

IT exports increased by 29.26pc in nine months

ISLAMABAD: The Information Technology (IT) exports have surged at the growth rate of 29.26 percent in nine months of the current financial year. "ICT export remittances, including Telecommunication, Computer and Information Services for the period July 2021 to March 2022 have surged to US\$ 1.948 billion at a growth rate of 29.26 % in comparison to US \$ 1.507 billion during the same period in FY 2020-21," said an official of the ministry of IT and Telecom. —APP

The Business

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DC ensures supply of food items at affordable rates

HYDERABAD: The district administration has set up a "Bachat Bazaar" in city to ensure the supply of food items to the people at affordable prices and Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro visited the bazaar on Sunday. According to a statement, ADC Qaim Akbar Namai and other officials accompanied the DC during his visit to the bazaar set up at the Expo Center. Talking to the organizers on the occasion, Fuad Ghaffar Soomro directed them to play their key role in providing maximum relief to the people. —APP

'PM announces special remission in sentences of prisoners'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Sunday that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited Kot Lakhpat Jail, Lahore and announced a two-month reduction in the sentences of prisoners across Pakistan.

In a series of tweets, the minister said that the PM announced formation of a committee headed by Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah which would develop a comprehensive strategy for welfare of the inmates and improving overall conditions of the prisons. The committee would comprise officers representing all the four provinces of the country, she said. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that all possible patronage was included in the duties of the government to make the prisoners who have completed their sentence, active citizens of the society.

She said that the prime minister urged the Kot Lakhpat Jail authorities to make effective use of available resources for the convenience of the inmates so that their basic needs could be met. The minister said that the PM also called for steps to further improve kitchen and health facilities of the prison.

She said that in addition, the prime minister directed for effective use of the available resources for the skill development of the prisoners so that they could complete their sentence in a positive manner and should be fully prepared to play an active role in the society after completion of their terms of conviction.

Marriyum Aurangzeb said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also paid a surprise visit to the Ramazan Bazaar in Johar Town. On the occasion, he issued directives to ensure supply of food items at cheaper rates during the holy month of Ramazan. —APP

PIA's first engineering hangar opens at NIAP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik Sunday inaugurated the national flag carrier's first engineering hangar here at the New Islamabad International Airport (NIAP). The hangar 'Nur Khan Engineering Complex' has been named after Nur Khan, the head of PIA's golden era, a news release said.

The facility would be useful in carrying out regular maintenance work of the PIA aircraft in Islamabad.

Earlier, the PIA planes were sent to the Karachi airport for maintenance purposes that had cost additional expenses.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Arshad Malik said the PIA was expanding its presence keeping in view the future requirements of the new Islamabad Airport.

"Most of the PIA operations are being shifted to the north due to passengers' demand," he said adding the aircraft's positioning expenses and flights' pressure would be greatly reduced by setting up this Engineering Complex here.

Arshad Malik paid tributes to PIA's former chairman Air Marshal Nur Khan for his meritorious services and for making the national flag carrier one of the world's top airlines during his tenure. "Nur Khan has rendered great services for PIA and Pakistan. Attributing a hangar to his name is a tribute to his services," he added. —APP

Blast occurs near Lyari Benazir University

KARACHI: A blast took place near Lyari Benazir University Kashti Chowk here on Sunday in which at least four persons reportedly got injured who were shifted to the hospital. The cause of the blast was being ascertained. Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah had also taken the notice of the blast and sought report in this re-



LAHORE: Delegation of Australian Legislative Council and members of Punjab Board of Investment PBI and Trade hold talks.

Pak-Iraq to sign accords on ties in various sectors: Iraqi Envoy

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iraq to Pakistan Hamid Abbas Lafta on Sunday said that Pakistan and Iraq will sign agreements on cooperation in various sectors, including trade promotion and tariff rationalization to enhance the bilateral economic and trade ties.

Pakistan and Iraq will sign 10 agreements to promote such cooperation in coming June, which will mark the beginning of a new era in enhancing bilateral relations, the Ambassador of Iraq to Pakistan told APP here. These agreements will be signed on tax and tariff exemptions, economic and trade cooperation, promotion of diplomatic cooperation, human trafficking, Coordination in crime, drug and air connectivity, he said.

Ambassador Lafta said that there was a huge potential for the development of bilateral trade between the two countries in near future. Ambassador said that Iraq was a free market where there were vast opportunities for Pakistani investors, from which the local business community can benefit from. He said the current \$100 million bilateral trade needs to be doubled, which would require new petroleum, tourism co-

operation on both sides and more facilities for mutual air travel. Talks are also underway to make air connectivity more effective in both the countries and agreements will be signed in this regard, he added.

