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EU agrees to assist Pakistan in energy conservation

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and European Union have agreed for cooperation in energy conservation and energy efficiency. In this regard, the Power Division will send a high level delegation, comprising of government officials and private sector experts, to EU to participate in a workshop that will be attended by European experts and professionals. The decision was taken Wednesday in a meeting between Federal Minister for Power Division, Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari and EU Ambassador Jean Francois Cautain here. It was further agreed that the European Investment Bank will be invited to the workshop to explore different options relating to financing the energy related projects in Pakistan.

Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari, while thanking the EU ambassador for the hosting of workshop on promotion of energy efficiency and energy conservation, said, “After having successfully bridged the demand and supply gap, now it is of utmost importance that the consumers should be educated on usage of electricity. The education will not only save money for the consumers but also help in efficient utilization of the existing generation capacity as one megawatt saved is far better than one megawatt generated.”

The federal minister also invited the European Investment Bank and other EU potential assistance partners toward assisting in establishment of Pakistan’s First Renewable Energy Institute. He said that he will meet the chairman of Higher Education Commission for identification of suitable university in Pakistan for establishment of the institute. Federal minister for Power Division also proposed which was agreed to by the EU Ambassador that both the Power Division and EU Embassy to appoint focal persons to frequently interact on matters relating to the energy cooperation between the two sides. The federal minister also highlighted salient features of the government plan to solarize some 30000 tube wells in Balochistan and he also invited the EU to take part in the process.

Jean Francois Cautain thanked the federal minister for the warm welcome accorded to him. He said that the European Investment Bank is keenly observing the fast expanding power sector in Pakistan. He said that the Bank will for sure be considering option of assisting in solarization of tube wells in Balochistan. He said that EU is already working closely with government of KP on a number of renewable energy projects most of which are hydel. The ambassador assured the minister that the EU will continue to provide assistance to Pakistan in the energy sector.
Govt to encourage people to bring back capital: PM

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Thursday inaugurated Digi Skills programme aimed at training one million youth through online modules in Islamabad. Addressing the ceremony, the PM said the present government has delivered in many fields by building motorways, ports, airports and establishing power plants but the advancement in the information technology sector is most important contribution in the last five years. He said that Digi Skills programme will equip the youth to get online jobs and earn money through a non-traditional way. He said that he has full faith in the youth of the country and expressed the confidence that the girls especially will lead in the e-commerce and digital skills. Abbasi said the world was changing fast due to revolution in information technology. He said the government's responsibility is to fully facilitate the private sector to take the initiative and lead the way. Abbasi said the government on its part is committed to ensure availability of broadband in every inch of the country and facilitate e-commerce.

In her address, Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunications Anusha Rehman said the Digi Skills programme is an important program of IT. She said the programme will create online employment opportunities to enable youth to earn 200 to 300 dollars per month. She said with the help of this programme youth from across the country will be providing their services to the entire world. She said that one million youth of Pakistan could get benefits from the program. Meanwhile, Prime Minister said that the government was considering the formulation of a policy to encourage people to bring their capital back to the country and invest in productive sectors of economy.

At a meeting with a delegation of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, headed by its president Ghazanfar Bilour, PM Abbasi said that a proposal for reduction of taxes was also under consideration to facilitate the documentation of economy and broadening the tax base. Minister for Commerce and Textile Muhammad Pervez Malik was also present, said a press release issued by the PM’s House. The meeting discussed the issues relating to various sectors of the economy, ease of doing business, enhancement of country’s export, input costs and taxation. The delegation appreciated the steps taken by the government especially in addressing the law and order, energy crisis and taking the business community and other stakeholders on board in putting in place a business-friendly environment in the country. Highlighting certain issues faced by the business community, the delegation presented various proposals aimed at further facilitating the traders, reducing input costs and taking other necessary measures for boosting confidence of the business community and capitalizing trade potential of the country especially enhancement of trade with international trade partners and organizations.

The prime minister congratulated the newly elected office-bearers of the FPCCI. Recounting various measures that have been taken by the government to facilitate the traders, the premier said that the government was actively working on improving ease of doing business in the country. He said that the private sector should play a leading role towards the enhancement of country’s exports. “The government would welcome the proposals from the private sector and continue to facilitate the business community in every possible manner,” he said. Meanwhile,
PM emphasized the need for the provision of quality and market-oriented technical training in different fields. He was chairing a briefing on National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTCC) here. The prime minister underscored the need for optimum utilization of available resources and infrastructure for the purpose of expanding NAVTCC activities so as to enable a large number of youth to benefit from the skill development programme. He also advised the NAVTTTC for further strengthening its partnership with the private sector to achieve the objective of quality in technical training.

