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Int’l Trademark Conference on Dec 5

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan is all set to host the first-ever an International Trademark Conference in the Federal Capital, commencing from December 5, to revolutionize trademark profession in the country. The three-day long regional Conference on "Competency-Based Trademark Examiner" was being organized in collaboration with World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), Chairman, Intellectual Property Organization (IPO-Pakistan) Mujeeb Ahmed Khan said in a press conference here at IPO headquarter on Friday. Mujeeb Ahmed Khan said the conference was aimed at increasing awareness regarding trademark examiner competencies considering the size, capacity, examination policy and practices of the office, besides tracking their training needs to match and avail training opportunities and resources more efficiently. The core purpose of holding this conference was to convince other signatory of Madrid protocol convention regarding protection of Intellectual Properties for helping Pakistan in signing that International agreement.

“The Protocol, signed by 140 countries, makes the country possible to protect a mark in a large number of countries by obtaining an international registration that has effect in each of the designated Contracting Parties,” he explained. He hoped that the country would be the part of this system by June of the next year. The Chairman said the parliamentarians of the country would be sensitized on the international treaty one day before the conference. Sharing details about the international event, he apprised the media that the conference would help boost competency of trademark examiners or heads of trademark experts coming from ten countries. "Pakistani trademark examiners will take benefit from the expertise of the examiners belonging to other countries", he said. It would also provide a platform to share their experiences with each other, he added. About the number of participants, the Chairman said that fifteen participants of the conference included WIPO experts, International Consultants and Heads of Trademark offices from Switzerland, France, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines and Sri Lanka.

To a question, he said that it was the vision of IPO-Pakistan to put Pakistan on the Intellectual Property map of the world by promoting and protecting Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs). He said that in the coming few months IPO-Pakistan would be entering in some major international treaties, which enable the organization to establish close linkage with its stakeholders especially academia and chambers of commerce. To another question about IPR awareness, Mujeeb said that a comprehensive media strategy had been prepared to ensure maximum awareness among general masses, adding the media would certainly play vital role for the purpose. For enforcement, he said they had set up 10 supra committees at provincial level comprising of Provincial chief secretaries, Federal Investigation Agency, Custom and other ancillary departments to ensure the protection of rights. He said there were three IP tribunals functioning in the country and the IPO-Pak had proposed for two other special courts to ease the tendency of
the pending cases. The Chairman said they were mulling to introduce royalty package for artists including actors, musicians, singers and lyricist as providing by other countries.

The Nation
December 1, 2018

Chinese investors to visit Pakistan from 3rd

ISLAMABAD - A delegation of Chinese furniture manufacturer would visit Pakistan for three days from December 3 to tap new prospects of mutual investment in the field of the furniture industry and further strengthen the existing bilateral trade relations. The delegation is visiting Pakistan on the invitation of Pakistan Furniture Council to explore the opportunities of developing joint ventures for development of the furniture industry, said a press release here on Friday. The delegation will also sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and visit Expo Center Lahore for their stalls along with PFC team. Chairing a meeting to review the arrangements for coming 3-day mega Interiors Pakistan exhibition scheduled on December 14 at Expo Center, Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) Mian Kashif Ashfaq said that invitation was extended to Chinese counterparts during Prime Minister Imran Khan’s tour to China. He said the Chinese companies would also display their products in Interiors Pakistan exhibition and besides Chinese, about dozen other companies hailing from Turkey, Malaysia, Taiwan, Italy, USA, England and Sri Lanka will also participate in this exhibition.

He said the delegation will aim to link business leaders, researchers and investors of both countries and added that the tour would enable investors to identify potential organisations to partner and develop successful regional economic strategies and support regionally vital businesses. He said that Pakistan has excellent craftsmen and designers, who could virtually give life to a piece of wood. Pakistan also has potential to capture its share of the international market because local industry in Pakistan has the finest wood available in the country. Joint ventures with China through trade commissions for providing machines on a lease can bring product quality at par with highest international standards. PFC chief said despite the massive influx of inexpensive Chinese furniture in the markets, Pakistani handmade furniture is still admired among masses for its customary designs, durability and quality. He pointed that furniture exports from Pakistan were hovering between $ 8 million to $ 12 million per annum, which did not reflect even a fraction of the actual potential of the furniture industry.

The Nation
December 2, 2018

4th CAC Pakistan Summit from tomorrow
Lahore - The 4th CAC Pakistan Summit & Exhibition Expo will be held from December 3 to 5 at Expo Center Lahore. Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar has been invited as the chief guest. Over 50 stalls have been booked by major companies of Pakistan and China related to agriculture and its sub sectors. The companies will exhibit state-of-the-art technologies and solutions to improve the productivity of agro based commodities and also keep the crops free of hazards. These companies will also manifest their range of products to visiting importers, distributors and farmers from Pakistan and neighbouring countries. The LCCI office-bearers said that Pakistan is an agrarian economy but we lag far behind in terms of obtaining the desired level of knowledge and ways to combat with potential threats to our food and cash crops existing in the form of pests, unnecessary herbs and scarcity of water. They said that CAC Pakistan promises to display and convince the use of modern technologies developed over the period of time through research and development in the field of agriculture. They said that the CAC Pakistan will provide a joint forum to government officials and industry professionals to highlight the benefits of using pesticides, fertilizers, processed seeds, latest yet affordable agri-equipment and machinery.

The Nation
December 3, 2018

Pakistan market has huge potential for innovative products: Peter

LAHORE - 100-year-old Panasonic, with an extensive portfolio and variety of products for its customers has been carrying the Japanese values to facilitate people's lives. “Pakistani market is a huge market which requires a lot of requirements for the innovative products. Panasonic is doing quite well in Pakistani market and we hope that Pakistan continues to open the market our products to come in,” Anthony Peter, Director - Corporate Communications and Operations Division for Panasonic Middle East & Africa, told The Nation. People in Pakistan expect premier and quality products and they like Japanese products,” he said. Panasonic is Japanese multinational electronics corporation started in 1918 and headquartered in Kadoma, Osaka, always come up with exiting products keeping in view the transition of developments around the world,” Peter said.

“We always believe that Pakistan is a very good market for us. Government authorities in Pakistan are doing quite a lot for the product availability and helping people to get products in the market,” Peter said. Pater said: “If we talk about the market share it depends on the various categories for products but we are very well known for our kitchen and home appliances.” Panasonic is now 100-year-old Corporation that has long tail of products targeting business-to-consumer and business-to-business customers. “As a worldwide company we are covering the entire globe actually. “Middle East and Africa there are markets which are huge like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and it depends upon the populations and products range to evaluate the market share. Panasonic has been increasing its launch of products also in these parts of the world,” Anthony, adding that, Panasonic has now also started its beauty products in a small stage in
Pakistan also. “With the adaptability of technology in people’s lives, which has been evolving with every passing day, Panasonic has been coming up with technology-driven solutions with changing landscape of product usage. He said that the Japanese corporation has been meeting up with the expectations and demands of its customers since decades. “We are here to think for the customers and keeping Panasonic legacy bringing pro-customers products, which are easy to use, we are also coming up with exciting products in coming months,” Peter explained.