Ambassador said that in order to improve economic and trade cooperation, it was necessary to know each other's markets and in this regard exhibitions and seminars should be organized to increase the interest of business class and investors of both the countries to promote mutual economic cooperation. He said that about 200 businessmen had gone to Iraq to participate in the trade exhibition this year 2022. In response to another question, he said that 200,000 Pakistanis go to Iraq every year for religious tourism, the number of which is increasing every year and the Iraqi government provides them with best facilities in every way possible.

The Iraqi Envoy said that these thousands of religious devotees visit the Iraqi cities of Karbala, Najaf and Baghdad every year and their locals do not leave any stone unturned in their service and love. In addition, there is a need to attract Pakistanis for traditional tourism in the tourist areas of

Iraq, which will boost tourism on both sides, he said. He said that special attention is being paid to the facilities for tourists in Iraq and there are many opportunities for foreign tourists to come to Iraq for tourism.

In response to another question, he said that Iraq is currently one of the largest producers of petroleum in the world. He said that Iraq was ready to meet the energy needs of Pakistan and talks were underway between the two countries in this regard. The Iraqi ambassador said that Iraq has vast potential for investment in the following sectors of the petroleum and energy sector and that local investors could play their best role in this regard. He said, "We want to promote mutual cooperation with Pakistan in petro-chemical and other fields of energy and in this regard technical support and mutual cooperation can be extended in every possible way." Hamid Abbas Lafta also said that there are numerous investment opportunities for Pakistani companies in the construction sector in southern Iraq. In this regard, some Pakistani companies have also expressed their interest which will help the two sides to understand each other. —APP

Urgent to raise Kashmir issue at Congress than before: Ilhan

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: The visiting US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar said that meeting victims of Indian ceasefire violations and "seeing them suffer" had made it all the more necessary than before to raise Kashmir issue at the Congress.

"Having met the Kashmiri people in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (AJK), who nurse the bullet wounds, due to ceasefire violations by India, was an incredible experience and this first hand experience has put me under an obligation to stand for human rights and human dignity", she said when asked about her bold stance on Kashmir and Palestine by the mediamen here at a local hotel. During her four-day visit on the invitation of the Pakistan government, the US Congresswoman visited the Line of Control (LOC) in AJK, met President, Prime Minister, cabinet members and leaders of political parties. She also visited the Walled City of Lahore.

Omar said she had always taken up the questions of Kashmir and Palestine in the Congress but "I had not had the opportunity to visit the place in person. It was incredibly awful to meet the people first hand and ask them how they want to be in partnership with me as a lawmaker and advocate of the human rights." When asked if she would



raise the issue at the Congress, she said having met the people in person and seeing them suffer made the necessity of raising the issue at the Congress more urgent than listening to it from the others. About herself, Omar said her story was of "trial and triumph". "I was born in Somalia but had to flee the country due to civil war and lived for four years in generous Kenya before me and my family were sponsored to come to the United States of America (USA). Here I was able to continue my studies and live in a community of warm-hearted people, although Minnesota is very cold, for the past 20 years. I represent people of my community in the US Congress."

"I am someone who has experienced oppression and violation of human rights at a young age, and since I have been put into a

position of power by people, I deem it my duty to advocate for those who don't have that power." Ilhan Omar said living with the people disenfranchised and facing economic challenges, those who had not had full opportunity to educational opportunities, and those who were dealing with Islamophobia and racial discrimination, had prepared her to fight for the cause of the weak and the exploited, she affirmed.

The US Congresswoman said the Pakistani diaspora provided a strong bond between Pakistan and the United States, and noted that those relations had bolstered over the past 75 years.

She said the Americans had benefited from the entrepreneurial spirit of the Pakistanis, their innovation, and focus on advancing technology and healthcare. For many Americans, she said, their first interaction with Pakistanis was when they met them as their physicians and surgeons.

The people-to-people contacts cemented equal and mutually beneficial diplomatic relations, she added. The US Congresswoman recalling the experience of her first visit to Pakistan, said, "I have been humbled by the generosity of the political leaders in Pakistan, who put their differences aside and welcomed me with open arms during my visit to the Federal Capital."

