

MEPCO releases marriage grant of Rs 2.3m for employees

MULTAN: Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) released funds of Rs 2.3 million for marriage grants to 29 employees and their daughters here on Sunday. According to an office order issued by Deputy Director Admin and Services Haider Usman Athangal, the marriage grant would be given Rs 80,000 each to 29 employees for marriages of their own and their daughters. The grant has been released for 29 employees including junior store keepers, assistant lineman, assistant, helper, junior clerk.

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Food authority seals two restaurants

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Food Safety and Halal Food Authority (KP FS&HFA) Sunday carried out operation against food businesses involved in unhygienic food processing and production and sealed two restaurants. The food safety teams inspected various food outlets in University Town area of Peshawar, during which two restaurants were sealed for severe unhygienic practices. The operation was carried out on the directions of KP FS&HFA Director General Shahrulh Ali Khan. During the inspection food workers in several food outlets were found working without having medical screening certificates. —APP

500 schemes worth Rs 86.9b being launched in division

RAWALPINDI: 500 new schemes worth Rs 86.9 billion are being launched in Rawalpindi division, out of which 430 were approved while the rest were in process.

According to a Commissioner Office spokesman, a total of 361 schemes of Rawalpindi district under annual development program were approved including 264 of new and 96 were ongoing projects.

The new schemes included 33 of Highway Division, 12 of RC Division, 72 of Building Division, 50 of Local Government and Community Development, 29 of Public Health, 05 of RDA, 04 of Sports Department, 05 of WASA, one small dam project and eight of other departments including Allied Hospitals, Tourism, TEVTA, Wildlife and PHA.

Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah chairing a review meeting of Divisional Development Working Party had directed the authorities concerned that no compromise should be made in the quality of projects and regular monitoring of all the development projects should also be ensured.

After completion, these schemes would be a boon for the people of the division, he said and informed that the meeting after detailed review, approved three schemes of Building Department, one of Highway and three of WASA.

The spokesman said, WASA had submitted projects to lay sewer line in Union Councils 21 to 29 and other projects of sewer line and drainage system in UC 1 to 12 and UC 37 and 36. Another project for improvement and maintenance of sewerage system of Satellite Town and adjoining areas was also submitted for approval.

The Building Department had presented schemes for establishment of Government Associate College for Girls Garhi Sikandar, Government Girls High School Taxila City and Government Girls High School Malik-abad Union Jalala.

The Commissioner directed the authorities concerned to complete the projects particularly of education department on priority and the buildings, declared dangerous should be demolished.

In addition, solid steps should also be taken to address issue of missing facilities in schools and improve the quality of education.

Gulzar Hussain Shah further said that efforts should be made to complete the projects within stipulated time frame throughout the division and ensure implementation of the policy guidelines for the development projects.

Concerned officers were directed to visit their respective projects on regular basis and update public representatives as well as Commissioner office about the progress of the schemes.

PM's vision making way to Central Asia

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is setting new targets of development by creating economic linkages with Central Asia and taking the pathway of regional prosperity that traverses through a peaceful Afghanistan.

The country, after its significant shift from the geo-strategic to geo-economic policies in line with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, has embarked upon a journey where all roads of regional integration lead to progress.

The government is focusing on regional connectivity with five-landlocked Central Asian states - Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, to witness a major economic upturn in near future. However, it has termed peace in Afghanistan as the "foremost factor" to materialize such a vision of prosperity.

Imran Khan at several occasions has emphasized that of all nations, Pakistan is the one "most interested" in the resumption of peace in Afghanistan for its own interests.

"Pakistan is concerned for peace in Afghanistan because the country's economic strategies greatly depend on it," he said, in a recent interaction with the visiting Afghan journalists in Islamabad.

A peaceful Afghanistan, he said, could act as a corridor for Pakistan's trade route to Central Asian states besides benefitting itself from Pakistan's Gwadar seaport. Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan on February 2, 2021 had agreed to a roadmap for construction of a 573-kilometer route from Mazar-e-

lion mega project of global and regional significance like China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will not only determine future trade trends, but will also play a key role in shaping the world's major trading markets. In the first phase of CPEC, infrastructure and energy projects have been successfully completed and in the future, friend countries need to be made partners in CPEC so that Pakistan's trade and economic relations with these countries can be further strengthened.

He said that the stages of industrial development and common currency of CPEC are currently under completion, which will lead to new ties of China-Pakistan friendship.