“If we talk about the B2B business then Panasonic is just begging and it is just in a small stage because B2B business requires infrastructure to develop and project based and we believe Panasonic have products and solutions. “If we look into the Pakistan’s market then we are focusing on the kitchen and home appliances which we want every home should have Panasonic product in Pakistan”, Peter said. As the adaptability of the smart phones has indulged in people’s lives, Panasonic too mobilized towards connected products and come up with more convenient connected products to facilitate of our customers,” Peter explained. “We have country specific products but we continuously tried to understand that products match with the country’s requirements,” he added. Peter said in market there are products which are available at different prices, similar products which can get at lower rates but Panasonic has premier products from Japan for the rest of the world. “We come up with Japanese quality-based quality products, so our products and we believe people who are looking for good and quality-based products will go for Panasonic. Of course, they have to pay little bit extra but they get premier products but customers know they are buying the quality-based product,” Peter said.

“We have launched a campaign this year ‘Makers of Quality. Mastered in Japan’ to show the heritage of nearly 100 years. Panasonic prides itself as a brand that genuinely understands quality rooted in Japanese culture, we ensure excellent craftsmanship and stay uncompromised on the latest innovations, offering a premium range of products that cater to every lifestyle need - be it at home or at work.” Peter said. As every market there are certain challenges, as a business we need to make sure that we understand the country’s demand better and offer them which are suited to them. Our customers believe that Panasonic is giving them the products according to their liking and dedicated to improving their lives, he said.

The Nation
December 5, 2018

PM reiterates transparency, pro-investors policies

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday reiterated that the government was committed to transparency, facilitating investors and enabling them to take full advantage of huge potential existing in the “growing” economy of the country. He was talking to President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Telenor Group Mr. Sigve Brekke, who called on him here at the PM Office. The Prime Minister appreciated Telenor Group’s contribution in the telecom sector and said that government aimed to develop a knowledge-based economy in Pakistan and
valued Telenor as an important partner in developing the ecosystem that supported the government’s development agenda.

Sigve Brekke shared with the Prime Minister telenor’s experience of investment in Pakistan terming it as “very satisfactory”. Sigve Brekke thanked the Government of Pakistan for its continued support for the telecom sector and for encouraging foreign direct investments into the country. He said that Telenor Group has been operating in Pakistan since 2005 and has made a significant impact on the socioeconomic uplift of the country. The Group has invested over USD 3.5 billion and created over 5,000 direct jobs, in addition to hundreds of thousands of indirect jobs. Sigve Brekke informed the Prime Minister that future plans of Telenor include scaling up of financial services, connecting farmers to the digital world and extending its services in healthcare and digital entrepreneurship. Through these initiatives, employing ICT (Information and Communications Technology) solutions, Telenor aimed at serving the people of Pakistan even better with all the learning they have gathered during past thirteen years, he added.

Brekke also highlighted Telenor’s commitment towards financial inclusion and informed the Prime Minister of incoming investment of USD 140 million as a result of the recently announced partnership with Ant Financial. On the other side, the prime minister designated Sheikh Rashid Ahmed - Minister for Railways - as the focal person for the decade old stalled 22 km long Leh Nullah Expressway and Flood Channel Project. “He will spearhead the feasibility of the project and, if found feasible, further processing of the project in consultation with all stakeholders including Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, and the Punjab government,” a letter from the Prime Minister Office said. The project launched in March 2007 by former president general Pervez Musharraf was aimed at controlling floods in the Nullah Leh, construction of sewerage treatment plant and limited access roads on either side of the storm drainage to ease traffic congestion on the airport and Murree roads, besides easing flow on other local arteries.

Frontier Works Organization initiated work, but the PML-N government stopped funding in 2008, bringing it to a grinding halt. Under the original plan the expressway to have two-lane roads on either side of the embankment, was to have interchanges at the Katarian Bridge, Moti Mehal and Ammar Chowk, besides eight flyovers and 10 bridges. Under the ambitious project a sewerage treatment plant was also to be constructed near Moti Mahal cinema, besides laying of sewerage pipes in those areas of the old Rawalpindi city which either did not have such lines or were in dilapidated condition. The initial plan of Leh Expressway was designed to line the sides of the old storm water drainage, now turned into an open sewer, with concrete walls and to have a concrete bed for smooth flow of water. Garbage dumps and sludge caused considerable damage to lives and property every year during the rainy season.

The Nation
December 6, 2018

Pakistan, Italy ink MoU to boost trade activities
LAHORE - The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) and Italian National Organization for Pakistan & Italy (ANIP) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to bolster business activities between Pakistan and Italy. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood inked the MoU on behalf of Pakistan, while ANIP President Karim Benvenuto represented his country. The ceremony was held at a local hotel on Wednesday. Punjab Assembly deputy speaker Dost Mazari, APBF former president Ibrahim Qureshi, general secretary Khurram Niaz and executive committee members were present on the occasion. According to the MoU, both the organizations would work together to improve the trade, commerce and economic relations between Pakistan and Italy. They would adopt a new strategy for exchange of information relating to their respective markets. The accord would help facilitate the exchange of trade teams between the two associations. The participants from both sides also vowed to work jointly to identify snags affecting trade between them. Speaking on the occasion, APBF president Syed Maaz Mehmood said that the MoU is a significant step in bringing the both the associations together.

He said that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Italy needs to be enhanced as both the countries have potential and resources to strengthen their economic ties. He said that Pakistan’s share in two-way trade is not significant, but the MoU between the two trade bodies is a step in the right direction as it will help increase the overall volume of trade between the two countries. ANIP President Karim Benvenuto observed that a large number of renowned Italian companies are presently exploring Pakistan as an investment option because the country has ample supply of cheap labour, with potential to be a regional hub for exports. He appreciated the APBF for arranging the ceremony, aimed at promoting trade relations between Italy and Pakistan by conducting B2B meetings and match making in various sectors. Pakistan provides significant trade links including to China and central Asian region, he observed adding that several Italian companies were viewing Pakistan as the next possible investment destination. APBF former president Ibrahim Qureshi appreciated ANIP’s plans for improving economic and business ties between the two countries. He assured them that APBF would fully facilitate Italian businessmen interested in investing in Pakistan.

APBF wants to diversify Pakistan exports and want to find new partners for doing business. I believe that Pakistan really has a lot of potential to promote itself, and Italy is one country which provides excellent business opportunities, he said. Punjab Assembly deputy speaker Dost Mazari, while addressing the meeting, said that the incumbent government was determined to promote bilateral trade and export-led growth of the economy. He said that the government would give priority to the promotion of export-led growth by enhancing exports and reduce dependence on imports, adding, it had identified many sectors that would boost exports from the country. He said that export promotion strategy would focus on increasing the country’s exports to compete with regional and global players in the international market.
Swiss SMEs keen to enter Pakistani market: Envoy

Lahore - The Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) of Switzerland are keen to enter Pakistan’s market and explore potential opportunities, said Bernhard Furger, the deputy head of the mission, Embassy of Switzerland. He was visiting the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT). Beat Ineichen, Sr. Consultant South Asia & Oceania from Switzerland Global Enterprise, an umbrella organization of Switzerland to promote the Swiss exports and joint ventures of the Swiss companies in other countries accompanied him to discuss investment and trade promotion with Punjab. PBIT CEO Jahanzeb Burana introduced the delegation about the mandatory functioning of PBIT as an Investment Promotion Agency and its role as a one-stop shop for local and international investors. An extensive presentation was shown on various potential sectors for investment in Punjab which includes food & agri, pharma, textiles, tourism, retail, e-commerce, logistics and construction etc. The delegation told that the objective of their visit is to study Pakistan’s market for partnerships and investment and to strengthen the bilateral relations with Pakistan. Their prime interest was the food processing sector in which they are interested to develop JV’s. He told that a business delegation is to visit Pakistan in the next half of the year to explore potential of Pakistan and look for business partnerships.

