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February 2020

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DEAR CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY, IS IT TIME TO CHANGE YOUR INNOVATION APPROACH?

There are nations which you can call innovators and then comes nations, who are users but we are not in both lists. There is a term in Urdu called “Lakeer Ka Fakir”, but we haven’t been able to even follow that “lakeer”, we are not users, let alone innovation.

But, there are people who still want to change current dynamic of construction industry. I have composed this write-up for these small number of thinkers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has certainly been a wake-up call on many fronts. And if you are in the construction industry, it could be the nudge you need to focus on more effective innovation.

Unfortunately, the construction industry continues to be a digital laggard. Each year productivity losses and cost overruns are in the trillions of dollars. Despite the significant percentage of global GDP (gross domestic product) generated by the construction industry, labor productivity increased only 19% during 1964-2012, according to the World Economic Forum. And the construction industry is second to last, above only “agriculture and hunting” in the use and adoption of digital technologies according to McKinsey.

While digital transformation has been slow, the adoption of new technologies

has a significant upside. Accordingly, investment in construction technology ventures increased from about \$4.5 million in 2008 to nearly \$1.5 billion in 2018. At the same time large players, like Autodesk, have been acquiring companies, and new corporate venture groups are forming at a higher rate.

Environmental and sustainability requirements are also driving regulatory and brand pressure. Construction and demolition material is estimated to take up more than 3 billion square yards of landfill each year according to Rubicon Global. And like other laggard industries (hotels, taxis, etc.), construction companies big and small are at increasing risk from disruptive innovation.

However, internal innovation efforts across all industries struggle. We live in an age of agility, and organizations that want to survive, let alone thrive, need to increase their speed, adaptability, and innovation. It is a challenge many are not well equipped to meet.

Many companies also under-estimate the cost and time for on-going maintenance and enhancements for custom development. This is

especially true at a time when finding and retaining top technical talent is an on-going challenge.

According to the Sloan MIT Review, “...The worlds of venture capitalism and corporate investing are not always easy to combine. After a period of initial enthusiasm, many CVC units falter or close, failing to achieve either financial or strategic returns.”

But it is also clear that money alone is not the answer. 70% of funded new ventures fail—usually around 20 months after first raising financing (with around \$1.3 million in total funding closed, according to CB Insights).



“The venture studio is the model we need right now...The world needs big, audacious thinking to solve the thorniest problems impacting humanity...It takes a team of seasoned experts and entrepreneurs to build these new dynamic businesses.” (Venture Beat) A venture studio (also called a start-up studio or venture builder) invests capital, resources, and hands-on multi-disciplinary teams as well as rigorous best practices to programmatically address the top reasons for innovation failure.

According to GSSN, in its report, The Rise of Startup Studios, ‘seed-stage investments for startups created by top-tier studios are more likely (34%) to result in an exit than the average Series D investment (27%)...with more than a 4% chance of becoming a unicorn.’

Collaboration between studios and enterprises broadens opportunities for success even more. Dedicated innovators and experienced entrepreneurs working directly with enterprises can help uncover clear and valuable opportunities for innovation. The studio resources and its ecosystem relationships become “living” innovation hubs to continuously (re)prioritize and curate solutions and new venture development.

So during this quarantine period, review

your current innovation methods. Co-innovation may be your key to more sustainable economic and environmental outcomes.

In Pakistan, there are few startups related to construction but only in BIM field. We need startups that work to change Pakistani labor is working techniques. Open schools for construc-

tion workers, teach them how they can speed up their work with lowering accident chances.

The reasons for innovation failures typically include a combination of people, process, technology, and relationship access issues. So a not so new approach, venture studios, has been gaining traction.



CDA TO CONSTRUCT KORANG BRIDGE UNDERPASS AT PWD

Islamabad: The tendering for construction of PWD underpass, widening of Korang Bridge and converting Khokar Hotel U-Turn into fish-belly at Islamabad Expressway would be conducted within the next few months.

Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee on Interior Raja Khuram Shahzad Nawaz said while talking to this agency said, over Rs450 million would be

spent on these projects. The inter-provincial traffic congestion at the expressway would be reduced significantly with these measures.

Last year, the Capital Developed Authority (CDA) had asked the government for Rs10 billion to widen the expressway from Koral to GT Road but the government had only allocated Rs450 million in the 2019-20 budget.

As per law a society having over 1,000 Kanal of land is bound to construct service areas along main highways, he said adding that the surrounding housing societies should construct the service areas along with the expressway in their respective jurisdictions to ease traffic congestion.

Responding to a question regarding stoppage of the construction at Khokar Hotel U-Turn, he said, CBR society had started the construction work on converting the U-Turn into fish-belly, but CDA stopped the work however, the construction work at the U-Turn will be resumed soon.

The rupees six billion budget of Islamabad was being spent in 200 schools of federal capital while 600 schools situated in rural areas lack basic facilities.

Criticising mayor Islamabad Sheikh Ansar Aziz, he said Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation has been made ineffective. A mega centre of National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) would be set up at Tarlai area.



JAPANESE STEEL BRIDGES ADD BEAUTY TO FORT MUNRO



Multan: Eight steel bridges set up at the Fort Munro, connecting the Iran-Pakistan border and Gwadar via N-70, have become fully functional for heavy traffic.

The National Highways Authority (NHA) officials said that the first phase of East-West improvement of N-70 from Rakhi Gaaj-Khar-Bewata had been completed with the Japanese financial assistance worth Rs 14 billion. The second phase was the construction of 55km dual carriageway from Rakhi Gaj to Dera Ghazi, they said, adding that the federal government had allocated funds for the project in the Public Sector Development Programme 2019/20. The NHA engineers and officials said that the architectural gem project had decreased vehicles' operational and maintenance cost and travel hours between Punjab and Balochistan provinces.

They said that the steel bridges also added to the beauty of Fort Munro. They said that the area fell in the tribal region of Tuman Leghari.

NHA Director Construction Muhammad Sulait Ahmar said that the Japan's most

advanced technology was utilised in the steel bridges. He said: "This unique type of steel is not available in Pakistan. The technology includes box shaped girders made of maintenance free steel for more than 100 years and special embankment wall using light and strong material."

The seven steel bridges were 11.5 kilometer long, connecting south Punjab to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor via N-70 from Bahawalpur to Multan, Dera Ghazi Khan, Fort Munro to Qila Saifullah to Gwadar and Iran-Pakistan border at Taftan, he said, adding that Muzaffargarh-Dera Ghazi Khan dual carriageway had already been completed and inaugurated by Prime Minister Imran Khan a couple of days ago.

