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400 contract employees of WASA regularized, says Mahmood



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PTI, JKT Group to move forward as a family: Fawad

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry said on Saturday that the PTI and members of estranged PTI leader Jahangir Khan Tareen's (JKT) Group had decided to move forward as a "family" and united political party, adding that any personal or collective problems would be resolved through dialogue.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore along with members of the JKT Group, the minister said he and PTI leader Aamir Mehmood Kiani had been tasked by Prime Minister Imran Khan to visit the group and hear their point of view in detail. "We all

have decided to move forward as a family and a united party as is tradition. There is no issue of grouping in this or conflict between one another.

"We have decided that we will sit and have talks to solve any personal or collective problems. We are all united under PM Imran leadership," Chaudhry said after the meeting with the group, adding that the delegation had also been tasked to solve the issues of the group in an "organisational manner". Chaudhry said all of them were one "family" and often there were coordination issues in a family. He acknowledged that there was a need to improve the party's political and administrative coordination.



LAHORE: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Hussain talks to mediamen at the residence of Malik Numan Ahmed Langrial Punjab Agriculture Minister at the Zaman Park.

Pakistan witnesses strong growth, says Shaukat Tarin

Expresses gratitude for PM Imran Khan and his team for achieving this growth despite strict IMF restrictions

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Shaukat Tarin said Saturday that Pakistan witnessed a strong V-Shaped growth despite being in a tough International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. In a tweet here the Minister said that IMF programme was necessitated by unsustainable current account deficit and falling foreign currency reserves, and a vicious Covid 19.

He expressed gratitude for Prime Minister, Imran Khan and his team for achieving this growth. "A strong V growth despite being in a tough IMF program, which was necessitated by unsustainable current account deficit and falling foreign currency reserves, and a vicious Covid 19. Well done team Imran Khan; Thumbs up @FinMinistryPak @GovtofPakistan," he tweeted.

It is pertinent to mention here that the National Accounts Committee (NAC) on Friday had estimated that the provisional growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) during the current fiscal year (2020-2021) was 3.94 percent. Due to a combination of GDP growth and strengthening of Pak rupee against the

US dollar, per capita income of Pakistan jumped by 13.4 percent during the current fiscal year (2020-21) from \$1361 to \$1543. The GDP increase from \$263 billion to \$296 billion, an increase of \$33 billion during the current fiscal year, was the highest ever in any year.

4pc GDP growth rate to be achieved in current FY: Hammad
Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar on Saturday said that four per cent Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate would be achieved during the current fiscal year. Addressing a press conference here, the minister said all GDP growth related targets had been achieved. "There are many analyses that the growth rate will be more than four per cent," he added.

He said total the GDP increase from \$263 billion to \$296 billion, an increase of \$33 billion during the current fiscal year, was the highest ever in any year.

He went on to say that the country's exports stood at \$ 3.2 billion in March while the remittances witnessed 29 per cent increase during July 2020 to April 2021. Similarly, the minister said that 15 per cent growth was recorded in tax revenue collection during the said period.

The country's foreign reserves had also jumped to \$ 23 billion, he added.

The large-scale manufacturing (LSM) sector showed an unprecedented healthy growth of 9.29% while sales of cement also witnessed 17 per cent increase.

Hammad said that current account surplus stood at \$ 250 million and not a single penny borrowing was done from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The PML-N government borrowed Rs 7000 billion from the SBP, he added.

He said despite the huge challenge posed to the economy by the COVID-19 pandemic, the country's economy witnessed growth and it was a proof of the success of Prime Minister Imran Khan's economic policies. The minister said it was not a temporary growth but would be sustained and further strengthened. He said PM Imran Khan had completely made the National Account Committee free and independent as he (PM) always believed in impartial umpire.

He expressed the hope that the economy would further grow at rapid rate from the new fiscal year. Agri and industrial sectors would also gain more momentum which would also help generate more job opportunities, he added.

Pak reaffirms support to Kashmir cause, says FM

NEW YORK: Pakistan will negotiate to find a solution of the decades-old Kashmir dispute, but will not barter away the inalienable rights of Kashmiri people, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi told a gathering of Pakistani-Americans on Saturday.