The Nation
December 7, 2018

Chinese industry’s shifting to CPEC Zone discussed

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is discussing with China the possibility of relocation of Chinese light manufacturing industry to the CPEC Special Economic Zone located in Rashakai, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Earlier, CPEC Centre of excellence was on working on four research themes under CPEC but now two more themes were added, said Deputy Director Media CPEC Centre of Excellence while talking to the media along with the officials of Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) and PIDE. Deputy Director Media and Publication Amir Masood said that the new research themes are related to socio-economic sector and agriculture sector. Dr. Nadeem, member media committee PSDE, said that Pakistan Society of Development Economists (PSDE) will hold the 34th Annual General Meeting (AGM) and conference from December 12-14, under the overarching theme of “Pakistan’s Economy: The Way Forward.” He said that PIDE is currently working on some important research topics, which is related to tobacco, food security and IMF. For example, on IMF programme a study is being conducted on the issue of how Pakistan will work with IMF programme and without IMF programme.

National and international intellectuals, researchers and policy experts will discuss and deliberate on various issues related to the Pakistan economy especially with focus to how to deal current crisis and avoid such crisis in future, Dr Atiq-Ul-Rehman head media coordination committee PSDE. Atiq said the AGM and conference of PSDE is a regular event taking place since 1984 under the umbrella of Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), the Pakistan’s premier think tank, policy research institute and university. He said that this year’s conference
includes 5 distinguished lectures, 6 panel discussion sessions, 8 parallel technical sessions and the inaugural session. The inaugural session of the conference is likely to be chaired by President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Dr Arif Rehman Alvi. He said that the conference will focus to evaluate the prospects of the economy, suggest the viable solutions and the way forward helpful in setting policy direction to achieve a higher growth trajectory in terms of economic as well as human development in the coming years.

This year’s distinguished guests include Dr Adil Najam, the lead author of report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, the report that won 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. He is also author of UNDP’s Human Development Report for Pakistan. Pakistan’s leading economist Prof. Syed Nawab Haider Naqwi and Chairman HEC Dr. Tariq Banuri for Quaid-e-Azam are also among the distinguished speakers. Sub-themes of the conference are, but not limited to, poverty, inequality, human development, revitalizing export potential, climate change and water security, and role of media in policy setting. Pakistan economy is facing many economic and development challenges and the government is struggling hard to cope with these challenges. These challenges include trade and current account deficits, climate change, water security, regional connectivity and health issues.

December 11, 2018

**New areas of cooperation: Pakistan, China agree to expand CPEC**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China Monday resolved to work together towards completion of the ongoing projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), besides expanding it to new areas of cooperation. This was agreed in the first round of Political Consultations between Pakistan and China held in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua led the Pakistani delegation whilst Chinese side was led by Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou. “Both sides held comprehensive discussions on the entire gamut of bilateral relations,” the Foreign Office said in a statement, adding that the two sides reaffirmed “All Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership” between the two countries and expressed their satisfaction at the strong bilateral ties in political, economic, security, cultural and other spheres. The two sides also agreed to build upon the consensus reached between the leadership of two countries during the visit of Prime Minister Imran Khan to China, it stated, adding that the Pakistani side conveyed that the CPEC is a national priority for the government and Pakistan remains committed to the successful implementation of CPEC. “The two sides also resolved to work together towards completion of the ongoing projects and agreed to expand CPEC to new areas of cooperation in line with the vision of the leadership of Pakistan,” it said. Earlier, the Chinese leadership had reportedly expressed concerns over the statements by some PTI government’s officials with regard to reviewing the CPEC projects following which the funding of some projects was reduced.
However, the 8th meeting of Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on CPEC will be held from December 20 in Beijing in which the two sides will exchange views on the upcoming projects under the CPEC. Sources said that the JCC is also expected to sign framework agreements on special economic zones (SEZs) for development of industrial sector. “Both sides exchanged views on international political situation with a particular focus on Afghanistan and South Asia,” it stated, adding that they also expressed satisfaction at their robust cooperation in multilateral fora and reiterated their resolve to further augment it in the future. The visiting Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou also called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi separately in Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The foreign minister congratulated Vice-Minister Kong on successful conclusion of Pakistan-China Bilateral Political Consultations. He said that Pakistan-China friendship has deep cultural, historical and institutional linkages and has become an ‘All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.’ Recalling Prime Minister’s Imran Khan’s successful visit to China in November, the foreign minister said that it marks a milestone in the history of bilateral relations and has deepened the bond of trust and friendship between the two nations. Qureshi highlighted that CPEC has added yet another dimension to bilateral ties and reiterated Pakistan’s commitment to complete this project as envisaged by the leadership of both the countries. He said that he is looking forward to participating in the 2nd meeting of China-Afghanistan-Pakistan Foreign Ministers’ Trilateral mechanism to be held in Kabul on December 15, 2018.

While reciprocating the sentiments of Foreign Minister Qureshi, Vice Foreign Minister Kong said that China attaches paramount importance to its relations with Pakistan. He expressed satisfaction at the momentum of bilateral relations and underscored the need to further enhance ties in political, economic, defence and cultural spheres. He appreciated Pakistan for its efforts to achieve goals of national development. Both leaders also exchanged views on regional situation and multilateral issues of mutual concern and agreed to deepen strategic coordination and communication at all levels. Meanwhile, the Chinese vice minister of foreign affairs also called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), at GHQ, the ISPR said. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security and enhanced bilateral cooperation came under discussion. The COAS said that Pak-China relations are all-weather and based on mutual trust and confidence. The visiting dignitary commended the sacrifices and resilience of the people and armed forces of Pakistan and appreciated the role Pakistan Army has played in battling the scourge of terrorism, it added.

DAWN

December 14, 2018

**US wants to help Pakistan protect its economy**

WASHINGTON: The core purpose of US economic engagement with Pakistan is to ensure that it’s not a failure in the future and stops being such a poor country, says a senior official of the US Treasury Department. David Malpass, Under Secretary of Treasury for International Affairs, told
lawmakers during a Congressional hearing on Wednesday that the Trump administration also wants to ensure that any IMF loan to Pakistan is not used to repay its Chinese debt.

Pakistan is seeking an $8 billion extended loan facility from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to bail itself out of a severe balance-of-payments crisis that threatens to cripple its economy. The two parties are still discussing the package and a final decision is expected early next month. At this House Financial Services Committee hearing on international financial institutions, several US lawmakers expressed concern that Pakistan may use the IMF loan to repay some of the $60bn loans it is borrowing from China for CPEC. Some lawmakers also argued that this huge Chinese debt was responsible for the economic challenges Pakistan was facing.

