

Two boys drown at Karachi's Sea View beach on Eid

KARACHI: Two young boys drowned at Karachi's Sea View beach on Wednesday after being swept away by a strong wave into the sea during the Eid holidays. The two boys were cousins. As per the details, Danial and Sonu, residents of Pipri, accompanied by their friends arrived at the beach for a picnic. They were bathing at the beach when a strong wave suddenly swept them away into the sea. After being informed, the rescue officials rushed to the scene and launched an operation to recover the boys. —APP

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Hammad wants Pakistan to purchase oil from Russia

ISLAMABAD: Former energy minister and PTI leader Hammad Azhar has urged the government to purchase oil and LNG from Russia at discounted rates. Talking to a private channel, Azhar said the PTI government had been in talks with Moscow over purchase of oil products before the government changed hands after the no-confidence vote. "In the month of March and April, we initiated talks with Russia over the purchase of oil and gas at cheaper rates. I also wrote a letter to the Russian Energy Minister in this regard. —FOSC

Hajj operators not to collect money from pilgrims

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Thursday urged the private tour operators and individuals to refrain from collecting money from the intending pilgrims in advance.

In an exclusive talk with this agency, the ministry's spokesperson Muhammad Umar Butt informed that the ministry had not permitted any tour operator to receive money or applications for Hajj-2022 so far.

He said there were certain private tour operators and individuals allegedly involved in collecting money in the wake of Hajj applications or registration which was totally an illegal act and a punishable offence. The ministry had urged the people not to hand over his/her passport and money to any individual or operator, unless a list of private tour operators with Hajj quota was posted on the ministry's website www.hajjinfo.org and authorization of them to receive Hajj applications, he added.

Umar Butt said if they found involved any individual or operator in this illegitimate practice, they should immediately intimate the ministry on its given phone numbers, 051-9205696, 051-9216980-82, so that a necessary disciplinary action may be taken against them in accordance with the law.

He made it clear that those who did not follow the ministry's instructions, they would be responsible for their own loss.

He also clarified that the ministry had allowed designated branches of the schedule banks to collect the Hajj applications with token money of Rs 50, 000.

He said the applications could be submitted via online and banks from May 1, to May 13 while the token money could be deposited from May 9, to May 13. —APP

UK voters head for polls with Ireland result predicted

LONDON: Local and regional elections were being held across the UK on Thursday that could prove historic in Northern Ireland and heap further pressure on embattled Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

The contest for the devolved assembly in Belfast could see a pro-Irish nationalist party win for the first time in the troubled history of the British province. The results, expected from Friday, could have huge constitutional implications for the four-nation UK's future, with predicted victors Sinn Fein committed to a vote on reunification with Ireland.

Voters are electing councils in Scotland, Wales and much of England, with Johnson facing a potentially pivotal mid-term popularity test. Poor results could reignite simmering discontent within his ruling Conservatives about his leadership, after a string of recent scandals. —AFP

Asian, EU markets rise as Fed eases rate hike fears

HONG KONG: Markets rallied Thursday after the US Federal Reserve played down chances of a huge interest rate hike in the near future, while oil extended gains as the European Union moved to ban imports from Russia.

US central bank officials announced an expected half-point lift in borrowing costs -- the biggest since 2000 -- as part of its battle to rein in inflation, while unveiling a timetable to offload its vast bond holdings. However, traders were given some much-needed cheer when Fed boss Jerome Powell said a 75 basis-point rise, which had been flagged by many observers, was not "not something the committee is actively considering".

While he flagged more 50-point hikes to come, the news fuelled a rally on Wall Street, where all three main indexes piled on around three percent thanks to a surge in tech firms, which are most susceptible to higher rates.

"This was a reflection of relief, as investors came into the meeting fearful that the committee would be overly aggressive in tightening monetary policy," said Clara Cheong of JP Morgan Asset Management. She added that if inflation began showing signs of slowing, it could allow the Fed to be less aggressive as it treats a fine line between containing prices and nurturing the post-pandemic economic recovery. "It remains to be seen if the Fed can pull off this fine balancing act and or-



KARACHI: People gather on Sea View at the Clifton Beach during celebrations to mark the Eid-al-Fitr holidays.

Farah Gogi case charge sheet against Imran, says Hamza

By Our Staff Reporter

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shahbaz has said that it is my best effort to bring ease in the lives of a common man and get the blessings of Allah Almighty, adding that he is doing all this to serve the humanity of Allah Almighty and will continue to do so.

He was talking with media persons on Eid-ul-Fitr at the Children Hospital, on Thursday. Hamza Shahbaz said that the solution to the country's problems lies in tread on the path of unity, tolerance, mutual consultation and lenience, adding that all political parties should think of their country. He disclosed that the growth rate during the tenure of Nawaz Sharif was 5.8 percent as people were getting employment and CPEC was going on. He lamented that CPEC became sluggish during the tenure of Imran Niazi and the economy was raised to the ground. He remarked that our elders had attained this country by laying down their lives and today their souls must be feeling unease.

