

Govt to offer 50pc subsidy on pesticides to facilitate cotton farmers

MULTAN: Punjab Agriculture Department will provide pesticide on 50% subsidy to cotton farmers. According to official sources, the farmers upto 12.5 acres will be eligible to submit applications. The facility will be provided to peasants hailing from Multan, Bahawalpur, DG Khan, Sahiwal and Faisalabad divisions. The farmer can submit applications by May 2. The balloting draw will be held on May 18. Similarly, the subsidized pesticides will be issued from May 23. —APP

The Business

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12,918 net metering licenses grants in last three years

ISLAMABAD: The all power distribution companies (DISCOs) and K-Electric has received total of 16,149 applications for net metering during last three years and out of which 12,918 licenses have been issued so far. According to official data, as many as 1981 applications were received during fiscal year 2018-19, 4232 in FY-2019-20 and 9,936 in FY-2020-21. Similarly, out of total, some 1167 licenses had been issued during FY-2018-19, 3,334 in FY-2019-20 and 8,417 in FY-2020-21. —APP

New govt decision lauded to keep oil rates unchanged

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Friends of Economic and Business Reforms (FEBR) on Sunday welcomed the newly-elected Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's decision of keeping oil prices unchanged for the rest of the month by rejecting the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority's proposal to raise the rates of oil products.

FEBR President and LCCI former vice president Kashif Anwar observed that it was the first test for the new government to provide relief to the industry despite high oil rates in the global market.

Few days after the exit of the previous government, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority had suggested an unprecedented increase of 83 percent in the prices of petroleum products with effect from April 16 to recover full imported cost, exchange rate loss and maximum tax rates.

But the new government remains successful in this test, providing another huge amount in subsidy from Apr 16 to 30 with a view to lower cost of production which is imperative for constant economic growth of Pakistan.

He said that the stable petroleum prices will not only provide the much-needed respite to the masses but also reduce the cost of production and give a boost to economic activity.

It is fact that the government was facing problems due to the former government's mismanagement as they had set the price of petrol at Rs149, which burdened the national exchequer. Kashif Anwar said that Pakistan was generating a major share of electricity through furnace oil and increase in POL prices makes the cost of manufacturing activities unviable for the private sector.

He said that an increase in diesel price also further enhances transportation cost and create additional problems for the agriculture sector as most of the tube wells were running on diesel. He also demanded the immediate reduction in electricity tariff especially for SMEs as a first step towards cut in production cost while the second and vital step toward this direction would be bringing discount rate to the regional level with a view to provide level-playing field especially to the export industry.

The decision would have the same importance for the domestic industry too, as it has also been facing tough competition of cheaper imported merchandise in the country following FTAs with several countries, he added.

Wapda boosts work on hydropower project

ISLAMABAD: The Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has expedited the development work on the much awaited 72 megawatts Keyal Khwar Hydropower Project that would increase power generation, irrigation and employment opportunities for the locals.

Keyal Khwar Hydropower Project is located at Keyal Khwar Nallah, a tributary of the Indus River in Lower Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that has around 72 megawatts (MW) electricity generation capacity.

Talking to APP, an official of WAPDA said that there were two turbine units of 34 MW each and one unit of 4 MW installed at Khan Khwar Hydroelectric Station with an average annual generation capacity of 595 million units (GWh) of cheap electricity.

In the current financial year, around Rs 1,084 million has been allocated for the execution of the project. The hydropower project would channelize emission less energy and business opportunities for the locals by promoting fisheries and tourism opportunities, the official said. —APP

Pakistan celebrates Easter nationwide

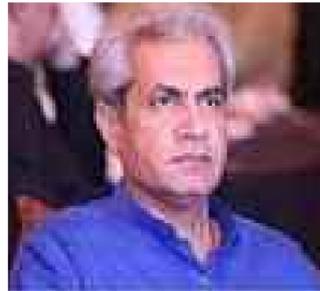
ISLAMABAD: Christian festival Easter was celebrated Sunday with traditional zeal and religious fervor across the country.