Congressman Ed Royce, a California Republican, reminded Mr. Malpass that in July this year Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said that there’s no rationale for using IMF and American tax dollars that are part of the IMF funding to bailout Chinese bond holders. What’s the administration doing to prevent this, Congressman Royce questioned. ‘With regard to Pakistan, Secretary Pompeo is exactly right. So, we are working and making clear within the IMF that if it were going to supply any funding to Pakistan that it would not be used to repay Chinese loans, Mr. Malpass said. ‘We are trying also to make sure that Pakistan changes its economic programme, so that it’s not a failure in the future. So, that’s the core of our purpose with regard to Pakistan, he added. Later in the hearing, Congressman Brad Sherman, a California Democrat, raised the issue again. ‘Looks like IMF will loan the money to Islamabad so that they can send the money to Beijing. What would we do to make sure that the IMF is not used, in effect, just to pay back China? he asked. ‘We will make strong efforts, and I believe successful efforts, to make sure that what you describe doesn’t happen, meaning a payoff of Beijing via Islamabad, Mr. Malpass said. ‘But Pakistan has not been successful yet at all in finalizing a package with the IMF. So, it’s something that we follow closely, he added. ‘One of the things that we are aware of and do follow is that IMF loans tend to be shorter maturity loans and China’s loans to Pakistan have been longer maturity loans.

When Mr. Sherman demanded to know how would Washington make sure that Islamabad follows the conditions attached to an IMF package, Mr. Malpass said: ‘We will look for ways that that round-tripping does not happen the way you described. Helping Pakistan overcome its economic deficiencies, however, was even more important, he added. ‘Important in this, in my view also, is the structural reforms in Pakistan that are necessary for it to stop being such a poor country, Mr. Malpass said.

The Nation
December 14, 2018

RCCI, Chinese firm sign MoU
RAWALPINDI - A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and a Chinese company Dongguan Yi Zeng Import & Export Trade Co Ltd here on Thursday. President RCCI Malik Shahid Saleem and Chairman Huang Haitao signed and exchange documents at a ceremony attended by Chamber representatives including Senior Vice President Muhammad Badar Haroon Vice President Fayyaz Qureshi, Chairman Rawal Expo Nasir Mirza and Secretary Geenral Irfan Mannan Khan. While commenting on the occasion, President RCCI Malik Shahid Saleem said that the major objective of this MOU was to promote bilateral trade ties and mutual benefits of the business communities of the both countries through trade exhibitions. Under the agreement, the Chinese trade company will assist and Co-operate with RCCI in booking of stalls for Chinese companies to display their products at Rawal International Expo at Ayub Park April 2019. Both parties will cooperate with each other to establish and develop direct and effective business relations between their respective offices and to facilitate arranging business to business (B2B) meetings on reciprocal basis.

The Nation

December 17, 2018

Pakistan-UK trade post-Brexit: making the most of it

As the UK prepares to leave the EU and expand its trade relations with the non-EU countries, Pakistan offers unique opportunities since Brexit coincides with the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan’s existing capacity coupled with its projected potential by virtue of the CPEC is steadily enhancing its profile as a trading partner for the developed countries. Cooperation in the Pakistan-UK bilateral trade and investment can be conceived in terms of their current trade profiles and the future outlook. On the ground, it may be categorized at three levels: frameworks of bilateral economic relations, research and development collaboration, and import and export of goods and services. In this scenario, the best decisions would be those negotiated in the present envisaging an outlook for the future. Pakistan’s population of over 200 million is world’s 6th largest and boasts 64% of its citizens aged between 18 and 30 years. With a literacy rate of 58%, Pakistan has over 150 million mobile phone users which include 57 million 3G/4G subscribers and a sizeable social media community. The official language of business in Pakistan is English. Pakistan’s GDP for the financial year 2017 was 5.3% and its projected real GDP growth for the year 2018 is at 5.6%. As of April 2018, the UK is Pakistan’s second largest export partner with a market share of 7.33%. The UK has a trade deficit of £656 million with Pakistan which is UK’s 53rd largest trading partner (2017) and accounts for only 0.2% of total UK trade.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a framework of regional connectivity comprising a set of roads, rails and energy infrastructure projects. China and Pakistan have agreed to complete these projects worth $62 billion over a period of 15 years through long-term government-to-government concessional and preferential loans and grants from China. The
investment in the early-harvest energy projects is in IPP mode with funding from the Chinese banks and investors. Under the CPEC arrangements, other projects include the development and commercialization of Gwadar port, optical fibre connecting China and Pakistan, 4 urban transit projects and 9 Special Economic Zones (SEZs) across Pakistan. The CPEC projection of 2030 is to accumulate investment of $150 billion, rapid growth in service industry catering to transit trade, and FDI to SEZs. Pakistan’s growth projections include a GDP growth rate to 7% by 2020 and an annual revenue from toll collection of $5 billion by 2022. A key purpose of the CPEC projects is to connect the Pakistani seaports at Gwadar and Karachi to Kashgar in China and Central Asia. The development and operation of this linkage will facilitate international trade and create vast opportunities for businesses. While the UK is preparing for Brexit and looking to maximize trade opportunities globally, Pakistan is emerging as a promising old friend fraught with new opportunities as a trading hub of the future.

Operational details of the CPEC projects indicate that Pakistan is experiencing a decentralization of economic diplomacy. Players have moved down to the project level and the involvement of government functionaries is minimal. Following the launch of the CPEC there have been several calls for institutional and structural reforms in Pakistan whereby it can leverage its geographic advantages. Likewise, Pakistan has recognized the importance of economic diplomacy and inter-ministerial liaison as a strategy to attract foreign investment. Setting forth Pakistan’s policy priorities, Foreign Minister Qureshi declared in November 2018 that in order to facilitate foreign investment the Foreign Office will be working closely with other ministries. In terms of future potential, CPEC is set to create huge opportunities across all major sectors. These developments mean fresh opportunities for the UK businesses to engage their R&D expertise in Pakistan collaborating with the public and private sectors. The Pakistani markets have already demonstrated vast scope for capacity building in manufacturing and services industries. There is a high demand for standardization and quality control, research collaboration, and training in sectors such as logistics and transportation, construction, higher education, agricultural technology, and renewable energy. Evidently, the UK industries are well placed to exploit these opportunities.

At the sectoral level, several emerging and established sectors are untapped markets in Pakistan and offer lucrative opportunities for the UK businesses. As a fast-growing internet and e-commerce market, Pakistan has opportunities in e-commerce automation including payment systems, logistics, and training. Other key sectors with trade and investment opportunities in Pakistan are infrastructure development, transportation including road freight and temperature-controlled logistics, urban transport, renewable energy, agricultural technology, health, education, and textile and apparel (given its GSP plus status). Pakistan’s established exports are textile products, rice, sports and leather goods, and surgical instruments. At present, it is looking to find new markets for its fisheries and seafood, minerals, poultry and meat, and gems and jewellery. What is lacking in Pakistan is quality research and the linkage between the academia and the industry. Manufacturers routinely hire foreign technical support. For example, Pakistan imports energy sector products, including alternative and renewable energy, but lacks operational expertise in this sector. As the UK government seeks to improve the way it engages with and supports businesses for trade and investment, visa and immigration constitutes an important
consideration. A common constraint in the engagement of responsible businesses in Pakistan is the requirements of the UK’s visa and immigration process. Especially, the new businesses and the first-time exporters/importers commonly run into visa issues and need more recognitions and visa options to overcome this issue. A quick look into Pakistan’s cultural profile shows that face is an important consideration for the Pakistani businessmen. Visa issues are linked to the loss of face, a core fear in the Pakistani culture and may have a negative impact on business relationships. Business-friendly visa regimes and cross-cultural training are key to facilitating good B2B matchmaking between the UK and Pakistani businesses. The Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) is a success story in Pakistan and indicates that there is vast scope for dedicated trade facilitation desks at the UK missions in Pakistan and working through public-private partnership. After the launch of the CPEC projects, the PBIT established one-window trade facilitation counters in order to meet the demands of local and foreign businesses. These facilitation counters offer services to local and foreign businesses that range from information to matchmaking and co-ordination and cooperation between the public and private sectors.

