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Javed Afridi to sponsor Hajj of 82 year old Pakistani shepherd



PM doubles down on same-day polls, says arbitration not SC's job

6 policemen martyred in Jaffarabad during operation against dacoits

Syed Ali Shah Ibrar Ahmed

At least six policemen were martyred during an operation against dacoits in Balochistan's Jaffarabad area. Police launched an operation against the dacoits involved in various incidents of robberies in the Jaffarabad area of Balochistan, police sources said.



participated in the funeral prayer of the martyred policemen

Three policemen succumbed to injuries on the way to hospital

Whereas, three policemen succumbed to injuries on their way to the hospital. The incident happened in the Maulaada police station area of Jacobabad, police said. The dead bodies of the martyred policemen were shifted to the Jaffarabad district headquarters hospital. The funeral prayer of the martyred policemen was offered in the Dera Allah Yar police station. A large number of people

Funeral prayer of the martyred policemen being offered in Dera Allah Yar: Photo provided by the author

A huge contingent of policemen from Balochistan and Sindh provinces moved to apprehend the culprits involved in the attack. So far, there was no report of the arrest of any culprit. The martyred policemen include Inspector Iqbal Umarani, Nisar, and Wahab.

CM Bizenjo strongly condemns the attack

Chief Minister Balochistan, Mir Qudus Bizenjo strongly condemned the attack and expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of lives. Mr Bizenjo directed the police and district administration to arrest the culprits and bring them to book.

Home Minister Balochistan

Home Minister Balochistan, Mir Ziaullah Lagov strongly condemned the attack and directed the police to arrest the culprits behind the attack. In a statement issued after the attack, Mr Lagov said the Balochistan government has also contacted the Sindh government with regard to the location of the dacoits involved in the attack. He expressed the hope that the attackers would be brought to justice soon.

Staff Reporter

QUETTA-The Special Secretary (Home) Balochistan would probe into the martyrdom of six policemen in the province's Jaffarabad district on Wednesday.

CM inquired whether the police party had gone with full preparation

planning to confront the dacoits, whether any senior police officer was supervising the action, and whether there was a raid against the dacoits. The Chief Minister has directed the Additional Chief Secretary Home to inquire whether the police party had gone with full preparation and submit a report.



handout issued said. The provincial government has appointed the Special Secretary of Home Balochistan to probe into the martyrdom of policemen.

Expressing concern over the evidence of the police, the chief minister inquired whether the police party had gone with full preparation and

The chief minister said that the brave and courageous security personnel are the protectors of our lives and property, we cannot afford to lose them, the statement concluded.

Poll funds: NA speaker to write letter to CJP after lawmakers assert parliament's supremacy

National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf said on Wednesday that he will be writing a letter to Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, conveying to him the "sentiments and thoughts" of members of the House about Supreme Court (SC) orders on elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as well as the release of funds in this regard. Ashraf announced the decision after taking "sense of the House" — expressed by members by thumping of desks — and on the call of several lawmakers, particularly the PML-N's Muhammad Barjees Fahir, who asserted parliament's supremacy. The NA speaker's decision also followed the federal cabinet's decision to again refer to parliament the finance ministry's summary for the release of funds to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for polls in Punjab and KP. Earlier today, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office said the federal

cabinet had approved that the matter for the release of Rs21 billion, initially ordered by the Supreme Court in an April 4 order, be taken to parliament for a second time. The decision comes a day before the SC is set to resume hearing a case pertaining to elections in the country, the latest development in a weeks-long impasse between the judiciary and executive regarding the matter.