He said that the then prime Minister Mian Nawaz Sharif had requested Japan for soft loan to establish the steel bridges. He said that the Fort Munro steel bridges project was executed in 2016 and Muzaffargarh-Dera Ghazi Khan dual-carriageway in 2017. The then Punjab chief minister Shahbaz Sharif had laid down the foundation stone of Muzaffargarh-Dera Ghazi Khan dual carriageway

on October 14, 2017, he added.

He said that the hilly portion of Dera-Taftan Road from Rakhi Gaaj to high mountains of Girdo (Fort Munro) was constructed in the late 19th century by the British rulers as a part of the strategic forward policy in the subcontinent. Starting from Rakhi Gaaj-Khar-Bewata, the project made the hilly portion of the road wide and safe for Gwadar-bound cargo traffic, he added.

Embassy of Japan First Secretary Economic and Development Teruki Hanzawa said that the project site was traffic choke point with continuous steep, slopes and sharp curves. He said that Japan had provided concessional loan with the lowest markup rate of 0.2pc and the repayment period was 40 years with 10 years grace period. He said that Japan had provided \$142 million to improve N-70. Teruki Hanzawa said that the physical work had been executed in 2016 and it was completed in the shortest period of three years with the help of Japanese and Pakistani engineers. He said: "A single track road has been expanded to double track and sharp curves with a radius of eight meters to 30 meters."

Meanwhile, big trailers and trucks carrying heavy loads, passenger buses, vans and picnic lovers riding vehicles are found frequently moving on the route after the steel bridges gave a solution to the most dangerous and sharp curves in more than 6,000 feet high hilly area across Fort Munro. The Iranian cargo trucks are also entering the Punjab through Fort Munro steel bridges. Meanwhile, the Japanese Embassy in Islamabad organised a tour of journalists from Multan to Fort Munro to examine Japan's contributions towards Pakistan's sustainable development.

Japanese Embassy First Secretary Economic Affairs Teruki Hanzawa, Japanese Consultant Naoka Kogure and others were also present.

CORONAVIRUS NOT TO IMPACT CPEC PROJECTS

Islamabad: The multibillion-dollar projects being implemented under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) would not be affected by the temporary challenge of coronavirus, declared Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the Energy Week, organised by the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra), Yao emphasised that despite the challenges being faced because of the coronavirus, China was determined to move forward on CPEC.

He stated that the next stage of CPEC would focus on cooperation among diverse sectors. He expressed confidence that it would give a new momentum to future development of Pakistan's economy.

Moreover, he appreciated the structural reforms being introduced by Pakistan government and added that the energy sector of Pakistan was undergoing transformation, which was focused on providing affordable and reliable energy. He stressed that the Chinese government and investors would fully cooperate with Pakistan in that endeavour.

Speaking on the occasion, Minister for Power Omar Ayub said the government



was targeting to provide sustainable, affordable and reliable power to the consumers by producing 75-80% of electricity from domestic resources. The minister apprised people at the conference that the government had formulated a renewable energy policy under which the share of alternative sources of energy would be increased to 20% by 2025 and 30% by 2030.

Ayub highlighted that the energy sector of Pakistan offered investment opportunities of \$100 billion including \$45 billion

in power generation, \$20 billion in transmission and \$15-20 billion in distribution. The minister expressed satisfaction that several companies were evincing interest in relocating their manufacturing facilities to Pakistan for the production of wind turbines and solar panels.

Nepra Chairman Tauseef H Farooqi pointed out that circular debt had increased to Rs1,900 billion. "We have to give attention to the power sector to make improvement," he said.

SINDH GOVT PLANS TO REBUILD NIAZ STADIUM HYDERABAD



Hyderabad: After Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah stopped the construction of unauthorized sports courts at Niaz Stadium, the provincial govt has decided to carry out the extension of historic cricket venue Niaz Stadium in consultation with Pakistan Cricket Board. Commissioner Hyderabad Muhammad Abbas Baloch said that Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah contacted with high ups of Pakistan Cricket Board to seek consultation so that lost glory of the historic stadium could be restored at the earliest.

He said that provincial government fully committed to expanding seating capacity of the stadium with repair and renovation of stands so that the venue could host the international T-20, ODI and Test matches as well as the matches of Pakistan Super League.

He maintained that alternate space would be provided for the establishment of Squash Court and Tennis Court and the premises of the Niaz Stadium would be utilized only for the extension of the historic cricket venue. It may be noted that Sindh sports board had started construction of the tennis courts for Rs. 20 million and squash court for Rs. 65 million.

According to the inquiry report, the construction was started in the parking area of Niaz Stadium without any permission, therefore construction work has been stopped. The Commissioner Hyderabad has proposed that funds earmarked for these ongoing schemes may be diverted for rehabilitation of Niaz Stadium in order to make the ground worthy of holding international matches.

Niaz Stadium History

Niaz Stadium was established in November 1961 by then commissioner Hyderabad Niaz Ahmed. The inaugural first-class match was played here between South Zone and Pakistan Education Board on March 16-18, 1962. It also hosted the first international Test between Pakistan and England on March 16-21, 1973. Niaz Stadium, in all, has hosted five Tests and seven ODIs till January 2008.

The Stadium was also the inaugural centre of the 1987 World Cup. The historic stadium holds the record of first-ever hat-trick of ODI by Jalaluddin. The ground remained with Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for 11 years until the municipal committee revoked the MoU arbitrarily on April 2, 2018 and seized control of it. It may be noted that CM Murad in 2018 had announced for the renovation of Hyderabad Stadium for the PSL and International matches.

PM IMRAN APPROVES 'NEW BLUE AREA' PROJECT



Islamabad: In a bid to encourage commercial activities in Islamabad and to establish a passive income source for funding constructions under the Naya Pakistan Housing Project (NPHP), the federal government has decided to expand the existing size of the commercial area in the city by establishing another commercial zone.

In this regard, Prime Minister Imran Khan approved the 'New Blue Area' project in a meeting held at the prime minister's office on Monday, sources said. The premier decided to establish a new commercial zone in the federal capital for encouraging business activities and for this purpose, the sources informed, 170 Kanals land would be allocated near Sector F-9 Park while international standards would be followed in the construction of the new commercial zone. The project is estimated to generate up to Rs30 billion initially. This would be the first time in the history of Islamabad that the size of the commercial space would be doubled.

