

Buzdar summons Firdous to explain behaviour with Sialkot AC

LAHORE: Taking notice of the insulting attitude adopted by his Special Assistant on Information Firdous Ashiq Awan towards Sialkot AC, Punjab CM Usman Buzdar on Monday summoned Firdous to give explanation for her conduct. Firdous had admonished Sialkot AC Sonia Sadaf publicly during her visit to Ramadan Bazar, resulting in anger in Punjab bureaucracy as Chief Secretary Jawad Rafique Malik conveyed to CM Buzdar his and other civil servants' concern over the incident. —Online

The Business

Lahore, Tuesday, May 04, 2021 Ramazan 21, 1442

Tough contest expected between PML-N, PTI in PP-84 by poll

KHUSHAB: By-elections for a vacant Punjab Assembly seat (PP-84) in Khushab will be held on May 5 (Wednesday). The campaign for the by-polls will end midnight tonight, after which no candidate will be allowed to hold a rally or corner meetings to woo voters in the constituency, according to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). The electoral body warned that it will take action in case any candidate is found violating its election rules. —Online

Pakistan wants to improve trade ties with Egypt

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Railways Azam Swati on Monday expressed the desire to further strengthen trade relations between Pakistan and Egypt. He was talking to Egyptian Ambassador to Pakistan who called on him in Islamabad.

The Minister said Pakistan Railways is working to enhance its customer base by entering into long term agreements with the domestic and international suppliers.

Azam Swati said the Egyptian investors should take advantage from investment friendly environment in Pakistan. —Online

President for knowledge economy of deptt

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Monday called for promoting knowledge-economy and digitalisation of government organisations to enhance the efficiency of work and service delivery. President was talking to a delegation of Huawei, led by the Vice President of Huawei Middle East Region Li Xiangyu, which called on him here on Monday.

The President said Pakistan is blessed with immense talent and resources and the government is making serious efforts to channelize this potential in the right direction. Li Xiangyu in his presentation informed that Huawei has contributed to Pakistan's economy by providing 10,000 jobs and paying 120 million dollar in taxes, besides spending six million dollar to support disaster-relief efforts of the government.

He said Huawei has contributed to Pakistan's Information and Communication Technology talent by providing 10,000 certifications in 2020. He said Huawei would train over 1000 government employees to achieve Digital Pakistan initiative. —Online

Govt hands over possession of 1,508 apartments

ISLAMABAD: The government has handed over the possession of 1,508 apartments and housing units to the applicants under Naya Pakistan Housing Programme (NPHP). Talking to APP, a housing ministry official said around 2,003,940 people applied for the registration in NPHP during Phase-I and II, out of which 1,799,533 were eligible.

He said the ministry was taking various steps to facilitate the low income segment of the society by restarting stalled schemes and constructing new apartments worth Rs109 billion. He said the ministry had revived some stalled projects including Kurri Road, G-10/2, I-16/3, I-12/1 and Wafaqi Colony Lahore.

These long stalled projects had been put on track and completed by the Pakistan Housing Authority (PHA), however, the work on I/16-3 and I/12-1 projects was in progress, he added. Regarding the initiatives taken in Balochistan, he said the Kuchlak Road project Quetta, consisting 1,350 housing units, was inaugurated in 2019 on the land provided by the Balochistan govt. The official said the membership drive was executed and over 7,700 applications were received and automated balloting was also held successfully. —APP

PRA collects Rs10.07b in April

By Our Special Correspondent

LAHORE: The Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA) successfully collects Rs10.07 billion in April. The collection is reported to be 70.7 percent higher than the revenue of Rs.5.9 billion collected last year over the same time period. Overall PRA revenue for the first 10 months stands at Rs.117.4b compared to Rs.85.5billion generated last year showing an increase of 37.2pc in the revenue generation.

According to the spokesperson this is a significant increase considering the country is going through the third wave of Covid 19.

The PRA is hopeful on successfully achieving its target for FY 2020-21. The chairperson in his remarks praised the efforts of the officers and paid credits to the vision of the Finance Minister and the Punjab Govt for giving the right direction with a vision of



LAHORE: Senior leader of PTI Jahangir Tareen leaves after his hearing at the Accountability Court.

PCMEA sends letter to Secy MoC for remedial steps

LAHORE: The Pakistan Carpet Manufacturer and Exporters Association (PCMEA) has sent a six-point studded letter to Secretary, Ministry of Commerce & Industry appealing for instant remedial measures to save carpet industry languishing on the account of lack of trade incentives as well as pandemic related economic contractions.

In a letter, Pakistan Carpet Manufacturer and Exporters Association (PCMEA) Senior Vice Chairman Riaz Ahmad said that on issue of highly charged air & sea freight rates, request is pleaded for at least 50 percent compensation subsidy by the govt against above rates. Letter demanded for International exhibitions participation with 50/50 govt subsidy instead of 80.20 which was approved by the Ministry but yet not implemented till date.