'Funds cannot be released without due process'

In his speech, Finance Minister Dar stressed that funds could not be released without following due process as per the law and the Constitution. The minister stated this while explaining the procedure adopted by parliament and



the government for the release of funds for elections in Punjab and KP as well as the subsequent rejection of the proposal. He recalled that a resolution was passed in the House on April 6, which bound the finance ministry not to make additional payments for elections. Then, referring to the apex court's directives, Dar said, "If there is a court order to provide funds, make no mistake, nobody can give the money unless the process and procedure is followed as per the Constitution and the law. He said no summary was moved by the ECP or any other authority for the release of the grant of supplementary funds, as required by the Constitution and the law. Eventually, he added, the matter was referred to the federal cabinet, which gave approval for it to be taken to parliament. 'This House has the sovereign will to decide whatever they want to decide — and I believe they have a reason to decide what they decided,' he said, adding that Web Desk.

Javed Afridi to sponsor Hajj of 82 year old Pakistani shepherd

Javed Afridi, the owner of Pakistan Super League (PSL), Peshawar Zalmi announced sponsoring Hajj for the 82-year-old Pakistani shepherd on Wednesday. Javed Afridi said he would bear the expenses of the elderly man from Balochistan's Hub district. The Spokesman government of Balochistan, Babar Yousofzai has already announced sponsoring the Hajj of the elderly man from Hub.

The elderly man has no mobile phone

The 82-year-old Pakistani shepherd who belongs to Balochistan's



Hub district came into the limelight when his video roaming in the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) mosque Medina went viral. The Pakistani shepherd identified as Hajj Abdul Qadir collected money for 15 years to pay the expenditures for performing the religious duty of



Hajj. Shepherd by profession, Hajj Abdul Qadir made headlines in the media and dominated the social media networks including Facebook and Twitter. The elderly man had not even a mobile phone and spent days and nights collecting money to perform Hajj.

PM doubles down on same-day polls, says arbitration not SC's job

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said "arbitration" was not the Supreme Court's (SC) job and such matters should be discussed in parliament, asserting that the federal coalition was united on its stance that polls should be held across the country on the same day. The premier passed these remarks while addressing the federal cabinet hours after holding an important meeting with coalition partners to discuss the possibility of talks with the opposition PTI and the date of the Punjab polls set by the top court. The meeting



was attended by JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Foreign Minister and PPP Chairperson and Bilawal

Bhutto-Zardari and other important members of the federal coalition. It was held ahead of the SC's April 26 deadline for the political parties to hold talks and evolve a consensus on the date for elections to the provincial and national assemblies. The apex court will resume hearing the case tomorrow (Thursday). At the outset of his speech today, PM Shehbaz said the challenges faced by the government in the last few months. Web Desk.

COAS Asim Munir, Chinese army commander discuss security, military cooperation

Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Gen Asim Munir visited the headquarters of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) and met its commander on Wednesday. They discussed regional stability and military cooperation. The army chief, who is in China on a four-day official visit, arrived in the neighbouring country on Tuesday. In a press release issued today, the military's media wing said that upon his arrival at the PLA headquarters, the COAS was warmly welcomed and presented with a guard of honour. The army chief reviewed the "smartly turned out contingent" which was later followed by a detailed meeting with the PLA commander, it said. During the meeting, the two military commanders reaffirmed the need to maintain peace and stability in the region while promoting military-to-military cooperation, the ISPR stated. The army chief also observed a demonstration of the PLA troops' operational capabilities and commended the high standards of training and professionalism demonstrated by the soldiers.



COAS Munir's four-day visit to China includes a series of meetings with military leaders aimed at strengthening the longstanding relations between the two armed forces, the military's media affairs wing said. These inaugural meetings are expected to be followed by further discussions on enhancing military cooperation and promoting greater collaboration in the areas of defence and security, it added. This is COAS Munir's fourth overseas visit ever since he took charge as the army chief. Earlier this year, he undertook a week-long official visit to UAE and Saudi Arabia and held meetings with the top leadership of the Gulf states. During the visit, the officials reviewed Pakistan's bilateral ties with the two countries and discussed ways to strengthen the relations. Later in February, the COAS visited the United Kingdom for meetings on defence-related issues. He also attended a conference at Wilton Park, an executive agency created by the UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office to foster open dialogue between governments. Web Desk.

Weathering Public Institutions

Asghar Harifal

Why equipment non functional in Balochistan hospitals?