Further, the government has decided to utilise a part of the revenue generated from the commercial city in the form of rents and taxes for constructions under NPHP. Besides that the project would encourage business activities in the capital, it will also

generate employment opportunities. Sources added that the premier has also directed the related authorities to improve the system of provision of basic amenities to the citizens. In an interesting move, the district administration has razed the foundation stone of the metro bus project between the twin cities laid by the former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif. The government had earlier renamed public parks in Rawalpindi as a measure to de-politicise development projects. The foundation of the project was laid by the ex-premier on March 23, 2014. The Express Tribune has learnt that the plinth on the Mall Road Chowk near Saddar metro bus station was demolished on Monday which had a plaque with Sharif's name. The administration has given no explanation regarding the move so far.

The metro bus service is used by more than 0.2 million people every day. However, the roads on its route are not being well-maintained owing to which potholes have been formed at various spots.

Razing of the foundation stone is not the first such incident that the names belonging to opposition party Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) have been removed or changed. Earlier, the government changed the names of

Nawaz Sharif and Shehbaz Sharif Parks in Rawalpindi.

Ring Road route alignment finalised

The reservations of lawmakers of Rawalpindi on Ring Road's route alignment have been finally addressed in the third design after which the Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) and the legislators have reached a decision on the matter.

The problems in the first two designs arose after the identification of graves and houses in the project's route.

The MPAs and MNAs of Rawalpindi had expressed their concerns on the issue and emphasised the executive agency, RDA, for changes in the route in the public interest. In this regard, a high-level meeting was held on Monday in which the officials of the consultant firm Zurich International gave a briefing to the lawmakers. The meeting was attended by the Provincial Minister of Revenue Malik Mohammad Anwar Khan, Minister for Aviation Ghulam Sarwar Khan and other lawmakers including Wasiq Qayyum Abbasi, Chaudhry Adnan, Javed Kausar, and Haji Amjad Mehmood. The project's route passes through the constituencies of the related legislators.

The consultant firm addressed the issues highlighted by the public representatives and briefed them regarding the changes done in the route alignment in the third design. The design received no objections from the lawmakers and was approved it unanimously.

Further, the Rawalpindi Commissioner Spokesperson Erfa Tahira endorsed this information to The Express Tribune. She said that all reservations of the public representatives had been addressed in the third design and a consensus on the road alignment was achieved. She added that as per new route alignment, there would be the construction of underpasses and flyovers without disturbing any kind of settlements.

CDA DECIDES TO REGULARISE HIGHRISE BUILDINGS IN E-11

Islamabad: After opening a window for regularisation of unauthorised construction in Zone IV, the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has also decided to regularise high-rise buildings in E-11.

Sources in the CDA said new parameters to regulate buildings in E-11 had been notified in the Gazette of Pakistan through a statutory regulatory order (SRO). There are over 50 high-rise unauthorised apartment buildings in E-11 where builders and local people made billions of rupees investment. However, a few years ago the CDA got all construction activities in the sector stopped.

The CDA ignored the massive unauthorised construction in the sector for years claiming the area was an 'exempted pocket'. The sources said because of a shrine revenue estate Golra was exempted from land acquisition but the CDA was supposed to implement its bylaws there which it failed to do. It restricted itself mostly to issuing notices and occasionally sealing buildings.

The CDA Part II SRO titled "Review of master plan of Islamabad prepared by federal commission" got new parameters notified in the Gazette of Pakistan on February 14 to regulate the buildings in E-11. The SRO stated: "Due to lack of enforcement, hundreds of projects have been executed in Islamabad. There have been several ruling from august courts to take immediate steps in order to provide relief to residents of these projects. There are number of multi-storey housing projects constructed in E-11 without getting necessary approval from the CDA."

New parameters for regularising over 50 buildings notified through statutory regulatory order

It said CDA formulated zoning control policy in 2007 to regulate construction of such projects in E-11 which could not be implemented. "These multi-storey projects need immediate attention as lot of people are living and a huge amount of money has been invested there."

The projects should be regularised after taking compoundable and non-compoundable charges from the developers subject to health and safety evaluation study completed by consultants. "In conformity with the Pakistan Building Code (Seismic Provisions 2007) other applicable environmental laws are to be ensured. Provision of amenities, infrastructure, open spaces, parking and circulation of traffic must be developed through cost sharing by the developers," the SRO said.

It added that latest traffic, environmental impact studies and urban regeneration studies will provide the way forward for the regularisation of E-11. "All buildings which meet the criteria recently approved amendments in zoning control policy 2007 and supported by traffic impact and environmental impact studies be regularised with imposition of fee and penalties," the SRO said.

"This is a big development. The chronic issue of E-11 will be resolved amicably now. Those buildings which meet our

criteria will be regularised," said CDA spokesperson Syed Safdar Ali. He said environmental study and traffic impact will be the main criteria for regularising the buildings. He, however, said the SRO was not E-11 specific rather it also related to other construction and housing societies.

The PTI government formed the federal commission of experts in December 2018 to revise the master plan of Islamabad. A comprehensive revision of the master plan could not be made so far as a consultant firm to carry out the revision is yet to be hired by the CDA. But the commission in its interim report approved by the federal cabinet in October 2019 opened a window to regularise unauthorised constructions in Zone IV, V and E-11.

In December, the CDA had also notified bylaws in Gazette of Pakistan, which provided a chance to owners of unauthorised constructions (except zone III), including Prime Minister Imran Khan's Banigala house, to get their buildings approved.

Mr Khan had applied to regularise his house in 2018. But the authority raised objections to his application and asked him to provide missing information. The regularisation process was later stopped. But in December 2019, following approval of the cabinet, the CDA notified the bylaws which allowed owners of all unauthorised constructions to get their buildings regularised by CDA.



TIMESACO TO INVEST \$600M IN TRANSPORT SECTOR OF KARACHI

Islamabad: A Chinese technology company Timesaco is set to invest over \$600 million in the country's pathetic public transportation sector with aim to restructure and digitize it by replicating the Chinese model.

After launching "Tatu Mobility which is a transportation infrastructure network to promote the e-transportation sector business in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Timesaco is now mulling to move to Karachi and intends to invest \$600 million. Timesaco provides wide-ranging mobility services, such as taxi-hailing facility, pick and drop, bus booking, vehicle rental and other related technological solutions.

Media Manager of Timesaco Asad Ullah said that the company is trying to restore and restructure Pakistan's public transportation system by replicating the Chinese model that, according to him, will enable the relevant authorities to track the movement of vehicles and ensure their punctuality."

