

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia have vast avenues for promoting bilateral trade

KARACHI: Special Assistant to Chief Minister (SACM) Sindh on Investment and Public Private Partnership Projects Syed Qasim Naveed Qamar said that the businessmen of two brotherly countries, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, had significant opportunities to promote bilateral trade. He hoped that B2B meetings would provide a platform to Pakistani businesses to promote their products and services as well as explore new avenues of trade and investment in Saudi Arabia. —APP

The Business

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Huge quantity of ghee, cooking oil seized

SARGODHA: In a crackdown against ghee hoarders, the district administration on Sunday seized a huge quantity of non-declared ghee and cooking oil from a godowns. On a tip-off, Assistant Commissioner Bhera Shaikat Sandhu along with police raided at a godowns and seized 25,325 kg ghee and 792 kg cooking oil. The raiding team sealed the godowns and got registered a case against its owner namely Hamid, says a spokesman for the district administration. —APP

Balochistan govt to enhance production of off-season crops

QUETTA: Balochistan government has installed as many as 396 green tunnels aimed at enhancing the production of off-season vegetables and fruits production in the province through tunnel farming.

Talking to mediapersons, Minister for Agriculture Mir Asadullah Baloch said the Balochistan government had also constructed 878 Water Courses and 361 Water Storage Tanks to resolve water issues in agriculture sector.

He said that the government has allocated Rs 576 million in the budget 2022-23 to convert the tub-wells on solar energy in the province. The government of Balochistan in the financial year 2022-23 would spend Rs 610 million to provide urea fertilizer to farmers across the province on 50 percent subsidized price for the improvement of agricultural production.

Locust attacks have also led to a significant decline in agricultural production, to offset its impact the provincial government used spray and took other basic measures for the prevention of locust.

The Balochistan government was considering to launch Kissan Cards permanently to provide maximum relief to the farmers of the province. The minister said the Balochistan government allocated Rs 1.5 billion for providing bulldozers hours to flourish the agricultural land and facilitate the farmers across the province, especially in drought hit areas.

The power load shedding during the growing season was affecting the crops, he said adding that the government was working to convert the tub-wells on solar energy. —APP

Pakistan logs over 400 COVID-19 cases, two deaths in 24 hours

KARACHI: Alarm bells are ringing as the country continues to see an uptick in fresh COVID-19 cases, with experts saying Pakistan may suffer another wave of the deadly pandemic.

According to the latest statistics issued by the National Institute of Health, Islamabad (NIH), the country reported 406 fresh cases of coronavirus in a single day.

The new infections were detected after 14,437 diagnostic tests were conducted across the county over the past 24 hours, taking the positivity rate to 2.81%. Meanwhile, two more patients succumbed to the virus during the same period.

As per the NIH stats, the condition of 94 more patients with the virus is critical. Cases and positivity rates have more than doubled over the previous week, indicating rapid transmission. The rise is more marked in Karachi — with 21.71% COVID-19 positivity, and Islamabad — with 3.45% positivity, due to better testing and reporting but the risk is likely to be widespread. The rise in number of hospitalisations and admission of patients in ICUs may become evident starting next week.

Among the provinces, Sindh is the most affected while Mardan and Hyderabad are the most affected cities after Karachi, with 8.77% and 8.51% COVID-19 positivity, respectively.

PM directs

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System (OTP) used for purchases at utility stores. Original ID cards will now have to be displayed at the counter for purchasing subsidized items at utility stores, said a Press release issued by Utility Store Corporation (USC) here.

The photocopy requirement has also been removed and declared to receive a confirmation SMS to the customer's registered mobile number after purchase. The Utility Stores Corporation is pursuing a strategy of transparent transfer of federal government subsidies to the real beneficiaries.

The Utility Stores Corporation is gradually increasing the number of POS counters at every supermarket store and mini market in Lahore and Islamabad on the direction of the Prime Minister. All zonal managers have been urged to contact all the Deputy Commissioners of Punjab and ICT for providing water coolers, tents, chairs, fans to the customers at the utility stores. Tent and water supply is already in place and orders have



KARACHI: Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin UI Haque visits projects put on display in a two-day Techiton 1.0 Computer Science and Technology Exhibition. —Online

President highlights tapping youth bulge's potential



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi Sunday stressed upon focusing more on the education and skill sets improvement of the country's youth bulge, besides creation of more space to the womenfolk in the mainstream of economy.

During a conversation premiered live on YouTube, a popular social media platform, the president said that the world had been moving at a faster pace with regard to latest development in information and technology sector and the research and knowledge.

