

● Prime minister reconstitutes Economic Coordination Committee

Saudi Arabia to expedite \$5 billion investment in Pakistan

● PM & Saudi Crown Prince Strengthen Bilateral Ties, Pledge Support for Peace and Prosperity

MUDASSER CH./WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD/RIYADH



In a landmark meeting steeped in mutual respect and solidarity, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and Mohammed bin Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, the Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, convened at Al-Safa Palace in M a k k a h Al-Mukarramah on April 7, to reaffirm and elevate the enduring bond between their nations.

Both leaders underscored the significance of accelerating the implementation of the first wave of the \$5 billion investment package, laying the groundwork for mutually beneficial trade and investment ventures.

Amidst global challenges, the leaders addressed the pressing issue of the situation in Gaza, expressing grave concern over the humanitarian crisis and calling for urgent international intervention to halt Israeli military operations. They emphasized the need for adherence to international law, humanitarian aid access, and advancing the peace process in line with relevant UN resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Furthermore, the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve outstanding issues, particularly the Jammu and Kashmir dispute, was emphasized as pivotal to ensuring regional peace and stability.

In a gesture of goodwill and mutual respect, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif extended a cordial invitation to the Crown Prince to undertake an official visit to Pakistan, which was graciously accepted, underscoring the depth of bilateral relations and the shared commitment to advancing mutual interests.

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The meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the Saudi Crown Prince heralds a new chapter of collaboration and solidarity between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, grounded in shared values of peace, prosperity, and regional stability.

As both nations forge ahead on their path of progress, the world watches with optimism, anticipating the fruits of their enduring friendship for the betterment of their peoples and the wider region.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has reconstituted the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC).

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, performed Umrah and offered Nawafil inside the Holy Kaaba on Monday.

Production Rana Tanveer Hussain a member of the ECC.

After inclusion of the minister of industries and production, the number of ECC members has gone up from six to seven. The finance minister will remain the chairman of the committee.

Earlier, the prime minister had appointed the finance minister as the chairman of the ECC on the reconstitution. The prime minister had withdrawn the decision to head the ECC himself.

The ECC members include federal ministers for commerce, power and petroleum. Federal ministers for economic affairs and planning are also part of the committee.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is on a visit to Saudi Arabia, performed Umrah and offered Nawafil inside the Holy Kaaba on Monday.

Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met with Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister Mohammed Bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud here wherein the two countries affirmed their commitment to expediting the first wave of the previously discussed investment package worth \$5 billion.

The bilateral ties and regional as well as global developments of mutual interest, including the worrying situation in Gaza were discussed in the meeting that took place at Al-Safa Palace here on Sunday during Prime Minister Shehbaz's three-day visit to the Kingdom, according to a joint statement issued on Monday.

The discussions centered on fortifying the fraternal relations between the two brotherly nations and exploring avenues for enhanced collaboration across various sectors.

Emphasis was laid on the Kingdom's supportive role in Pakistan's economy and the mutual desire to strengthen trade and investment ties, the statement added.

The two countries called for efforts by the international community to halt Israeli military operations in Gaza and mitigate humanitarian impact besides emphasising the need to advance the peace process.

Both sides underscored the imperative

for the international community to pressure Israel to cease hostilities, adhere to international law, and facilitate unhindered humanitarian aid access to Gaza.

Two sides discussed the need for advancing the peace process in accordance with relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as the Arab Peace Initiative aimed at finding a just and comprehensive solution, to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The two sides stressed the importance of dialogue between Pakistan and India to resolve the outstanding issues between the two countries, especially the Jammu and Kashmir dispute to ensure peace and stability in the region.

The Crown Prince congratulated Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on assuming the office and expressed warm wishes for his tenure.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also conveyed gratitude for the Kingdom's steadfast support and hospitality and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to bolstering bilateral ties and economic cooperation.

PM Shehbaz invited the Crown Prince to undertake an official visit to Pakistan at the earliest convenience which he accepted.

Four police personnel among 10 injured in Quetta blast

STAFF REPORTER

QUETTA

Four police personnel among 10 injured in Quetta blast. The blast, occurred near the mosque on Quetta Kuchlak Road. According to initial reports, the injured have been rushed to nearby medical facilities for urgent treatment. The condition of the victims remains unknown at this time.

Law enforcement agencies swiftly cordoned off the area and launched an investigation into the incident to determine the nature and cause of the explosion.

Meanwhile, security personnel have been deployed to maintain order and security in the aftermath of the blast.

Quetta is the capital and largest city of the Pakistani province of Balochistan. It is the tenth largest city in Pakistan, with a population of over 1.1 million. It is situated in the south-west of the country, lying in a valley surrounded by mountains on all sides. Quetta is at an average elevation of 1,680 metres (5,510 feet) above sea level, making it Pakistan's only high-altitude major city. The city is known as the "Fruit Garden of Pakistan" due to the numerous fruit orchards in and around it and the large variety of fresh and dried fruits produced there.

Located in northern Balochistan near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and the road across to Kandahar, Quetta is a trade and communication centre between the two countries.

Nepra hikes power tariff by Rs 4.92 per unit ahead of Eidul Fitr

● National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) approved on Monday a significant hike in electricity tariffs just days before the upcoming Eidul Fitr festivities

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



Nepra hikes power tariff by Rs 4.92 per unit ahead of Eidul Fitr. According to the notification, the cost of electricity has surged by a staggering Rs 4.92 per unit, effective immediately. The decision, reportedly stemming from adjustments made in February's monthly fuel assessment, has triggered outrage among citizens who view it as an imposition of undue financial burdens.

Expressing their dismay, many have characterized the move as the government dropping "electric bombs" on the populace, particularly as it coincides with preparations for Eid celebrations.

However, Nepra has clarified that the tariff hike will not apply to lifeline customers and consumers of Kelectric, offering some respite to the most vulnerable segments of society.

Nevertheless, the additional burden imposed on other consumers is expected to reflect in their upcoming April bills.

Furthermore, the surge in electricity tariffs is anticipated to contribute to an estimated additional sales tax burden of 40 billion rupees on consumers, compounding their financial woes.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (abbreviated as NEPRA) is responsible for regulating the

electricity supply in Pakistan. It is also responsible for issuing licences for generation, transmission and distribution of electricity, establishing and enforcing standards to ensure quality and safety of operation and supply of electric power to consumers; approving investment and power acquisition programs of utility companies; and determining tariffs for the generation, transmission, and distribution of electric power. NEPRA was created when the Parliament of Pakistan passed the Regulation of Generation, Transmission and Distribution of Electric Power Act, 1997.

PSX-100 index hits all-time high record, reaches 69620 benchmark

● PSX-100 index gained a record 1203 points and crossed the 69,000 benchmark to reach 69620 points at the closing time on the first day of the trading week ahead of the Eid-ul-Fitr holidays

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD



PSX-100 index hits all-time high record, reaches 69620 benchmark. Experts said progress in PIA privatization along with a likely decrease in interest rates.

Last week, Pakistan's benchmark stock index hit all-time intraday and closing highs on Thursday, extending a rally following a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund earlier this month to free up more financial aid for the country.

The benchmark KSE-100 (KSE), opens new tab touched a record high of 67,246.02 points

in intraday trade, surpassing its previous high of 67,093.96 touched on Dec. 13, before settling at 67,142.12 - a record closing high.

Advertisement Scroll to continue "Foreign and local institutions buying amid positive news on privatization and IMF," Topline Securities' Mohammed Sohail

Overall, the index rose 594.34 points on Thursday, up 0.89% from the previous day's close.

Pakistan and the IMF reached a staff-level agreement on the second and last review of a nine-month, \$3 billion Stand-By Arrangement, which, if cleared by the

global lender's board, will release about \$1.1 billion to the struggling South Asian nation.

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Both sides have also spoken about negotiating a longer-term bailout and continuing with necessary policy reforms to rein in deficits, build reserves and manage soaring debt servicing.

Pakistan's new government, led by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, has also resolved to follow through with a long delayed privatisation process of loss-making state-owned enterprises that have drained critical funds from the cash-strapped government.

IHC judge asks Bushra Bibi's lawyer to file contempt plea against Adiala Jail admin

● PTI decides to 'boycott' Senate chairman, deputy chairman elections

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Showing his strong displeasure over the failure of Adiala Jail, Rawalpindi superintendent to arrange the meeting of Bushra Bibi, wife of former prime minister and ex-PTI chairman Imran Khan, with her husband in the light of the court order, Islamabad High Court (IHC) judge Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb on Monday asked Bushra's lawyer to file a contempt of court

plea in the case. During the hearing of the petition, seeking implementation of the IHC order in which it had said that Bushra should be allowed to meet Imran, the court also summoned the advocate general, Islamabad.

The judge wondered how on earth the court's order could be ignored.

Justice Aurangzeb recalled that earlier the court had disposed of the petition with directions.

Usman Gul, Bushra's lawyer, informed the

judge that despite the court order, the two were not allowed to meet each other. "And that is why we have submitted another petition, seeking my client's meeting with her husband in the light of the court order," he said.

The lawyer prayed to the court to order the jail administration to now arrange the meeting on Eidul Fitr, saying the administration had the authority to do so.

Later the court gave a break in the hearing until the arrival of the



advocate general.

Meanwhile, the registrar of the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday raised an objection to the petition filed by five PTI senators in which they had sought a court order for delay-

ing elections for the seats of Senate chairman and deputy chairman unless elections for the Senate seats from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) are held.

The senators had also prayed to the

court to declare the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) notification, dated April 2, 2024, of postponement of the Senate elections in KP as null and void and give order to hold the elections in the province.

The registrar said that since the Peshawar High Court (PHC) was already hearing the KP Senate seats' election case; therefore the PTI was asked to approach the high court for the purpose. Separately, the PTI

has also filed a motion against the election of Senate chairman at the Senate Secretariat on Monday.

The PTI application bears the signatures of Senators Zarqa Taimoor, Saif Abro, Falak Naz Chitrali, Fauzia Arshad and Saifullah Niazi.

PPP enlists other parties' support for its candidate. On the other hand, members of the special committee constituted by the PPP for election for the seat of Senate chairman have started reaching

out to other political parties to enlist their support for the party's candidate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani.

In this connection, PPP leaders Syed Naveed Qamar and Sherry Rehman have held a meeting with Gilani and chalked out a strategy to ensure his success in the election.

Later speaking to the media, Sherry said that Gilani enjoyed the support of a majority of senators, and tomorrow the PPP would demonstrate it before everyone.

NATIONAL

Eid-ul-Fitr preparations gain momentum in Swat

HAROON SIRAJ

SWAT



The preparations for upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr have started gaining momentum with each passing day as a huge number of buyers are seen in the prominent shopping markets of the district. Despite rising inflation and escalating prices of the garments, clothes, shoes and other accessories, Eid shopping is registering an upward trend in the markets.

The illuminated shopping malls and markets displaying stalls of colourful bangles, jewellery and henna outside the shops are attracting the buyers, mostly after Iftar.