He said that In the second week of

February, the company officials will visit Karachi to meet with officials of the Sindh government, including the chief minister and we are planning to launch the service in the third or fourth week of February 2020 in Karachi.

Timesaco will become the second international player in the transportation sector after Egypt's SWVL by launching mass transportation services in Karachi.



NULLAH LEH TO BE INCLUDED IN CPEC

Rawalpindi: With reports that the project has been shelved by the Punjab government owing to a paucity of funds, the federal railways' minister on Wednesday insisted that the Nullah Leh Expressway project between the twin cities of Islamabad and Rawalpindi will become a reality. For this purpose, he suggested that the project could be included in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project.

This was claimed by Federal Railways Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad during a

talk at Lal Haveli on Wednesday ahead of his public address.

Rashid, who has been vehemently pursuing the expressway project ever since he was a federal minister during the regime of former dictator General Pervez Musharraf, assured that work on this mega project will commence this year.

"Chinese President Xi Jinping is expected to lay the foundation stones of Nullah Leh and the Main Line-1 (ML-1) projects during his visit later this year," the federal minister said while talking to The Express Tribune.

"We will construct the Nullah Leh Expressway even if we have to twist some necks," Ahmad said suggestively, adding that the Punjab government will earmark funds for the project in the budget for the next fiscal year.

The project had been revived by the incumbent Pakistan government after

it was halted with the election of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government in 2008.

As preparations began to start work on the much-anticipated Rs80 billion Leh Expressway project, the government had decided to build the road link on a 'Build, Operate and Transfer' (BOT) basis. This way, the government had hoped to shed around 85 per cent of the cost for the mega project.

The government had finalised the project concept-I (PC-I) of the Leh Expressway and Prime Minister Imran Khan was expected to lay the foundation stone of the project in August.

However, with the cost of the 30km-long signal-free corridor escalating from Rs50 billion to Rs80 billion, owing to delays, caused the government to backpedal on the project.

The expressway is expected to start from Soan Adda bus terminal near the Islamabad High Court and will be linked with the Ammar Shaheed Chowk through an additional six-kilometre-stretch of road.





Muzafargarh: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Saturday announced establishment of a university in the city. He said that after the establishment of the university, there would be no need to go to other universities for getting higher education. He expressed these views while presiding over a meeting at Circuit House. The chief minister also performed ground-breaking of various uplift projects. He announced construction of a two-way road from Alipur to Muzaffargarh and gave the

status of tehsil to Chowk Sarwar Shaheed.

The chief minister also announced establishment of the Industrial Estate in Muzaffargarh, which would be set up on 400 acres land and hoped that employment opportunities would be created on a large scale. He said that parks would be constructed at Head Punjnad and Head Taunsa to promote tourism. Usman Buzdar also inaugurated upgradation of rural health centre projects in Shah Jamal and Muzaffargarh and Rescue 1122 service in Kot Addu and Jatoi. He also performed ground breaking of Jatoi to Sethari Road, which would be constructed with Rs 80 million. He also planted a tree on the Circuit House premises.

The chief minister said that the work on development package worth Rs 19 billion was underway for progress and prosperity of the masses of the district. Parliamentarians, the commissioner, the RPO, the DC and others were also present. The CM also visited the DHQ Hospital and opened projects at gynae ward and labour room and reviewed other facilities there. He inquired after the health of patients and

asked them about the health facilities.

He said that the government was bringing revolutionary steps in health sector and assured that quality health facilities would be ensured. Usman Buzdar also inaugurated the Qasr-e-Behood and visited class rooms set up for the training of women and asked about their issues. He said that the government was making all-out effort to provide relief to the common man. The free of cost training was being imparted to women at the centre while the project was completed at a cost of Rs 60 million.

The chief minister said that the training about eight various programmes was being imparted to women according to need of market and assured that more facilities would be extended there. The women thanked the CM for visiting the centre and listening to their problems.

He also inaugurated first ever of its kind facilitation centre at the Deputy Commissioner Office and reviewed facilities there. He also paid a visit to Sadar police station where a police squad presented him guard of honour.

PAKISTAN RAILWAYS RETRIEVES 293.56 ACRES ENCROACHED LAND

Islamabad: Pakistan Railways has retrieved 293.56 acres of land in an anti-encroachment operation across the country during the past 11 months. "The encroachment operation has been launched with the assistance of railway police and district administrations of the provincial governments," an official in the Ministry of Railways said. Giving a division-wise breakup, he said Pakistan Railways had retrieved 143.45 acres from Punjab, 80.54 acres from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 59.8 acres from Sindh and 9.77 acres from Balochistan.

The official said Pakistan Railways owned 167,690 acres land across the country out of which Punjab had 90,326 acres, Sindh 39,428 acres, Balochistan 28,228 acres and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had 9,708 acres. He said the Geographic Information System (GIS) survey had also been conducted under the project of computerization of railway land records in which all the encroachments and leases etc had been recorded in the Pakistan Railways Land Management Information System (PRLMS) software.

The official said the database was under

verification and being compiled. To a question, he said P-Way labor was not being allowed to work on the Khost-Sibi section since January 2018 by FC Balochistan and laying of ballast from 1 to 134 kilometer was also held up due to non-provision of security. He said the contractor, M/S National Logistics Cell (NLC) had to face difficulties due to the non-availability of the road approach to the site of work and on account of law and order situation.

The official said the track rehabilitation work which was being carried out by division was suspended due to security reasons and the work would take six months subject to availability of proper protection by law enforcement agencies. He said in this regard a meeting had been held by the Divisional Superintendent, Pakistan Railways, Quetta and Superintendent Railways Police, Quetta with Chief Secretary Balochistan.

The official said the chief secretary assured that the request of Pakistan Railways for provision of sufficient security would be taken in earnest and arrangement through Levies would be

made available on sustainable grounds and on the mutually agreed terms between the government of Balochistan and Pakistan Railways. To another question, he said Pakistan Railways has finalized inquiries of 44 passenger train accidents while 22 accidents related to goods trains were being dealt with by the respective divisions in accordance with rules of the department.



WETLANDS MATTER



Pakistan should move away from solely using a hard-engineering approach for controlling floods and, instead, consider soft-engineering approaches like the creation of wetlands.

When we look at some of the pressing questions we face today, most of those point to the issue of water. Availability of water remains central to the growing population of the country, water quality and quantity being one of the important issues. Public health also depends on access to clean drinking water. Food production, preserving biodiversity; and mitigating climate crises, all come back to the question of availability of water bodies in the country.