Separately, PM Abbasi chaired a meeting of Cabinet Committee on Energy and reviewed the report on validation of energy and demand forecasting as prepared by National Transmission and Dispatch Company and evaluated by an international consultant engaged through the World Bank. The PM said that although remarkable progress has been achieved in power sector during the last three years, there was a need to constantly monitor demand and supply situation keeping in view the anticipated high gross domestic product growth scenario in the coming years. High Voltage Direct Current Matiari-Lahore transmission line project was also discussed during the meeting.

The proposed project with evacuation capacity of 4000 megawatts is being planned to ensure evacuation of power from the new generation planned in the southern part of the country to the load centres in the middle of the country. He urged the need to synchronize the completion of the transmission lines with the expected completion of the power projects in Thar as well as other projects in South. Amendments to the Renewable Energy Policy 2006 also came under discussion during the meeting.

DAWN

February 07, 2018

Govt keen to launch Islamabad, Karachi SEZs this year

ISLAMABAD: The federal government is pushing for expedited completion of formalities to launch two special economic zones (SEZs) one each at Islamabad and Port Qasim, Karachi in this year under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). ‘We want to present the federal SEZs as models for Chinese investment so that the two zones take off during the current year,’ a senior government official told Dawn on Tuesday. The top priority of the federal government is to ensure that CPEC physically enters the next stage of industrial cooperation this year. He said the Board of Investment (BoI) as the federal government’s lead agency for foreign investment was holding meetings on a daily basis with National Industrial Parks Development and Management Company and Capital Development Authority for finalisation of all legal and procedural requirements for Port Qasim and Islamabad industrial zones. He said the zones would be given a shape that could be followed by the provincial governments in development of their respective SEZs. Around 1,500 acres of land out of Pakistan Steel Mills had already been
identified and earmarked for Port Qasim SEZ but its pricing has to be approved by the PSM board of directors in its coming meeting.

On the other hand, the land for Islamabad SEZ is yet to be finalised. The official said there were some issues with availability of a compact piece of land and therefore the CDA had been directed to submit a detailed report on availability of land within 20 kilometre radius of the capital. The CDA had been given two options including a railway land around Golra Railway Station and Thalian on the outskirts of Islamabad on the motorway. The CDA would be directed on the basis of its report to start immediate land acquisition so that one-window facilities and infrastructure could be made available for their development and offered to the private sector for investment. Responding to a question, the official explained that all seven other SEZs in provincial and special areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata) were final and the governments of China and Pakistan had given their consent for their development. He said the expedited development of Port Qasim and Islamabad SEZ had been taken in hand in view of comparatively slower processes at the provincial level for seven other SEZs because of their localised challenges.

Officials said the industrial cooperation would be the most crucial part of the CPEC’s long term plan over the next 13 years for job creation and export growth. The two sides have set up an expert group on industrial cooperation to scrutinise detailed feasibility studies of the provincial SEZ. The group is meeting on monthly basis to go through the feasibility studies and address issues as they arise. The main task for the expert group is to complete the planning phase of these SEZs and make sure it enters the implementation phase during 2018. During the interim period, the two countries are set to pass through the political transitions expected to be completed in two months in China and about six months in Pakistan. The BoI and the Planning Commission are engaging with prominent chambers of commerce and industry in KP, Punjab, Islamabad, Sindh, GB, AJK and the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, among others, for briefings about upcoming SEZs. All the nine SEZs identified so far in all four provinces and special areas including AJK, GB and Fata would be initially developed by provincial governments for building infrastructure in various forms of public-private partnerships. This would be followed by setting up industrial units for which the federal government would offer equal incentives to all investors irrespective of their Chinese or Pakistani origin. Provincial governments would also be free to give additional tax incentives to attract local and foreign investors. The federal government would offer complete tax holiday for these SEZ if investments start before the end-2020.

The special economic or industrial zones also include the Dhabeji economic zone in Sindh, for which 1,000 acres have been earmarked, whereas the development of an industrial park on 1,500 acres of Pakistan Steel Mills’ land at Port Qasim is awaiting land transfer. Moreover, the 200-acre Bostan Industrial Zone in Balochistan, Allama Iqbal industrial city near Faisalabad, Mohmand marble city in Fata, ICT model industrial zone in Islamabad and a mix-industry special zone in Mirpur, AJK, are under process but have yet to take off. China’s key objective is to gain the quality and efficiency improvement of the textile and clothing industry, expand its
size and increase the supply of high value-added products, and in the process promote the Kashgar Economic and Technological Development Zone, and Caohu Industrial Park to adopt means like export processing. On the Pakistani side, the key objective is to expand cooperation in the appliance industry, promote Pakistan’s industries from assembling imported parts and components to localised production of parts, and encourage various forms of Chinese enterprises to enter the Pakistani market to improve the development of energy efficient appliance industry. It also envisages industrial capacity cooperation in sectors such as chemicals, engineering, agro, iron and steel and construction materials, and the of use efficient, energy-saving and environmental friendly processes and equipment to meet the demands of Pakistan’s local markets while further expanding into the international market.