He further said that the agriculture sector is also one of the important projects of CPEC, which will usher

in a revolution in the agriculture sector in Pakistan. Zafar said that there is a potential of about \$2 billion in bilateral trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan, which can be further enhanced by adding some new sectors. Peace in Afghanistan is crucial for the development of Pakistan and the mutual trade relations of the countries of the region including Central Asian economies. He said that recently Pakistan and Afghanistan have revived the Protocol for Six-month extension of Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement 2010 (APTTA). "Our trade must be based on secure, open, consistent, reliable and legal movement of goods at the Afghan border along with enhanced connectivity with Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs)", he said. —APP



KARACHI: Hundreds of people line up to receive a dose of the COVID-19 vaccine outside a vaccination center set up in an Expo or convention centre. —Online

Pak-Italy see new dimensions to enhance trade, economic ties

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Pakistan to Italy, Jauhar Saleem on Sunday said that Pakistani-Italian bilateral relations are looking at new dimensions to enhance mutual cooperation and economic activities in different sectors.

Negotiation between both of the sides on enhancing cooperation in the fields of trade, labour market, tourism, agriculture, energy, investment, innovation and skills and media sectors are in the final stages, he said this while talking to the media through 2nd series digital 'Zoom Link' webinar organized by the embassy of Pakistan in Rome. Jauhar Saleem said that Italy and Pakistan have agreed in principle to negotiate a labour agreement that will give Pakistan comprehensive market access to Italian labour market.

He informed that Pakistan has been included in Italian Seasonal Work Visa for 2022 which would offer an immense opportunity for our labour force working in the agriculture and services sector to come and work in Italy with legal entry mode.

He informed me that Italian firms are in-

vesting in energy, food processing, leather, textile, construction and furnishing.

He added that the Mission is promoting Joint Venture mode for Italian investment in Pakistan that will help in technology and skill transfer to our businesses.

Jauhar Saleem said that once the travel restrictions are eased there will be an increased number of Italian investor delegations to Pakistan.

He also highlighted the initiatives that have been taken to promote tourism, especially capacity building of Pakistan's tourism sector stakeholders through Italian experts. On the multilateral front, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem informed that Pakistan has been elected President of IDLO for two years which would help in promoting Pakistan's leading role on different forums along with taking advantage of IDLO's technical assistance for Pakistan.

Meanwhile, he informed that Pakistan has posted a trade surplus of \$ 300 million with Italy in Fiscal year 2020-21, which is 49 percent higher than the previous year of 2019-20. The Ambassador informed that Pakistan's exports to Italy have reached all-time high i.e. \$ 786 million in FY

2020-21. The trade surplus has been created by export enhancement and import contraction, the Ambassador said.

The value added sectors were the main drivers of this growth, he added. Moreover, Italian imports from non EU countries declined 14 percent. Pakistan posts record trade surplus and export growth in the COVID-19 hit Italian market, he said.

The Ambassador said that Italy has been among the first countries in Europe that were severely hit by the pandemic. Italian GDP fell as low as 9.6 percent in 2020, which is the highest fall since World War-II, he informed. However, despite these difficult conditions, Pakistan has not only recovered from the pandemic led export challenges but it has registered impressive growth of 9.1 percent in FY 2020-21.

While responding to a question, the Ambassador stated that despite the Indian false claim over Basmati's exclusive Geographical Indication (GI) rights in the EU and Italian market, Pakistan maintained its position as market leader in rice with 37.4 percent share whereas India supplied only 12 percent of the total imported rice in Italy.

PBF calls for Pak-China agricultural collaboration

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Agricultural collaboration with China will give direction to move forward to adopt international practices in Pakistan as well as stimulate economic and social development.

Talking to mediamen here Sunday, Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Vice President Ahmad Jawad, "We must adopt a global and international perspective in our business practices in order to make its agricultural products more competitive in international markets to earn valuable foreign exchange."

To a question, he said the use of old cultivation and production methods, negligence on international market quality certification systems, quality control standards, and least understanding of consumers' needs had since long been the reasons behind the less demand of Pakistan's products in the international market.

"Pak-China cooperation in agriculture can be most significant in the bilateral economic relationship. The focus of collaboration in this sector should be high yields, lower consumption, food security, local suitability, adoption of technology and research and development," he maintained.

He was of the view that 'Jo Banain Gaen,

Khayen Gaen' (we eat what we produce) was the idea that needed to be implemented if we want to make our economy grow at a fast pace. People of most countries realized the importance of locally produced goods, so much so that even in the richest country in the world, he said, adding that this approach should be promoted to strengthen the agriculture and manufacturing sector of the country a lifeline for the economy. In this regard all available resources must be utilized to transform this idea into reality.

To another question, he mentioned, "We also need an export-driven growth strategy, yet we are far behind. Even leading economies cannot function without exports therefore experts on trade should be hired for policy formulation."

Ahmad Jawad suggested that a public-private partnership could be mutually beneficial in developing reforms/policy/frameworks that could holistically focus on exports; diversity of products, prioritizing services sector, and implementation of simple, easy to comprehend, schemes and incentives.

Private sector had to develop its own brands on a war footing for survival otherwise neighbouring countries will continue to sweep international markets," he said. He asserted, "Pakistani missions abroad must

also help introduce and promote Pakistani products in the respective country and ensure dissemination of trade-related information so that Pakistani entrepreneurs can avail trade opportunities to the maximum."