In the current climatic conditions that continue to be buffeted by climate change crises and climate-induced migration at unprecedented rates, wetlands can be the silver bullet against some calamities, providing a safe-haven to the human population, animals and plants. In the past, wetlands which include marshes, peat lands, flooded forests, and mangroves, were widely considered unproductive wastelands full of disease and danger. The only good wetland was a drained wetland. No wonder the world has lost its natural wetlands at an alarming rate. We have lost 87 percent of our wetlands in the past 300 years, and 35 percent since 1970, due to agricultural practices, urban and industrial development, pollution, and over-exploitation; all of which still contribute to the ongoing degradation of wetlands.

Today, they are disappearing faster than any other ecosystem – three times faster than even forests. As they vanish, so does the life within them. More than 25 percent of wetland plants and animals – which comprise up to 40 percent of the

world's species – are at risk of extinction, and stocks of other remaining species are depleting rapidly.

Like all other environmental problems there's no single solution for the protection of wetlands. The Ramsar Convention, an international treaty for the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, provides guidance on the wise use of wetlands. "Wise use" was a highly progressive term coined by the Convention's founders in 1973, long before sustainable development was mainstream, and continues to be useful today. The central idea behind wise use is that all the benefits wetlands provide must be considered and incorporated when people make decisions that affect them.

Unfortunately, the "wise use" of these wetlands when translated into Pakistan's context resulted in unsustainable exploitation and increased levels of industrial and urban effluent discharge into the aquatic environment. A signatory to the Ramsar Convention since 1976, Pakistan has only been able to list 19 Ramsar wetland sites, covering an area of 1,343,627 hectares, out of the Convention's 1,283 sites which now cover a surface area of 108,751,595 hectares. As an agrarian economy, managing river systems through a growing system of wetlands could have helped Pakistan manage the menacing floods, dealt with droughts, created engines for a green economy, as well as helped mitigate greenhouse gas emissions more effectively and more cheaply.

In East Africa, researchers have worked with communities to develop approaches to help sustainably manage wetlands in a way that improves food security and enhances livelihoods, a step on the way towards wise use. With Pakistan fast

approaching the scarcity threshold of water, what is even more disturbing is that groundwater supplies – the last resort of water supply – are rapidly depleting. In these conditions, the fundamental importance of wetlands of cleaning, storing and recharging ground water supply multiplies. At a time when one in three people worldwide lacks access to safe drinking water, and water-related conflicts are on the rise, protecting these ecosystems will eventually save lives.

The implications of this trend are sobering, given that wetlands were supposed to be our most valuable ecosystem from the high mountain lakes up in the north to the marshes and mangroves in the Indus delta region. Economically, wetlands are estimated to provide \$47 trillion worth of services annually and a livelihood for about one billion people. Examples of ways to facilitate wise use of wetlands include a few examples, such as Colombo. The capital of Sri Lanka recognised that wetlands helped prevent flooding and therefore prioritised the protection of these urban spaces for flood defence and other benefits.

In India, guidelines have been developed on the preservation of wetlands to protect the role they play in the provision of food, fish, and other goods to many poor communities. Similarly, in East Africa, researchers have worked with communities to develop approaches to help sustainably manage wetlands in a way that improves food security and enhances livelihoods, a step on the way towards wise use. Wetlands are also among the planet's most effective carbon sinks, and thus play a central role in climate regulation. That is why countries like Scotland and Denmark have embarked on large-scale peatland restoration, with positive knock-on effects for wildlife.

But, despite clear evidence of beneficial impacts, wetlands are largely sidelined in national policymaking. A recent study published by Springer in 2019 – The Hindu Kush Himalaya Assessment (authored by 210 scientists from 22 countries), warns that these water towers could lose between one-third and two-thirds of their ice fields by 2100.

According to Hassan Abbas, an expert in hydrology and water resources, "Pakistan's rivers will initially have more water in the drier summer months due to higher glacial melting until 2050-60.

PM INAUGURATES ERDOGAN HOSPITAL TRUST IN MUZAFFARGARH

Muzaffargarh: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday inaugurated Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital Trust in Muzaffargarh.

Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar was also accompanied by the prime minister on the occasion. The 100 bedded hospital state of art free of cost healthcare facilities to all segment of the society. Earlier in the day, the prime minister inaugurated Muzaffargarh- Dera Ghazi Khan road project in the city. Earlier on February 20, lauding the services of Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital Trust in the health sector, Prime Minister Imran Khan had assured the trust of his full cooperation and support.

Talking to a delegation of Recep Tayyip Erdogan Hospital Trust (RTEHT), who called on him in Islamabad, PM Imran had said that philanthropists' cooperation with vulnerable segments of the society is commendable.

The delegation had briefed the prime minister about the trust's services in the health sector. The trust is providing state of the art free of cost healthcare facilities at seven hospitals in various areas of the country, the RTEHT chairman had

added. He had said that the trust was also providing food to thousands of homeless

people in shelter homes.



DASU POWER PROJECT TO BEGIN GENERATING ELECTRICITY IN 2024

Construction work on Dasu Hydropower Project is gaining momentum and it will start generating electricity in the second half of 2024, said Water and Power Development Authority (Wapda) Chair-

man Muzammil Hussain.

During his visit to the project site on Monday, the chairman said that the issue pertaining to rates of land needed for the

project had been resolved following the support of federal and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P) governments.

He further reviewed construction activities at the main access tunnel leading to the powerhouse, the two diversion tunnels, project offices, and colony.

The chairman added that besides the main civil works of stage-I, the construction work on seven different contracts relating to infrastructure development in the area was also underway

These included the construction of the right bank access roads, relocation of Karakoram Highway, construction of 132-Kv transmission line and grid station to provide electricity from Duber Khwar Hydropower Station to the site, he added.

He was also informed that the K-P government and the district administration had assured of completing the process of land acquisition by June 2020.



60% KHISAR DAM'S WORK COMPLETED



Islamabad: The Senate Standing Committee on Water Resources on Tuesday was informed that 60 per cent work on Khisar dam district Noskhi has already been completed and it would store 3000 acre feet of water. The committee which met with Shammim Afridi in chair was briefed about Khisar dam Bhimber Dam, AJK Projects. The Committee was informed that the proposed Dam site was located 18 Km from Nushkhi Town, Balochistan. The objective of the project was to recharge the ground water acquirer in

the area located downstream of these dams.