Special services were hosted at different places where the Christian community attended prayers for salvation, and for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan. Ceremonies were held nationwide. Prominent celebrations were carried out in churches of federal capital, Lahore and Peshawar's Methodist church at



HYDERABAD: Workers of Awami Tehreek hold a sit in protest against PPP, PML-N and MQM agreement outside the Hyderabad Press Club.

Governor postpones oath-taking ceremony of CM-elect Hamza



By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Punjab Governor Omar Sarfraz Cheema has "delayed" the oath-taking ceremony of Chief Minister-elect Hamza Shehbaz due to the ruckus that took place in the assembly a day earlier.

Cheema, in a press conference Sunday, condemned the violence that took place in the Punjab Assembly one day prior and said that such incidents set a very wrong precedent. "I am a political worker and have fought elections. This a very wrong precedent being set," said the Governor.

It should be noted that during Saturday's

Omar Sarfraz Cheema says Prime Minister does not have right to remove him from office as only President can de-notify him

session, 197 MPAs had cast their votes to elect Hamza Shehbaz as the chief minister.

The Punjab Governor accused the CM elect of using "state power" on the polling day against his rival the PTI and PML-Q. "I believe if Hamza Shehbaz had enough votes, then he should not have made the election controversial like this," said Cheema.

The Governor also questioned whether the elections for the Punjab Chief Minister were conducted as per the directives of the Lahore High Court and said that he had summoned a report from the Secretary of the Punjab Assembly related to the ruckus and violence that took place during the session on Saturday.

Cheema added that Deputy Speaker

Dost Muhamamd Mazari acted in a "partisan way". The Governor said that his office will write letters to the advocate-general of Punjab as well as the Speaker related to the polls. "Sitting in a constitutional office, I cannot endorse an unconstitutional act. I will start these oath-taking proceedings once I am satisfied that these elections were conducted according to the Constitution and LHC's order," said the Governor.

While the Governor was holding the press conference, reports started circulating that he has been removed from office.

Sources told that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had sent a summary to President Arif Alvi for the removal of Governor Cheema. The summary was moved under the discretionary powers given to the premier.

SAARC Chamber urges new govt for incentives to boost exports manifolds

ISLAMABAD: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry President Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday warmly felicitated Hamza Shehbaz for securing vote of confidence as leader of the house (Chief Minister) in the Punjab Assembly.

In his congratulatory message, he said the business community was proud that first time in history father and son both have been democratically elected simultaneously as the prime minister of Pakistan and chief minister of the largest province.

He said earlier Nawaz Sharif was also elected thrice premier and chief minister with his younger brother as chief minister as well which is another feather in the cap of the Sharif family.

He said, he (Iftikhar) always firmly believed in rule of law, supremacy of the constitution and promotion of democracy besides strengthening of national cohesion, integrity, safeguarding sovereignty and defending the frontiers of the country.

Felicitates Hamza's election as Punjab Chief Minister

He said now entire business community pinned high hopes that ever increasing yawning trade deficit would be clipped to stabilise the crumbling national economy on sound footings. He said only way to address this core issue was to offer another excellent package of incentives to boost the exports manifolds and ease of doing friendly business was also a major key factor for sustainable economic growth. Meher Kashif Younis former senior vice president of Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry while extending greetings separately to Hamza Shehbaz hoped both father and son with varied rich diversified experience as leaders of the opposition and chief minister would contribute towards economic development and to do away with red-tape

and de-regulations besides tax reforms focusing on promotion of tax culture in every sphere of life. Shahid Nazir, Executive Committee Member Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry in his congratulatory message said all stakeholders must be taken into confidence to tailor viable result-oriented prudent economic policies to accelerate the growth and speed up industrialisation across the country. He said soon well conceived balanced export dominant charter of economy will be presented to them by our octogenarian top trader leader of south Asia Iftikhar Ali Malik, which he added if implemented would usher an era of prosperity, progress and development besides improving socio-economic condition of down trodden. —APP

Experts recommend new govt to tame budget deficit by hiking tobacco taxes

ISLAMABAD: The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) here on Friday organized a session with journalists to discuss the opportunity for the new government to generate revenue by increasing tobacco taxes.