The Nation
February 09, 2018

Envoy sees $500m increase in Pak-Romanian trade
RAWALPINDI - Ambassador of Romania Nicolaie Goia has said that there is a lot of room for promotion of trade between Pakistan and Romania. Romania has vast business opportunities and Pakistani businessmen should come forward and avail these opportunities. Talking to Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry members and traders here at the RCCI office on Thursday, ambassador Nicolaie said that the bilateral ties between Pakistan and Romania could be strengthened by intensifying people to people contacts.

The Romanian ambassador expressed hope that current bilateral trade volume can be enhanced from $100 million to $500 million. The ambassador said that Romanian investors are keen to step in joint ventures with their Pakistani counterparts. He said that exchange of delegations between Romania and Pakistan can help boost the bilateral trade volume which at the moment does not match the potential exist in the two countries. The envoy suggested that Pharmaceutical, Machinery, Tourism and Agriculture will serve as promising sectors for boosting bilateral trade. He also lauded RCCI efforts in promoting trade activities in the region.

President Zahid Latif Khan, Senior Vice President Nasir Mirza, Vice President Khalid Farooq Qazi, Executive Committee and traders are present on this occasion. Zahid Latif Khan said that Romania has been the fastest growing economy of the European Union with a growth rate of 5.7%. Pakistan and Romania have longstanding cooperation in political, economic, cultural and scientific fields. He said that with respect to trade, both countries could greatly benefit from each other. Zahid said that RCCI had been striving to find out new ways for increasing exports. Possible joint ventures can be made in different sectors like pharmaceutical, poultry, gems and jewelry, textile and marble. RCCI will work closely with chamber of commerce of Romania and expressed hope that a business delegation will be taken to Romania to explore new markets, he
added. He also invited envoy to participate in the 'RCCI 10th All Pakistan Chamber Presidents Conference in Gwadar in March 2018 and Rawal International Expo in April 2018.

The Nation
February 09, 2018

Progress on CPEC projects going smoothly: PD
ISLAMABAD - Progress on all projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) including up-gradation of Main Line-1 (ML) railway track is going smoothly and without any delay, Project Director (PD) of CPEC, Hassan Daud Butt Thursday said. Talking to APP, he said progress of all the projects that were agreed by the both China and Pakistan during 7th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) on CPEC held here on November 21, 2017 was on track as both sides were committed to complete the projects as early as possible. Responding to a question regarding possible delay in the $8.2 billion ML-1 project, the project director said earlier due to huge implications in the project, the revised PC-1 of first phase got delayed, however he said ministry of railways had assured to submit the PC-1 of phase-1 by February 20, therefore groundbreaking of the project was likely to be launched in few months as per announcement made by Minister for Planning Ahsan Iqbal last month. He said the ministry of planning had also sought time from cabinet committee on CPEC to discuss details of the project in next meeting and discussion would help further boosting the progress of project.

Giving details about preliminary design review of the project, Butt said work scope of phase-1 sub projects had already been completed. Similarly, he said work of standards and specifications, BOQs, and cost estimates both local and foreign had also been finalized. He said now approval of PC-1 and award of Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) would be given on fast track to ensure ground breaking of the project as early as possible. The phase-1 of ML-1 project consists of seven priority sub-projects with three contract packages including Lahore-Multan (334 km), Khanewal-Pindora (52 km), Nawabshah-Rohri (183 km), and Peshawar-Rawalpindig (159 km), Taxila-Havelian (55 km) while establishment of a dry port near Havelian is also part of the project. Under the project the entire track from Karachi to Peshawar would be made doubled and speed of passenger trains would be raised from existing 80 km per hour to 160 km per hour while freight trains would run at speed of 120 km per hour. Moreover, signaling and control system of railways would be computerized whereas safety of train operations would be ensured by grade separation. After completion of the project, freight traffic would be increased from five to 25 million tons per annum by 2025, and passenger traffic is likely to be increased from 55 to 80 million passengers per annum, official documents available with APP suggested.