Women shopping normally starts two weeks earlier as they have to prepare

dresses, buy jewellery and other accessories to colour their religious festival with traditional zeal.

Many established and amateur dress and jewellery designers have started exhibiting their products at various galleries, houses and open-air lawns to attract the maximum number of women, providing them with a perfect fashion extravaganza.

Most rushes were seen at the city center, cheena markets and new road.

A bangle stallholder at a local market told our correspondent that "These days are not only a way to pro-

vide a variety of shopping opportunities for shoppers but also a great income generation opportunity for the stallholders. Any type of accessories relating to women and garments for children are the most profitable business, he added. The last weeks of Ramadan also witnessed a huge rush at beauty salons and ready to wear boutique dresses. "I bought a pink dress and now looking for matching shoes and then I have to buy matching jewellery, hair clips, and bangles. I will again come with my family on 'chaand raat' for henna," Aiza Khan, who is five years old, said. "I have visited the market to buy bangles and observed that bangle stalls are very few and the prices are not affordable," she said.



RAWALPINDI: People board a train at Pindi Railway station to celebrate the joyous occasion of Eid-ul-Fitr with their loved ones. — Staff Photo

KP Government Sets Up Committee to Monitor Eid Fares

● Transport Department Takes Action Against Overcharging to Protect Travelers

STAFF REPORTER

PESHAWAR

The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has established a six-member committee within the transport department to tackle overcharging during the upcoming Eidul Fitr holiday.

The committee, comprised of transport department officials including Deputy Director Admin Salman Nisar and Assistant Director Ruidad Khan, is tasked with ensuring citizens are not subjected to excessive fares.

"A divisional-level committee has been formed to address citizens' complaints promptly," the transport department announced. The committee will investigate and take immediate action on reports of inflated fares at bus stations across the province.

To ensure compliance with official rates, the committee will be operational until April 16th. They

are required to submit documented and photographic evidence of their inspections and interventions to the Transport Department.

This initiative aims to prevent travelers from being exploited during the peak travel period associated with Eid al-Fitr.

Govt initiate nationwide crackdown against hoarders

The government of Pakistan and the military leadership have decided to take strict measures against the hoarders, and initiated a crackdown across the country, on Sunday.

During a recent crackdown against hoarders, the relevant institutions conducted raids across the country and recovered 26,762 metric tons of fertilizer, 2,420MT of flour, 53,954MT of ghee, and 9,340 MT of sugar.

According to the report, a total of 38 successful anti-hoarding operations were completed from March 24 to 31, while 168 MT of fertilizer,



0,544 MT of flour, 869 MT of ghee, and 205 MT of sugar were recovered from Punjab.

Earlier this year, the former Caretaker Minister for Planning Muhammad Sami Saheed sought a detailed report from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on the active usage of the Decision Support System on Inflation (DSSI) for price monitoring of edibles, checking profiteering and hoarding.

He passed these directives while chairing a meeting of the National Price Monitoring Committee (NPMC) to review the prices of essential commodities, a news release

said. One of the salient features of DSSI, which provides market-level information, city-wise comparison of prices, and time series data at the commodity level, is the comparison of rates issued by D e p u t y Commissioners and those collected by the PBS every week.

The minister also directed the Ministry of National Food Security and Research to engage with the Pakistan Poultry Association to identify and resolve the supply issues of poultry products.

Besides, he asked provincial governments and the administration of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT)

to vigorously pursue smooth availability of essential items, especially in the preview of the upcoming holy month of Ramadan, seeking report demand and supply situation of specific commodities used in the fasting month.

During the meeting, the PBS Chief Statistician presented an overview of the price situation in the country for the week ended on January 11, 2024, and apprised the meeting that the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) increased by 1.4 percent over the previous week (WoW) and increased to 44.2 percent over corresponding week the previous year.

He explained that the current spike in SPI was driven by perishable items including tomatoes, onions, and poultry products like chicken and eggs.

During this week, he said prices of 21 items increased and eight items' decreased while prices of 22 items remained stable.

Riphah Launches Herbal Research Center to Advance Medicinal Science

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

Gulberg Greens Campus of Riphah Institute of Pharmaceutical Sciences (RIPS GGC)

witnessed a momentous occasion as it inaugurated a specialized center for herbal research, marking a significant stride in the realm of medicinal science.

The event, graced by esteemed dignitaries and faculty members, underscored the growing importance of herbal medicines in modern healthcare.

Led by the distinguished Deputy Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Yawar Hayat Khan, the ceremony provided a platform to delve into the vast potential of herbal remedies in drug development.

Dr. Sidra Kaleem, the driving force behind the event's organization, ensured its seamless execution, reflecting the dedication of RIPS GGC towards advancing herbal research. The official inauguration of the herbal research center by Dr. Yawar Hayat Khan marked a pivotal moment, symbolizing a commitment to explore the



and Dr. Humaira Naureen shed light on their diverse applications in treating a myriad of ailments. The event witnessed active engagement from esteemed faculty members including Prof. Dr. Aslam Khan, Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed, Dr. Sidra Kaleem, Dr. Zakir Khan, Dr. Muzammil Masud, Dr. Yasir Rasool, Dr. Komal Raja, and Dr. Saima Akram, all of whom reiterated the importance of integrating herbal knowledge into pharmaceutical research.

Dr. Sidra Kaleem, the driving force behind the event's organization, ensured its seamless execution, reflecting the dedication of RIPS GGC towards advancing herbal research. The official inauguration of the herbal research center by Dr. Yawar Hayat Khan marked a pivotal moment, symbolizing a commitment to explore the

untapped potential of medicinal plants. Amidst fervent discussions and scholarly exchanges, students enthusiastically shared their perspectives on the significance of medicinal plants in modern healthcare. Their contributions were met with appreciation from Dr. Yawar Hayat Khan and Dr. Sarwat Jamila, who blessed them with prayers, encapsulating the spirit of collaboration and growth that defines RIPS GGC.

With a vision to promote global awareness of herbal medicines, the launch of the research center heralds a new chapter in pharmaceutical sciences. Through concerted efforts and innovative research endeavors, RIPS GGC aims to pioneer advancements that will shape the future of healthcare, harnessing the healing power of nature for the betterment of humanity.

From Tar Ali Pur to Hussainabad story of Social Revolution

KAMRAN KHAMISO

SUJAWAL



The villages located in remote areas of Sindh have been in headlines for lack of basic amenities and poor infrastructure, but there is a village in Sujawal district that has been an example of persistent social development.

Hussainabad a village located some 30 kilometers from Sujawal has been playing a vital role in the development of district Sujawal by contributing in the field of health, education and agriculture.

The village with a current population of 300 souls has the highest literacy ratio in the district besides Tarr Khowaja. The village was established here in 1974 with the joint efforts of Motan Khowaja, Imam Dino Khowaja, Piyar Ali and Ashiq Ali Karimi under the guidelines of Aga Khan Council for Sindh. The village is considered as a modern village owing to facilities the villagers have.

Imdad Hussain Acharani a villagers serving on a high rank in district education department Sujawal said that the

villagers are maintaining institutions provided to them by the government and Aga Khan Development network for the past 50 years.

"We established a Library and coaching center in Hussainabad in 1983 when the literacy ratio here was negligible and our move developed interest among youth for quality education and learning"; he mentioned adding that the villagers had supported government functionaries during crisis.

The nurses of this village remained on the forefront during COVID-19 epidemic, flood and heavy rains of 2003, 2010 and 2022, serving with complete dedication in different hospitals.

Another village K h a m i s o Muhammad Khan said that the villagers convened first Agricultural confer-

ence in the history of district Thatta in 2005 under the auspices of Aga Khan Economic and Planning Board for Pakistan to create awareness among local growers regarding agricultural development.

The village has produced several adept professionals working in different fields across the country and in different parts of the world.

Dr. Mashoq Khowaja mentioned that the village has primary school, health care center, vocational training center a computer lab and a library, besides well furnish streets, a public park and water supply mechanism.

The villagers migrated from Tarr Ali Pur village in 1974 and settled here. Agricultural farming is the major source of earning for the villagers. Chairman of Village development organisation said that recently that have launched a project with regard to environmental protection under which they had planted 500 saplings in village and it's adjoining areas and held 4 sessions on environment protection.

Citizens urged to discourage professional beggars

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD

According to the details, the Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Operations Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari issued an important message to the general public regarding the security of markets and professional beggars on the occasion of Eid.

In his message, he stated that the Islamabad Capital Police's top priority is to protect the lives, property, and dignity of the public. Citizens are urged to discourage the professional beggars and not to give their charity to beggars and instead, give the charity and financial assistance to relief organizations.

He further said that, citizens should report information about professional beggars on the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or via the "ICT-15" app.

Similarly, if there are any issues during shopping in commercial centers and markets that harass you or pose security concerns, citizens should inform the police immediately, he added.

AGF mission: Alleviating hunger, poverty reduction and long-term sustainability

● Amity Global Foundation kicked-off robust 'Food Distribution Drive' in Interior Sindh District Sujawal

STAFF REPORTER

KARACHI

Amity Global Foundation, a Canadian organization dedicated to empowering rural communities in Pakistan, kicked-off its 'Food Distribution Drive' ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr across 25 villages in the interior Sindh District Sujawal.

Amity's Ramadan Food Distribution Drive targeted underserved villages in interior Sindh, providing much-needed food assistance to families. This intervention aims to alleviate immediate hunger concerns while working alongside local partners to establish long-term solutions for food security.

Chief Operating Officer (COO) Amity Global Foundation, Saad Hasnain while expressing his views on the successful implementation of this drive said "we are immensely thankful to Almighty Allah that this Food Distribution Drive turned successful in



all aspects and it is the need of the hour to address malnutrition issues in the rural Pakistan.

Saad also said that Amity is highly inclined towards empowering the communities in interior Sindh and the Punjab provinces with all honest intentions help the suffering humanity and to

support them in such a manner that they could become able to attain a better livelihood for themselves and their families making them sustainable in the long run.

One of the villager hailing from Bachal Khalifa Malah Goth told this scribe that across 25 villages Amity Global

Foundation not only distributed the ration bags but also supported the local communities by distributing 'Eidi gifts' among the villagers. Numbers of people praised this pious initiative of Amity Global Foundation in the sacred month of Ramadan.

COO Amity Saad Hasnain also added that the cornerstone of our food distribution project is its scalability and adaptability. Starting with an initial distribution of 150 food boxes in the District Sujawal, Interior Sindh province of Pakistan, we aim to expand steadily, addressing the evolving needs of the communities we serve. By providing essential food supplies, we not only alleviate immediate hunger but also lay the foundation for long-term sustainability.

Furthermore, Amity's food distribution project is seamlessly integrated into our broader goal of supporting local charities.