In Balochistan's government-run hospitals, expensive equipment can always be found non-functional. In the province's largest government-run hospital, the Bolan Medical Complex Hospital (BMCH), the angiography and angioplasty machines are out of order for the last two and half years.

This is nothing new in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan. Non patients and their attendants are mentally prepared for this. Expensive machines including CT-Scan, MRI, angiography, etc can always be found out of order in BMCH and civil hospitals. District headquarters hospitals, basic health units, and rural health centres paint a bleak picture when it comes to health facilities and services.

This daily's report about out of order machines fell on deaf ears
This daily recently reported a news item regarding the non-functional angiography and angioplasty machines. Nevertheless, the provincial high-ups including the Chief Secretary, Secretary of Health, and other concerned officials preferred not to take notice. The report rather fell on deaf ears.

It is crystal clear that deserving and poor patients and their attendants are the worst sufferers of the non-functional expensive machines. The doctors and the para-medics are the beneficiaries of this.

Patients the worst sufferers of out order machines
If the machines are out of order, the patients have no option other than to conduct the tests and procedures in private hospitals and clinics. Balochistan Health Minister, Syed Ehsan Shah told this daily that there are reports that doctors and paramedics deliberately make these expensive machines out of order. Senior doctors rejected the minister's claim and held the latter responsible for all the mess in the health department.

In this blame game between doctors and the minister, the common man is the worst sufferer. The provincial government in general and the health department in particular should make the machines functional since it is their core responsibility.



The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee justifications broadening the turf war.

The beleaguered public offices have come under a new wave of employee justifications broadening the turf war. The new rallying point is to assert the right for the coveted packages in wages given to the provincial secretariat. Guided by the tools of the attached department, the number of associations has multiplied and the pre-existing ones have condescended into a broader alliance.

They have further asserted to arrogate the positions of head of attached departments claimed by provincial secretaries. Every few days, back Balochistan Secretariat Employees Association and the union draw from a grand

alliance of other employees' associations. The alliance was formed to put pressure on the government for the demand of wages shared, which included the rise in pay and allowances and to address the discrepancies.

A growing number of employees adding grievances
The growing number of employee associations, the name of their welfare underscores the growing utility of forming pressure groups to protect their sphere of influence.

One of the phenomena, engendered by growing pressure groups, is the written writ large that institutions have exponentially grown in size, while the same time has turned into pathetically ossified entities, foretelling their imminent fall.

will not only bring about suffering for employees associated with these institutions but will also add to the flight of the aged and skilled nature has turned them into a self-serving superstructure and lost relevancy to the common man.

A department created for the general public turned into a service provider for employees only
A department created for the service of the general public has turned into a service provider for its respective employees.

The element of power among employees' associations also includes larger size of the institutions, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay. At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size decades-old clerical staff positions are expounded, leading to a one size fits all structure. Despite specialization in every unit, the public sector is stuck in an age-old management model. The information technology development has turned into a

bone of contention for members of the institutions. Speaking of personal experience of a department, with district level offices, it was noted that more than 90% of the correspondence made with that office was related to the personal affairs of the employees working in that department. It is the case with every public sector institution. Their raison d'être is service unto self.

Element of powers keep their opponents at bay
The element of power among employees' associations also includes larger size of the institutions, the more nuisance value to keep the opponent at bay. At the provincial secretariat with the aim to enlarge its own size decades-old clerical staff positions are expounded, leading to a one size fits all structure. Despite specialization in every unit, the public sector is stuck in an age-old management model. The information technology development has turned into a

ment has turned the public sector structure into an obsolete entity. The manpower and the machine have found no compatibility. The only change in the last 75 years is that number of positions has shifted from one service group to another. Mutual bargaining among the service workers is a department in the system. A third-party assessment guided only by the public interest is service unto self. The resistance to change has not only left the public sector unworkable, the private sector has overtaken it in the market. Where private sector services are required for the market, the public sector functionalities are found totally clueless about the trends in the market. Unfortunately, the public sector is uniformly characterized by sub-standard quality. The public sector still not parted from the role, long performed by it but is now overtaken by the private sector. A role swap from a player to a r egulator has still not taken place. The state's role in the market, which should have been taken by the public sector, is discharging. **The author is a serving Secretary for Archives and Culture**

What ails the HECS after the polls?