He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan was deeply committed to the just cause of the Kashmiris and that his stand on the issue was unequivocal.

"We will talk respectfully, but will not make a deal (on Kashmir)," the foreign minister told a cheering audience. He was answering a question about concerns being voiced over reported back-channel engagement with India on the decades-old dispute. He also said that Pakistan was open to dialogue with India aimed at peacefully resolve all

outstanding issues, including Kashmir.

Past regimes in Pakistan, Qureshi said had put the Kashmir issue on back burner, but the present government had revived it, citing PM Imran Khan's forceful address to the UN General Assembly in 2019. Friday's meeting with community members, held at the Pakistan Mission to the United Nations, began with recitation from the holy Quran. Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Munir Akram and Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Asad Majeed Khan were among those who also present.

Pakistani Consul General in New York, Ayesha Ali, welcomed the foreign minister, noting that he is the first dignitary from Pakistan to visit New York since the Covid-19 pandemic hit the

world early in 2020. On their part, the community members praised Pakistan's strong advocacy of the Palestinian cause, the way it stood by the beleaguered people and highlighted their plight as they suffered under massive, 11-day Israeli bombardment that left nearly 250 people dead, including women and children.

FM Qureshi, who led the Pakistan delegation to May 19's session of UN General Assembly on Palestine, said his purpose and that of other foreign ministers from Islamic countries, who have come to New York, was mainly to raise voice in the 193-member body in an effort to seek an end to the atrocities being committed against the Palestinians.

"By the grace of God," he said, "We succeeded in our first objective -- a ceasefire." —Online

NCOC allows re-opening of edu sector from 24th

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) in accordance with its decisions taken on dated May 19, has allowed staggered re-opening of education sector (all public & private education institutes) in districts with less than 5% coronavirus positivity ratio with effect from May 24. However, considering prevailing disease situation across various districts, education sector in high disease districts will remain closed till June 6, said a notification issued by NCOC on Saturday.

The education sector in the districts with more than 5 percent ratio to be re-opened on June 7 subject to review planned on June 3. Therefore, education sectors in high disease districts may not be opened from May 24 onwards. All federating units are requested to issue notifications accordingly by May 21. According to the notification, a total of 52 districts across the country were closed due to positivity ratio higher than 5 percent.

The districts in Sindh included Badin, Dadu, Hyderabad, Jamshoro, Sukkur, Shaheed Benazirabad, and all districts of Karachi. In Balochistan, educational institutions would remain closed in Quetta till June 6, while 04 districts of Azad Jammu and Kashmir including Muzafarabad, Ponch, Bagh and Sadhnoti. The districts in Punjab were included Attock, Bahawalpur, Bhakkar, Dera Ghazi Khan, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Khanewal, Khushab, Lahore, Layyah, Lodhran, Mianwali, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Okara, Rahim Yar Khan, Rawalpindi, Sargodha, and Toba Tek Singh.

In KP, 14 districts have a high positivity ratio, including Abbottabad, Bannu, Buner, Charsadda, Lower Dir, Upper Dir, Haripur, Kohat, Karam, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Swabi, and Swat. While the Islamabad Capital Territory was also among the districts with high positivity ratio.

NCOC urges people aged between 30-40 to get vaccinated

National Command and Operation Center (NCOC) has announced to begin vaccination for 30-40 years of age from Saturday.

In Tweet, NCOC urged the people between this age to register themselves by sending CNIC to 1166. On receiving SMS, visit the mentioned Vaccination center on given date (or afterwards) and get vaccinated, the NCOC said through its Twitter account.

Macroeconomic indicators showing positive trend: Asim

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Chairman China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Authority Lt. Gen. (ret'd) Asim Saleem Bajwa Saturday said all the major macroeconomic indicators were moving towards positive trajectory due to immense hard work by the govt.

Not without an immense hard work, Pakistan's economy performed beyond expectations with all major macroeconomic indicators showing positive trend amid Covid-19 pandemic," he said in a tweet. Asim Bajwa said the hard work resulted in 3.94 per cent economic growth during the outgoing fiscal year.