The CM vowed that he along with his team will move forward by taking into account the sufferings of the people. He denounced that those people had deceived the youth of this nation by showing them false dreams of giving one crore jobs and building 50 lac houses even demolished the dwellings of the poor, adding that instead got Bani Gala house regularised.

He stated that it is a crime to play with someone's emotions and give false hope to someone. Hamza Shahbaz censured that Imran Niazi not only snatched away livelihoods of the people but also made them unemployed. He reprimanded that Imran Niazi made false claim of making Madina State but did everything to the other way round. When the false claimant was Madina State was accounted for Tosha Khana then he is left with no answer, adding that foreign funding case is clamouring loud and clear that he indulged into money laundering and concealed tax returns. What to say of making a New Pakistan even if Old Pakistan got ruined, he added.

He maintained that it is not the responsibility of one political party but of all the political parties to work collectively to find solutions to national problems adding that if the wheel of national economy runs then politics will run. He highlighted that we will have to put our ego aside and will have to strive hard inside as well as outside the Parliament. CM emphasised that we will not take revenge from anyone but the law will take its own course adding that any of our actions will not smack of revenge. He regretted that the President of Pakistan and the Governor Punjab do not obey LHC order nor accept the constitution and the law. He warned that disrespecting the law will make you pay a heavy price. Hamza Shahbaz outlined that our intentions are right and will Allah willing will solves the

problems of the masses with dedication.

Hamza underscored that the country got ruined during the tenure of Imran Niazi and the economy got collapsed adding that Imran Niazi used to claim that if he would go to the IMF then he would commit suicide. He did not commit suicide himself but created such conditions in which children of the nation are committing suicide, he added. The CM stressed that the Ring Road scandal, flour scandal, sugar scandal and medicines scandals are linked with the members of the previous cabinet and they all had been sitting together in Bani Gala. He vociferously remarked that Imran Niazi and his fellow colleagues will have to account for all these scandals. He lamented that he did injustice to the children of this nation, snatched away bread from their mouth and this nation as well as court of the people take account for your misdeeds and you will have to be answerable and account for your actions. CM stated Imran Niazi did political victimisation activities in his tenure and nabbed Shahbaz Sharif Saaf Pani Case and 16 persons got acquitted during the tenure of PTI government adding that that case was a heap of lies.

CM remarked that he got arrested Shahbaz Sharif in the money laundering case and detained myself for 22 months. He said that he handed over the same case to the National Crime Agency and they did across the board investigations and not a single penny of corruption was proved against him.

Shazia Merri for reforms to conduct free, fair elections

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Poverty Alleviation, Shazia Merri on Thursday stressed the need for reforms to conduct free and fair elections in the country.

There is dire need to work on election reforms to bring improvement in the system, she said while talking to news channels. Commenting on Imran's political agenda against the ruling party of Pakistan Muslim League-N, she said, Imran Khan is not able to gather one hundred thousand people for his campaign launched to grab power. She said that the Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI), leadership is crying for power to rule the country again through different tactics.

In reply to a question about campaign for early elections, she said there is no harm to organize elections before the time but we need to have reforms for transparent elections. She expressed the hope that incumbent government would make all out efforts to conduct error-free elections across the country.

Pak urges UN to counter Islamophobia that threatens Muslims' rights

Pakistan has called on the United Nations to take steps to counter the growing phenomenon of Islamophobia which has emerged as a new form of racism, characterized by hate speech, discrimination and violence against Muslims.

"Islamophobia is a reality," Pakistani delegate Mariam Shaikh told the Committee on Information, a subsidiary body of the UN General Assembly, on Wednesday.

Ms. Shaikh, who is the press counselor at Pakistan Mission to UN, pointed out that Islamophobia's manifestations -- hate speech, discrimination, and violence against Muslims -- are proliferating in several parts of the world, constituting "grave violations" of Muslims individuals and communities' human rights and religious freedoms. In this regard, she urged the Department of Global Commu-

nication (DGC) to raise awareness of the phenomenon and to promote messages of tolerance, peaceful coexistence as well as interfaith and cultural harmony among all religions, races and nations.

A couple of months ago, the 193-member Assembly unanimously adopted a Pakistan-sponsored resolution that proclaimed March 15 as International Day to Combat Islamophobia, a move aimed at promoting a culture of tolerance and peace globally.

In her remarks, the Pakistani delegate also said that in an era where "fake news" travels faster than the truth, it is important to discern the ways in which information can be misunderstood. She described General Assembly resolution 76/227 as the path to addressing disinformation, noting that some countries, driven by the ambition to diplomatically isolate others, have compromised their own credibility, making the issue of fake news and disinformation warranting at-

PFC to attend 'Made in Pakistan' expo, says Kashif

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC), in collaboration with Chenone, will also participate in "Made in Pakistan" expo being held at Almaty, Kazakhstan on May 19-23 to showcase Pakistani products and identify new global markets besides luring foreign investments.