"Pakistan must immediately board on that fast moving train of information and knowledge," he said urging the country's political leadership and parliamentarians to focus more on education and human resource development. The president opined that an intellectual and smart leadership was

must take a country on the path of progress and development by equipping youth with the latest education and by making investment upon enhancement of the human resources.

The president said the country was producing about 27,000 IT graduates whereas in India the numbers of IT graduates stood around 800,000. The president cautioned that if this huge youth and women bulge of the country was not properly utilized, then they would become an elderly bulge.

The president said that in the next few years, according to an estimate, the world would require 80 million trained people in the realm of information and technology and artificial intelligence by 2030. He said that IT sector possessed huge opportunities and stressed upon the need to overcome the formal brick and mortar educational system.

These issues were like bottlenecks which should be removed, he added. The president said with use of latest technology, Pakistan could become a bread basket of the world in the field of agriculture.

To a query, he said that the government policies always determined the economy of a country. The president observed that elections should be held on the basis of issues. He said in today's world policies were so dynamic that these required constant transformation and in different sectors, like the education and technology, the world was

witnessing an exponential growth.

The president opined that if a leadership possessed smart thinking, nothing could stop a country from heading on the path of progress and development. Responding to another question, he said Pakistan had faced the global Covid 19 pandemic with efficient response.

He cited that the pandemic had disrupted the global supply and demand chain, adding but when compared with the global economy, Pakistan had performed better. Stability could be achieved when there was betterment in policies, he said, and expressed his optimism that Pakistan would be soon out of the economic challenges. The president shared that implementation of policies in Pakistan always took time whereas the changes around the world were taking place at rapid speed.

About Pakistani diaspora, he said that they had great affection for their motherland. But he regretted that after imparting them education and skills and qualities, they had exported such talent to abroad which was 'wastage of human capital'. The president also emphasized upon creation of awareness over the issues of growing population. He also regretted that the world was subject to vested interests based global order. The president, to a question, replied that they made efforts for the women's inheritance rights and resolution of the issues of disabled people. —APP

Super Tax to close down registered SMEs, says FEBR

ISLAMABAD: The Friends of Economic & Business Reforms (FEBR) President Kashif Anwar on Sunday said that the super tax means taxing the already taxed even more, as it would squeeze the formal and registered sector of the economy.

Hitting hard at the government for levying 10 percent super tax on businesses, he warned that it would trigger an avalanche of inflation, leading to closure of documented small businesses, factories and SMEs owing to unbearable cost.

He was of the view that the tax would destroy small traders and it would unleash a storm of inflation in the country. He was of the view that if the government imposed fixed tax, then the big fish would have dodged it.

Kashif Anwar said that the economy is nose-diving and such a measure at this time will reverse the industrialization

momentum. He said that the industry was already facing crippling costs due to rising prices of commodities and energy, adding this super tax will be priced in their balance sheets and passed on to the customers in many cases, leading to escalate the inflation further.

He lashed out at the government for putting 10 percent levy saying it would result in closure of many industrial units.

Lambasting the government for levying the tax, he said that it would crush the economy, exacerbate inflation and joblessness in the country, besides increasing imports and sliding the country into economic disaster.

He said this tax is an attack on those sectors of the economy that have the potential of growth and which can increase production and livelihood.

It would further squeeze the formal sector of economy and traders would pass on the tax to customers in the shape

of higher prices of commodities, he added.

He said that putting more burdens on trade and industry would lead to a severe crisis in the country. He suggested to the government that instead of imposing more burdens on the already registered sector, efforts should be made to bring other unregistered sectors in the tax net so as to increase the revenue of the country in the right direction.

He said that in order to get rid of the IMF, it was necessary to increase its exports by giving incentives to the value added sectors so that a lot of foreign exchange can be earned for the country and the country can avoid default.

No country in the world can charge 39 percent tax to corporations and still keep the economy afloat, he added. Additionally, new private-sector and foreign investments dry up completely in an uncompetitive market, he said. —Online

Modi regime can't mislead world by hosting G20 summit in IIOJK: Mushaal

ISLAMABAD: Mushaal Hussein Mullick, wife of jailed Kashmiri Hurriyat Leader Yasin Malik lashed out at fascist Narendra Modi regime for its plan to host a G20 meeting in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) in a bid to present a false and misleading narrative on Kashmir situation, which was virtually turned into a 'slaughter house'.

Mushaal, who is Chairperson of the Peace and Culture Organization said in a statement on Saturday that holding the G20 summit in IIOJK was nothing but just a façade, as its sole objective was to spread mere propaganda.