THE DESTINATION

NEWS THAT TRAVELS

CITY



ISLAMABAD: Beautician applies traditional henna designs to the hand of a customer ahead of the Muslim festivities of Eid al-Fitr, in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

Ceremony held for passed-out departmental promotion courses officials

STAFF REPORTER ISLAMABAD

According to the details, a ceremony was held in honor of the second Upper Course, 12th Intermediate Course, and 21th Lower Course passed out by officials at Police Lines Headquarters Islamabad, a public relations officer said. He said that, the ceremony was attended by Capital Police Officer (CPO) Law and Order/Commandant Capital Police College Shaker Hussain Dawar, while high-ranking officials, including the SSP Law and Order/Dy. Commandant Capital Police College and

other staff members. During the ceremony, the CPO Shaker Hussain Dawar distributed awards and certificates to the deserving officers and cadets who demonstrated exceptional performance during the training courses. Addressing the ceremony, CPO Shaker Hussain Dawar praised the dedication and hard work of the officers and cadets who had completed the training courses successfully. He urged them to perform their duties with diligence, dedication, and a commitment to serving the community. CPO expressed his delight at being part of the Islamabad Capital Police passing out ceremony and congratulated Capital Police College and

Our journey towards water management and climate action: Amos Alliance

STAFF REPORTER ISLAMABAD

We are pleased to share a significant milestone in our journey towards sustainable water management and climate action. The Amos Alliance, comprising esteemed organizations United Council of Churches, Community Development Foundation, and Green Life Ministry, recently organized a momentous book launch ceremony at the prestigious Jinnah Convention Center. Titled "The Responsibility Ignored," authored by the esteemed Dr. Riaz Yousaf, a beacon of pride within the Christian



community, has contributed immensely to our collective understanding of these pressing issues. The ceremony was graced by the esteemed presence of Rev. Samson Sohail, representing the United Council of Churches, and Waris Masih Bhatti, representing the Community Development Foundation, Green Life Ministry was represented by none

Federal Minister for Power Launches Aggressive Campaign to Stamp Out Electricity Theft Nationwide

● Minister Leghari's proactive stance was unveiled as he issued a clarion call for immediate and stringent measures to combat electricity theft

STAFF REPORTER ISLAMABAD

In a bold move to tackle the persistent issue of electricity theft plaguing Pakistan, Federal Minister for Power, Sardar Awaiz Ahmed Khan Leghari, has spearheaded a comprehensive crackdown, signaling a resolute commitment to uphold the integrity of the nation's power grid. Minister Leghari's proactive stance was unveiled as he issued a clarion call for immediate and stringent measures to combat electricity theft across the country. With an

unwavering resolve to eradicate this illegal practice, Minister Leghari has set a decisive deadline of April 23, galvanizing stakeholders nationwide into action. In a directive that leaves no room for ambiguity, Minister Leghari has tasked the chairmen and CEOs of all Distribution Companies (Discos) with mobilizing their resources effectively to root out electricity theft. Furthermore, he has mandated a stringent verification process, enlisting the cooperation of Superintendent Engineers, Executive Engineers,



Subdivisional Officers, and field staff to certify the absence of theft within their operational jurisdictions. Under Minister Leghari's vigilant leadership, a robust campaign is underway to identify and neutralize every avenue exploited for electricity theft. Any instances of malpractice or non-compliance will face immediate legal and disciplinary repercussions, ensuring accountability at all

levels of operation. Recognizing the necessity for stronger deterrents, Minister Leghari has advocated for amendments to existing laws to impose severe penalties on employees found complicit in electricity theft. This firm stance underscores the government's unwavering commitment to fostering a fair and transparent power distribution system, free from fraudulent practices. Emphasizing the importance of regular performance evaluations, Minister Leghari has reaffirmed the government's vigilance in maintaining a steadfast stance against any lapses or irregularities. This proactive approach reflects the government's dedication to ensuring equitable access to electricity for all citizens, thereby fostering socio-economic development and prosperity across the nation. As Minister Leghari's campaign gains momentum, Pakistan stands poised to usher in a new era of integrity and transparency in its power sector, paving the way for sustainable progress and prosperity for generations to come.

IESCO Ensures Uninterrupted Power Supply During Ramadan, Promises Continued Service for Eid-ul-Fitr Holidays

STAFF REPORTER ISLAMABAD

In a remarkable display of dedication and commitment to customer service, the Chief Executive Officer of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan, has hailed the successful fulfillment of the promise of uninterrupted power supply during the holy month of Ramadan. Dr. Khan expressed his satisfaction, emphasizing the exceptional efforts of IESCO's officers and staff who, despite observing fasting, diligently carried out their official duties

with utmost devotion. Their unwavering commitment ensured that customers experienced seamless power continuity, enabling them to perform their religious obligations and daily routines without hindrance. Customers, in turn, lauded the tireless efforts of the IESCO team, acknowledging their pivotal role in facilitating a conducive environment for worship and daily activities. The 100 percent power continuity provided by IESCO was instrumental in enhancing the Ramadan experience for many residents across the region.



Looking ahead to the upcoming Eid-ul-Fitr holidays, Dr. Khan outlined a comprehensive roadmap for ensuring uninterrupted power supply. Monitoring rooms have been established to closely monitor electricity demand and supply, as well as the continuity of power on grid stations and feeders. Additionally, a dedicated complaint staff will remain on high alert to promptly address any customer grievances. To further streamline the complaint registration and resolution process, IESCO has made its services readily accessible round the clock. Relevant SDO Complaint Offices, Helpline No. 118, SMS Service 8118, and Complainant and

Monitoring Cell numbers: 051-9252933-4 will be operational 24/7, ensuring swift registration and redressal of complaints during the holiday period. Dr. Muhammad Amjad Khan's assurance of continued service and proactive measures to maintain power continuity during Eid-ul-Fitr exemplifies IESCO's unwavering commitment to customer satisfaction and service excellence. As the company continues to prioritize the needs of its customers, residents can look forward to a seamless and enjoyable holiday season, free from power interruptions.

During the blessed month of Ramadan, Mercy Universal distributed Ramadan packages

SYEDA NOOR FATIMA MUZAFFARABAD

During the blessed month of Ramadan, Mercy Universal distributed Ramadan packages to 100 deserving families in Muzaffarabad yesterday, including needy, widows, and those without support. During the distribution of the Ramadan package, Raja Aftab and Syed Salim Shah, coordinators of ROKAM, addressed the audience.

They said that Allah provides unseen help to people so that the service of the needy can be carried out. Mercy Universal has been striving according to its capacity since the beginning of Ramadan to provide facilities to fasting individuals. Ramadan is a sacred month of blessings in which Allah's special grace and generosity prevail, and Allah helps humans invisibly so that the service of the needy can be performed.

246 members of 104 criminal gangs arrested; valuables worth Rs 12.4 million recovered

STAFF REPORTER ISLAMABAD

According to the details, the DIG Operations Syed Shahzad Nadeem Bukhari said that, the Islamabad Capital Police has initiated indiscriminate crackdown against criminal gangs involved in heinous crime, a public relations officer said. He said that, the Islamabad Capital Police arrested 246 members of 104 criminal gangs during the last months and recovered valuables



worth Rs 12.4 million from their possession. The arrested gangs were involved in robbery, dacoity, snatching, theft and vehicle lifting activities. During the crackdown, the Islamabad Capital Police utilized all technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending 111 mem-

bers of 45 gangs involved in dacoity and snatching activities. 15 members of 07 gangs involved in house robbery activities. 58 members of 25 gangs involved in theft activities. Moreover, 24 members of 08 gangs involved in car lifting activities, 38 members of 19 bike lifter gangs were also arrested. The Islamabad Capital Police also recovered

stolen valuables worth Rs 12.4 million from the nabbed accused. DIG Operations said that, the Islamabad Capital Police is taking all possible measures to protect the life and property of the citizens, no criminal element will be allowed to disturb the peace of the people. Citizens are urged to cooperate with police and to report any suspicious activity or information on the emergency helpline "Pucar-15" or via "ICT-15" app for immediate assistance.



Islamabad: On behalf of Talha Mehmood Foundation, Mohammad Saeed Jan, Ambassador of Tajikistan, Mr. Hajupro Lawyer. Ambassador Netherlands, Center Talha Mehmood distributing ration to the poor.

EDITORIAL

Terror is back

Pakistan is no stranger to terrorism. On Saturday, a DSP officer and his gunmen embraced martyrdom when their vehicle was attacked in Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A week before that, at least five Chinese nationals were killed in a suicide bomb blast when they were on their way to the Dasu Dam in KP. Ever since its creation, it has seen long periods of violence involving both internal and external forces. The situation turned worse after the 2001 Twin Towers attack in the US when the resultant 'war on terror' led to the deaths of 80,000 people in Pakistan. By the late 2010s, the country's security forces, following multiple operations against terrorists, had managed to bring the situation under control. But the calm the country achieved after great sacrifices by both civilians and troops has been disturbed once again. Terror is back in the country, and in the first three months of 2024 alone, Pakistan saw 245 incidents of terror attacks and counter-terror operations, per a report by the Centre for Research and Security Studies (CRSS). These incidents have led to a total of 432 fatalities and 370 injuries. The report also suggests that militant groups have only claimed responsibility for 20 per cent of the total attacks. Other shocking revelations include the emergence of a new militant group - the Jabhat Ansar al-Mahdi Khorasan (JAMK). Balochistan and KP - two provinces bordering Afghanistan - have been worst affected by this new wave of terrorism. And while Sindh has seen an uptick in violence - over 40 per cent - the number of fatalities in the region has been low.

These worrying statistics once again remind us of the multifaceted challenges ahead. Militant groups are armed with sophisticated and hi-tech weapons - some of which were left by American soldiers during their hasty withdrawals. Also, years of war, resulting in vast destruction in remote areas of the country, have created a generation of frustrated and dejected people who pick up arms to protest against the government's apathy towards their causes. Several reports have suggested that militant groups use propaganda campaigns on social media to lure young recruits, ensuring that they have enough people to keep their presence intact. The government has repeatedly stated that it will take stern action against extremist elements responsible for spreading violence and fear in the country. It has also warned Afghanistan officials, over and over, of the use of Afghan soil for terror attacks against Pakistan. It is time the interim setup in the neighbouring country heeded Pakistan's concerns and took action against groups responsible for spreading terror across the border. The Pakistani government should do whatever it takes to bring peace back to the country. For decades, the people of the country have silently suffered from growing extremism in the country. Violence and destruction caused in remote places in KP and Balochistan have expelled the area's residents and forced them to find meagre jobs either in urban cities or overseas. Our people need some stability in their lives, and it is the government's responsibility to provide a safe living environment to all its citizens. The two provinces that are only visited by mainstream politicians during the election year need the undivided attention of all authorities who should be on the same page to put an end to this menace. Only a safe Pakistan can transform into an economically strong Pakistan.

