Chinese Sinopharm vaccine so far out of the total 14,173 signed up themselves for the vaccination. —APP

UNHCR requires \$6.96m to implement DRIVE

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has required a sum of US\$ 6.96 million to implement Document Renewal & Information Verification Exercise (DRIVE) of Afghan refugees in Pakistan by December 31, 2021.

According to a document of UNHCR Pakistan, as many as 1.4 million Afghan refugees registered with the UNHCR in Pakistan would receive a biometric Smart Card in 2021. As per shared information by the UN Refugee Agency, some 8,000 persons would be verified per day to complete the verification process by the end of current year.

DRIVE will be implemented jointly with the government of Pakistan through the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) / Commissioner for Afghan Refugees (CARs) and the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), UNHCR Pakistan said.

Indian troops martyr 2 more Kashmiri youth

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Indian troops in their fresh act of state terrorism, martyred two Kashmiri youth in Shopian district.

Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on Sunday.

The troops martyred the youth during a siege and search operation in Wangam area of the district, the Kashmir Media Service reported. The operation was started in the area a joint team of Indian Police, Army's 34RR and CRPF Saturday evening. An Indian soldier was also killed and two others were injured in the area.

Tobacco exports drop 14.10pc in 8 months

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The exports of tobacco from the country witnessed a decrease of 14.10 percent during the eight month of financial year (2020-21) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. Pakistan exported tobacco worth US \$ 22.271 million during July-February (2020-21) compared to the exports of US \$ 25.927 million during July-February (2019-20), showing negative growth of 14.10 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).

In terms of quantity, the exports of tobacco also decreased by 14.19 percent as the country exported 8,312 metric ton of tobacco during the period under review compared to the exports of 9,686 metric ton during last fiscal year. Meanwhile, on year-on-year basis, the tobacco exports declined by 86.82 percent during the month of February 2021 as compared to the same month of last year.

PM directs SBP, NBP

Continued from Front Page responded to their complaints. Governor SBP Raza Baqir said the banks had eased out the loaning conditions. In order to facilitate the applicants, the SBP had standardized the list of documents required for housing loans. The applicants would require to provide copy of CNIC, two passport sized photo, salary slip in case of job or copy of rent agreement of shop or house to make the banks assess the income and fix an installment.

Moreover, the SBP had also established 16 offices to register complaints and guide the applicants of the housing loan. Anwar Ali Hyder said the government has announced to extend Rs 300,000 subsidy for the construction of each first 100,000 houses to be constructed under the Naya Pakistan Housing Program. President NBP Arif Usmani said the people could directly approach him through contact No. 03025567776 in case of any glitch in their loan process.



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Hamza Shafiqat fines a roadside shopkeeper as buying facemask in Rs100 during inspection of Aabpara Market.

No right time for withdrawal of tax exemption: LCCI

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) has said that it was not the right time for withdrawal of tax exemptions from various sectors and an addition to the discretionary powers of tax machinery.

In a statement on Sunday, the LCCI President Mian Tariq Misbah, Senior Vice President Muhammad Nasir Hameed Khan and Vice President Tahir Manzoor Chaudhry said that the government has withdrawn tax exemptions of Rs 140 billion and has also introduced more than 75 amendments in tax rules and regulations.

They felt that some amendments have conferred discretionary powers to the tax collection machinery which would create problems for the business community. They said that discretionary powers have always remained a matter of concern for the businessmen.

They said that after new amendments, shop owners will be fined Rs.5,000 for not displaying tax numbers.

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There will be Rs. 5,000 fine for those not filing tax returns or wealth statements.

The LCCI office-bearers said that the government has withdrawn tax exemption for fresh graduates and investment companies.

They said that Pakistan's IT exports are stagnant around 1.4 Billion Dollars.

Any Change in Tax Exemptions for the IT sector would hamper its export competitiveness.

The LCCI office-bearers said that trade and industry is going through difficult challenges to the Covid-19 which has already caused huge loss the business community.