The Dam would also be instrumental in protecting downstream areas from flash floods. The Committee inquired reasons for delay of the project since execution of work had begun in 2017. It was informed that less allocation of funds was the main cause of lack in progress of work on the dam. The Committee directed that the Finance Division must be summoned in the next meeting. A progress report of the project was demanded as well. The Committee was informed that approved PC-I cost was Rs 444.001 million, whereas updated revised cost was Rs 381.551 million.

Officials of Provincial Irrigation department Balochistan told the committee that the project was part of constructing 100 small dams in the province. However, the project was delayed due to unavailability of required fund, they said. Mir Muhammad Yusaf Badini said there would be water shortage issue in Noskhi if the dam was completed in time. The committee deferred proposed briefing regarding PSDP proposed by the Water Resources Ministry for Budget 2020-21 as

observed that relevant documents were not shared with the members. The members would give their view points, once they studied the said documents.

Deliberating over the work conducted over Bhimber Dam, the Committee was informed that PM AJK desired for the construction of small dam projects on Bhimber Nullah in 2010. WAPDA submitted a PC-II for feasibility study. CDWP approved the PC-II (Rs 86.089) on 29 November, 2013 subject to WAPDA financing and addressing AJK concerns. WAPDA requested Government of AJK to arrange funds, since it was the sole beneficiary of the project.

AJK refused funding due to financial constraints. At that WAPDA requested Ministry of Water Resources to consider providing funds through PSDP for the project. The meeting was attended by Senator Brig, (R) John Kenneth Williams, Senator Muhammad Yousaf Badini, Senator Usman Khan Kakar, Senator Syed Muhammad Sabir Shah and senior officers from the Ministry of Water Resources, Planning Division and IRSA etc.

MASTER PLAN FOR SINDH'S 17 CITIES

Karachi: Sindh Chief Secretary Syed Mumtaz Ali Shah has said that the master plan for the proper development of 17 cities of the province will be prepared by the government by December 2020. He stated this on Monday as he met a delegation of the 42nd Specialised Training Programme comprising 45 government officials at Sindh Secretariat here on Monday. The delegation comprised 38 officials belonging to the Pakistan Administrative Service and seven from Gilgit-Bal-tistan Service.

The chief secretary informed the delegation that apart from one for Karachi, the master plan was being prepared for the cities of Sukkur, Larkana, Mirpurkhas, Nawabshah, Islamkot, Jamshoro,, Mithi, Sanghar, Naushahro Feroze, Dadu, Mititari, Umerkot, and Tando Allahyar.

He added that world standards had been followed for developing the Thar coal power project whose 70 per cent of staffers belonged to local areas. He said that the provincial government had also constructed an airport for the Thar coal project. He said that the civic infrastructure of Karachi was being developed after the restoration of law and order in the city.

The chief secretary remarked that educational, cultural and commercial activities in the city got accelerated due to the restoration of law and order in the city. He said that some 449 new civic projects in Karachi, including those related to water supplies and construction of roads, would be completed by June, 2020.

He said that projects related to road

construction, flyovers, and underpasses having a cumulative length of 150 kilometres had been completed in Karachi. The special development projects being developed in Karachi include Competitive and Livable City of Karachi, Karachi Neighbourhood Improvement Project, Karachi Water and Sewerage Services Improvement Project, and Bus Rapid Transit Service.



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THE NEED FOR PORT INFRASTRUCTURE IN PAKISTAN

Karachi: On Jan 16 2020, the I.I. Chandrigar road of Karachi a.k.a Wall Street of Pakistan was blocked, just because of an unexpected load on Karachi Port. Transporters strike which was ended and that caused an overload which exposed the thin port infrastructure.

SBP is emphasizing on following a Vietnam model of exports for Pakistan by becoming part of the Global Value Chains (GVCs). For that, flow of goods in and out of the country need to be smooth. That is not the case. Firstly Pakistan's annual trade value is less than one sixth of Vietnam's, Secondly the load on two ports in Karachi seems to be higher than of any port at Vietnam or many other export based countries.

The other issue in enhancing trade competitiveness is improper inland transport system. There is an old joke, "shipment cost of coal from Indonesia to Karachi is half of what is to transport from Karachi to Lahore". This tells about the inefficiencies of the transportation system within the country. Railways are generally the option for inland

goods transportation world over. However, that is not the case in Pakistan, since 1980s, when NLC was formed, the goods transportation in Pakistan shifted to roads.

One of the main reasons for poor competitiveness in the country is its poor port and inland transport infrastructure. There is dire need to upgrade the existing ports and to have new ports as well. There is a feasibility of building a cargo village in Karachi catching dust for 15-20 years. Nothing has happened to date. At this stage, the sea port load in Pakistan is relying on Karachi Port and Port Qasim with higher load on the former.

Karachi port is now well within the city. Cargo yards can be seen from a modern glass building of a leading financial house. Karachi traffic mayhem is not only due to rising population, but also due higher number

of oil and water tankers. There is dire need of investment in rail and sea port infrastructure. It's a prerequisite for attaining competitiveness. Without it becoming part of GVCs is a pipedream. The dividend from CPEC and other infrastructure expansions is limited as the chock point is the port. The road access to the Karachi Port is thin, and the area is too congested. There are informal settlements around limiting the ability to expand Karachi Port Qasim further. God forbid, one accident at port Qasim can halt the energy supply up north.









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BAHRIA TOWN OPENS M9 INTERCHANGE FOR PUBLIC



Bahria Town Karachi opened its newly-built dedicated interchange on M9 Motorway for public on Saturday. The

interchange is the country's first public infrastructure project to be constructed and fully funded by a private real estate

developer. The objective behind construction of the interchange was not only to facilitate the residents of Bahria Town but also to assist travelers at large.

The eight-kilometres-long project includes three underpasses, multiple slip roads, access roads, service roads, part of M9 that passes through the interchange, extension of an existing bridge, construction of a new bridge and a causeway.

The interchange also incorporates a modern drainage system, while it is decorated with trees, shrubs and plants alongside the network of roads, pavements and walkways. Moreover, the interchange also complements the road network within Bahria Town, which also features the 18-lane Jinnah Avenue, inspired by Sheikh Zayed Road of Dubai.

Five years ago, Bahria Town had constructed a sophisticated set of underpasses and a flyover in Clifton in its efforts to upgrade the living standards of the people and ease of conveyance in Karachi. These efforts were also followed by the 'Clean Karachi Campaign' by Bahria Town Karachi, while striving to revive the beauty of the city.