(Courtesy The News)

Baseless Propaganda Against SIFC Related Activities in AJK (PART-I)

BY ABDUL BASIT ALVI

Despite its wealth of attractions, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) remains relatively unexplored as a tourist hotspot. However, the time has arrived to recognize and harness the immense potential of this scenic region and promote tourism as a catalyst for sustainable development and prosperity. AJK boasts a diverse range of landscapes, spanning from verdant valleys and meandering rivers to snow-capped mountains and pristine lakes. The Neelum Valley, with its crystalline waters and lush hillsides, emerges as a haven for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers alike. Similarly, the tranquil charm of Banjosa Lake and the towering peaks of Pir Chinasi offer awe-inspiring panoramas that rival those of any global destination. Moreover, AJK brims with historical and cultural richness, boasting a heritage that traces back centuries. From the ancient remnants of temples and forts to the vibrant customs of indigenous communities, the region provides a captivating glimpse into its storied past. Visitors to AJK can explore historical landmarks such as the Red Fort in Muzaffarabad and the Sharda Peeth Temple while immersing themselves in the vibrant festivals and cultural celebrations that define local life.



Furthermore, sustainable tourism practices can aid in preserving and safeguarding AJK's delicate ecosystems and cultural legacy for future generations. By advocating for responsible tourism practices such as eco-friendly accommodations, community-based tourism initiatives, and conservation endeavors, we can safeguard the natural and cultural riches of AJK for future generations. Amid an era defined by environmental challenges and the imperative for sustainable development, Pakistan has taken a bold stride forward with the inception of the Green Initiative within the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Investment Facilitation Committee (SIFC). This pioneering program endeavors to address pressing environmental concerns while fostering economic growth and societal advancement throughout the nation.

transition towards a low-carbon economy. In addition to renewable energy, the Green Initiative prioritizes enhancing waste management practices nationwide. Pakistan grapples with significant challenges in solid waste management, leading to environmental degradation and public health hazards. To combat this issue, the government is implementing innovative waste management solutions, including recycling programs, waste-to-energy plants, and landfill rehabilitation projects, to curtail waste generation and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Moreover, the Green Initiative under SIFC is driving endeavors to conserve and safeguard Pakistan's natural resources, including forests, water bodies, and biodiversity hotspots. Through initiatives like reforestation programs, watershed management projects, and conservation efforts, the government aims to rejuvenate degraded ecosystems and preserve crucial habitats for plant and animal species. Furthermore, the Green Initiative seeks to promote sustainable agricultural practices to bolster food security and livelihoods for rural communities. By advocating for organic farming, agroforestry, and climate-smart agriculture techniques, the program aims to enhance resilience to climate change and improve the productivity and sustainability of agricultural systems.

Additionally, green tourism companies in AJK prioritize conservation and restoration efforts to safeguard the region's delicate ecosystems and biodiversity. Reforestation projects, habitat restoration initiatives, and wildlife conservation programs are underway to preserve critical habitats and protect endangered species. These endeavors not only enhance AJK's natural beauty but also contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation efforts in the region.

The Green Initiative under SIFC signifies a significant milestone in Pakistan's journey towards sustainable development and environmental stewardship. By harnessing the potential of public-private partnerships, innovation, and collaboration on fossil fuels and foster a

the Green Initiative under SIFC constitutes a comprehensive strategy encompassing a diverse array of initiatives aimed at promoting environmental sustainability and combating climate change. From renewable energy ventures to waste management schemes, the program seeks to leverage innovation and collaboration to cultivate a greener, more resilient future for Pakistan. At the core of the Green Initiative lies a dedication to renewable energy and clean technologies. Pakistan boasts abundant energy resources, including solar, wind, and hydropower, yet their full potential remains largely untapped. Through the Green Initiative, the government is investing in renewable energy projects, such as solar and wind farms, to diminish reliance on fossil fuels and foster a

change from time to time, things become trendy, and people around the world do it as well. If it's in makeup or something else, if we talk about makeup it gives you a beauty but only for a short time or temporary, it enhances your beauty and makes your features more attractive. It's important to remember that each person is beautiful in their own way. They should normalize this. There was a time when dark skin people weren't considered beautiful but now they are, everything changes time to time, so we should value every skin color we shouldn't talk or make friends on the basis of their skin color or body type.

South Korea South Korea is a country that has actual beauty standards, and individuals from all over the world come here for whitening injections or plastic surgery. Plastic surgery is okay at some point if people have some kind of unique feature which doesn't match with the rest of your face or skin so they can get them. But changing the entire structure or features of your skin is not good, if you are perfectly fine. Beauty standards in South

capacity to instigate transformative change and cultivate a greener, more prosperous future for all Pakistanis.

As the world grapples with the urgent imperatives of climate change and environmental degradation, initiatives like the Green Initiative under SIFC serve as beacons of hope and inspiration. By prioritizing sustainability and investing in green solutions, Pakistan is paving the way for a brighter, more sustainable future for generations to come.

In the picturesque landscapes of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK), a burgeoning wave of sustainable tourism is taking root, propelled by innovative projects spearheaded by green tourism enterprises. These initiatives not only showcase the region's natural splendor but also prioritize environmental preservation, community involvement, and economic advancement.

As AJK emerges as a leading tourist destination, these green tourism ventures are leading the charge towards a more sustainable and conscientious approach to travel. One notable endeavor involves the creation of eco-friendly accommodations and resorts seamlessly integrated with AJK's natural environment. These sustainable lodging options employ locally-sourced materials, renewable energy sources, and low-impact design principles to minimize their environmental footprint. Whether it's eco-lodges nestled in forests or riverside campsites with minimal infrastructure, these accommodations provide travelers with an opportunity to reconnect with nature while positively impacting the environment.

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Where's our water?

Water shortages in an agricultural country mean that the country has been sentenced to economic death. Any dip in agricultural output could have a huge impact on the national exchequer of the said country. Financially weak Pakistan, which is already trying hard to avert default, now finds itself entangled in another web of economic challenges. The Indus River Authority (IRSA) says that Pakistan will face a water shortage of up to 30 per cent during kharif season. This, IRSA says, is due to the operational constraints at the Tarbella and Mangela dams, as the country's two major water reservoirs are still not available for water discharges. An official of the Sindh irrigation department also says that from April 1 to June 10, "there will be no water available for below Kotri water releases which are essential to stop the sea intrusion into Sindh's agricultural land." It is prudent to mention that the province has already lost 3.5 million acres of agricultural land since 1956 because of sea intrusion.

Water distribution across the country is a disputed issue, with Sindh often making a case for the adoption of the 1991 Water Accord to ensure a proportional share of water for all provinces. But the problem at hand is also exacerbated by climate change and outdated water infrastructure that fails to store water. This year, particularly, the lack of snow in parts that used to receive record-breaking snowfall has resulted in a dip in water storage. That Pakistan is not taking any measures to protect itself against the harmful effects of climate change is baffling. If important kharif crops - both food and cash crops - drop in production, Pakistan can face huge challenges. Crops like cotton are vital for the country's gigantic textile sector. Any deficit in production will leave textile industries in a fix, unable to complete the orders, mostly from abroad. At a time when other countries in the region like Bangladesh are ever-ready to capture the share of the Pakistani market, Pakistan cannot afford to commit avoidable mistakes. Also, the lack of availability of important food crops compels authorities to import them, transferring the burden of heavy taxes and customs duties to ordinary Pakistanis who are barely meeting their monthly expenses. The country must realize that it has to look for home-grown solutions to these problems and that it cannot expect any developed nations to extend financial aid. And in a world of technological advancements, Pakistan can act independently.

Agri-tech can help Pakistan deal with external pressures on its natural resources, like water, to avoid any losses in agricultural output. There are tools available that can help water-scarce Pakistan conserve water. But all this requires public-private partnerships and the government's firm resolve. Pakistan's water woes are not new.

(Courtesy The News)

Sky-high circular debt

Pakistan's surging energy sector circular debt is a pressing issue that demands swift action. The debt, which has now reached over Rs5.5 trillion, stems from a variety of factors, including inefficient power generation, poor distribution infrastructure and inadequate tariff policies. The circular debt alone amounts to over 5% of GDP and is rising at a rate of over Rs135 billion per month. This is despite the massive energy tariff hikes during the past year, which have significantly raised revenue collection while breaking the backs of poor and middle-class families. Unfortunately, unresolved inefficiencies in the system and poor planning mean that despite the price increases, the government still sells gas and electricity at a net loss. The failure of price hikes to resolve the problem is another illustration of the need for the government to work on more holistic solutions that include measures such as new investment in plants to increase overall efficiency, improving transmission and distribution infrastructure, and reforms to the tariff policy. The government must also come up with a more effective power theft and 'line-loss' policy, while encouraging better usage practices among consumers. And while new green energy projects still look expensive, the government must seriously examine their lifetime potential and be willing to invest today to save tomorrow.

Given the government's financial constraints, investment in renewables and green energy also need not be direct - subsidies and tax exemptions on residential solar panels, for example, are a practical option that would make installation cheaper without necessitating new spending. Such policies may also help reduce subsidies on energy consumption, which amount to around 1% of GDP - the highest in the region, according to the World Bank - even though there has been a massive decline in the number of recipients, from 92% to 62% of all consumers.

(Courtesy The Express Tribune)

Beauty Standards Around The World

BY RAHMAT RANA

As we all know, beauty is everything in this century and back in history, they drastically effect everyday interaction, the media and the commercial world. They determine what is "beautiful", from body shape, to facial proportions, to height and weight. The phrase 'beauty is in the eye of the beholder' is well-known! The majority of people will approach someone based on their beauty or appearance, but most won't. Women are particularly in this category because they are under a lot of pressure from society to look presentable, whether in the industry or in their everyday life.

While beauty standards may be good in some ways, their extremeness can lead to negativity, which is currently happening. Everyone is striving to obtain fair injections or treatments to appear beautiful in society. It's not their fault, they were raised in a mindset where only fair (white) colors were considered beautiful (attractive). Or they've been pressured by their society to do this thing. It mostly happens in Pakistan. Let me discuss these few countries where beauty standards are set or high.

(Pakistan, America and South Korea) Pakistan A country that is both conservative and has a high standard of beauty, essentially in a negative or incorrect manner. When discussing society, people are forced, but for what purpose? Marriage in Pakistan

is not easy for both men and women. The person must be fair in color. It is not easy for dark skin individuals to get married because society will criticize them or the person they are marrying. Their mindsets are totally wrong, and some go into depression because of this. Media is also causing this. People feel insecure about themselves. Feminine beauty is defined as having fair skin, almond-shaped eyes, long hair, and a petite figure.

People with these are regarded as beautiful. In the media industry, we can see that only fair-skinned people are actors/actresses. I've never seen anyone with dark skin. This is how media influences us. We only want to see people who are fair-skinned or, on the other hand, we criticize them. America It is a country where Beauty Standards are high and change time to time, now people are getting self tanning injections to look cool or more pretty and to set standards so the people around the world follow their path by changing the real color of their skin. They are not aware that this thing can also cause harm to their skin. The use of heavy injections or treatments can cause damage to your skin both now and in the future,

as everything has its own side effects. Being light-skinned, blonde and blue-eyed is the benchmark of beauty, of what is most desirable. The standards in America

change from time to time, things become trendy, and people around the world do it as well. If it's in makeup or something else, if we talk about makeup it gives you a beauty but only for a short time or temporary, it enhances your beauty and makes your features more attractive. It's important to remember that each person is beautiful in their own way. They should normalize this. There was a time when dark skin people weren't considered beautiful but now they are, everything changes time to time, so we should value every skin color we shouldn't talk or make friends on the basis of their skin color or body type.