FPCCI thanks Iran for normalizing power supply to bordering districts

Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) on Sunday thanked Iranian Ambassador Syed Ali Husaini for normalizing electricity supply from Iran to the bordering districts of Balochistan Province that would help in promoting trade and business activities in these areas.

A delegation of FPCCI led by its Chairman Capital Office Qurban Ali called on Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan and apprised him about the opportunities existing in bilateral trade and investment, particularly in context of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Project, said a press release issued by chamber here today. The resumption of electricity supply from Iran to Gwadar and Makran areas would boost local business activities, besides helping the industries to run on their optimal capacity, he said adding that the initiative would also help in addressing the problem being faced by fisheries industry of that areas.

Ehsaas Framework

Dr Sania opens Pak Korea Nutrition Centre

From Our Staff Correspondent

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Dr. Sania Nishtar Sunday inaugurated the Pak Korea Nutrition Center (PKNC) at the University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF).

Dr. Sania was invited as a chief guest to join the launching ceremony of the center, said a news release issued here.

Established under the Ehsaas framework (Policy # 59), the national nutrition center, 'PKNC' is the first of its kind, meant to address the malnutrition issue that has hit more than 50 percent of the population.

Dr. Sania also thanked the government of Korea for their collaboration.

At the university, Dr. Sania was warmly welcomed by the Vice Chancellor of UAF, Professor Dr. Iqbal Ahmed Khan; Professor Dr. Masood Sadiq Butt, Dean Faculty of Food, Nutrition and Home Sciences; Professor Dr. Tahir Zahoor, DG National Institute of Food Sciences and Technology; and other faculty members. Principally aimed at improving child and community nutrition, PKNC has been established at the Faculty of Food Nutrition and Home Sciences with the total funding of Rs. 1.5 Billion for a period of over three years. Collective funding comprises Rs. 1.15 Billion from Korea International Cooperation Agency's (KOICA) and the remaining funds from HEC/PSDP. The project will train government officials, nutrition policy makers and 35 master trainers. The master trainers, in turn, will train over 12,000 nutrition educational experts, lady health workers, nutritionists and primary school teachers etc to improve nutrition and child nutrition.

Uniform edu in all schools starts today: Gill

ISLAMABAD: Spokesman to the Prime Minister and Special Assistant on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Sunday said that on advent of new education year, implementation of uniform curriculum at primary level in all public, private schools and religious madaris would start across Punjab from today (Monday). "Materializing of Prime Minister's dream and most important agenda of PTI manifesto has been started from Punjab," he tweeted. —APP

PTI gets 3 more seats in AJK Assembly

MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has increased its strength by securing 29 seats as the Party won 3 women seats out of 5 while Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) secured one seat each, all declared elected unopposed by the Election Commission as all other candidates withdrew their nomination papers.

Polling on three other seats reserved one each for Technocrat, Ulema, Mashaikh and Overseas Kashmiris, will be conducted on Monday as more than one candidate are contesting for each category and expected that PTI will also win all three seats taking its strength to 32 in the House of 63. Those who have been declared elected unopposed by the Election Commission after their opponent withdrew nomination include three PTI candidates Ms. Intiaz Naseem, Sabeha Sadique, Kausar Taqdees Gilani, PPP candidate Nabeela Ayub and PML-N candidate Ms. Nasaran Abbasi. Earlier, four PPP candidates Ms. Sadaf Shaikh, Shazia Akbar, Naureen Kazmi, Shaheen Kausar Dar and one PTI candidate Ambreen Turk withdrew their nomination papers before given time after which all other five candidates were declared elected unopposed.

Three candidates are in contest on one seat reserved for Ulma, Mashaikh including Sahibzada Fazal Rasool of PPP, Saleem Chishti of PMLN and Maulana Muhammad Mazhar Saeed of PTI and third one is expected to win on the basis of party strength.

Three candidates are contesting on seat reserved for Technocrat including Muhammad Rafique Nayar, Zulfiqar Ali and Sardar Manzar Bashir while three candidates on seat reserved for overseas Kashmiris including Mirza Tanveer Akhtar, Hafiz Tariq Mehmood and Muhammad Iqbal.

Pakistan's air connectivity to regional economies vital

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General United Business Group (UBG) of Pakistan Zafar Bakhtawari on Sunday said that Pakistan's air links with the outside world, especially with regional countries, are crucial for regional trade and economic integration.

Promoting air, land and sea connectivity can make Pakistan a major economic and trade power at the regional level by teaming up with regional countries, especially Central Asian countries, he said this while talking to APP here. In the recent geo-economic scenario, the 'Gwadar Port' is emerging as a major opportunity not only for regional countries but also for global trade, which will strengthen our trade links with the regional countries and also with the global trade markets. Even a \$60 bil-



RAWALPINDI: Vendors display national flags attraction for customers ahead of celebrating Independence Day on 14th August at Murree Road. —Online