Trade fraud and disputes are part the game on both sides of a trade partnership. A dedicated service from a UK body can ensure quality and credibility of business information. It can facilitate matchmaking at B2B, B2F, B2C, and G2G levels, due diligence and true diligence, exchange of sectoral surveys and market data, and organize conferences and academic exchanges, thus enabling businesses to take right decisions at the right time. For the first-time exporters and importers of the UK and Pakistan, the quality and credibility of B2B match making will translate into a successful trade relation between businesses. Secondly, UK DIT’s local channels in Pakistan will be able to establish cross-agency collaboration. These channels will enhance the functioning of the bodies already working for the promotion of trade and investment between UK and Pakistan. For example, in order to set its export priorities, the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP), which is mandated to liaise with trade bodies abroad, relies largely on the input from Pakistan’s missions abroad. Collaboration between the TDAP and the DIT’s local channels will streamline processes that both bodies would otherwise complete separately and less effectively. To sum things up, with the CPEC Pakistan is undergoing a reorientation of its foreign economic policy and a readjustment of its economic relations with the developed world. Its geo-economic potential, and its proximity and linkage to the world’s largest trading power are cardinal factors that determine its real importance as a trading partner of the post-Brexit UK. As the UK prepares to leave the EU, both Pakistan and the UK have a chance to explore opportunities as trade and investment partners outside the EU. These opportunities require that the UK come up with a broader vision of long-term partnership with Pakistan rather than be guided by the current trade profiles of the two sides. Khalid Jarral is a Doctoral Researcher at the School of Politics and International Relations where he is a member of the University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute.

The Nation

December 18, 2018
CCPIT, ICCI ink MoU to promote Pak-China trade

ISLAMABAD - China Council for Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) and Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to promote bilateral trade and investment between Pakistan and China. Zhao Kai, President CCPIT, Shenyang Sub-Council along with a delegation of Chinese entrepreneurs visited ICCI on Monday. Ahmed Hassan Moughal, president ICCI, and Zhao Kai signed the MoU. By signing MoU, both sides agreed to keep constant contact and make efforts to promote bilateral trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and China. They agreed to exchange regularly market information to explore new possibilities for enhancing business cooperation between their members. They will assist visits of trade delegations between the two countries and encourage bilateral investment & technology transfer. Both sides will assist each other in organizing or participating in exhibitions, trade fairs, conferences, business seminars, training programs and forums taking place in respective countries. Speaking at the occasion, Zhao Kai, president, CCPIT-Shenyang Sub-Council, said that his organization was national foreign trade and investment promotion agency of China and the purpose of signing MoU with ICCI was to accelerate efforts for promoting bilateral trade and investment between China and Pakistan. He said CCPIT has about 150,000 members in China and it would work with ICCI to promote connectivity between the enterprises of both countries. He said CCPIT along with a delegation of 35 enterprises of Shenyang City of China recently participated in an Expo at Karachi and it was planning an Expo at Islamabad next year for which cooperation of ICCI was required. He said that a delegation of Pakistani enterprises should also visit Shenyang city to explore opportunities of business collaboration in investment in China.

Addressing the delegation, Ahmed Hassan Moughal, president ICCI, said that CPEC has created great opportunities for business and investment in Pakistan while in the next phase of industrial cooperation under CPEC, many Special Economic Zones would be established in Pakistan. He urged that Chinese enterprises should bring in technology and setup JVs in SEZs in Pakistan. He hoped that MoU between ICCI and CCPIT would further strengthen business relations between Pakistan and China. M Ejaz Chaudhry, former MNA and member of PTI Central Committee, said that PTI government was very open to investment and Chinese companies should set up business partnerships in Pakistan. He said Pakistani exporters have also great prospects to promote exports to China and they should take benefit of such prospects. He assured that he would fully cooperate with ICCI in promoting business relations between Pakistan and China. Rafat Farid, senior vice president, Ifikhar Anwar Sethi, vice president ICCI, M Ejaz Chaudhry former MNA & a businessman and others were present at the occasion.

The Nation

December 19, 2018

China’s EXIM Bank vows to continue support
ISLAMABAD - President of China's EXIM Bank Zhang Qingsong Tuesday said that with regard to investment, Pakistan had become the top trading partner of the bank and vowed to continue support for the country in future. President of China's EXIM Bank Zhang Qingsong expressed these views in a meeting with Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Reforms, said a press release issued here. The federal planning minister Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar along with a high-level delegation arrived in Beijing on Tuesday to participate in 8th meeting of China Pakistan Economic Corridor’s Joint Coordination Committee (JCC), scheduled to be held on December 20. The Chairman Board of Investment Haroon Sharif, representatives of provincial governments and senior officials of the line ministries and departments will also participate in the JCC.

The apex body of CPEC will review progress on ongoing projects and identify new initiatives in socio-economic development, industrial cooperation, Gwadar, transport and energy. On the sidelines, Minister PD&R has met President of China's EXIM Bank Zhang Qingsong. In the meeting, both sides agreed to continue cooperation in future. Khusro Bakhtyar said that Pak-China friendship has lasted for decades and CPEC is helping to further strengthen the relations. The federal planning minister said that a number of CPEC projects including Multan Sukkur Motorway, KKH upgradation and cross border fiber optic were implemented with the help of Chinese Bank. He hinted to initiate new projects in future with the help of this world leading financial institution. "Government is taking measures to overcome current account deficit," minister highlighted and said that manufacturing base of Pakistan is being expanded, export are being enhanced coupled with policy reforms and improvement in ease of doing business.

He said that the focus of public sector development program was made in line with the reform agenda. Highlighting importance of CPEC SEZs, Bakhtyar said that 09 zones are being established that would help to control trade deficit. Minister further intimated that Pakistan wishes to launch projects in transport sector with special focus on ports development, rail and roads by exploring 'Built- Operate -Transfer (BoT) mode'. The incumbent government is also trying to take up economically feasible oil and gas projects with investors to reduce oil import bill, he added. Minister, however, said that those projects would be promoted which are economically viable, create jobs opportunities and help in achieving sustainable growth. President EXIM Bank said that a number of projects under CPEC are being implemented that would help Pakistan to achieve its development goals.

CPEC transformational for Pakistan

KARACHI: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is potentially transformational for Pakistan and we are keen to participate in the opportunities it offers, said UK Deputy High Commissioner and Trade Director Elin Burns on Thursday. In an interaction with media, she said that UK is investing in Pakistan for the long-term. "We want to be a trading partner of a
booming, thriving Pakistan 20 years from now, she said while answering questions that focused on ‘what next for Pakistan’ after the enthusiastic reaction to British Airways’ (BA) decision to resume flights to the country. The thing with Pakistan that comes to mind is the scale of potential, with a growing young population and middle-class that has an appetite for UK products, brands and expertise, that makes it appealing, she said while talking about the scope of increasing bilateral trade. The UK-Pakistan bilateral trade in 2017 was £2.9 billion in goods and services. ‘The trends are in the right direction and I see that as getting better and better, but there is a lag between perception and reality, she added.