South Korea South Korea is a country that has actual beauty standards, and individuals from all over the world come here for whitening injections or plastic surgery. Plastic surgery is okay at some point if people have some kind of unique feature which doesn't match with the rest of your face or skin so they can get them. But changing the entire structure or features of your skin is not good, if you are perfectly fine. Beauty standards in South

Korea are often influenced by K-pop culture, which promotes a youthful and flawless appearance characterized by fair skin, large eyes, a slim figure, and a V-shaped jawline. Features such as double eyelids and a small, slim nose are also highly valued. Most of the people don't understand what is the actual reason that Korean people skin looks good the reason behind this is their genetics and also they follow Korean Skin Care daily. The products they use daily are designed to nourish and make their skin glow and look fresh. Double eyelid surgery and rhinoplasty are commonly performed cosmetic surgeries there.

"Normalizing all skin colors is essential for promoting inclusivity and celebrating diversity. Embracing the natural beauty of various skin tones contributes to a more inclusive and accepting society. By challenging the notion that certain skin colors are superior to others, we can help individuals feel confident and proud of their unique appearance. We shouldn't let the media take over our minds about whether this thing is right or wrong. As things become trendy, it's not possible for us to keep up with everything happening in the world. Think in a positive manner and make your own decisions about what is right or wrong for you. Do not let others make us feel down or low due to your features. Embrace yourself and love yourself as you are."

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BUSINESS

Budget deficit: Govt to borrow Rs5,000 billion by selling T-bills, investment bonds

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



To meet the budget deficit in the last quarter of the current fiscal year 2023-24, the federal government decided to borrow about Rs5,000 billion from the banks by auctioning the T-bills and Investment Bonds.

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) released the schedule for the auction of T-bills and investment bonds from April 24 to June 24.

According to the State Bank, Pakistan Investment Bonds worth Rs2,490 billion will be sold in three months while the

government will borrow a loan of Rs2,475 billion from the auction of T-bills during this period.

According to financial experts, the government will cover the budget deficit by selling T-bills and investment bonds worth Rs 4,965 billion to commercial banks from April 24 to June 24.

The experts said Pakistan's domestic debt is continuously increasing and in the first eight months of this financial year,

debt has increased by 6.51 per cent to Rs64,805 billion.

The experts also said that compared to February 2023, Pakistan's debt increased by 19 per cent in February 2024, which has increased from Rs54,438 billion in February 2023 to Rs64,806 billion in February 2024.

According to experts, in the eight months of the current financial year, the internal debt of the government has increased by 10 per cent to Rs42,671 billion and the external debt has increased by 9 per cent to Rs22,134 billion.



ISLAMABAD: A vendor is displaying ice blocks for selling purpose at his roadside setup at Aabpara Market, in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

OGDCL Unveils Major Gas Discovery at Nur West # 01, Fueling Pakistan's Energy Potential

● Success story at Nur West # 01 underscores OGDCL's unwavering dedication to strategic exploration endeavors

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



In a groundbreaking development, the Oil & Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL) has announced a momentous gas discovery at the exploratory Well Nur West # 01, located in the picturesque Sujawal district of Sindh province.

With OGDCL holding a commanding 100% stake in the Nur Development & Production Lease (D&PL), this discovery marks a significant milestone in Pakistan's quest for energy self-sufficiency.

Utilizing its state-of-the-art drilling expertise, OGDCL delved deep into the earth's crust, reaching a remarkable depth of 2975 meters. The results were nothing short of spectacular,

as the well tested an impressive 1.24 Million Standard Cubic Feet per Day (MMSCFD) of gas through a 32/64 choke, with a well-head flowing pressure of 150 Pounds per Square Inch (PSI) from the Lower Goru Formation ('A' Sand). This substantial discovery is being hailed as a breakthrough in the realm of Tight Gas exploration.

The success story at Nur West # 01 under-

scores OGDCL's unwavering dedication to strategic exploration endeavors. It not only highlights the company's technical prowess but also reaffirms its commitment to reshaping the energy landscape of Pakistan. With an eye toward bolstering both its own hydrocarbon reserves and the nation's energy security, OGDCL continues to forge ahead

on its mission of excellence.

This pivotal achievement serves as a catalyst for future growth and development, opening up new vistas of opportunity in the realm of energy exploration. In line with its strategic vision, OGDCL has embarked on a rapid implementation of its tight gas exploration program, signaling its proactive stance in harnessing the coun-

try's energy potential. The discovery at Nur West # 01 not only fuels optimism within OGDCL but also resonates positively across the entire energy sector. As Pakistan charts its course towards sustainable development, this landmark find stands as a testament to the nation's resilience and ingenuity in harnessing its natural resources for the collective prosperity of its people.

With OGDCL leading the charge, Pakistan is poised to unlock even greater energy reserves, paving the way for a brighter, more vibrant future powered by indigenous resources. As the nation embraces this newfound energy abundance, it takes bold strides towards achieving its aspirations of economic prosperity and energy security on the global stage.

Finance Division Refutes Delay Claims on ECC's Wheat Procurement Decision

● Clarification Issued Regarding Thorough Deliberation Process

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



The Finance Division has refuted claims circulating in the media regarding the purported delay in decision-making by the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) concerning wheat procurement targets.

In a statement issued on Saturday, the Finance Division clarified that the ECC is committed to ensuring comprehensive stakeholder consultation before finalizing any decisions.

Contrary to misleading reports, the Finance Division stated that the ECC extensively discussed matters related to wheat procurement during its meeting on April 4, 2024.

Following deliberations with relevant federal ministries, it was deemed neces-

sary to involve provincial governments in the decision-making process, given their pivotal role in implementing these decisions at the grassroots level.

Consequently, the ECC reconvened on April 5, with the participation of representatives of all provincial governments. During this session, provincial representatives provided updates on the current status of wheat procurement in their respective regions and outlined their requirements for bank credit.

After thorough discussions, the ECC approved the procurement targets proposed by the Ministry of Food Security and the provinces, along with the corresponding cash and credit limits needed

for implementation. Notably, there were no suggestions for alterations to the targets, nor were any such changes approved by the ECC.

The government of Punjab assured the committee of its proactive measures to monitor the wheat situation within the province and initiate procurement processes accordingly. It also underscored its commitment to facilitating farmers in selling their produce at the support price level.

The Finance Division underscored the ECC's commitment to meticulous deliberation on all matters brought before it, highlighting the importance of informed decision-making with the involvement of all stakeholders.

This approach ensures that decisions with significant implications are made collectively and transparently.

Chicken prices increase Rs 95 per kg ahead on Eidul Fitr

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



Chicken prices increase Rs 95 per kg ahead on Eidul Fitr. In the month of Ramadan from March 12th to April 28th, 2024, the price of poultry chicken increased by 15 percent and the price of poultry meat increased by 17 percent per kg.

On the Ramadan, the price of chicken was fixed at Rs 410 per kg, it increased to Rs 475 per kg, similarly, the price of chicken meat at the beginning of Ramadan was Rs 595 per kg, which increased to Rs 690 per kg by 28th

Ramadan. Meanwhile, it was observed that on April 6th (26th of Ramadan), the price of live chicken stood at Rs437 per kg and the price of meat was 634 rupees per kg. It increased by Rs 38 and 56 in only two days and sold up to Rs 475 and 690 by Ramadan 28th.

In the last four weeks during the month of Ramadan, there was a 10 to 12 percent

increase in the prices of poultry chicken and meat from normal days to weekends, Saturdays and Sundays, which caused severe inflation for the people during Ramadan.

Similarly, the price of eggs, which was Rs 220 per kg before Ramadan, increased by Rs 40 per dozen in the first week of Ramadan and by Rs 60 per dozen in the second week.

Minister for Industries Rana Tanveer Hussain made ECC member

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

The number of members of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) rose from six to seven when Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday added another member to it.

The committee's new member was Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain. They informed that Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb would remain the committee chairman.

Workers' remittances record \$3 bn inflow in March 24

● Gold rates up by Rs 600 to Rs 245,700 per tola

BUSINESS REPORTER
ISLAMABAD



The overseas workers' remittances recorded an inflow of US\$3 billion during March 2024, the State Bank of Pakistan on Monday said.

In terms of growth, during the month under review, remittances increased by 31.3 percent on month on month basis and 16.4 percent on year on year basis, said a news release here.

Workers' remittances inflow of US\$ 21.0 billion has been recorded during the first nine months of the fiscal year 2023-24 as compared to US\$ 20.8 same period of last year.

Workers' Remittances inflows during March 24 were mainly sourced from Saudi Arabia (US\$703.1 million), United Arab Emirates (US\$548.5 million), United Kingdom (US\$461.5 million) and United States of America (US\$372.5 million).

Meanwhile, The per tola price of 24 karat gold witnessed an increase of Rs 600 and was sold at Rs 245,700 on Monday as com-

pared to its sale at Rs 245,100 on the previous day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 514 and was sold at Rs 210,648 against the sale price of Rs210,134 and 10 gram 22 karat gold also increased to Rs193,094 from Rs 192,622, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported.

The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,650 and Rs 2271.94 respectively. The price of gold in the international market increased by \$5 to 2,355 from \$2,350, the Association reported.

China's Central Bank Boosts Gold Reserves Amid Global Uncertainty

WEB DESK
BEIJING

For more than a year, China's central bank has been buying up large amounts of gold. The move, along with the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, have helped spike the price of the precious metal to new highs.

The price of gold broke the \$2,300 level for the first time this week as geopolitical issues, expectations of US interest rate cuts and China's accumulation of the precious metal spurred interest from speculators.

Gold is seen by investors as a safe haven in times of turmoil and a hedge against currency devaluation, so the conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine have

helped the recent price rise, along with the post-COVID inflation spike.

The move by China's central bank, the People's Bank of China (PBC), has been mirrored by other mostly emerging market central banks, who are all keen to up their gold holdings.

DW takes a look at why Beijing has gone on a gold-buying spree.

What exactly has China been doing? The PBC has been adding to its gold reserves for the past 16 months in a row, according to the World Gold Council. In 2023, the PBC bought more gold than all other central banks. The industry body calculated China's purchases of the precious metal last year at 225 metric tons, roughly a quarter of the 1,037 tons bought by all the world's central banks.



In January and February alone, the PBC increased its gold reserves by 22 tons, and the country's stock market dropped in value due to recent economic woes in the world's second-largest economy.

From the start of the year, we've seen enormous Chinese retail buying ... record amounts of buying on the domestic Shanghai Gold Exchange," John Reade, chief market strategist at the World

Gold Council, told Bloomberg TV last month. Why is China buying so much gold? China is heavily reliant on the US dollar for trade with the rest of the world. As the world's reserve currency, most commodities are priced in dollars and more than half the world's trade is conducted using the greenback.