They said that the countries around the world have announced special incentives and supporting measures for their trade and industry in the wake of the pandemic.

They said that relief measures like tax exemptions always lead to an increase in local and foreign investment and governments receive many times more taxes.

The LCCI office-bearers said that at this time when entire trade and industry is trying hard to back on to feet, such measures would put a reverse gear to their all efforts.

They also feared that withdrawal of tax exemption and discretionary powers to the tax machinery will put a halt to the investment which would hit the revenue targets of the government.

Govt urged to give due respect to taxpayers, save rights

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The Friends of Business and Economic Reforms (FEBR) President Kashif Anwar Sunday asked the government to give due respect to the taxpayers and safeguard their rights through legislation against the misuse of discretionary powers by the FBR.

He called for creating harmonization between Sales Tax and Income Tax laws by removing those provisions which conflict with each other, suggesting to enhance tax base by automation and integration of revenue departments with other public entities. The FEBR President said the sustainable solution to Pakistan's problems lies in the structural reforms, as we can see very large inefficiencies in tax collection, which needs to be removed.

So, the tax compliance must be improved and tax base be broadened, which cannot be achieved with a single policy change, but by a systemic approach. He said that only direct taxes can improve tax collection, as the existing tax system is heavily skewed toward indirect taxation.

Kashif Anwar said the non-filers, who are outside the tax net, are not accounted for at all, which discourages businesses to come into the tax net, calling for legislations through parliament for protection of

the rights of the existing taxpayers.

Registered businesses are required to comply with various departments involving a lot of financial and time resources, whereas unregistered businesses are free from all such hassles, he maintained.

Kashif Anwar said that in the past instead of focusing on controlling under-invoicing, curbing smuggling and expanding the tax net, the FBR seems to be inclined to pressurize registered taxpayers, who are already suffering due to a high rate of sales tax, income tax, and custom duties by creating fictitious cases for recovery of outstanding dues to meet revenue target.

He said that businesses are already in a complicated state-of-affairs, while anti-business actions against business community were not only adding to the miseries of the business community but are also promoting trust deficit between the government and the business community.

He also rejected the frequent increase in the energy prices of gas and electricity, as the move continues to make Pakistan's products uncompetitive in the international market.

He observed that country has not been able to achieve its maximum export potential and product diversification owing to limited access to raw materials.

He pointed out that the procedures for

temporary import schemes should be simplified so that exporters could be able to achieve price competitiveness and product diversification.

Pakistan's exports have been struggling for a long time and to counter that he called for continuation and consistency in long-term policies.

He also emphasized that concentrating on import substitution is imperative to narrow import bills and certain imported products such as oil are of a fixed nature, therefore, the government needs to enhance focus on import substitution industries, as chemicals, agriculture and steel are potential industries.

He said that enacting structural reforms, such as improvements in tax collection system, bureaucracy and ease of doing business requires major political will and strict implementation of policies, he added. FEBR President said the current account deficit contracted to a large extent, foreign exchange reserves increased, and now there is need to ease core inflation.

Importantly, export-based manufacturing showed signs of traction and construction activities picked up, indicating that the economy was on the path of recovery. However, further improvements need serious structural reforms to put the economy on a firm path of sustainable growth.

Rice exporters' vow to boost health standards in rice farmers

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Rice exporters on Sunday has vowed to boost the health standards and high quality of life of rice farmers for maintaining efficiency and productivity in the agriculture sector.

Rice farmers play a leading role in the country's agricultural production and earning foreign exchange, Chief Operating Officer of rice exporter group, Rice Partners Pvt Ltd, Muhammad Ali Tariq said told APP here on Sunday.

He said that "We organized a preventive vaccination campaign for the agricultural families including rice transplanters for the different regions of Central Punjab to protect them from epidemics."