Chief Executive Officer PFC Mian Kashif Ashfaq while talking to a delegation of exporters led by Abdullah Ishtiaq said here Thursday that five-day expo starting from May 19 will provide an opportunity to present a world class range of Pak products and all other allied services. He said it is platform for import and export mainly with various and flexible pattern of trade.

He said PFC and Chenone will both hold series of meetings with other multi-national and exchange their professional expertise with each other for further improving the quality of their products at par with international standards in order to bolster rate of trade in the field. He said nearly sizeable number of top Pakistani companies are likely to participate which he added will help determine market potential and evaluate competition besides initiating joint ventures and project partnership.

Kashif urged Trade Development Authority of Pakistan to further manage series of a single country expos in all major countries for the effective and result oriented promotion of Pak products which can compete globally with their competitors in terms of its best quality. —APP

11,650 MW added to grid during 2013-18: Power Div

ISLAMABAD: As many as 11,650 MW electricity was added to the national grid system during a period of 2013 to 2018.

About 3000 MW clean energy had been added to the system during the said period, Ministry of Energy said in a statement here Thursday. Out of total 3000 MW, 1350 MW hydel and 1400 MW wind and solar energy was included in the system. Similarly, some 680 MW had been added to the national grid through nuclear energy source during 2013 to 2018, it further said. For the first time, work on local Thar Coal based projects was started in the country during the said period.

Thar Coal power generation projects were started under China Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Power Division said. 660 MW Thar Coal power project has already been supply cheap electricity. Work on 884 MW Sukki Kinari hydel project was started in 2018 which would start generation by 2024.

Similarly, 720 MW Karot was launched in 2017 and it would start supply power to the national grid in July this year. Various power projects under CPEC faced inordinate delay to the then government policies after 2018. Three power projects based on Thar Coal having 2000 MW capacity were also delayed.

Another important project of 1320 MW proposed at Thar Coal Block VI did not go ahead due to government stalemate. —APP

Eid celebrations: Tourists throng Murree

RAWALPINDI: The most famous hill station Murree attracted a large number of tourists during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays particularly on Tuesday and Wednesday as they reached 'Queen of the Mountains' from different areas to enjoy the pleasant weather.

Rawalpindi district administration had finalised all the arrangements to ensure security of the visitors and facilitate them particularly during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays. According to a district administration spokesman, the DC urged the tourists to observe traffic rules on the roads of Murree to avoid traffic mess and any untoward incident during Eid-ul-Fitr holidays.

Special teams had been formed to facilitate the tourists, he said adding, parking of the vehicles was not allowed outside the parking areas. There was a complete ban on illegal parking in Murree. He said main control room had been set up at Jinnah Hall in Unit office Murree, which could be contacted on 051-9269015-16-18 besides, Highway control room 051-9269189 and Traffic Police control room 051-9269200. "The beautiful climate of Murree during summer attracts a large number of tourists so motorists face severe traffic congestion. —Online

UBG reposes full trust in PM over prudent economic policies

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's United Business Group (UBG) Thursday unanimously reposed full confidence in Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for pursuing prudent economic policies to help steer the country out of economic crunch.

Talking to a delegation of traders led by president UBG Zubair Tufail, Central Chairman UBG Shahzad Ali Malik said it's good omen that Prime Minister was taking top elected leaders of business community from all sectors into confidence prior to formulation of monetary and trade policies to push the national economy in the wake of deadly pandemic. He said UBG top leadership including its patron-in-chief S M Munir, founder chairman

Ifikhar Ali Malik, Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary Information Dr Mirza Ikhtiar and other members of core committee today decided in principle to support the prime minister and extend helping hand in the larger national interests for bringing gradually structural economic reforms mainly aimed at strengthening economy.

He said the private sector is backbone of economy and engine of economic growth, creating jobs, increasing trade, providing goods and services to the poor besides generating tax revenue. He said govt plays a central role in supporting economic growth and reducing abject poverty by fully ensuring result oriented sustainable policies.

He said the vast majority of constraints to economic growth identi-

fied by the private sector are directly linked to government decisions and actions which he added needs to be addressed on top priority to accelerate the economic activities in the country.

Shahzad Ali Malik said that continuous stable democratic process is a key factor for sound economy. The prime minister attached great importance to the private sector for ease of doing business and all out sincere efforts are being made to provide business-friendly environment to gear up trade activities, he added.

He said private sector provided around 90 percent of employment including formal and informal jobs which also funded 60 percent of all investment and provided 80 percent of government revenue. —APP



RAWALPINDI: Ex-Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmad talks to media after Eid prayer at the Lal Haveli.