World

Pakistan Agrees to Launch PM Abiy's Green Legacy Initiative in Major Cities

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD
The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have agreed to launch the Green Legacy Initiative of H.E. PM Dr. Abiy Ahmed in the major cities including Lahore, Peshawar, Karachi, Quetta, Sialkot and others. This was agreed upon in a meeting between H.E. Jemal Bekir Abdula, Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan, and Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Environmental Coordination H.E. Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam.

The Ambassador lauded the role played by H.E. Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam in initiating a joint collaboration between Ethiopia and Pakistan last year for addressing climate related issues. He recalled the launch of Green Legacy Initiative in Islamabad last year



in the presence of senior ministers, government officials, diplomatic corps, business community, media and civil society. The Ambassador stressed the need for enhanced collaboration between the two countries to address climate issues through skills, technology, information and knowledge sharing. He said the govern-

ment of Ethiopia stood ready to work together with the Pakistani government in addressing climate-related issues such as floods, food insecurity and others. Ethiopia would extend all-out support to Pakistan on climate mitigation through technological transfer and experience sharing, the ambassador remarked. He also congratulated H.E. Romina Khurshid Alam on assuming the charge of the Coordinator to the PM on Climate Change. H.E. Romina Khurshid Alam expressed keen interest in the launch of the Green Legacy initiative in different cities of her country. She said the climate change was a global phenomenon and joint efforts against climate changes were the need of hour. The government of Pakistan is looking forward to working with Ethiopia to deal with climate change, she added.

Apple asks US appeals court to reverse Apple Watch import ban
WEB DESK
NEW YORK
Apple (AAPL.O.) opens new tab urged a US appeals court to overturn a US trade tribunal's decision to ban imports of some Apple Watches in a patent dispute with medical-monitoring technology company Masimo (MASI.O.), opens new tab. Apple told the US Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, opens new tab that the US International Trade Commission's decision was based on a "series of substantively defective patent rulings," and that Masimo failed to show it had invested in making competing US products that would justify the order. Representatives for Apple and Masimo did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the filing. Irvine, California-based Masimo has accused Apple of hiring away its employees and stealing its pulse oximetry technology after discussing a potential collaboration. Apple first introduced pulse oximetry to its Series 6 Apple Watches in 2020. Masimo convinced the ITC on Dec. 26 to block imports of Apple's latest-edition Series 9 and Ultra 2 smartwatches after finding that their technology for reading blood-oxygen levels infringed Masimo's patents.

Widespread Flooding in Australia Prompts Hundreds of Rescues

WEB DESK
SYDNEY
Intense rainfall at the start of the weekend saw around 300 homes evacuated in north-east Sydney, emergency services said. Floodwaters had caused widespread damage across the state in a very short amount of time, federal minister for emergency management Catherine King said. "The New South Wales government is continuing to assess the damage and understand the impact of this disaster," King added. Emergency crews had performed about 200 flood res-



cues since Friday, said state minister for emergency services Jihad Dib, as some regions were left cut off by damaged or flooded roads. Around 5,000 volunteers had worked through the night helping those affected, he added. State emergency commissioner Carlene York said 60 community warnings remained in place for regions affected by the flooding. Disaster support had been triggered by officials in a dozen areas to help cover clean-up costs and pay for emergency accommodation. It was the region's seventh flood in 18 months. Researchers have repeatedly warned that climate change amplifies the risk of natural disasters such as floods, bushfires and cyclones.

Taiwan Earthquake Death Toll Rises to 13, Hundreds Stranded

WEB DESK
TAIWAN
Helicopters in Taiwan are being used to rescue stranded people as rescue work continues following a powerful earthquake. The death toll from a powerful earthquake in Taiwan has risen to 13 after another body was found in the hard-hit Taroko National Park. Meanwhile, over 600 people — including nearly 450 at a hotel in the national park — remained stranded three days after the island's strongest earthquake in 25 years. The disaster caused at least 1,145 injuries. Meanwhile, the demolition of a building in the city of Hualien that is leaning



precariouly after the 7.4 earthquake was halted on Saturday because of aftershocks that made it lean even more. Helicopters on a rescue mission Rescued helicopters were deployed to bring people to safety after the earthquake damaged roads and blocked tunnels, leaving hundreds stranded in the mountains. Rescuers have also airdropped food and

Aftershocks continue Wednesday's quake was the most serious in Taiwan since one of a magnitude of 7.6 hit the island in 1999. More than 300 aftershocks have since struck Hualien, the quake's epicenter, which is situated around 100 kilometers (60 miles) south of the capital Taipei. The latest aftershock — measuring 5.2 on the Richter scale — was felt in the area on Saturday morning. The relatively low number of deaths from Wednesday's massive quake has been attributed to strict building and widespread public education awareness in earthquake-prone Taiwan.

World food prices rise for first time in 7 months: UN agency

WEB DESK
UNITED NATIONS
Global food prices in March recorded their first monthly increase in seven months, driven by higher costs of vegetable oils and dairy products, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a Rome-based UN agency, has said. The prices, however, posted a year-on-year decline during the month, according to the UN agency. The February reading was the lowest for the index since February 2021 and marked a seventh consecutive monthly decline. International food prices have fallen sharply from a record peak in March 2022 at the start of Russia's invasion of fellow crop exporter Ukraine. The FAO's price index, which tracks



ing producing countries and firm domestic demand in South-East Asia, while those for soy oil recovered from multi-year lows, boosted by robust demand from the biofuel sector, particularly in Brazil and the US," the agency said. Vegetable oil quotations were also driven by higher crude oil prices. Dairy prices, meanwhile, dropped 8.2 per cent annually to 124.2 points, but rose for the sixth straight month, driven by higher cheese and butter prices. The increase reflected steady import demand from Asia, higher internal sales in Western Europe leading to the spring holidays and seasonally falling production in Oceania, according to the report. "Notwithstanding softer Asian demand, international butter

prices increased further in March, mainly due to solid seasonal demand and somewhat tighter European stocks," it said. Meat prices rose 1.7 per cent to 113 points in March, a second consecutive monthly increase but a 1.5 per cent decline from the same period a year ago. International poultry prices rose, underpinned by "continued steady import demand from leading importing countries, despite ample supplies mostly sustained by reduced avian influenza outbreaks in major producing countries", the FAO said. The resistant nature of avian influenza viruses means they can be carried on farm equipment and spread easily from farm to farm, according to the World Organization for Animal Health.

Sanofi to settle 4,000 Zantac cancer lawsuits

WEB DESK
NEW YORK
Sanofi has reached an agreement in principle to settle 4,000 U.S. lawsuits linking the discontinued heartburn drug Zantac to cancer, the company said on Wednesday. Sanofi did not disclose the financial terms of the deal. The agreement, which still needs to be finalized, will resolve most of the lawsuits against the French pharmaceutical company in U.S. state courts, with the exception of Delaware where the majority of the cases are pending. Sanofi did not admit any liability in the settlement, and said it is settling to avoid the expense and ongoing distraction of the litigation. "Sanofi has vigorously defended the Zantac litigation since the outset and will continue to do so," the company said in a statement.



Sanofi still faces about 20,000 lawsuits over Zantac in Delaware state court. A judge in Delaware Superior Court in Wilmington is weighing the fate of about 70,000 cases filed against Sanofi and other defendants, including GSK (GSK.L), Pfizer (PFE.N), and Boehringer Ingelheim. GSK, Boehringer Ingelheim and Pfizer did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Plaintiffs and defendants are awaiting a ruling from the judge on whether there is sufficient scientific evidence to support plaintiffs' claims that Zantac causes cancer. The drugmakers notched a significant win in 2022, when another judge dismissed about 50,000 lawsuits making similar claims that had been consolidated in federal court in Florida. That judge concluded that the opinions of the plaintiffs'

expert witnesses that Zantac can cause cancer were not supported by sound science. Plaintiffs are appealing that ruling. The drugmakers have maintained that there is no evidence Zantac exposed users to harmful levels of the carcinogenic chemical NDMA. Jennifer Moore and Brent Wisner, who are the lead plaintiffs' attorneys in the Delaware and California litigation, said on Wednesday that they were pleased that Sanofi had reached a settlement while litigation continues against other defendants. "We are pushing forward aggressively against GSK and

Boehringer Ingelheim and are preparing for multiple trials in California state court this year," Moore said. First approved in 1983, Zantac became the world's best-selling medicine in 1988 and one of the first-ever drugs to top \$1 billion in annual sales. Originally marketed by a forerunner of GSK, it was later sold successively to Pfizer, Boehringer and finally to Sanofi. In 2019, some manufacturers and pharmacies halted Zantac sales after NDMA was detected in some pills. Some tests showed that Zantac's active ingredient, ranitidine, could degrade into NDMA over time or when exposed to heat. Lawsuits began piling up from people who said they developed cancer after taking Zantac. Plaintiffs said the companies knew, or should have known, that ranitidine posed a cancer risk and that they failed to warn consumers.

Ant Group launches partnership on International Consumer Friendly Zones Program in China

WEB DESK
BEIJING
Ant Group, along with 11 overseas payment partners of Alipay and major international card organizations, launched here on Monday a nationwide program to build International Consumer Friendly Zones Program across major Chinese tourist and commercial cities, with the support of relevant authorities and local governments. Working with local merchants, tourism sites and commercial districts, the Program aims to enhance international visitors' experience and drive business for local merchants.

Ant Group now offers 2 mobile payment alternatives for overseas visitors in China. Alipay+, a suite of cross-border mobile payment and digitalization technology solutions under Ant International, enables overseas consumers to pay with their home e-wallets across China. Travelers may also choose to bind major international bank cards, including Visa, Mastercard, JCB, Discover® and Diners Club International to an Alipay app to access a rich array of local Alipay services from shopping, dining,

ride-hailing to public transportation while in the Chinese mainland, without needing a local bank account or phone number. As part of the International Consumer Friendly Zones program, Ant Group will collaborate closely with partners to significantly enhance accessibility and convenience of the two mobile payment options for international visitors. Emphasis will be placed on refining these services at locations most frequented by travelers, including key transportation hubs as well as tourism attractions, hotels, and shopping districts. Initial efforts will focus



on expanding bilingual support, offering comprehensive user guides, and bolstering merchant training to ensure a seamless and welcoming experience for global consumers. At the launch, Alipay+ jointly announced with NayaPay, Pakistan's leading fintech platform, that NayaPay users will be able to make payments with their e-money account at Alipay's extensive network of 80 million merchants in China, as bilateral trade and visits increase. NayaPay thus becomes the 11th

overseas and 1st Pakistani payments platform to "roam" in China, following AlipayHK (Hong Kong SAR, China), Changi Pay (Singapore), HiPay (Mongolia), Kakao Pay (South Korea), MPay (Macao SAR, China), Naver Pay (South Korea), OCBC Digital (Singapore), Toss Pay (South Korea), Touch 'n' Go eWallet (Malaysia), and TrueMoney (Thailand). To welcome overseas travelers, Ant Group, in collaboration with partners, has been rolling out extensive merchant and consumer education and marketing campaigns. Danish A. Lakhani, CEO NayaPay said

"Today marks a monumental milestone in the commercial relationship between China and Pakistan as we witness the establishment of the first direct payment channels between our two nations. This groundbreaking development is made possible through the collaborative efforts of Ant Group, NUCC, and NayaPay, under the auspices of the People's Bank of China and the State Bank of Pakistan. This achievement not only paves the way for a new era of financial transactions but also symbolizes joint innovation between our nations." YIN Xiaolong, Vice

President, General Manager at Visa mainland China, Chao Zhan, Vice President of NUCC of China (NetsUnion Clearing Corporation), Jake Xue, General Manager, Global Business Services, Ant Group, also spoke on the occasion. Introduced in 2020, Alipay+ now connects over 88 million merchants in 57 countries and regions to 1.5 billion consumer accounts on over 25 e-wallets and banking apps, allowing consumers to travel and pay worry-free globally, and merchants to boost revenue through a growing portfolio of digitalization tools.