Gold prices decline by Rs200 to Rs109,100/tola

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed decrease of Rs 200 on Saturday and was traded at Rs 109,100 against its sale at Rs 109,300, Karachi Sarafa and Jewelers Group reported.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat also decreased by Rs 171 and was traded at Rs 93,536 against its sale at Rs 93,707 whereas the prices of ten gram 22 Karat gold decreased to Rs 85,741 from Rs 85,898.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained stable at Rs 1420 and Rs 1217.42 respectively.

'Problems of businessmen being resolved'

From Our Staff Correspondent

SIALKOT: Special Assistant to Chief Minister Punjab on Information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan has said services of the business community are commendable which is contributing the country's exports and earning billion dollars in foreign exchange.

She expressed these views while addressing a meeting with the members of the Pasrur Road Action Committee of the business community at the DC office here on Saturday.

Deputy Commissioner Tahir Farooq, Humayun Sheikh, Chaudhry Talat Masood Advocate, Sohail Sandha, Ahsan Bhatta,

Ali Sheikh Zohaib Raffique, DD Development Abdul Rauf, XEN Highway, Gapco, Sui Gas, PTCL and other concerned officials also attended the meeting. On this occasion, Dr Firdous said that industrial zone was being set up in Sialkot to promote economic activities, adding that people were being provided facilities of communication, health and education.

Dr Firdous said the government was fully aware of problems being faced by the business community, adding that the government was making all out sincere efforts for the early solution of these problems. The meeting reviewed the con-

No grouping or forward block in PTI: Sarwar

From Our Staff Correspondent

RAWALPINDI: Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan on Saturday paid rich tribute to foreign Ministers of Pakistan and Turkey for highlighting human rights violations of defenseless Palestinians by Israeli forces at United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) session held on May 20.

Addressing a press conference here at his camp office, he said there was no grouping or forward block in the Pakistan Tehreek Insa(PTI) and "we all are united under the leadership of PM Imran Khan". Sarwar said some elements of PDM were spreading the rumours of differences in the party and requested the media to refrain from carrying out negative propaganda about the party.

Khan renewed his pledge

that PTI would complete its five-year term and there was no threat to the government. The Minister reiterated there was no political victimization in the country as its government believed in indiscriminate and across the board accountability, adding our parliamentarians were appearing before the Court of law and no one was above the law as Prime Minister believes in the supremacy of rule.

Commenting on the Ring road project scandal, he rejected the impression that he or his family were involved in changing the alignment of the road and there was no name of him or his associates in the inquiry report. The Minister emphasized that completion of Ring road was a project of national importance and nobody would be allowed to derail it, adding it would be inaugurated in the current year.



LAHORE: A view of closed shops at The Mall as markets closed on Friday and Saturday during lockdown to prevent spreading of COVID-19 epidemic.

COVID-19 claims 88 lives, infects 4,007 more people

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: The national tally on Saturday of total active COVID-19 cases recorded 63,436 with 4,007 more people tested positive for the deadly virus and 3,712 people recovered from the disease during the last 24 hours.

Eighty eight corona patients have died during past 24 hours, 80 of whom were under treatment in hospital and eight out of the hospital in their respective quarantines or homes, according to the latest update issued by the National command and Operation Centre (NCOC).

During the past 24 hours, most of the deaths have occurred in the Punjab

followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Out of the total 88 deaths occurred in the last 24 hours 40 of them had died who were under treatment on ventilators. There were 4,412 Covid infected patients under treatment in critical care in various Covid dedicated healthcare facilities in past 24 hours.

The National Covid positivity ratio during past 24 hours was recorded 6.43 percent. It may be mentioned here that the Covid positivity ratio was the percentage of actual positive cases appearing in every 100 tests performed to identify infected individuals. According to John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the percent positive will be high if the number of positive tests

is too high, or if the number of total tests is too low. A higher percent positive suggests higher transmission and that there are likely more people with coronavirus in the community who haven't been tested yet.

The maximum ventilators were occupied in four major areas including Lahore 51pc, Multan 70pc, Bahawalpur 42pc and Peshawar 33 percent. The maximum Oxygen beds (alternate oxygen providing facility other than ventilator administered as per medical requirement of COVID patient) was also occupied in four major areas of Gujranwala 45 percent, Swabi 48 percent, Peshawar 41 percent and Multan 62 percent.