By Farhan Bokhari

It is interesting to note that political parties that draw their major support from Punjab tend to promote centralization and resist devolution to provinces. This we have seen even after the passage of the 18th Amendment to the constitution since 2010.

Among other ministries and divisions, education at all levels - from elementary to higher - now comes under the purview of the provinces. Before the 18th Amendment, education under entry No 38: Curriculum, Syllabus, Planning, Policy, etc. of Excellence and Standards of Education found itself in the concurrent list. It was a joint function of the federal and provincial governments and especially under the military dictatorship of Gen Pervez Musharraf, the then education minister - who himself was a retired general - tried to consolidate most powers in his own hands. After the 18th Amendment, there was a strong hope that the situation would change.

With the federal college and school education, the provinces had ample powers, but the Higher Education Commission based in Islamabad had the major hurdle in the devolution of tertiary education to provinces. The 18th Amendment had stipulated that the HECS would have all powers to regulate higher education clearly shifted to the provinces.

executive and legislative powers in the provinces, it never materialized. A new entry - a centralization and resist devolution to provinces. This we have seen even after the passage of the 18th Amendment to the constitution since 2010.

This new entry fell under the domain of the Inter-Provincial Commission (IPC) and became a joint responsibility of both the federal and provincial governments. In 2011, a multi-member 10-member Commission under Article 270 recommended that the HECS should continue to work as Commission of Standards in institutions of higher education per entry No 12 of the Part II of the Federal Legislative List. When the Functional Commission on Education presented its report, the Senate unanimously recommended the role of the federal HECS to the formulation of the quality of the legitimate role of the provinces in funding and implementation of higher education management and policy.

A major recommendation of the HECS Ordinance 2002 which had the protection of the constitution imposed by General Musharraf. The 18th Amendment had stipulated that the HECS would have all powers to regulate higher education clearly shifted to the provinces.

provinces but did not specifically touch on withdrawal the HECS Ordinance, that gave the provincial governments an excuse to forestall the devolution of higher education. Years later, the PML-N or the PTI showed any willingness to withdraw the HECS.

Perhaps the only positive decision of the previous government was to appoint Dr Tariq Banuri as the HECS chairman. But then the PTI government, rather than doing any positive work for education, indulged in something that it should not have done at all. It tried to impose a so-called 'single national curriculum' and attempted to curtail the powers of the provincial governments, trying to do some really good work. Instead of withdrawing the HECS Ordinance and facilitating provincial HECSs, the government gave all the powers to the executive director and chairperson to just two years.

When the Shehbaz Sharif government took office in April 2022, there was some hope that it would withdraw the HECS. However, the PTI government had taken steps that the PTI government had taken, with slight modification. Now some MNAs have proposed to give more arbitrary powers to the HECS. Ideally, any such matter should come

under discussion in the relevant committee of the House (CC) in the House of Representatives - such as the Provincial HECSs and, most of all students - must have a say in such matters as those that affect their education.

The new bill that some MNAs have proposed is a copy of which is available with the writer. It seeks to introduce amendments to the HECS Ordinance by overriding the provincial governments that the constitution guarantees. The most disturbing alterations will affect Section 10 of the existing ordinance that lays down the powers and functions of the HECS. It encroaches upon the domain of the provinces and aims to render the institutes of higher education as total devoid of whatever little autonomy they have.

The bill is clearly ill-intentioned and will introduce even more arbitrary powers to the executive director and chairperson to just two years. When the Shehbaz Sharif government took office in April 2022, there was some hope that it would withdraw the HECS. However, the PTI government had taken steps that the PTI government had taken, with slight modification. Now some MNAs have proposed to give more arbitrary powers to the HECS. Ideally, any such matter should come

of interviews and hundreds of applicants going through the process for months.