SPORTS

Babar Azam opens up on 'painful' defeat against Afghanistan in World Cup

● Babar responds to criticism over his strike rate

TAHIR CH.

LAHORE

Pakistan's white-ball captain Babar Azam broke the silence on the upset defeat against Afghanistan in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023.

The star batter appeared in Peshawar Zalmi's podcast and discussed a wide array of topics from his cricketing journey.

He was also asked about Pakistan's most shocking defeat in last year's mega event which drew massive criticism from cricket pundits and fans.

"That match was very painful for me because losing to Afghanistan in a World Cup was a different kind of thing.

"I think they played very good cricket and we could not execute the way we should. We made efforts and we posted a good total but the way they both (Ibrahim Zadran and

Rahmat Shah) played, it seemed they would not get out on that pitch. The credit should be given to them as well. "So, that day was a hard day for me. I couldn't sleep that day. It (defeat) hit me hard in the heart."

Babar Azam then went on to share how he overcame the setback, stating it takes time but experience helps a person to handle such situations.

"Look, it takes some time to overcome, a day or two. If you do well, you don't sleep with excitement leave aside failures.

"The more you play, the more you get experienced, you get to know how to handle yourself."

For the unversed, Afghanistan defeated Pakistan by eight wickets in the ICC World Cup 2023.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Ibrahim Zadran and Rahmat Shah scored sensible half-centuries after Noor Ahmad's 3/49 led Afghanistan to



upset Pakistan.

The eight-wicket victory marked Afghanistan's first over Pakistan in ODIs.

The two sides had come face to face on seven occasions in the 50-over format.

Meanwhile, Pakistan captain

Babar Azam has recently opened up about the criticism he faces regarding his batting strike rate.

The star batter defended himself stating that he plays according to the situation, yet some critics always find a way to

criticise him.

During a recent appearance at a podcast, Babar Azam addressed the issue regarding his strike rate and maintained that he always intends to win the match for his team.

"You cannot satisfy

someone all the time, I am only focused on how to win matches for my team. How I have to build the innings, and how I have to maintain my strike rate, is my concern," Azam said.

"See, strike rate is a different story, build-

ing an innings, and winning a match are two different things. When you win a match, then both things are covered," he added.

The star batter emphasized that he adapts his batting style according to the match situation, as some matches require a cautious approach.

"Sometimes you cannot play freely because you have to build the innings, and you have wickets in hand, you can play with a 200-strike rate as well," Azam stated.

Babar Azam also explained that every player has a different approach and role, but some people always take issue with his batting style.

"I cannot understand why people have issues with my strike rate, they will say it is 150. It should be 170. If I play with 170, they will say it should have been 200. Every player has his own playing style, I don't like to compare myself with anyone."

Spurs bolster Champions League qualifying bid with Forest win

WEB DESK

LONDON

Tottenham Hotspur boosted their Champions League qualifying hopes with a 3-1 home win over relegation-battling Nottingham Forest to move into fourth spot in the Premier League.

Second-half goals from Micky van de Ven and Pedro Porro, after Forest's Chris Wood had cancelled out Murillo's own goal in the opening period, helped Spurs capitalise on rivals Aston Villa and Manchester United dropping points this weekend.

Tottenham's victory puts them level with Villa on 60 points but with a game in hand and leaves United trailing with 49 after their 2-2 draw with Liverpool.

Spurs coach Ange Postecoglou, however, told reporters that he "couldn't care less about the race for fourth, what I care about is the way the team is progressing".

Tottenham led after 15 minutes when Brazilian Murillo, who minutes earlier almost scored an audacious goal from inside his own half, turned Timo Werner's cross into his own net.

Kamindu Mendis named ICC Men's Player of the Month for March 2024

WEB DESK

DUBAI

Sri Lankan batter Kamindu Mendis was awarded the ICC Men's Player of the Month for March 2024 following his impressive comeback during the recent tour of Bangladesh.

Mendis, who rose to prominence following his impressive Test returns, beat out stiff competition from Ireland's Mark Adair and New Zealand's Matt Henry to claim his first ICC Men's Player of the Month award.

The 25-year-old batter became the third player from Sri Lanka to win the prestigious award after



spinner Prabhath Jayasuriya and star all-rounder Wanindu Hasaranga.

Mendis expressed his joy after winning the award, calling it a source of motivation for his career.

"I am extremely happy to be named the ICC Men's Player of the Month, which I consider an inspiration for my interna-

tional career," Mendis said.

"A recognition such as this motivates and makes us as players work more and more to deliver in the middle for the team, country, and fans.

"I also wish the very best for the other two players who were nominated along with me, Mark Adair and Matt Henry,

whom I consider excellent players and good competitors."

Mendis made a comeback to the national side after two years and scored 68 runs in three T20Is against Bangladesh, including a 37 off 27 in the second game.

However, he proved his mettle in the following Test cricket against the hosts, scoring 367 runs in the two-match series.

During the first Test match, he and Dhananjaya de Silva rescued the team from a score of 57-5 and made history by becoming only the third pair from the same country to score centuries in both innings.

De Bruyne Double Leads Manchester City to Victory over Crystal Palace

● City Level on Points with Liverpool in Premier League Title Race

WEB DESK

LONDON

Kevin de Bruyne struck twice to inspire Manchester City to a dominant 4-2 win at Crystal Palace on Saturday and move the champions level on points with Liverpool at the top of the Premier League table.

Stunned by conceding an early goal scored by Palace striker Jean-Philippe Mateta, De Bruyne equalised with a superb shot and after second-half goals by Rico Lewis and Erling Haaland the Belgian midfielder added his second.

"It's just like every other title race. We have to win every game," the 19-year-old Lewis told TNT Sports. "There's three teams in it and we have to be the strongest team."

Odonne Edouard grabbed a late consolation for the hosts but with seven games remaining City are level on 70 points with Liverpool and two ahead of Arsenal, although both their title rivals have a



game in hand.

Mateta had shocked the travelling City supporters with a goal in the 13th minute, but De Bruyne, who along with Haaland was rested for Wednesday's 4-1 win over Aston Villa, levelled in the 13th minute with an inch-perfect finish that had manager Pep Guardiola blowing the Belgian kisses.

"I just try to be more of an example with the way I am on the pitch," De Bruyne said. "I won't be the person to tell others how to live their lives but I try to show on the pitch."

Lewis put the visitors ahead soon after the interval, Haaland bagged his 19th goal of the season in the 66th minute from close range and De Bruyne netted his 100th goal for City to keep them well in the hunt for a fourth successive league title.

"The main message was to keep on going," Lewis said. "The chances would come. We needed to get into the box and that's what we did."

"As a kid you dream of scoring a goal and celebrating. I want to get more goals and assists."

City keeper Stefan Ortega made an

important contribution late in the first half, dribbling the ball out of danger when Mateta nearly got to a reckless pass back from Rodri.

"We watched City and how they pressed high and I scored early against one of the biggest teams in the world," Mateta told TNT. "In the second half they came back strongly. They are a good team."

Jordan Ayew squandered a good Palace chance in the first half after picking Rodri's pocket and hammering the ball against the crossbar.

Collins triumphs again with title in Charleston

WEB DESK

MIAMI

American Danielle Collins continued her late career rich vein of form, winning the WTA Charleston Open clay court title with a 6-2, 6-1 defeat of Russia's Daria Kasatkina.

The victory comes a week after Collins enjoyed the biggest

win of her career, clinching the Miami Open 1000 hard court title and her back-to-back wins means she will move up to 15th in the world rankings.

The 30-year-old Collins has announced that she will retire from the sport at the end of this season but has found herself playing in the form of her life and has extended

her winning streak to 13 matches.

Kasatkina, the 2017 winner in Charleston, reached the final after a three-set semi-final win over top seed Jessica Pegula but Collins proved to be a step too far.

Collins, who defeated Greece's Maria Sakkari in her semi, needed just 77 minutes to defeat Kasatkina and the

contest moved decisively in her direction when she broke to go 2-0 up in the second set, celebrating with a forceful first-pump.

The change in surface from Miami made little difference to Collins who marched to victory with her powerful strokeplay that was simply too much for the 26-year-old Russian.

Jude Bellingham could help Real Madrid turn tables on champions Manchester City

WEB DESK

SPAIN

Jude Bellingham is aiming to give Real Madrid the edge they badly lacked last season in the Champions League quarter-final first leg against Manchester City on Tuesday, as he continues a remarkable first season in Spain.

England star Bellingham will lead Madrid's attack alongside Vinicius Junior as the reigning European and Premier League champions visit the Santiago Bernabeu.

Battered and bruised in a 5-1 aggregate thumping by Pep Guardiola's City at the semi-final stage last year, Real Madrid stumped up 103 mil-

lion euros (\$112 million) to sign the England star from Borussia Dortmund.

Madrid's initial expectations for the 20-year-old were quickly smashed, as he surpassed them at lightning pace.

Jude Bellingham began in stunning goalscoring form, with 14 strikes in his first 15 matches for the club, breaking the record of 13 held by Madrid greats Cristiano Ronaldo and Alfredo Di Stefano.

Having arrived at the club as a midfielder but mainly deployed in the attack by Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti, Bellingham quickly established himself as a leader and a fan favourite — "Hey Jude", they sere-

nade in the capital.

Although inevitably his goal flow has slowed in recent weeks, he remains Madrid's top scorer and in addition to 20 across 32 appearances in all competitions, he also has provided 10 assists.

Madrid, who also seem poised to capture Paris Saint-Germain striker Kylian Mbappe this summer at the end of his contract, hope Bellingham can help them catch up with City.

Guardiola believes Bellingham's presence could be crucial for the record 14-time winners.

"(Bellingham's) impact has been massive," Guardiola told reporters in March.

"It's a different team from last season — his



influence is obvious, and we have to try to discover what he does to control it.

"Facing Real Madrid is always a tough challenge, nobody can deny it. They are an exceptional club, and in this competition, they can control many things with the experience they have in the past."