Punjab offers excellent business opportunities to Australian businessmen

By Our Special Correspondent

LAHORE: A delegation of Pakistan-Australia Business Council led by Shaoquett Moselmane, Member of the Australian Legislative Council, visited the Punjab Board of Investment (PBI) and Trade and reviewed in detail the investment opportunities available in Punjab.

Speaking on the occasion, the delegation said that revolutionary measures have been taken to facilitate business and increase investment in Pakistan and overseas investors should take full advantage of the excellent business opportunities and lucrative market here.

The delegation led by member of Australian Legislative Council, Shaoquett Moselmane, and consists of President of Pakistan Australia Business Council Rana Ifthikhar, President of Pakistan Australia Council Dr. Shabbaz Chaudhry, PABC Vice President Ahmed Nadeem Khan and others were received by CEO Punjab Board of Investment and Trade Ahmar Malik. He welcomed the delegation to Punjab and briefed them in detail about the investment opportunities available in Punjab.

The visiting delegation appreciated the scope of work of the Punjab Board of Investment & Trade and said that PBIT should also have a representative office in Australia and in this regard Pakistan-Australia Business Council is ready to provide facilities.

Replying to a question by President PABC, Rana Ifthikhar, CEO Ahmar Malik said that Security and Exchange Commission of Pakistan has taken revolutionary steps and now business can be registered in just three days. He also apprised the visiting delegation about the Special Economic Zones (SEZs), encouraging incentives and about the facilitation role of PBIT for foreign investors in setting up their industry on plug and play model.

Investment opportunities and further avenues in the Province of Punjab were discussed in detail. Member of Australian Legislative Council Shaoquett Moselmane asked about the real estate projects, he was briefed in detail about the RUDA and the Central Business District to be set up at a prime location in Lahore.

The Australian delegation was also briefed on the details of Lahore Technopolis, a state-of-the-art project of the new era, so that they could invest in this excellent and profitable opportunity as well.

The guest delegation, knowing the details of these initiatives, said that the business opportunities in Pakistan are excellent and the market is profitable but there is a need for the government to give confidence to the stakeholders based in Australia so that they can invest in without any hesitation.

'Imran regime deprived lawmakers of right to question'

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Irfan Siddiqui on Sunday said the previous government of Imran Khan was worst in terms of transparency and accountability, which can be gauged from the fact that even members of the Parliament were deprived of their right to ask questions.

The Senator, in his articles published on various web magazines, said as per the Senate's figures, 1,579 questions were asked during the last parliamentary year, of which only 409 (25.90%) were answered in the House.

"Three-quarters of the questions (74.10%) were rejected with some excuse and were not allowed to be asked by the deposed regime of Imran Khan", he added.

He said that the questions asked by the senators had to go through so many factions of the Secretariat. Senator Irfan Siddiqui said he was not even allowed to ask how many vehicles were purchased by the Cabinet Division.

"When contacted, the deputy chairman said that since the prime minister was in charge of the cabinet division, it was not appropriate to ask him", he mentioned.

Senator Irfan Siddiqui added that the question of Toshakhana was submitted to the Secretariat thrice but he was not allowed to ask and no reason was given. —APP

Country could earn \$100m in horticulture exports through attractive packaging: PBF

ISLAMABAD: President of Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) Mian Usman Zulfiqar on Sunday said the country could earn \$100 million additional in horticulture exports through attractive packaging in the agriculture sector.

Packaging is an essential element for export operation, impacting the safety, cost, communication and even marketing of your agricultural products, he said.

"Agricultural packaging has gained immense popularity across the world," said a press release issued by PBF. According to Statista "the global agricultural packaging market is expected to reach \$ 5.02

billion by the end of 2023."

He said the primary purpose of the agricultural packaging is not only limited to protecting the cargo during the international logistic process but the packaging is also an essential element of the product's marketing, as it conveys a strong image of the company in front of the consumers.

He said that unfortunately country agriculture companies lack in it, our packaging pattern and colour scheme was not up to mark. In today's export world the presentation of the product matters, in this regard our exporters should understand the new concept of packaging.

The PBF president quoted the example that citrus exports used to be shipped in pallets so that cartons should be in shape but from Pakistan our mostly exporters don't follow that and in result it created bad impact in front of the buyer once it reached the destination.

Through attractive packaging country agriculture exports could earn around \$100 million extra, he said.

The PBF president also suggested the Ministry of Commerce to lay down some SOP's in the account of packaging for agriculture and horticulture commodities. —APP



RAWALPINDI: People busy in shopping at Bara Bazaar ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. —Online