A big announcement like the BA coming to Pakistan serves as a big boost and showcases Pakistan as a trading destination. [For] the UK companies, knowing that BA is flying to Pakistan will give them confidence, Ms Burns said. ‘For me as a trade director, it’s about thinking how we can use the BA boost to tell the story of Pakistan. On the return of BA, she said that a whole range of factors including the new Islamabad Airport led to the decision and ‘the whole thing came together’. She was quick to point out that the Pakistani government’s [previous and present] support played a huge part in this major decision. When questioned about UK’s trade with Pakistan in the post-Brexit scenario, the trade envoy said a framework similar to the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP+) scheme will be introduced. The UK government is committed to maintaining the same levels of preferential access Pakistan receives to UK markets under the EU’s scheme. It is important that Pakistan continues to make progress on its international obligations in order to retain its EU GSP+ status, including human rights, she said while referring to protection of minority rights, and steps to reduce the scale and scope of death penalty.

In 2017, Pakistan exported £1.8bn of goods and services to the UK. The UK is Pakistan’s largest export market in Europe (followed by Germany and Spain) and second largest globally ahead of China and after the US. The UK is Pakistan’s largest export market for services. The trade envoy mentioned that she wants to introduce superior quality Pakistani mangoes to the UK markets. The Pakistani mangoes taste so different from the mangoes sold in supermarkets there, she said, adding that it would be great to see Pakistani mangoes available in the UK.

DAWN
December 21, 2018

Nine applications received to set up private SEZs

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Investment (BoI) has received nine applications so far from private sector to set up Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in different cities of Punjab. A senior BoI official said that the applications are currently under consideration adding that private SEZs would be fully facilitated on the line of government SEZs, including provision of tax exemption and one window operation to further ease down doing business in the country. He said that BoI was working on 100 days’ reform agenda with a deadline of January 20 for executing the 35 reforms to attract foreign investment in the country. The official said that around 75 per cent of
work on reforms agenda had been completed and all the concerned institutions including Federal Board of Revenue, Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan and Employees Old-Age Benefits Institutions are also onboard for adopting the integrated approach for ease of doing business reforms. He said that BoI is committed to facilitate foreign investors to attract maximum Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the SEZs to be established under China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The foreign investors in SEZs would get the facility for plant and machinery import without customs duty in all four provinces of the country, the senior official said. He said that countries including China, Germany and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were interested to invest in SEZs in different regions of the country. - APP

The Nation
December 21, 2018

Pakistan, China sign MoU for industrial co-op

BEIJING/Islamabad - Pakistan and China signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for industrial cooperation at the 8th meeting of the Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) held here on Thursday. The memorandum was signed by Minister for Planning, Development and Reform Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar and Vice Chairman of the National Development and Reform Commission of China, Ning Jizhe who also co-chaired the JCC meeting. Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, Board of Investment Chairman Haroon Sharif, Ambassador of Pakistan to China Masood Khalid, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform Secretary Zafar Hassan, Balochistan Information Minister Zahoor Ahmed Buleidi, besides concerned senior officials also participated. The JCC meeting, first after the new government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan took charge this year, was held in a friendly and cordial atmosphere. Both sides underscored significance of the CPEC for win-win cooperation. The two sides reviewed the progress achieved after the 7th JCC meeting and also conducted an in-depth discussion of the future pragmatic cooperation under CPEC. They also reviewed the progress on the long-term plan for CPEC, energy cooperation, transport infrastructure, Gwadar and industrial cooperation. The two sides expressed satisfaction over the progress achieved on projects relating to the energy cooperation and transport infrastructure while emphasizing on the need to speed up the work on projects concerning Gwadar and industrial cooperation. They also discussed the way forward for effective and timely implementation on various projects under CPEC.

The two sides discussed ways to implement the bilateral economic cooperation and further deepen the all-weather strategic partnership of the two countries. They agreed to ensure smooth operation of the completed energy projects, accelerate construction in progress and make new progress in the field of energy, transportation, infrastructure construction. They also reviewed the progress to further improve the cooperation mechanism and promote the construction of the corridor to industrial parks, social and people livelihood and other fields. At the conclusion, the two sides signed minutes of the meetings of JCC and various working groups. It was decided that
the next (9th) JCC will be held in Islamabad next year, the dates for which will be decided by the
two sides through mutual consultations. Meanwhile, expressing his views at the 8th meeting of
the CPEC JCC which he co-chaired with Chinese Vice Chairman of NDRC Ning Jizhe, Federal
Minister for Planning Makhdoom Khusro Bakhtiar Thursday reiterated Pakistan’s firm
commitment to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which he termed as the heart and
soul of Pakistan-China economic cooperation. Appreciating the progress made in CPEC, the
minister said the stage was now set to take the corridor to the next level wherein the cooperation
could be diversified to more trade and industrial cooperation, socioeconomic development,
agriculture, people-to-people interaction and knowledge sharing under the clear vision set by
Pakistani leadership. He said cooperation in the industrial sector would help attract investment in
special economic zones and encourage relocation of Chinese industry. Both sides agreed to
cooperate to develop Special Economic Zones in a speedy manner.

In the next phase of CPEC, two sides also agreed to cooperate in the maritime sector, port
development and automobile sector. The two sides discussed promoting joint ventures and
industrial relocation from China to harness Pakistan’s export potential. The two sides also held
the first meeting of the recently established Joint Working Group on socioeconomic cooperation
which discussed a detailed action plan in six areas for future cooperation such as education,
agriculture, poverty alleviation, skill development, healthcare, water supply and vocational
training projects. The two sides agreed on poverty alleviation demonstration projects in all
regions of Pakistan. The first meeting of the Joint Working Group on Agriculture will take place
early next year. In his remarks, NDRC Vice Chairman Ning Jizhe said the CPEC served the
fundamental interests of two countries and their people. Calling the visit of Prime Minister Imran
Khan to China as “phenomenal success”, he expressed confidence that the Pakistan-China
relationship would continue to grow and prosper. Undertaking review of areas of cooperation
under CPEC, the two sides expressed satisfaction and showed willingness to expedite work on
all projects including Gwadar. The minister said Gwadar was the jewel of CPEC and with the
development of its auxiliary projects; it was poised to become the next big economic and
transshipment hub of the region. Meanwhile, NDRC Chairman, He Lifeng hosted a banquet in
honour of the minister and his delegation at Diaoyutai State Guest House.

The Nation
December 22, 2018

Govt to set up expo centers in different cities

RAWALPINDI - Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce, Textile, and Industries, Abdul Razzak
Dawood has said that government is bringing reforms and has taken key initiatives to provide
conducive environment for investment in the country. Addressing 2nd All Pakistan Women
Chambers Presidents Conference (APWCPC) at Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and
Industry (RCCI) on Friday, the advisor said women entrepreneurs play a significant role in the
economic development of any country and in Pakistan the role of women entrepreneurs recently
had assumed a high degree of importance for enhancing internal trades and boosting up exports and the resultant economic activities. He said government was focusing on socioeconomic empowerment of the women by encouraging women entrepreneurs in the field of business and commercial activities. He appreciated RCCI’s role in promoting business activities and providing a platform to women entrepreneurs to excel in their fields. He said expo centers will be established in different cities including Rawalpindi, Faisalabad Multan and Karachi. He said the proposed locations for said centers will be identified through chambers consultations. He also assured his full support and cooperation for establishing an expo center at old airport building which is one of the demands from RCCI. He also assured his assistance and cooperation to remove impediments in registration process for women chambers, releasing funds under Export Development Fund (EDF) and appointments of commercial counselors/attaché from business community and chambers.