Madrid have a track record of snatching

victory from the jaws of defeat in Europe and did just that against Manchester City in 2022 on the way to glory.

Rodrygo Goes struck in the 90th and 91st minutes against City to force the tie to extra-time and Karim Benzema netted the winner to secure a remarkable 6-5 aggregate triumph for Los Blancos.

However, the following season Benzema was not fully fit, and a Madrid lacking spine crumpled at the Etihad Stadium in a 4-0 second-leg thrashing.

Despite only being at the club for a few months, Bellingham has already shown a penchant for the big occasion.

The midfielder helped Madrid come from behind to beat Barcelona 2-1, netting a brace in the league match in October including a 92nd-minute winner.

Bellingham's Madrid thrashed Barcelona 4-1 in his second Clasico appearance to claim the Spanish Super Cup in January, his first trophy with Madrid.

Eight points clear in

La Liga, a second beckons domestically, but Bellingham understands how much Champions League victory would mean for his club.

"I'd much rather keep scoring in the 90-plus minutes than in the 15th, even though it might take a bit of strain (on) my heart and the fans' hearts," said Bellingham after a 94th-minute winner against Union Berlin in the group stage.

"That's the history of the club, I'm new... but I've had a TV since I was little and I can't remember from what age I've been watching Madrid complete comebacks where I'm thinking 'there's no chance' and 'it's not possible'."

Bellingham has four

Champions League goals in six appearances this season, including netting twice against Serie A champions Napoli.

An ankle sprain and a suspension has disrupted his start to 2024 but the City tie offers Bellingham a chance to get fully back on track, against a club that would have loved to sign him before it became clear he had his heart set on Madrid.

Most would have liked to — even at 20, Bellingham is drawing comparisons to some all-time greats.

"There are things about the way he plays that remind me of (Zinedine) Zidane — it's his extraordinary quality on the ball," declared Ancelotti in February.



ISLAMABAD: Women busy in selecting artificial jewelry for preparation of upcoming Eid ul Fitr, in the Federal Capital. — Staff Photo

Social media cannot be closed in Ghotki Kachha Area: IG Sindh

TANVEER SOOMRO
MIRPUR MATHELO

IG Sindh Police Ghulam Nabi Memon has said in a press conference at the District head quarters Mirpur Mathele that social media cannot be closed in Ghotki Kachha Area, we have sent a reference to cybercrime, CTD in Kachha has been tasked, they are working to find out who is supplying the arms in Kachha. When it comes to police operations, we will conduct operations based on intelligence because this is the way to conduct operations in Kachha, IG Sindh. He said that we are buying modern weapons which are being given to the police and we are also giving vehicles to



the police. The accused killed in the clashes will be arrested. Sindh IG Ghulam Nabi Memon said in the press conference that Ghotki, Shikarpur and Kashmir are districts in which they want to ensure law and order situation and the police are giving facilities to the police. If we do good work, people will support us. There have been some incidents, the purpose of which is that the police is fighting with the dacoits. IG Sindh said that if we challenge the dacoits. If you do, there will be problems. Currently, there are no hostages in the Sukkur range, there are no robbers in the possession of the dacoits, not only the robbers, but also the noble people, that's why they conduct intelligence operations. Earlier, he also presided over a high-level meeting attended by top police officers and apprised them about the situation in the area.

Rain with thunder forecast for first day of Eidul Fitr

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

Rain with thunder forecast for first day of Eidul Fitr. Dr Babar from the Meteorological Department has stated that a new series of rains is likely to commence across the country from Friday onwards. According to the latest forecasts he has provided, rain accompanied by thunderstorms is expected in the upper regions, including Islamabad, on Wednesday. However, the weather is anticipated to be dry and slightly hot on Thursday, providing temporary relief before the onset of heavy rainfall. Dr Babar has cautioned that a new wave of heavy rain is expected to enter the country from Friday evening, continuing until Monday.



This prolonged period of rainfall may lead to clearing clouds in most areas, but it also poses risks of flooding and landslides in certain regions. In response to these forecasts, all institutions have been instructed to remain on high alert to mitigate potential risks and ensure the safety of residents in affected areas. Authorities are urged to take necessary precautions and measures to handle any emergencies arising from adverse weather conditions. landslides in Galiyat, Kashmir, and Gilgit-Baltistan due to the anticipated heavy rainfall. The Meteorological Department's advisory specifically highlights the risk of heavy rain and thunder from April 13 to 15, particularly in areas such as Dir, Swat, Chitral, Kohistan, Mansehra, and a fear of flooding near the Kabul River. Additionally, there is a heightened risk of

Islamabad's Tourism Sector Embraces Digital Transformation with Launch of E-Licensing Portal

“This development marks a significant milestone in our journey towards standardizing government services,” remarked the Secretary

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

In a significant stride towards modernization, the Department of Tourist Services, Islamabad (DTS, Islamabad) has unveiled a pioneering E-Licensing portal. This innovative platform, crafted in collaboration with the National Information Technology Board (NITB), promises to revolutionize the travel and hospitality landscape in the capital territory and Gilgit-Baltistan. With its user-friendly interface and seamless functionality, the E-Licensing portal ushers in a new era of convenience and efficiency for stakeholders in the travel, hotel,

and restaurant management sectors. Gone are the days of cumbersome paperwork and bureaucratic hurdles; now, professionals can access a plethora of online services with just a few clicks. This landmark initiative has garnered praise from the Secretary of the Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ministry, under whose auspices DTS, Islamabad operates. Expressing admiration for the collaborative efforts of DTS and NITB, the Secretary underscored the government's unwavering commitment to enhancing service quality and accessibility for citizens. “This development marks a significant



milestone in our journey towards standardizing government services,” remarked the Secretary. “By embracing digital innovation, we are not only streamlining processes but also promoting sustainability through cost-effective and eco-friendly practices.” The E-Licensing portal represents a paradigm shift in how business is conducted within the tourism sec-

tions for businesses, the portal is poised to enhance the overall experience for tourists and visitors. With streamlined processes and enhanced transparency, travelers can expect a more seamless journey, from booking accommodations to dining experiences. As Islamabad embraces the digital age, stakeholders across the tourism spectrum are optimistic about the transformative impact of the E-Licensing portal. With its potential to drive growth, foster innovation, and elevate service standards, this initiative heralds a bright future for the capital's burgeoning tourism sector. In addition to facilitating smoother oper-

PRCS and IFRC distribute buffaloes among flood-affected families in Sindh and Balochistan

STAFF REPORTER
ISLAMABAD

To support the livelihoods of the communities affected by the 2022 monsoon floods, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), in collaboration with the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), has successfully completed the distribution of buffaloes in Sindh and Balochistan. Under the livelihood assistance initiative, 360 buffaloes were distributed among the flood survivors, with 60 buffaloes in each of the five districts in Sindh, including Larkana, Qambar, Shahdadkot, Dadu, Khairpur, and Shikarpur. Additionally, 60 buffaloes were distributed in Jaffarabad district of Balochistan. 120 buffaloes will be distributed in Dera Ismail Khan district in Khayber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Dera Ghazi Khan Khan district in Punjab in the coming days. The distribution of buffaloes was done in separate ceremonies held in the aforementioned districts. The events were



graced by Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, Secretary General, PRCS; Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC Pakistan; the leadership of PRCS's respective district branches, staff and volunteers from PRCS and IFRC, and community representatives and notables. Speaking on the occasion, Sardar Ahmad Laghari, Chairman, PRCS expressed gratitude for the tremendous efforts of PRCS staff and volunteers who have been tirelessly working day and night to provide much-needed assistance to flood-affected people. He highlighted PRCS's commitment to continuing its support to communities through various interventions,

and stand ready to support communities in their journey towards recovery and resilience”, Chairman Laghari added. Piwi Ophoff, Head of Country Delegation, IFRC Pakistan, commended the teams involved in providing assistance to those in need. According to him, “The distribution of buffaloes among the flood survivors is one of the key initiatives taken by the national society to empower the livelihoods of the affected communities. IFRC remains committed to supporting the national society in providing livelihood opportunities to the flood survivors, to improve their well-being and building their resilience to climatic shocks.”

Commissioner Dera finalized all arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitar in all four districts

ADAM LHAN WAZIR
S. WAZIRISTAN

Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan Division Zafar Ul Islam has said on Monday that all the arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitar should be finalized and the best arrangements should also be ensured while adequate measures should be taken for security plan and sanitation. He gave these instructions while presiding over a meeting held in his office regarding the arrangements for Eid-ul-Fitar. In the meeting, Regional Police Officer Dera Ismail Khan Nasir Mehmood Satti, Deputy Commissioner Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, South Waziristan (Upper), Additional Deputy Commissioner South Waziristan Hospital



Director DHQ, MTL DI Khan, Pesco, Halal Food and Food Safety Authority, RTA, Rescue 1122 and other relevant departments officers and representatives participated. During the meeting, a briefing was given regarding the arrangements regarding Eid-ul-Fitar by various departments. Commissioner Dera while issuing instructions on this occasion said that all the arrangements should be finalized as well as the best management should be ensured while adequate measures should be taken

He said similarly, bus stands should be visited continuously by RTA and immediate and strict action should be taken against those who charge more than passengers. He added that Rescue 1122 has performed well in recent times, especially, the efforts of the department in recovering the bodies of the youth who drowned in the CRBC canal two days ago and handing them over to their families are commendable. However, full implementation of the emergency plan should be ensured regarding Eid-ul-Fitar as well. He said while the establishment of a control room in the offices of Deputy Commissioners should also be implemented.

Massive raid at Karachi International Airport

STAFF REPORTER
KARACHI

Massive raid at Karachi International Airport. The passenger Muhammad Adnan, was illegally travelling with passports of different citizens to Iran via Dubai. Muhammad Adnan along with the recovered unrelated passports were shifted to FIA passport circle for

the recovered passports were given in the custody of FIA immigration by the ASF. The passenger Muhammad Adnan, was illegally travelling with passports of different citizens to Iran via Dubai. Muhammad Adnan along with the recovered unrelated passports were shifted to FIA passport circle for

further action. Jinnah International Airport formerly Drigh Road Airport or Karachi Civil Airport, is Pakistan's busiest international and domestic airport, and handled 7,267,582 passengers in 2017-2018. Located in Karachi, the largest city and commercial capital of Pakistan and capital of the province of

Sindh, it is named after Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the statesman founder of Pakistan. It is one of the oldest airports in the world. The airport is managed by the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), and serves as a hub for the national flag carrier, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), airblue, and many

other private airlines. The airport is equipped with aircraft engineering and overhauling facilities including the Ispahani Hangar for wide-body aircraft. History Imperial Airways was one of the first airlines to fly to Karachi in December 1926 when Pakistan was a part of British India.

J. R. D. Tata, the father of civil aviation in British India, made the maiden voyage from Juhu Aerodrome in Bombay (now Mumbai) to Drigh Road airstrip (now Jinnah International Airport), Karachi, on 15 October 1932, carrying mail in a Puss Moth aircraft.