It asked for waiver from import duties on un-finished carpet goods in raw from Thorkum border, as partial manufacturing in Afghanistan is done due to the availability of different knots in Afghanistan. It requested govt for zero percent duties including sales tax on the import of partial manufacturing from Afghanistan.

Allocation of textile parks in budget will make industry competitive: PBF
President Pakistan Businesses Forum

(PBF) Sahibzada Usman Zulfiqar demanded setting up of five mega textiles parks proposed in the budget 2021-22, saying this will make the industry globally competitive. In the budget proposals shared with presser on Monday, he said in the last year finance bill textile industry had been completely ignored and deprived of relief.

"There must be consistency in the policies and no way backs for quite some times for the long run growth and development while overnight shift in policies has also ways been disadvantageous" he remarked. He said Pakistan has a continuing balance of payments crisis and is being financed by local and international borrowing. More debt piling or borrowing is not a feasible solution. Therefore, this challenge can be overcome only by increasing exports, he stressed.

PBF President further said the government through Finance Act 2013 had raised the general rate of minimum turnover tax under Section 113 of the Income Tax Ordinance 2001 to one percent from 0.5 percent, which was further increased to 1.5 percent through Finance Act, 2019 and we proposed the minimum turnover tax should be abolished for the coming year. Indirect exporters may also be extended taxation

regime available to direct exporters.

Partnership signed to increase Pak-China business, cultural link

China Pakistan Study Center (CPSC) at ISSI and RINSTRAS signed memorandum of understanding to increase cultural understanding between businesses and people of Pakistan and China.

The memorandum of understanding was signed by Dr. Talat Shabir Director China Pakistan Study Centre and Amir Jahangir Chief Executive Officer RINSTRAS Technologies. Speaking at the occasion Director General Institute of Strategic Studies Ambassador Azaz Ahmad Chaudhary said "The ISSI provides a platform for quality policy input through informed research, objective analysis and dialogue on regional and international issues affecting peace, security and development of Pakistan. We are confident that this partnership will create knowledge resources among the youth and the business community alike while providing strategic direction for policy makers".

On the signing of the MoU, Dr. Talat Shabir, Director ISSI said, "The memorandum of understanding underlines to build cultural, business and economic cooperation and understanding. —Online

Over 2.861m tons of wheat procured, 46pc target achieved

ISLAMABAD: Wheat procurement campaign across the grain producing areas in the country was in full swing as procurement targets for the season achieved by 46 percent. So far, over 2.861 million tons of wheat has been procured in order to fulfill the domestic requirements as well as for keeping the strategic reserves to tackle with the future consumption, said Food Security Commissioner in the Ministry of National Food Security and Research Dr Imtiaz Ali Gopang.

Talking to this agency here on Monday, he said that the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet in its meeting had approved the wheat procurement targets of 6.3 million tons during procurement drive for the crop season 2021.

By the end of last week, Punjab has achieved 53.94 percent of its assigned targets as it procured 1,888,016 (over 1.888 million tons) as against the st targets of 3.500 million tons during current season.

Meanwhile, Sindh, which is the second largest grain producing province has completed its procurement campaign by 38.66

percent and procured about 541,242 metric tons as against the set targets of 1.400 million tons, he added. Federal Food Security Commissioner informed that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan provinces were tasked to procure 100,000 tons respectively as till date Balochistan has procured about 19,698 metric tons of grains, adding that procurement details from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was yet not received.

Dr Imtiaz said that Balochistan had 19.69 percent of its procurement targets as procurement centres had established in different areas to facilitate the farmers in the province. Meanwhile, Pakistan Agriculture Storage and Service Corporation (PASSCO) has procured 398,263 metric tons of wheat as it achieved about 33.11 percent of its set targets for current season, he added.

The PASSCO had also established over 239 procurement centres across the country in order to initiate grain procurement drive for crop season 2021. These centres were established to facilitate the farmers in order to sell their produce on official fixed rates and safe them from the ex-

ploitation of middle men, he added.

In this regard, PASSCO has already made all the necessary arrangements like requirements of logistics including supply of bardana (jute bags), gunji kits, fumigants or pesticides and, polyethylene, he added. Meanwhile, he said that 227 bank branches of scheduled banks have been earmarked for disbursement of tendered wheat and in case of any complaint, project managers, zonal heads are available to solve the problem.

But if matter remains un-resolved, the growers will have access to the General Manager (Field) and even MD PASSCO for redressal of their grievances, he added.

In order to address the issues faced by the growers, complaint cell with toll free NI number 0800-72772 has also been established at Head Office, Lahore for redressal of the complaints of farmers and growers, he added. He informed that complaints received through Pak Citizen Portal are being entertained on daily basis and forwarded to concerned quarters for immediate action and implementation. —

BoP, Akhuwat sign accord for low-cost housing

LAHORE: The Bank of Punjab (BOP) and Akhuwat Islamic Microfinance (AIM), have signed an agreement for promoting Low-Cost Housing under Government's Markup Subsidy Scheme (G-MSS).