Keeping in view the importance of Railway sector, the government decided to include the ML-1 project in CPEC and in the 6th JCC meeting held in Beijing in 2016, this project was declared 'Strategic'. Framework Agreement on ML-1 was signed on May 15, 2017 while commercial
contract for preliminary design was signed on May 2017, the documents added. Replying to a question regarding progress on construction of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under CPEC, Hassan Daud Butt said the governments of Pakistan and China were actively engaged for early completion of all nine SEZs in one each in federal capital, all provinces and special areas of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). He informed that a Chinese special business delegation was visiting Pakistan next month to review progress of CPEC projects. He said the delegation would interact with government officials, local trade bodies besides it would also visit all the provinces to ensure expedited work on SEZs. Regarding progress on Karachi Circular Railway, he said government of Sindh and Chinese government were directly and actively engaged on the project to ensure early launch of groundbreaking of the project.

DAWN
February 10, 2018

German envoy urges stronger business relations, joint ventures

ISLAMABAD: Huge potential exists for business collaboration and joint ventures in medium-sized enterprises between Germany and Pakistan, said Martin Kobler, German ambassador to Pakistan on Friday. The envoy said this in a meeting with Minister for Revenue and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan. An official statement quoted Mr Kobler as saying that medium-sized companies were the strength of the German economy. It would be good for businessmen from both German and Pakistan to forge business collaborations and join partnerships in the medium sized enterprises in Pakistan, he said.

The number of German companies operating in Pakistan could increase substantially through greater initiative from the German-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce, Mr Kobler added. Mr Khan called for re-doubling of efforts to strengthen business-to-business partnerships and forge new collaborations between Pakistan and Germany. ‘Pakistan is an ideal market with vast opportunities for investment in many sectors of the economy and the German investors should benefit from our pro-investment and business-friendly policies to make healthy returns on their investments,’ he said. Mr Khan appreciated the ongoing local German business and investment and initiatives in Pakistan. He hoped the number of German companies engaged in business in Pakistan would grow considerably.

The Nation
February 10, 2018
Pakistan, Malaysian traders sign MoU
The Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) and Malaysian International Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MICCI) have inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to work together for improving trade, commerce and economic relations between the two countries. LCCI President Malik Tahir Javaid and President MICCI Datuk Wira Jalilah Baba inked the MoU.

US traders show interest in Pakistan's furniture
ISLAMABAD - A high level United States furniture producers' delegation currently on a visit to Pakistan to explore local furniture market has shown keen interest in Pak handmade traditional furniture. They underlined the need of further enhancing collaboration with the Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) to promote furniture business between the two countries, a press release said. Briefing the delegation about the potential of Pak-handmade furniture, PFC Chief Executive Mian Kashif Ashfaq said there is significant potential for the promotion of Pak-US furniture trade and further strengthening of investment relationship to continue grow and durable working on the positive lines. He said there are plenty of opportunities to increase furniture export volume to the US due to its an upward trend, as the demand for furniture and wooden products are on the rise in the US and European markets along with the domestic consumers.

"Only US furniture demand at the manufacturers' level is forecast to reach $59.0 billion in 2021," adding he said opportunity is huge, but the sector needs a large number of skilled workers to meet the rising demand. "We are making special efforts to increase furniture export catering to the rising global demand. Further he said another one driver in the US market is improving residential construction market. The real estate industry in the US is expected to drive the home furniture market in the next few years. This will be due to the increasing number of people engaging in household formation. There has been a significant rise in the number of women joining the workforce and living independently. As a result, there is a rising need for service apartments and single storey houses. He said American buyers prefer to buy value-priced and high quality finished goods for dining and bedroom, leather and fabric upholstery, occasional and youth furniture. He further said due to social media, great design has become more accessible through pop culture and customers come in knowing what they want because they have seen it on TV, in magazines or even in their travels. He said the PFC will work closely with trend experts to create new items to ensure we cover these lifestyles, and our goal for new intros is to offer the perfect item reflecting consumers' demands.
IT industry wins recognition at international forums

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani IT Industry has repeatedly won international awards and recognition at international forums and become world’s largest and most reputable entities among its regular clients. Pakistan has won GSMA Awards, Spectrum for Mobile Broadband(2015) and Government Leadership Award (2017). Minister of State for IT, Anusha Rehman won the United Nations’ International Telecommunication Union’s Gender Equality and mainstreaming (GEM-TECH) Award in December, 2015. Ministry of Information Technology (MoIT) has also secured a seat in the Governing Council of Asia Pacific Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development under the UNESCAP. Managing director Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) Iftikhar Shah said, at yearly APICTA Awards, Pakistani IT companies had consistently won top awards and several Pakistani IT companies were ranked among the fastest growing companies in the country.

The presence of international IT companies in Pakistan, as IBM, Intel, Huawei is a vote of confidence in Pakistan’s potential as an IT destination. He said, PSEB had launched several programs to bolster the local IT Industry including IT company capability development through international certifications such as CMMi (28 companies), 9001 (110 companies), ISO27001 and ISO20000 (24 companies). These coveted certifications made it easier for IT companies to solicit business from overseas entities, he added. Pakistan is ranked as the 4th most popular country for freelancing in the Online Labor Index published in 2017 by Oxford Internet Institute (OII) and is consistently ranked among the top destinations for ICT outsourcing as a result of strong government efforts and stellar commitment to the growth of the IT sector in Pakistan.

There are already plenty of Pakistani IT companies working in international arena mainly named as ‘Mindstorm Studios’, ‘GameView Studios’, ‘Pepper PK’ and ‘TkXel’ etc. From these companies, ‘TkXel’ has created mobile applications and gaming companies from a university lab in Lahore while Pepper PK made history by developing paid BlackBerry applications which reached top rankings on BlackBerry’s App World store.

Tintashhas designed many innovative casual games for iPhone, iPad, and Android platforms. Games are not the only avenue on the mobile platform that Pakistani companies are focusing on, bit a number of companies have looked at broader educational and infotainment markets. Folio3 judged as one of the Harvard Business School’s All-World Fast Growth 500 companies in 2010 has interesting products in its portfolio. Folio3 has been instrumental in creating an online educational platform for SecretBuilders, a company that boasts a virtual world for children 5 to 14 years old powered by a Web 2.0 community of children, parents, educators, writers, artists and game developers.
Pakistan has produced some great gaming studios. The title animation sequence of Game of Thrones, the world’s most-watched TV series these days, has been produced by Hameed Shaukat, a US-born Pakistani. Cricket Companion application which received worldwide recognition was also developed by TricastMedia, a Pakistani startup. Pakistani Visual Effects Artist, Mir Zafar Ali has received three Oscar awards for his work in The Golden Compass, Life of Pi and Frozen. Novaira Masood, a Pakistani animator, effects in some of the most popular Hollywood movies including Maleficient, A Christmas Carol, Thor, Transformers 3 and Jack the Giant Slayer. Like Novaira Masood, Laraib Atta is another emerging visual artist from Pakistan who has worked on visual effects for popular Hollywood flicks such as X-men, Godzilla, and Gravity to name a few.

**DAWN**

February 13, 2018

**Italy to cooperate with Pakistan in stone sector**

ISLAMABAD: The Marble Association of Italy has agreed to help Pakistan for the development of marble and granite sectors, in addition to establishing a technical and scientific international trade centre in the country. The Memorandum of Intent was signed here on Monday between Pakistan Stone Development Company (Pasdec) and the Marble Association of Italy, and has already been approved by the federal cabinet. The agreement was signed by Pasdec CEO Zahid Maqsood Sheikh and Marble Association of Italy’s Honorary President Flavio Marabelli. Pasdec and the Italian association will contribute an equal amount of 400,000 euros each towards setting up of the centre in Risalpur. The project is expected to be completed within two years and it will also serve as an export promotion centre for the stones being extracted in Pakistan.

Speaking on the occasion, Mr Maqsood said that more of such agreements will be signed with other stone producing countries to further upgrade mining and processing methodology in the country. A technical group from Italy would soon be visiting Pakistan to evaluate and set timelines for execution of the project, he said. The trade centre is to be equipped with the latest machinery and equipment for the human resource and skill development in the two fields at the marble city of Risalpur. The association representing over 300 Italian marble and stone industries will provide technical expertise and support for the transfer of know-how, technical and scientific education for operators as well as international communication and marketing. The companies associated with the Marble Association of Italy supply the advanced technology that makes Italy a global leader in stone and manufactured stone industries. Italian machinery is engineered to be versatile and provides customers with unique solutions to process marble and stone at competitive prices.
UK investors keen to invest in Pakistan

LAHORE - A delegation of British investors, led by UK Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Pakistan , Tuesday showed keen interest to invest in Pakistan ‘s projects. The UK government is determined and strongly desires to see more developed economic and trade ties with Pakistan , said UK Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Pakistan while meeting with senior government officials in Lahore. Abdul Rehman Chishti, UK’s Trade Envoy to Pakistan , said that UK government wants to see British companies doing business with, and in, Pakistan , and playing an active role in the Pakistan economic development as both nations share an ambition to increase their economic, trade and cultural ties.

A high level delegation headed by UK Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Pakistan Abdul Rehman Chishti MP along with senior business representatives from the UK’s financial, legal and professional services sector visited Lahore and held meeting with number of prominent government officials and shared talks regarding economic growth and mounting investment opportunities in the province. The delegation comprised of Rehman Chishti – MP Prime Minister’s Trade Envoy to Pakistan , Elin Burns – British Deputy High Commissioner, Ali Aziz - Senior Manager (Mott McDonalds), Mark Gill - Project Principal (Mott McDonald), Farmida Bi - Partner (Norton Rose Fulbright), Stephen Hart - Senior Executive Officer (Jardine Lloyd Thompson), Michael Dryer - Investment Director Infrastructure (Commonwealth Development Corporation PLC), SaadUl Islam - Investment Manager, Infrastructure (CDC PLC) and Matt Lister - Deputy Director and First Secretary Trade(British High Commission Islamabad). The aim of the visit was to discuss various forthcoming infrastructure projects, investment opportunities and how UK companies can play a greater role in the development of Punjab.

Minister Industries Sheikh Allauddin welcomed the high powered delegation and briefed them about the immense business opportunities in Punjab. While addressing the occasion, he stated that Pakistan has now become a much stable, peaceful and prosperous country and there is a vast scope of investment in various sectors in Pakistan particularly Punjab. He said that government is providing facilities to the investors on priority basis and a conducive atmosphere has been created for investment in Punjab under one roof. A number of helpful presentations were shared with the delegation. Abdul Rehman Chishti, speaking at the occasion, stated: “This is my second visit to Pakistan and I am pleased to bring with me a delegation of some of the United Kingdom’s leading companies to support Pakistan in the development of the country’s economy.” Rehman Chishti highly appreciated the hospitality of Punjab government for their warmth and expressed the desire to strengthen and deepen relations with Pakistan. He termed Pakistan as land of opportunities and informed that both countries enjoy strong ties and UK was looking forward for investment opportunities in services, goods, banking and security, tourism sectors. Apart from that, he also showed immense interest in upgradation of Pakistan Railways.
Chief Minister’s Advisor and Vice Chairman PBIT Khawaja Ahmad Hassan said: “Pakistan is a rapidly growing economy and fifth largest consumer market in the world with 200 million population, while our economy is continuously flourishing in various sectors.” The UK and Pakistan have a shared ambition to deepen our economic relationship and it is the UK government’s firm desire to see more British companies doing business with, and in, Pakistan creating jobs and prosperity and playing an active role in Pakistan’s economic development. The meeting was attended by Khawaja Ahmed Hassan, CEO PBIT, Jahanzeb Burana, CEO Lahore Knowledge Park, Dr Zubair Iqbal Ghouri and number of governmental bodies and representatives from various prominent departments. The participants hoped that trade envoy of UK’s Prime Minister will play an instrumental role in further improving the trade and investment relations between Pakistan and UK.

February 14, 2018

Pakistan, Canada seek to remove hurdles in bilateral trade

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Canada have decided to hold a joint working group meeting next month in Islamabad to identify and remove bottlenecks in bilateral trade relations and develop partnerships in economic, trade, agriculture and investment sectors. This was decided during a meeting between Commerce Minister Pervez Malik, Canadian International Trade Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne and Canadian Immigration Minister Ahmed Hussen in Ottawa on Monday. Mr. Malik informed the Canadian side that under the World Trade Organisation framework, Pakistan is looking for a level playing field for its exports to the Canadian market.

However, issues like travel advisory for Canadian business community to visit Pakistan and visa restrictions for Pakistani businessmen were affecting the bilateral trade. He urged for immediate removal of these irritants in order to enhance the bilateral trade volume. Due to its prudent economic policies, Pakistan has laid the foundation of sustained economic growth and macroeconomic stability, and offers attractive trade and investment opportunities to Canadian investors and, on a reciprocal basis, seeks greater market access for its products, Mr. Malik informed his Canadian counterpart. He added that Pakistan’s investment policy, characterised by liberalisation, deregulation and privatisation, is one of the most liberal ones in the region, providing a conducive environment for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). He highlighted the manifold increase in FDIs in energy and infrastructure projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor and international investments in automobile, telecom, manufacturing and tourism industries in Pakistan.

The minister underlined that Pakistan meets the priority of Canada’s foreign trade in consumer products, industrial machinery, ICT goods, infrastructure, mining, oil and gas, clean
technologies, agriculture and education sectors. He said that with, over a 200 million consumer market and a large booming middle class, Pakistan is a promising market for Canadian goods, services and investments. Mr. Champagne expressed his gratitude to the commerce minister for accepting the invitation to hold the trade dialogue in Ottawa. He said that Canada would like to increase the trade volume between the two countries and all practical steps would be taken to enhance cooperation in areas of mutual interest.

Canada also seeks to enhance relations with emerging economies and partners in Asia and Pakistan certainly provides an opportunity for Canadian investors to benefit from an increasing demand of consumer goods and services, he added. Mr. Hussen briefed the delegation about the steps being taken to ease the visa processing for Pakistani businessmen, students and tourists. Pakistan has a great potential and Canada would like to facilitate bureaucratic procedures for all categories in order to increase people-to-people ties, he added.

February 16, 2018

**Doing business in Sindh to get easier: SBI**

KARACHI: World Bank (WB) Country Director Patchamuthu Illango has said that Pakistan needs to create two to three million new jobs every year, which would require 8 per cent economic growth per annum. He was speaking at the ‘Sindh Doing Business Reforms’ exhibition organised by the Sindh Board of Investment (SBI) on Thursday. On the occasion, Mr Illango said Pakistan needed significant investment from the private sector and the World Bank was helping the government make a business-friendly environment. He said various reforms were being taken in Sindh and Punjab which would improve the future investment scenario and benefit the private sector and the government.

Addressing the exhibition participants, SBI Chairperson Naheed Memon said: ‘We are always compared with Punjab. We are not only doing better when it comes to reforms; we are doing it quicker. Karachi is a bigger city with more complicated challenges. The Doing Business Reforms, she said, were part of the provincial government’s aim to transform the regulatory environment to help make Sindh the next business powerhouse. These efforts are part of a larger plan developed to introduce the business reforms at federal and provincial levels, she added. Counting on various reforms, SBI chief Naheed Memon said the procedures of four government departments had been simplified while procedures for eight more departments would be made simple in future.

The Sindh Building Control Authority (SBCA), she said, had eased out the procedure for the approval and issuance of construction permits for residential houses and non-obnoxious warehouses (Category-I buildings). She added that the requirement of interdepartmental no-objection certificates (NOCs), and others departments Karachi Water and Sewerage Board, Sindh
Environment Protection Agency, and Sindh’s Excise and Taxation department were waived off. The procedures and the timeline for approvals of construction permits for residential houses and non-obnoxious warehouses had been revisited. Ms. Memon said that the SEPA recently de-notified the requirement for environmental approval for nine types of projects. She said reforms introduced by the Sindh Board of Revenue would help make registering property quicker and easier than before. The overall time required to register property in Karachi had been reduced from 208 days to just 17 days, said Ms. Memon.

President of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), Mufassar Malik, said the days required to register for professional tax with the excise and taxation department, SESSI, EOBI and district labour department should be reduced to one to two days from two to four weeks. Pakistan’s Doing Business ranking had slipped to 147 from 144 in 2018 due to the business environment of Karachi, he regretted.

DAWN
February 21, 2018

EU renews GSP+ scheme for two years
ISLAMABAD: The Generalised System of Preferences Plus (GSP+) scheme has passed smoothly through European Parliament’s Committee on International Trade (CIT), enabling Pakistani exporters to enjoy preferential duties on exports for the next two years. The continuation of the scheme is an award for Islamabad’s progress in enacting new laws and developing new institutions for implantation of 27 core conventions of GSP+, specially the National Action Plan for human rights. Speaking to Dawn on Tuesday, EU Ambassador Jean-François Cautain confirmed these developments. ‘The steps being taken are part of the ongoing GSP+ monitoring process during which the European Commission can decide to launch an investigation if there are significant shortcomings in respect of the implementation of international conventions relevant under the scheme,’ the ambassador added. As part of the process of renewing the facility, a presentation will also be made to the European Council on Feb 21, which is a mere formality according to a source in the commerce ministry. The council is a technocratic committee of the European Union. Pakistan’s first Biennial Assessment Report of GSP+ was conducted in 2016. The second Biennial Assessment Report of GSP+ was done in Brussels on Tuesday.

Commerce Secretary Younus Dagha led Pakistan’s delegation. A statement issued by the commerce ministry said that the EU parliament expressed satisfaction on the progress achieved by Pakistan in enacting new laws and hoped that Islamabad would continue to engage with the EU and ensure to bridge implementation gaps during the next two years of reporting on GSP+. The CIT also agreed to deliberate upon possibility of up-scaling the relationship with Pakistan from a beneficiary of GSP+ scheme to a free trade agreement (FTA) partner in future. A similar
offer of an FTA has been made to India, Pakistan`s main competitor in the EU market. The European Commission will send a report to Islamabad in March identifying gaps in the implementation of the conventions. Pakistan will respond to these observations by June. It will be followed by a delegation from the European Commission in second half of the current calendar year. All these are part of the process of monitoring of compliance of GSP+ for next biennial assessment report for 2018-2019. Commerce Secretary Younus Dagha is in Brussels to follow developments with regard to ongoing deliberations by the EU Parliament and to undertake necessary engagements with policy makers in European Parliament, European External Action Service and European Commission. He attended a meeting of the EU committee on international trade. The details of the meeting were released in Islamabad by the ministry of commerce.