Earlier, President RCCI Malik Shahid Saleem said women empowerment is imperative for the economic uplift of the country and women entrepreneurs must be promoted. The main purpose of this initiative was to provide women a platform to excel in the field of entrepreneurship, improve networking and consultation, he added. He said that more than 15 presidents of Women Chambers from all over Pakistan, Lahore Karachi, Mardan, Quetta, Multan, Bahwalpur, Peshawar, Islamabad etc., attended the two days summit. He also highlighted the key initiatives of RCCI in promoting business activities and entrepreneurship and said that Women Business Incubation Center (WBIC) is one of the examples. Group leader, Sohail Altaf, former presidents, senior vice president Muhammad Badar Haroon, vice president fayyaz Qureshi, female member of the executive committee and a large number of women entrepreneurs were also present on the occasion.

The Nation
December 24, 2018

Chinese body keen to make JVs under CPEC

ISLAMABAD - A delegation of Overseas Chinese Federation of Gansu Province visited Islamabad of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and showed interest to set up Joint Ventures (JVs) with Pakistani count parts in CPEC project. Representatives of Gansu Federation of Returned Overseas Chinese, Gansu Construction Investment Group Corporation, Nanya p International Import & Export (Pvt.) Ltd., Overseas Chinese Association of Pakistan were also in the delegation. The delegation members said that 11 companies and over 800 citizens of Gansu Province were already working in Pakistan and more enterprises of Gansu Province were interested to explore JVs and investment in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). They said that CPEC was making good progress in Pakistan and China and added that it would bring benefits for both countries as well as for the region. They said that the purpose of delegation visit was to study the Pakistani market and explore business opportunities in it for Chinese
enterprises. The delegation members also invited ICCI members to visit Gansu Province and explore business opportunities with Chinese counterparts.

Addressing the delegation, President ICCI Ahmed Hassan Moughal said that CPEC was a project of long-term cooperation between Pakistan and China and it would strengthen Pakistan’s economy by improving infrastructure development, energy, industrialization and agriculture development in Pakistan. He stressed that Chinese investors should bring technology and set up JVs with local partners in CPEC and in other areas of Pakistan’s economy. He said Pakistan was a competitive destination for manufacturing activities and added that by investing in Pakistan, Chinese companies would be able to meet the demand of local market and export surplus products to many other countries including Middle East, Central Asia and other regions. He assured that ICCI would extend all possible cooperation to Chinese companies in finding right partners in Pakistan. China's digital economy accounted for a bigger share of gross domestic product (GDP) in the first half of this year, with more room for further improvement, a report showed. The digital economy was estimated at 16 trillion yuan (2.32 trillion U.S. dollars) in the January-June period, according to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology (CAICT) under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology.

The CAICT said the figure was equivalent to 38.2 percent of GDP, up from the 32.9-percent ratio in 2017. In the face of looming downward pressures, China has resorted to an emerging, fast-growing digital economy for new growth momentum, which has prompted booming growth in areas including e-commerce and mobile payment, as well as technological innovation in traditional industries. The report pointed out, however, that China's digital economy still faces imbalance. Compared to the tech-savvy service sector, agriculture and secondary industries have huge room for improvement in digitalization, and gaps are wide between different regions, CAICT researcher Lu Chuncong said. As the digital economy has become an inevitable trend, more efforts should be taken to push forward digital transformation across all industrial and value chains, Lu said.

The Nation
December 28, 2018

Pak-Qatar business conference to be held in Doha

RAWALPINDI: A two-day Pak-Qatar business conference, organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), will be held on January 28 at Doha, the capital city of Qatar state. Talking to APP, President RCCI said Malik Shahid Saleem said that RCCI being the oldest chamber of commerce in the country has geared up its efforts by arranging visits of delegations of Pakistani businessmen to various parts of world for exploring opportunities of enhancing trade and investments. He said that the delegation related to textile, chemicals, pharmaceutical, electronics and construction industry would participate in the two-day conference that aims to further strengthen the linkage between Pakistan and Qatar businessmen community. Pakistan has not only huge untapped potential of exports but at the same time it’s
growing market with population of around 200 million, offered excellent opportunities for bilateral trade, Malik informed. The Second Pakistan-Qatar Business and Investment Conference being organized by RCCI will focus on the technical aspects for trade and investment between the two countries, he added.

The Nation
December 28, 2018

Commerce ministry working on export enhancement strategy

ISLAMABAD - Ministry of Commerce is working on formulation of an Export Enhancement Strategy with a focus on promotion of new and emerging products/sectors as well as exploring non-traditional export markets for enhancing export. Latin Americas is one of the most important non-traditional markets where Pakistan’s market share is negligible despite a huge potential for Pakistan’s exports to the region in both traditional and non-traditional export sectors, a commerce ministry statement Thursday said. To achieve greater market access in the region, commerce ministry had signed a Framework Agreement on Trade with Mercosur (a trade block comprising Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay) in 2006 with a view to sign a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) leading to a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Pakistan has an annual bilateral trade of US$ 1 billion with Mercosur countries. Pakistan’s annual bilateral trade with Argentina is US$ 200 million which has a potential to increase to US$ 800 million. The FTA will provide an opportunity to address trade deficit with Mercosur countries. Pakistan’s imports of soya bean oil and cake provide a lucrative market for Argentina and Brazil, while Pakistan is mainly focused on textile exports. Pak-Mercosur FTA will create further win-win opportunities for both Argentina and Pakistan.

The Ministry of Commerce has been making efforts to restart negotiations on Pakistan’s bid for PTA/FTA with Mercosur. Due to the consistent efforts of the ministry, Pakistan’s request will be taken up by the External Relations Group of Mercosur (GRELEX) in early 2019. As Pakistan’s request is being taken up by External Relations Group of Mercosur, the ministry has intensified its ‘Trade Diplomacy’ efforts by engaging embassies of Brazil and Argentina in Islamabad. A Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) with Mercosur will provide opportunity to diversify products as well as markets and enhance trade with the Latin American countries, which introduce new products in pharma, information and communication technology, auto parts and light engineering sectors in the market and diversify our export basket. The PTA with this potential market would benefit the textile sector which is currently Pakistan’s biggest export sector to the region and also strengthen to further consolidate our business and trade relations in the region.

It will provide level playing field to Pakistan vis-a-vis its competitors in Latin Americas. Argentina and Brazil are among world leaders in agro food production and development of agricultural technology especially in the areas of production innovation in seeds and food processing. There is huge scope of technical assistance and investment from Brazil and
Argentina in agricultural conservation and food processing. Pakistan and Argentina may engage in mutually beneficial collaboration and technology transfer in agro food processing, meet processing, livestock rearing and fattening. MoC is focused on increasing and incentivizing ICT investment collaboration with Latin American countries as there is significant potential in the region for export of IT-enabled services, incubation and innovation, e-commerce. Both countries can mutually benefit by enhancing cooperation in Chemicals and Pharmaceutical sectors especially value chain and import regulations/certifications in pharmaceutical sector. Mining is another area for collaboration between Pakistan and Argentina.