The ceremony was held at The Bank of Punjab's Head Office in Gulberg, Lahore, on Monday. Zafar Masud, President and CEO BoP and Asif Riaz, Group Head Retail and Priority Sectors Lending represented BoP, while Akhuwat Islamic Microfinance (AIM), was represented by Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib, Executive Director, Dr. Kamran Shams, Director and Shahzad Akram, Chief Credit Officer. Zafar Masud opined this is a revolutionary step in the Housing Industry and such arrangements shall help us extend support at grass root level.

Dr. Amjad Saqib appreciated BoP's initiative to take a lead in this noble cause and expected that like all other government subsidized schemes, BoP shall assume a leading role in this segment as well. He also appreciated Prime Minister of Pakistan for introducing such an affordable scheme for Lower and middle income segments. Speaking at the occasion, Zafar Masud also appreciated the efforts of State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and NAPHDA, which have taken exemplary measures and much-needed policy interventions to promote housing in Pakistan. —APP

PIA slashes its flight operations by 20 percent

KARACHI: The national flag carrier, in accordance to NCOC decision has made 20 percent reduction in its in-land flight operation, however, that has in no manner affected the service to Faisalabad and Islamabad, said PIA spokesman Abdullah Khan here on Monday.

In a statement, he particularly emphasized that service between Quetta and other (major) airports of the country will remain fully functional during the Eid holidays too. —APP

Fawad, Farrukh for inclusion of newsmen in NPHC

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and Minister of State for Information Farrukh Habib on Monday called on Chairman Naya Pakistan Housing Authority Lt. Gen. (retd) Anwar Ali Haider. During the meeting, issues relating to the inclusion of journalists in the prime minister's initiated Naya Pakistan Housing Scheme were discussed.

Fawad said that the welfare of journalists and media workers was top priority of the govt. He said that in the first phase of the programme, houses will be allotted to 600 journalists of the Islamabad region. He said that later, the scope of this programme will be extended to Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad and Gujranwala. He said that the project will be gradually taken to Peshawar and Quetta as well. —APP

Corona virus claims 79 lives

LAHORE: As many as 79 people lost their lives due to coronavirus while 4213 people tested positive in the last 24 hours on Monday. As per the latest statistics by the NCOC, 4,213 people tested positive for COVID-19 steering the total positive cases to 834146 mark while nationwide death tally has climbed to 18149.

About 45,954 tests were conducted in the past 24 hours across the country. The positivity rate of coronavirus cases stands at 9.16 percent with total cases at 834,146. The number of active cases stands at 87,953 with the nationwide recoveries rising to 728,044.

Punjab remains the worst-hit province by the pandemic both in terms of cases as well as deaths followed by Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. So far, 306,929 coronavirus cases have been confirmed in Punjab, 285,626 in Sindh, 120,064 in KP, 22,620 in Balochistan, 76,209 in Islamabad, 17,371 in Azad Kashmir, and 5,327 in Gilgit-Baltistan. As many as 8,572 individuals have lost their lives to the pandemic in Punjab, 4,667 in Sindh, 3,310 in KP, 237 in Balochistan, 691 in Islamabad, 483 in Azad Kashmir, and 107 in GB. —Online

SCCI supports traders' protest against lockdown from 8th

PESHAWAR: The Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) has announced to fully support the traders' protest against the government's decision of imposing a complete lockdown from 8 to 16 May, terming the move was tantamount to economic murder of the community, which should be withdrawn immediately.

A complete lockdown was unaffordable for covid-19 hit businesses, industries and trade, as the global covid-19 pandemic has already brought negative impacts to the national economy, says Sherbaz Bilour while talking to a delegation of traders' community here on Monday. He urged the govt to withdraw a notification issued by authorities concerned regarding a complete

lockdown, which will be imposed across the province from 8 to 16 May.

Sherbaz went on to say that the week-long complete closure of business activities is tantamount to further pushing the covid-19 affected businesses and economy into a complete collapse. He observed the covid-19 hit businesses were yet not fully recovered, the government has started again imposing smart lockdown and now a complete lockdown from 8 to 16 May, which couldn't be acceptable to them.

Therefore, he fully backed the traders' community protest over the government's move pertaining to a weeklong complete lockdown in the entire province. He called upon the incumbent rulers to stop economic genocide of trading community im-

mediately. The government's anti-business policies have brought economic stagnation, whereas the smooth functioning of trade, industrial, import and export activities were adversely affected as a result of these policies, says Sherbaz Bilour.

The SCCI chief said the government, though business-hostile policies, has multiplied miseries of traders' community instead of giving relief to them. He added there is no justification of imposing a complete lockdown during the last week of the holy month of Ramazan and on advent of Eid ul Fitr, the largest Muslim religious festival. While sensing the gravity of the situation, Sherbaz Bilour urged the government to immediately withdraw notification regarding. —Online



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff.