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Chief Secretary Punjab Yousaf Naseem Khokhar has directed deputy commissioners to ensure availability of sufficient quantity of wheat flour and sugar in Ramadan bazaars, besides addressing complaints of consumers on priority basis. He issued the direction while presiding over a video-link meeting of deputy commissioners here on Saturday. The meeting reviewed arrangements for Ramadan bazaars, price control, steps to eradicate dengue and polio and ongoing wheat procurement. Speaking at the meeting, the Chief Secretary said that effective measure by price control committees and administration have helped stabilize prices of commodities. He said that officers should work hard to make Ramadan bazaars beneficial for people in real sense, adding that officers would be fully encouraged over good performance. He also issued instruction to continue crackdown on profiteers and hoarders. He directed the secretary food to achieve target of wheat procurement at all cost. Khokhar remarked that there is a need to work with national spirit to eradicate dengue and polio from the country once and for all. The Chief Secretary asked deputy commissioners to personally monitor campaigns against dengue and polio in their districts. He also ordered secretary primary health that after consultation with health experts, a comprehensive plan comprising short, medium and long term measures be devised to combat dengue and polio. The secretary industries briefed the meeting that number of price control magistrates has been increased to 1200 in the province and as many as 916 profiteers have been arrested and 1,102 cases have been registered. —PRESS HANDOUT

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Is Dr Raheel Siddiqi an 'unsuccessful' bureaucrat in Punjab?

GOVERNMENT CIRCLES ARE DIVIDED OVER UN-CEREMONIAL TRANSFERS OF MR SIDDIQI AS ONE SCHOOL OF THOUGHT SAY HE BECAME THE VICTIM TO ANTI-BUZZDAR LOBBY IN PTI WHO WANTS TO WEAKEN CM WHILE THE OTHER SCHOOL SAY THE OFFICER'S INCOMPETENCE LED TO HIS FREQUENT TRANSFERS

By Faisal Ali Ghumman

Punjab government led by Sadar Usman Buzdar has recently appointed a senior bureaucrat of Pakistan Administrative Service (PAS)- Dr Raheel Ahmed Siddiqi- as Secretary Higher Education Punjab only a couple of weeks after he was removed un-ceremonially from the post of Secretary Finance Punjab.

The officer in question spent only 15 days with the finance ministry and was transferred to be posted as Secretary Higher Education Punjab, a considerably demoted position among the administrative secretaries.

Interestingly, Mr Siddiqi, a BS-21 officer from 21st Common, was appointed Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister Punjab in September 2018 after getting transferred from the post of Chairperson Punjab Revenue Authority (PRA).

An informed source at the Chief Minister's Secretariat con-

fided to lahoremirror.com that CM Buzdar had appointed Mr Siddiqi his principal secretary because of their past acquaintance as both belong to South Punjab and have family terms.

The officer belongs to Bahawalpure and has served as District Coordination Officer Bahawalpure and other districts in South Punjab in the past.

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The source, who is a senior officer in the Punjab government, said Mr Siddiqi 'failed' to come up to the expectations of the CM despite having seven months around with the latter.

Mr Buzdar had appointed Mr Siddiqi under an impression that the latter would help him running the province in a professional and wise manner as Mr Buzdar was a layman in administrative matters. But the bureaucrat failed to do so that got the chief minister disappointed," said the officer.

Mr Siddiqi was eventually transferred and posted Secretary Finance on April 14, this year, but he hardly survived for 15

days and was again transferred to be posted as Secretary Higher Education Punjab against an existing vacancy. A junior officer with BS-20 or BS-19 is usually posted Secretary HE.

Sources claim Mr Siddiqi apparently got frustrated after being demoted from the higher post of Principal Secretary to

CM and couldn't regain confidence to the run the finance ministry, usually considered a key position, despite having four years experience in running affairs of the Punjab Revenue Authority.

However, another reliable source close to the Chief Secretary Punjab's circles claimed Chief Secretary Yousuf Naseem Khokhar was 'dead-set' against Mr Siddiqi for a reason best known to both of them.

He said Mr Siddiqi was removed from the post of Secretary Finance at a time when he was representing the provincial government in negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

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The source said it was not CM who actually removed Mr Siddiqi as it was a lobby in PTI that wanted to cut Buzdar to size as the bureaucrat was considered the CM's most trusted man.

He further explained tussle between Punjab Governor Ch Sarwar and Jhanagir Tareen was said to be root cause behind the efforts to weaken Buzdar.

The source further said as CS was already against Raheel Siddiqi, the task of his removal was easily accomplished, adding the posting of Mr Siddiqi as Secretary HE is testimonial to the fact that he was victimized by his superior officers.

"It has nothing to do with the competence or incompetence of Mr Siddiqi but political tussles with PTI has made a weak CM more toothless", the source claimed, adding Secretary Coordination to Chief Minister Dr Muhammad Shoaib Akbar has been given the look-after charge of the PS to CM that means the officer in legal terms can only look after day to day work and can't give his full input.

According to an official, the PS to CM with look-after charge can't even sign a files on behalf of CM.

Mr Akbar, who is originally from the Office Management Group/Secretariat Group, has served the PML-N-led government as Special Secretary Home and Secretary Home. He was reportedly one of the closest members of Shehbaz's team as he remained on key posts most of the time.

Mr Siddiqi has been credited with successfully improving the revenues of PRA during the era of Shehbaz Sharif as CM and has previously proved his mettle as Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Revenue Authority. Mr Siddiqi was not available for his detailed point of view as lahoremirror.com sent text messages to his personal cell number and kept waiting for the response. —LAHORE MIRROR



KP Govt Approaches Protesting Doctors As Strike Enters Its Fourth Day

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government on Saturday approached the protesting doctors as their strike in state-run hospitals across the province entered its fourth day.

The KP Doctors Council has announced that they have been called by Chief Minister Mehmood Khan on May 21.

According to the KP Doctors Council, apart from emergency services, there is a complete strike in hospitals. The council also rejected an inquiry committee formed to probe the attack on Dr Ziauddin and demanded the formation of a judicial commission.

They have also demanded that a case be lodged against the KP Health Minister Dr Hisham Inamullah Khan, his adviser and Dr Nausherwan Burki.

The council has warned that emergency services would also be closed if there was any baseless action taken against doctors.

KP GOVERNMENT ORDERS STERN ACTION

The KP government had announced the reopening of outpatient departments (OPD) at all government hospitals across the province from today after associate professor Dr Ziauddin blamed provincial health minister Hisham Inamullah Khan of being attacked and warned of strict disciplinary action against those who created hurdles in the dispensation of health services to masses.

"Government has decided to resume OPD service from Saturday and anyone who created hurdles would be dealt with an iron hand," KP Provincial Minister for Information Shaukat Yousafzai said while addressing a press conference. He added the government was preparing a list of doctors who were creating hurdles in the provision of health services. "A handful of doctors want to sabotage health reforms introduced in the province by the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government," Yousafzai said.

The information minister added the provincial government has brought reforms in the health sector to facilitate people of remote areas but unfortunately, some doctors wanted to sabotage it due to their personal and political interests. —PRESS HANDOUT

Moisture And Insects: District Admin Lahore Suspends Quota Of Two Flour Mills

The District Administration Lahore has suspended the quota of two flour mills supplying flour to Ramadan bazaars after spotting moisture and insects.

According to a press release, the administration has been monitoring the quantity of moisture in flour being supplied to all Ramadan bazaars on daily basis and special teams of the Food Department are in field to check the quality.

There are more than two dozen flour mills which have been allotted quota of flour supply to Ramadan bazaars and their flour quality is checked on daily basis.

On detecting 15 percent moisture in flour, quota of flour supply for Ramadan bazaars of Behria Flour Mill has been suspended by the Food Department.

Similarly, on finding insects in flour bag, the quota of Zeeshan Flour Mill has also been suspended.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore Ms Saleha Saeed, speaking on the occasion, said the District Administration Lahore would not compromise on the quality of flour being supplied in Ramadan bazaars as it is taking all possible steps to provide best quality flour to the citizens, visiting Ramadan bazaars.

Flour samples of Ajwa, Imperial, Al Mukhtar, Good Luck, Kamal Zamindar, Yaqoomia, PMM, Raiwind, GL, Arabia, Khurshed, WAaz, Diyan, Kamal, Data, Al Harmain, Afzal, Sunder, Sarwer, VIP, Aitmad, Abdul Wasay, Tafail, Premier, Meezan, Rehmat, Rehman, Ahmad, Shanshah, Ravi, Ramzan and Al Wahab flour mills were found satisfactory and up to the mark.