JICA TO FINANCE MERGED TRIBAL DISTRICTS' ROAD INFRASTRUCTURE

The governments of Japan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have agreed on mutual cooperation in the development of road infrastructure of the newly-merged tribal districts. Both parties were agreed during a meeting of Japanese Ambassador Kuninori Matsuda with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan at Khyber Pakhtunkhwa House Islamabad. During the meeting, the Japanese ambassador and KP chief minister held detailed deliberations on areas of mutual interests and developmental projects in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

The CM said that with the assistance of JICA, roads and other infrastructure in the newly-merged tribal districts will be improved which will enhance commercial activities and will provide better traveling facilities to the people of NMDs. The chief minister said that several roads and 10 bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be rehabilitated with a cost of Rs 28 billion with the support and assistance of JICA, while other infrastructure in rural areas will also be improved.

The CM stated that strengthening of roads infrastructure will help promote

tourism and trade activities in the province. He said that KP government through Planning Commission of Pakistan has forwarded the concept paper regarding improvement and rehabilitation of damaged rural roads and bridges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to JICA and embassy of Japan.

He stated that the selection of roads has been done on merit basis including roads leading to basic public facilities and those that were damaged by natural disasters. The CM reiterated that Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan is taking efforts for improving accessibility to social services and enhancing community activities. In this regard, the PM also launched the Kamyab Jawan Programme for the uplifting socio economic position of the country. The CM said that opening of Torkham border 24/7 hours and improvement of infrastructure has increased trade and business activities in the province.

He said that rehabilitation of road infrastructure will further boost tourism, trade and exploration of mines & minerals in the province. "KP government is specially focused on promotion of nation-

al and international tourism in the province which will increase provincial revenue significantly", he added. The CM also thanked JICA and Japanese government for their assistance and cooperation in developmental projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and hoped that both the governments will further enhance coordination and bilateral cooperation in this regard.



PAKISTAN, TURKEY AGREE ON \$5B TRADE



Islamabad: Pakistan and Turkey signed over a dozen pacts, particularly the declaration of the Strategic Economic Framework, which is aimed at increasing the bilateral trade volume between the two countries from the existing \$800 million to \$1 billion in the short-term and eventually the target of \$5 billion two sides had agreed on earlier. The two countries will hold further negotiations to finalise a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) in April. The documents, including agreements, protocols and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), to boost existing bilateral ties in the fields of trade, energy, tourism, defence and infrastructure development were signed at a ceremony held at the PM House in the presence of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The ceremony was held after a one-on-one meeting between PM Imran and President Erdogan followed by the Plenary Session of the 6th round of Pakistan-Turkey High Level Strategic Cooperation Council co-chaired by the two leaders. The declaration of the Strategic Economic Framework was signed by the Pakistani prime minister and the Turkish president themselves. "We have to benefit from the experience of Turkey especially in the tourism sector through which it generates \$35 billion revenue per year," PM Imran said while addressing a joint news conference with the Turkish president. The premier said Pakistan also wanted to benefit from Turkey's achievements in the construction sector for providing affordable housing.

"We also want to benefit from how it [Turkey] has boosted its economy, checked debts, including the IMF loans, and achieved a turnaround," he added. "Giving jobs to the youth is very important for Pakistan and it will also benefit from Turkey's experience in industrialisa-

tion." Speaking on the occasion, President Erdogan recalled PM Imran's visit to Turkey and noted that the two sides had agreed to increase the bilateral trade volume to \$5 billion by 2023. "The Strategic Economic Framework provides a road-map to what the two countries should do for an economic partnership," he added. "Turkey is ready to support Pakistan in the areas of transport, energy, tourism, healthcare, education and law enforcement. This will help boost its socio-economic development."

Earlier speaking at a joint session of Turkey-Pakistan Business Forum, the Turkish president said no one who had invested in Turkey had regretted the decision so far. "The current trade volume of \$804 million between Pakistan and Turkey is not sufficient, he noted, adding that the bilateral trade volume must first increase to 1\$ billion and then achieve the target of \$5 billion. He noted that Turkey's direct investment in was about \$500 million. Speaking at the forum, Adviser to the PM on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood said work on the Strategic Economic Framework would be completed by March. In April, he added, the two countries would further negotiate on the FTA. Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan told the participants of the forum that the President Erdogan's visit to Pakistan would accelerate bilateral investments. She stressed the importance of Turkish contractors' participation in Pakistan's infrastructure and superstructure investments.

"We will utilise the sources of Turk Eximbank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank to finance these projects," she added. At the ceremony at the PM House, the two countries signed an MoU to boost cooperation in the energy sector, especially in the areas of hydrocarbons, exploration and production (E&P) joint ventures, sharing natural gas distribution and transmission practic-

es and LPG wholesale market expertise. Energy Omar Ayub and his Turkish counterpart Fatih Donmez inked the document in the presence of PM Imran and President Erdogan. The Turkish Petroleum International Company and the Pakistan State Oil, which have been nominated for increased cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector in the MoU, will create "supply and trading opportunities for petroleum and petroleum products mainly gasoline, fuel oil, bitumen and other products".

The Oil and Gas Development Company Limited/Pakistan Petroleum Limited and Turkiye Petrolleri Anonim Ortakligi will cooperate for E&P joint ventures. The two countries also inked a bilateral agreement on military training cooperation. It was signed by Defence Minister Pervez Khattak and Turkish National Defence Minister Hulusi Akar. Lt Gen (Retd) Naweid Zaman, the rector of the National University of Science and Technology of Pakistan, and Tamel Kotli, the CEO of the Turkish Aerospace Industries, signed an MoU for cooperation between their respective institutions. The Turkish Standard Institutions (TSI) and the Pakistan Standard and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) signed an MoU for cooperation in the fields of standardisation, conformity assessment, meteorology and training. It was inked by PSQCA Director General Abdul Aleem Memon and TSI President Dr Adem Sahin.

An MoU was signed between the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and the Turkish Ministry of Culture, Tourism on Cooperation in Diaspora Policy inked by Overseas Pakistanis Secretary Amir Hassan and Presidency for Turks Abroad and Related Communities President Abdullah Eren. To enhance media and cultural cooperation, a cooperation protocol between Turkish Radio Television Corporation (TRT) and Pakistan Television (PTV) was signed by PTV Managing Director Amer Manzoor and TRT DG Ibrahim Eren. Similarly, another such protocol was also signed by Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation DG Samina Waqar and the TRT DG to enhance cooperation and share expertise in the field of radio,

Pakistan and Turkey signed an agreement to strengthen cooperation for development of tourism. The signatories were Inter-Provincial Coordination Minister Dr Fahmida Mirza and Turkish Deputy Minister for Culture and Tourism Dr Serdar CAM. Science and Technology Minister Fawad Chaudhry and Turkish Trade Minister Ruhsar Pekcan signed an MoU for cooperation in the field of Halal accreditation between the two countries.