DAWN

December 29, 2018

Russian companies keen to explore opportunities

KARACHI: Some 200 Russian companies are keen to explore opportunities in Pakistan, a top Russian leader said during a special meeting at Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) on Friday. Trade Representative of Russia, Yury Kozlov addressing the same meeting revealed that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Russia improved to $660 million during 10 months of 2018 which is expected to reach around $750-800m by year end. Russia has also offered its assistance to expand the production capacity of the Pakistan Steel Mills. Pakistan and Russia are currently cooperating in numerous projects including the construction of north and south gas pipeline from Karachi to Lahore besides working on a 600MW project at Jamshoro Power Plant, he added. He added that bilateral trade between the neighbors is huge potential but it has not grown at the desired pace due to a lack of direct banking channels.

In this regard, he said that the State Bank of Pakistan and the Central Bank of Russian Federation signed a MoU in January, but the progress was too slow as not much has happened since then; therefore, the central banks of both countries will have to act more energetically. Deputy Trade Representative of Russia Ruslan Aliev, KCCI President Junaid Esmail Makda, Vice President Asif Sheikh Javaid, KCCI’s sub-committee Chairman for Diplomatic Missions and Embassies Liaison Shamoon Zaki and Managing Committee members also attended the meeting. While handing over CDs carrying presentations of 200 Russian companies and details of the exhibitions scheduled to be staged in Russia throughout the year, the Russian delegate said that these companies are keen to explore opportunities in Pakistan whereas the business and industrial community of the Chamber should look into the possibility of participating in numerous trade exhibitions in Russia.

He further asked the KCCI to send a trade delegation to Russia with a view to enhance the existing trade and investment cooperation between the two countries. Earlier President KCCI Junaid Esmail Makda, in his remarks, expressed concerns over nominal trade volume between the two countries which stood at around $600m in 2017 as Pakistan exported goods worth $280.69m while the imports increased to $310.94m during the said period. -PPI
Pakistan, Tunisia for early conclusion of PTA

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Tunisia have emphasized for early conclusion of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in order to translate the excellent brotherly relations into meaningful economic and trade cooperation. Both the sides also emphasized on frequent engagements at Government to Government (G2G) and Business to Business (B2B) level coupled with trade promotional activities. Both the countries agreed on cultural exchanges/ participation of cultural troupe in major events in near future. Adel Elarbi, Ambassador of Tunisia in Pakistan, and Secretary Commerce Mohammad Younus Dagha discussed the bilateral trade issues and proceed ahead with remaining work on Preferential Trade Agreement. Tunisian Ambassador mentioned the warm, cordial and brotherly relations between the two countries and desired to make the trade relations commensurate with the political relations. Tunisian ambassador appreciated the “Look Africa Policy” of Ministry of Commerce and assured his full cooperation for any proposed bilateral engagements.

Mohammad Younus Dagha, Secretary Commerce, warmly reciprocated the sentiments of Tunisian side and emphasized on boosting the existing trade ties. Secretary Commerce emphasized the need for holding 3rd meeting of Joint Working Group (JWG) on Trade and signing of Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) between the two countries. Request list of Pakistan for the proposed PTA was presented to the Ambassador. He assured to expedite the submission of request list by Tunisian Ministry of trade followed by expert level talks. He expressed interest in exporting Tunisian olive oil, dates and fertilizer to Pakistan. Secretary Commerce explained that Pakistan desires to make Tunisia a hub for enhancing exports to North Africa under Look Africa Policy, which was appreciated by the Tunisian Ambassador.

Secretary Commerce also shared Ministry of Commerce’s plan of holding a Single Country Exhibition in Tunis in 2019 with the Ambassador along with visit of high-level officials and requested him to ensure fruitful participation of textile business delegates from Tunis in the TEXPO 2019 (11-14th April 2019 in Lahore). Tunisian Ambassador welcomed the suggestion of holding single country exhibition in Tunis and assured cooperation for making this exhibition a successful regional event. Pakistan will exhibit textiles, sports goods, rice, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments etc. in the exhibition.

Pakistan among world’s top tourism destinations
ISLAMABAD - Consequent to the government’s push for tourism industry and revival of peace, Pakistan’s profile is going up fast with various tourism and media organizations, and travelers now figuring it among the world’s top tourist destinations. Be it is Forbes, the global media company, British Backpacker Society, solo travelers or bloggers, all are in unanimity to believe that Pakistan was fast becoming a tourism hub with the changing geo-strategic situation, improvement of internal as well as regional peace and more importantly the liberalization of tourists’ visa policy. The boom of economic activity particularly under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and consequent enhancement of world’s interest in the country for investment has also cast encouraging impact on erstwhile dwindling tourism industry of the country. In its recently published ranking, Forbes has enlisted Pakistan among “The 10 Coolest Places to Go in 2019’ along with Bhutan, Columbia, Mexico, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Mongolia, Rwanda, The Turkish Rivera and Portugal. “Explore the valleys of Hunza, Shigar and Khaplu via the renowned Karakoram Highway,” suggests Sara Barbieri, another specialist with GeoEx.

“This little-visited region in the far northeast of the country offers the kind of startlingly striking scenery that compels you to gaze from the window of your 4WD without blinking, for fear of missing a moment of the majesty of the landscape—or one of the astounding suspension bridges that cross the surging rivers filled with snow melt. Add to this the warm welcome of the people, the glacial blue of Attabad lake, the centuries of history, the juxtaposition of granite to greenery, the chance to walk through an age old-apricot orchard along water channels cut by hand, and the blazing snow-covered glory of Rakiposhi, and you must acknowledge there is a grand adventure to be had,” the article said. Similarly, the British Backpacker Society had described Pakistan as “one of the friendliest countries on earth, with mountain scenery that is beyond anyone’s wildest imagination”. The Society announced the ranking of world’s top 20 adventure travel destinations for 2018, which also included Russia, India, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and China. It had ranked Pakistan as the top adventure travel destination for 2018 after visiting the country extensively in 2016. “It is beautiful, exciting and culturally interesting, and travelers are rewarded at the journey’s end-point with perhaps the most beautiful natural sight on earth, the Hunza Valley,” the Society said on its social media page. Among other factors attracting the tourists, also feature the hospitable nature of Pakistan’s society, mouthwatering food, architectural, cultural and archeological allures.

A US-born travel blogger Alex Reynolds who repeatedly visited Pakistan while sharing her redefined notions following her visit to Pakistan said, “People invited me to stay in their homes and slept on the floor so I could sleep in their bed. Hosts arranged everything from day trips to rides from city to city, and took days off work to show me around. According to Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation, around 1.7 million foreigners visited Pakistan in 2017 showing a remarkable increase in the ratio of tourists’ influx while domestic travelers jumped by 30 per cent. As a major step forward to promote tourism, Pakistan had also announced visa-on-arrival option to group tourists from 24 countries including China, Finland, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, the United Kingdom, the United States and others.

In her diary, a French tourist Johanna said, “I really wish everyone has a chance to visit Pakistan. When I was doing my research before coming, all I came across was news about bombings, kidnappings, and how the country was not safe for foreigners, especially women travelling alone.
But I knew that this was not an accurate picture… I haven’t come across such generosity anywhere else in the world… I encourage you to go and discover Pakistan. I guarantee that you won’t be disappointed by the experience.” Based on the improving ranking and observations by various organizations and travelers, it looks as Pakistan would have a changed and confident time ahead when it comes to tourism industry.

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