The DC has directed DFO 1 and DFO 2 to send their teams to Ramadan bazaars on daily basis to gauge the quality of flour. —PRESS HANDOUT



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The Chief Secretary asked deputy commissioners to personally monitor campaigns against dengue and polio in their districts.

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The secretary industries briefed the meeting that number of price control magistrates has been increased to 1200 in the province and as many as 916 profiteers have been arrested and 1,102 cases have been registered.

The meeting was attended by administrative secretaries of different departments including industries, agriculture, food, livestock, health, chairman PITB, commissioner Lahore division, deputy commissioner Lahore and officers concerned. —PRESS HANDOUT

Punjab okays uplift schemes worth Rs 2,625 million in its PDWP forum



Punjab Provincial Development Working Party Saturday approved five development schemes of various sectors with an estimated cost of Rs2,625.596 million.

Those schemes were approved in the 26th meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) of current fiscal year 2018-19 presided over the Chairman P&D Habib ur Rehman Gilani.

All Members of the Planning & Development Board, Provincial Secretaries of concerned departments and other senior representatives of the relevant Provincial Departments also attended the meeting.

The approved development schemes included Hepatitis Prevalence Survey in the Punjab, 2017 (3rd Revised) (PC-II) at the cost of Rs. 70.928 million, Capacity Building of P&D Department for Improved Policy Planning and Monitoring of Development Process in Punjab (Revised) at the cost of Rs. 600.000 million, Delivery of Better Extension Services to Accelerate Fish Culture Practices (Revised) at the cost of Rs. 360.500 million, Elimination of Child and Bonded Labour Project (Integrated Project for Promotion of Decent Work for Vulnerable Workers in Punjab Province (2nd Revised) at the cost of Rs. 966.500 million and Establishment of Mini Hydro Power Sites, in Gujranwala and Khushab at the cost of Rs. 627.668 million. —PRESS RELEASE

New road from Lahore Airport to Ring Road opened for traffic



A newly-fabricated road directly approaching/leading to Lahore Ring Road from Allama Iqbal International Airport has been opened for general traffic.

The road was constructed in the light of instructions issued by Shahrulh Nusrat, the Secretary Aviation/Director General Civil Aviation Authority regarding passengers' convenience.

Due to opening of said road, passengers leaving Allama Iqbal International Airport will enjoy ease and comforts while directly approaching Lahore Ring Road.

On this occasion, Airport Manager Nazir Ahmed Khan, Project Director Major Aizaz and his team expressed pleasure and prayed for safe and sound journey of passengers through the said road. —PRESS RELEASE

CELLULAR COMPANIES, PROVINCIAL REVENUE AUTHORITIES LOCK HORNS OVER INPUT TAX CLAIMS

By Faisal Ali Ghumman



Four cellular service providers in Pakistan and the revenue authorities of Punjab and Sindh have developed differences over input tax adjustment claims linked to 19.5 percent GST on pre-paid cell phone cards.

The dispute has arisen after the Supreme Court of Pakistan has recently announced the restoration of all taxes charged by cellular service providers on mobile phone top-up cards. The representatives of cellular companies have been persuading the provincial revenue authorities- Punjab Revenue Authority and Sindh Revenue Board- to compensate their tax adjustment claims of last 10 months.

However, officials of two authorities are of the view that during suspension period (from June 2018 onward) of taxes on top-up cards the deduction of customs duties and federal excise duties at import stage could not be correlated to the suspended period and reimbursed to the companies.

When in case there was no tax payable then how come input tax could be claimed during the suspension period.

Legal experts say that intervention of Supreme Court will be sought again to resolve the matter. Officials fear when the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) and provincial revenue authorities of Punjab and Sindh already fear decline in annual revenues any such pressure by the cellular companies for compensation claims will further jeopardize the efforts of meeting revenue collection targets.

They may think jacking up the rate of tax on consumers.

Information gleaned by lahoremirror.com reveals that cellular companies have been demanding Rs5 billion claims from two provinces and several meetings between representatives of companies and officials of PRA and SRB have taken place to sort out the matter. The PRA is expected to miss annual target of Rs150 billion for fiscal 2018-19 by wide margin because of absence of telecom tax. However, SRB is most likely to achieve the annual target of Rs110 billion by the end of June 30, 2019. —LAHORE MIRROR