CDA VACATED 11 SITES FOR PARKS DEVELOPMENT

Islamabad: February 13, 2020 (TNS): After vacating the sites have been handed over to Environment Wing of MCI for development and maintenance of parks. Earlier it was reported that few sites reserved for parks are under illegal possession as either constructions have been carried or were encroached in the form of lawns and gardens etc by the nearby residents. In this regard, Enforcement Directorate was tasked to retrieve the possession of these sites so that these could be handed over to MCI. Acting upon directions of the management, a special operation was initiated earlier this week which has resulted in retrieval of 11 sites. After vacating possession sites have been handed over to MCI. During these operations constructions including rooms, wash-rooms, kiosks, building material depots and other encroachments established on the sites reserved for parks have been demolished.

The operation was carried out by the Enforcement Directorate while assisted by the Environment Wing, planning wing, Islamabad Administration (ICT), Islamabad police and other concerned formations of the authority.

The sites reserved for parks which have been vacated include street #73, sector F-11/1, street #14 & 8, sector F-11/1, street #50, sector F-11/4, Chaman Road G-8/1, Rohtas Road G-9/4, street #50 sector F-11/3, street #52 sector F-11/2, street # 109 & 110 sector G-11/3, Gali #165 sector G-11/1, street # 117 service road (east) sector G-11/3 and street #73

sector G-11/2. Moreover, demarcation of three (03) sites reserved for parks has been referred to Planning and Estate Wing which include street #100 sector G-11/3, street No.67 sector D-12/2 and park site in Model Town Hummak, so that after proper demarcation action could be initiated accordingly.



PM ORDERS FOR BUILDING 40-ACRE 'SOFTWARE CITY' IN ISLAMABAD



Islamabad: From the largest undergrad scholarship program in the nation's history to the launch of Hunarmand Pakistan, Prime Minister Imran Khan has been intent on making sweeping changes in Pakistan. In a similar vein, he has reportedly ordered the establishment of a massive 40-acre software city in the country's capital.

In a meeting held with high-profile

officials from the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunications on Friday, PM Khan discussed a plethora of ways in which Pakistan's IT sector could be strengthened. His vision is to boost the nation's IT exports to \$10 billion over the long term. In this regard, a set of key decisions were made which were geared towards increasing Pakistan's contribution to the global IT domain. One of the most significant decisions centered

around the construction of a software city spanning 40 acres in Islamabad.

This establishment would host technology startups and companies thereby giving them a platform with state-of-the-art facilities to continue developing and investing in their growth. The focus on software startups is critical as they will be among the biggest drivers of growth in Pakistan's IT contributions. Furthermore, the federal government will also be introducing a relief package for small scale software exporters in order to assist them further in their development.

Other important developments include the PM's decision to abolish the double tax imposed on software exporters by both the federal and provincial governments. Software exporters will also be supplied with foreign currency at a rate that is lower than that of the market. These developments are further going to incentivize the export of high-quality software in Pakistan thereby pushing the country closer to the goal of \$10 billion in IT exports. Finally, there was also considerable emphasis placed on the digital connection of remote and far-flung cities.

NEPRA ADVISES PRODUCERS TO INSTALL SOLAR-WIND HYBRID PLANTS



Islamabad: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) has advised the wind power producers (WPPs) to explore the possibility of utilising their sites and available land to set up solar-wind hybrid power projects with an eye on augmented capacity and to make their product economical.

This has been proposed by the regulator to the existing WPPs facing their load curtailments by the power operators — National Transmission & Dispatch Company (NTDC) and National Power Control Centre (NPCC) — because of their relatively higher tariff and substantial surplus capacity available in the base load and conventional power supplies — oil, gas and coal, etc.

Sources said Nepra had recently arranged a consultative session with all the stakeholders, including WPPs, NTDC and NPCC, for a way out of the current imbroglio as many of these projects were contracted under a higher tariff regime of the 2006 policy before the alternative energy technologies started to come down in the market.

The regulator has now suggested that hybrid retrofit of existing WPPs was feasible since the land for WPPs was allocated in blocks and large unutilised acreage was still available for solar photovoltaic installations. Also, the existing grid and evacuation infrastructure could also be utilised for this hybrid arrangement.

It has been argued that since some of these WPPs already had Letters of Intent (LoIs) for solar power, the concession documents for the existing project may require only a few amendments. If such hybrid retrofits are implemented, it will ease the non-project missed volume (NPMV) payment burden on the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) and will also result into lowering of tariff for consumers.

The sources said Nepra assured the sponsors of WPPs that it would support existing renewable projects to ensure that new investments required to meet the aggressive targets contemplated under the new Alternative and Renewable Energy (ARE) Policy, 2019, were facilitated since their capacity was just a fraction of the country's total generation capacity and the future targets set under the ARE Policy and would not have any significant impact on the average national tariff.

Under the ARE Policy 2019 yet to be formally approved by the Council of Common Interests (CCI), the government has targets of 20 per cent (8,000 MW) by 2025 and 30pc (20,000 MW) by 2030 of total power generation from alternative and renewable resources.

The regulator has also asked the NPCC and CPPA to look into the possibility of allowing these projects to operate at the threshold level of 31pc and 35pc annual plant factors, as envisaged in their

respective approved tariffs to ensure their ability to meet the debt servicing and other operations and maintenance costs were met and protect them from default to banks.

It has been observed that the world's energy-mix was changing rapidly to give priority to cleaner and renewable energy technologies to counter the looming threat of climate change. The global power generation capacity will shift from its present 57pc fossil fuel base to 66pc renewables by 2050. The additional 12,000 GW generation capacity will require an investment of \$13.3 trillion by 2050. Of this, 77pc is estimated to go directly to renewable power production and energy storage technologies.

Nepra has taken a suo motu notice of recent reports that WPPs, mostly at Jhimpir-Thatta, were being subjected to load curtailments by power operations leading to their financial problems. As many as 14 projects were developed under the government's 2006 policy.

The regulator has acknowledged the pioneering role played by the first stream of WPPs during 2014-17 under the ARE Policy, 2006, and noted that the low tariffs achieved in the last round were only possible after the bankable template provided by these WPPs to the local and international financiers.

ABOUT

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