Rice Partners (Pvt) Ltd (RPL) in collaboration with Helvetas Pakistan organized a preventive vaccination campaign for rice transplanter's families in three villages namely Kot Hanif, Khatyala Virkan and Saikham of different district of Punjab including Sheikhpura, Muhammad Ali Tariq said.

He said that approximately 200 persons participated in the campaign.

Online scrutiny of papers for overseas commended

From Our Staff Correspondent

RAWALPINDI: The agency for protection of overseas Pakistanis' rights has commended Prime Minister Imran Khan and concerned federal government officials for facilitating online scrutiny of papers for overseas compatriots.

The present government has given the best protection to the rights of overseas Pakistanis by providing various facilities in the shortest possible time. The government deserves congratulations on these steps. Khalid Nawaz, Chief Executive Officer of Knight Human Management Shalan GL Pakistan expressed these views while addressing the participants of a training session held here in School of Arts and Design on Sunday for overseas Pakistanis workers.

Khalid Nawaz said that Pakistanis working abroad need to certify their technical skills at various levels. These people used to face many difficulties and hassles in verifying their credentials, but under the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission of Pakistan, through its website, not only provide facility to these Pakistani professionals for verification of certificates but they will now be able to get new certificates online from NEVTEC according to their technical skills. "This initiative of NEVTEC has facilitated overseas Pakistanis and reduced the difficulties they face in finding employment abroad.

UNICEF imports anti-virus equipment worth \$5.5 million

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD, Mar 28 (APP):United Nations International Children's Fund has imported Covid-19 testing kits and others worth US\$5.5 million during the first two months of the current year in collaboration with World Bank and Asian Development Bank to support the Covid-19 response.

According to UNICEF in Pakistan Humanitarian situation report 2021. Ongoing challenges were being experienced in securing supply of COVID related supplies due to the high demand globally, report said.

The supplies included COVID-19 testing kits and associated equipment, (PPE) personal protective equipment and Oxygen equipment, while hand sanitiser has been procured locally.

The Covid response equipment and others were being distributed in consultation with the Ministry and National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination. Moreover, the Ultra Cold Chain (UCC) Freezers along with accessories were also being procured from China, said the report.

The UCC Freezers would be installed in 17 locations across the country by ensuring the training of end-users.

SNGPL, SSGC reduce gas losses in FY 2019-20

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The two state-owned companies, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC), have collectively prevented a volumetric loss of around 9,938 Million Cubic Feet (MMCF) gas against the UFG reduction target of 14,806 MMCF set for the financial year 2019-20.

The SNGPL decreased the loss of 4,771 MMCF gas against its Unaccounted for Gas (UFG) reduction plan of 6,840 MMCF gas. "However, the percentage of UFG has increased slightly (0.34%), as compared to the same period of previous year, due to reduction in gas received," according to an official

report available with APP.

The report also cited the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as one of the reasons that 'adversely affected' the company performance regarding UFG control activities during the period under review.

The SSGC has decreased the volumetric loss of 5,167 MMCF gas against a target of 7,966 MMCF gas, and brought down its UFG losses ratio by 0.15% as compared to the previous year.

The present government has given the SNGPL and SSGC a three-year UFG reduction plan [2019-20, 2020-21 and 2021-22] to gradually overcome the losses of 18,246 MMCF gas and 40,629 MMCF gas respectively. The companies in total have been given the

target to overcome the volumetric losses of 58,869 MMCF gas.

Whereas in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (2020-21), the two companies capped on the losses of around 2,476 MMCF gas against the 3,976 MMCF gas target.

During the three-month period, the SNGPL performed well and exceeded the target of 1,425 MMCF gas by reducing 1,567 MMCF gas losses.

While the SSGC saved 909 MMCF gas against the target of 2,551. "The SSGC could not meet the targeted reduction owing to the ongoing activity of the network segmentation and rehabilitation of old leaking pipelines," a senior official privy to petroleum sector development told this scribe.



RAWALPINDI: Ameer Jamaat-e-Islami Siraj ul Haq addresses during public gathering at Liaquat