During the session, Public Health experts recommended the new government to increase Federal Excise Duty (FED) on Tobacco Products by 30 percent to generate additional revenue that can be used for the well being of the people since the budget is a crucial challenge for the government. Khalil Ahmed Dogar, Program Manager SPARC told the media that Tobacco taxes were the

most cost-effective tobacco control measure and the use of tobacco caused an annual economic burden of 615 billion which is 1.6 percent of Pakistan's GDP. This leads to significant negative externalities, including high healthcare costs and lost productivity due to tobacco-attributable diseases. But contrary, the revenue generated from the tobacco industry is 120 billion in 2019 which is approximately just 20 percent of the total cost of smoking, he expressed.

He stressed that the health and economic costs of tobacco use were more than five times the tax receipts, even though the tobacco industry was a major taxpayer in absolute terms,

the tax contribution of the tobacco industry was a small fraction of what tobacco consumption costs the government and society. Since taxes on tobacco didn't interest the previous govt, it's an opportunity for the sitting govt. to generate revenue by increasing taxes on tobacco and tame the deficit, he added. Speaking to the participants, Dr Ziauddin Islam, former technical head Tobacco Control Cell (TCC), Ministry of Health said, the Tobacco industry misguides govt. over illicit trade and according to Tobacco Industry data in January 2021, illegal cigarette costs 40 billion to the economy and in February 2021, they quoted 77 billion. —APP

Pakistan's every city to become 'Tahrir Square', says Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry said Sunday "nation was getting ready for a 'soft revolution' as the PTI continues its nationwide series of public rallies.

"Peshawar and Karachi clearly told us that country is ready for a revolution," Fawad said in a twitter statement, referring to his party's public gatherings and mass protests across the country.

"By God's willing, Pakistan's every city will become Tahrir Square," Fawad added.

"Get ready for Imran Khan's call. He is about to call you for ending this 'imported government's regime,'" former federal minister addressed party workers. —Online

AJK LA to elect new PM today

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry has convened the session of state's legislative assembly today (Monday) at 10 am, to elect new leader of the house.

Sources have confirmed that Speaker of the AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Anwarul-Haq will preside over the special session to conduct voting for fresh Prime Minister's election.

53 member of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) will cast their votes out of which a total of 27 votes are required to be elected as the Chief Executive of semi-autonomous Pakistani administered part of Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has nominated Sardar Tanvir Ilyas as his candidate for Prime Minister's office while he will be competed by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) joint candidate Chaudhry Yasin. As per the 'number game', PTI has a clear majority with 32 MLAs while PPP has a total of 12 MLAs in AJK legislative assembly. —Online

Deputy Speaker calls off today's PA session

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The Punjab Assembly Deputy Speaker on Sunday withdrew his earlier order regarding convening of provincial assembly session today (Monday) that was summoned to hold voting on the no-confidence motion against Speaker.

PA Deputy Speaker Sardar Dost Mazari, who was thrashed, punched and rough handed during Saturday's session at the hands of his PTI party members on conducting elections for new chief minister, seems to be indecisive regarding his decisions.

He summoned provincial assembly session for today (Monday) at 11:30am for holding vote on no-trust motion against Speaker Ch Pervaiz Elahi but after a few moments, the deputy withdrew his order and cancelled it.

The Deputy Speaker had already issued agenda of the session that consisted of voting on no-confidence motion against Speaker in his now-withdrawn-order.

Speaker Pervaiz Elahi was also contesting for the CM office and lost it. But in Saturday's melee in the provincial assembly, Elahi got injured and broke his arm.

NAB makes highest recoveries from businessmen

ISLAMABAD: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) made highest recoveries from businessmen and lowest from politicians through plea bargain deals and voluntary payments.

According to the official document, the NAB recovered Rs17.16 billion through plea bargain and Rs7.15 billion under voluntary payments, making Rs24.31 billion the total amount of recoveries from the businessmen.

Similarly, the NAB recovered Rs4.21 billion through plea bargain and Rs3.96 billion under voluntary payments from the bureaucrats, making Rs8.17 billion the amount of total recoveries. —APP



LAHORE: Christians attend during an Easter mass at Presbyterian Church in Provincial Capital.