During the discussions, the EU committee noted the positive economic impact of the GSP+ scheme on the beneficiary countries and it has been useful in encouraging countries to undertake necessary steps for promoting principles of good governance and sustainable development. European Commission and the European External Action Service had prepared a Joint Staff Document evaluating steps taken by the beneficiary countries to comply with UN Conventions pertaining to human rights, labour rights, narcotics control and corruption. The section pertaining to Pakistan appreciated legislative and institutional measures undertaken to improve the human rights regime in the country. It specifically appreciated establishment of National Human Rights Commission and National Action Plan for Human Rights among other measures.

During the session it was announced that GSP+ monitoring missions shall undertake visits to Pakistan, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan and Bolivia in the second half of 2018 to interact with stakeholders engaged in implementation of mandatory conventions for GSP+. Pakistan is one of the 10 beneficiaries of EU`s GSP+Scheme. As a result of duty-free access available to Pakistan in 27 member states Pakistan`s exports to the EU have increased from 4.54bn euros in 2013 to 6.29bn euros in 2016. The duty-free access has been crucial for Pakistani products to maintain their edge in the EU market vis-à-vis similar products originating from India, Turkey, Vietnam and China. The GSP+ scheme is also beneficial for EU countries as data shows that imports from EU countries surged to 5.3bn euro in 2016 from 3.84bn euro in 2013.

**DAWN**

February 24, 2018

**Project launched to improve investment climate**

ISLAMABAD: The Board of Investment (BoI) launched a project on Friday to revive the country`s global image as an attractive destination for investment. The `Pakistan Investment Climate` project launched with the support of International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, aims to boost the country`s investment policy and promotion strategy. It will also
contribute to streamlining business regulation and creating opportunities for meaningful linkages between foreign and local firms in key sectors.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, BoI Chairman Naeem Zamindar said that with the goal to boost investment competitiveness, the project aims to boost the country’s investment competitiveness, and will support BoI to improve Pakistan’s investment policy and promotion strategy. Zamindar spoke at length about the potential of Pakistan’s economy which now stands at a crucial vantage point to grow at 9 per cent, and technology building momentum to lift the nation towards prosperity, and said that Pakistan must attract new investment which may assist in job creation jobs for its youth. BoI Chairman underscored the need to draw more overseas Pakistani business communities towards investment in the country and its integration with China, which is most likely to transform into a $30 trillion economic wonder over the ensuing 25 years.

Speaking on the occasion, IFC Country Manager for Pakistan Nadeem Siddiqui said that Pakistan has the potential to attract higher levels of foreign direct investment in the coming years, given the Bors investment promotion strategy taps into the economic potential of the provinces and opportunities arising from the development of Special Economic Zones. He emphasised that BoI should continue to facilitate foreign investors by helping them obtain work visas and coordinate with the federal and provincial authorities to improve the regulatory environment. It must be noted that international investors are eyeing Pakistan with renewed optimism. ‘Global experience confirms that regulatory certainty and policy predictability are essential for investors’ noted Christine Qiang, World Bank Practice Manager responsible for Investment Policy and Competition. The board has an important role to play, with the provincial BoIs, to advocate for and facilitate a stable and consistent policy environment for investors,’ she said.

**The Nation**

February 28, 2018

**US offers help to set up Renewable Energy Institute**

ISLAMABAD - US Ambassador to Pakistan David Hale said that the United States would explore the ways and means to help Pakistan for establishing its first Renewable Energy Institute. In a meeting with Federal Minister for Power Division Awais Khan Leghari on Tuesday, the ambassador said that the US would also share expertise of US National Renewable Energy Laboratory to ensure working of the institute as per international standards. He said the US would also consider assisting Pakistan in the formulation of National Energy Policy and National Electricity Plan. During the meeting the minister informed the ambassador that the government has initiated the process of interaction with all the provinces and the federating units for the formulation of Energy Policy and National Electricity Plan. “In this regard the
government has also decided to take into consideration various proposals of the power sector stakeholders including the service providers.

The minister appreciated the US General Electric Company for its Repowering Initiative proposal that includes conversion or rehabilitation of the existing power generation units across Pakistan. He said that he has asked the GE to be part of the process of energy policy and electricity plan so that their proposal can be materialized based on the decisions taken. The minister underscored the need of deep cooperation between Pakistan and USA in the renewable energy sector. He said that renewable energy is the only way forward to meet the energy requirements of Pakistan. The minister also informed the US ambassador on the progress made so far by the Power Division for establishment of the institute. He said that LUMS has also shown keen interest to house the institute, and has sent its proposal in this regard. He said that HEC and AEDB are finalizing to identify the university in Pakistan to house the institute. The US ambassador appreciated the Power Division initiative for establishment of the institute. He also underscored enhanced cooperation between the two countries in the energy sector. He also assured to soon appoint focal person for energy in the US Embassy who will frequently interact with his counterpart at the Power Division regarding cooperation in the sector.

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