She said that on the one hand brutal regime intensified the reign of terror in IIOJK to crush the Kashmiri freedom movement on the other, it announced holding the G20 summit in the world's largest torture cell occupied territory to mislead the world community about the real situation in the scenic valley.

Mushaal said that if Modi regime should have the courage to allow foreign fact-finding missions including rights groups to IIOJK instead of holding the G20 summit in the territory in an attempt to give credence to its false claims of normalcy in the territory. The Hurriyat leader went on to say that the G20 summit in IIOJK, which she called a smoke-screen, aimed at diverting international attention from India's massive HR violations in Kashmir, as India wanted to distort the reality of Kashmiris' freedom struggle by holding G20 summit in the valley.

"Fascist Modi regime wants to tell the world that everything is all right in IIOJK by holding G20 summit in the territory," she added. However, she stated that the fascist Indian regime could not hide the reality by such tactics, as the world was well-aware of state terrorism and barbarism unleashed by the brutal forces in the valley.

Mushaal urged that G20 countries must remember that India has illegally occupied territory and it is a disputed territory as per UN resolutions; therefore, these countries should press India to allow Kashmiris to decide their future themselves. —DNA

Competitive agriculture financing sought to boost GDP ratio

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Businesses Forum (PBF) on Sunday called upon the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) to try and restructure its agricultural finance regime, as 90 percent of farm loans were offered for production and only 6-10 percent for agricultural development.

Similarly, 1.7% of the total agri credit was distributed among farmers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, Azad Jammu Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan which is a worrying factor.

PBF Vice President Ahmad Jawad said in a statement "Give us the competitive agri financing, we will give you growth," as the agriculture sector has the potential to reach 5 percent of the GDP target.

He said that banks had no institutional means at their disposal to gather meaningful data about farms and rural businesses. The banks were not equipped to make informed investment decisions as far as Agri-financing was concerned.

And without formal financing, agricultural transformation was not possible. So, the country's population would continue to face food shortage. Farmers were at the mercy of middlemen and local money lenders — though they at least bring some liquidity to farm operations, he added.

Alongside those financial hurdles, the agricultural production side had been suffering too, and provincial governments seemed to be exacerbating it with transparency issues. For instance, the government of Punjab, Pakistan's most populous province, announced in January that it had arrived at a wheat sowing acreage target of 16.21 million, down from its initial goal of 16.70 million. At the same time, it also announced massive expansions in sowing of potato and oil seed crops, citing those as cutting into the wheat goal. Currently, as per the official data, agriculture contributes to 19.2 percent of its GDP, employs 38.5 percent of the country's workforce and supports the livelihoods of at least 65-70 percent of the population. —APP

Two killed as violence mars Sindh LG polls

KARACHI: At least two persons were killed and dozens were left injured in separate incidents of violence during the Sindh local bodies polls, which were also marred by electoral mismanagement on Sunday.

The voting time of the first phase of local body elections in Sindh concluded at 5pm today. Meanwhile, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has postponed elections in some areas over technical issues including Ghotki district's Mirpur Mathelo after wrong names of candidates were printed on ballot papers. Reports of missing electoral symbols on ballot papers, male presiding officers deputed at women's polling stations, and incomplete electoral rolls were received from

other cities. Violence in Sukkur, Kandhkot, Nawabshah, Ghotki and Mirpur Mathelo left dozens of people injured. At least one polling station in Kandhkot was attacked by dacoits. Brother of PTI candidate Zafar Gandapuri at Tando Adam's Municipal Ward number 13 in Sanghar was killed when clashes broke out between the PTI and PPP workers at a polling station. The clash also left several people wounded.

Another man was shot dead and three were injured during a clash between JUI and PPP workers in Sukkur. The two parties were clashing over election proceedings at a polling station in Rohri.

In a similar incident, polling in Municipal Committee Ward 13 was

suspended after a conflict resulted in the death of one person in Tando Adam. The polling station was immediately shut down after the incident. Sindh IGP Ghulam Nabi Memon has said that the body of the deceased did not carry any bullet wounds. He further added that an autopsy has not been performed so far. In Kandhkot, at least 20 people were reportedly injured as a fight broke out between the workers of rival political parties in ward 10 during the local bodies polls in Kandhkot on Sunday. A large contingent of police and rangers rushed to the scene to restore the law and order. Eyewitnesses said that the workers of the two parties, PPP and JUI, attacked each other with bamboo sticks, leaving scores of people



MIRPURKHAS: Female voters wait in a queue at a polling station for Local Bodies election.