The HECS itself has seen so much controversy in the appointment of its own chairpersons and executive directors. It has been unable to appoint a suitable ED despite multiple advertisements in the past couple of years, a retired bureaucrat who kept the change for long time. Ad-hoc appointments and decisions have marred the HECS's reputation in the country. Many universities do not have full-time acting heads of the institution. From Quaid-e-Azam University to Federal Urdu University, countless universities control, but they have become emblems of central incompetence in Islamabad. The new bill aims to concentrate even more powers at the HECS.

Hundreds of universities across the country are run by multiple committees of the centre to exercise more power without accountability. The HECS is not doing what it should be doing. Acquiring more powers will only compound the problem. The HECS and the Federal Education, with a limited authority of the HECS. The HECS proposed clause in the bill aims to acquire the authority to 'give directions to government functionaries, district administration and Police to assist the HECS in the

A s Pakistan's political rivals battle hard to rapidly and

space in the run up to the country's next general election, the ink on the wall seems to have been widely ignored. One election after another, the task of running a crisis-stricken country will fall upon the next set of rulers who will face unprecedented odds in overseeing a return to relative normalcy.

And that's where the challenge lies for the country's multiple stakeholders who are now acting heads of the institution. From Quaid-e-Azam University to Federal Urdu University, countless universities control, but they have become emblems of central incompetence in Islamabad. The new bill aims to concentrate even more powers at the HECS. The HECS and the Federal Education, with a limited authority of the HECS. The HECS proposed clause in the bill aims to acquire the authority to 'give directions to government functionaries, district administration and Police to assist the HECS in the

again exposed the power-law reality of a state that remains out of tune with its very own grassroots. The ink on the wall seems to have been widely ignored. One election after another, the task of running a crisis-stricken country will fall upon the next set of rulers who will face unprecedented odds in overseeing a return to relative normalcy.

No amount of condemnation by officials of this tragic event can ever ignore a reality that has been long in the making. The growing failure of Pakistan's once relatively stable administrative order. The country has reached the heart of the capital with the broad masses of the public left badly exposed.

It is an outcome that has led to a growing neglect of the state's responsibility towards the broad spectrum of its citizens. Considered a relatively manageable country, and without a clear vision of the future of a range of areas including the battered economy, it is likely to remain a dismal

ness backed by long overruns in the world. In decades gone by, Pakistan has repeatedly defied the odds. It has reforming the country's largely dysfunctional tax collection system. The massive surrounding the taxation structure has broadly progressed in tandem with the state's ever weakening capacity to impose its writ. Its fundamental role in large scale tax evasion has today become a hallmark of the nation.

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Lessons for Singapore and Punjab's upgrage

By Hassan Siddiqi

my previous research articles I provided the way forward for Pakistan by investing in education, science, technology and innovation with the objective of becoming a major exporter of high value-added high technology products.

I also described how countries like China and Korea have succeeded over the last five decades. Another Asian country that has undergone a miraculous transformation after its independence in 1965 is 'tiny' Singapore.

With a population of one-fourth that of Karachi's (about five million) and with hardly any natural resources, Singapore has exports of some \$400 million annually today, while Pakistan's exports stand at about \$32 billion.

Singapore has become a highly developed economy that is per capita income that is among the highest in the world. This transformation was made possible by a combination of factors, including a strong focus on education, science, technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship, as well as a pro-business environment that attracted foreign investment.

The Singapore government recognizes that a well-educated workforce is essential for economic growth and invests heavily in education - about 10 per cent of its annual budget. The country's education system is highly centralized, with a rigorous curriculum that focuses on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

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ment has also introduced measures to promote creativity and innovation in schools, such as the 'Project Learning Tree' initiative, which encourages teachers to focus on quality teaching rather than rote learning.

To ensure that students are adequately prepared for the workforce, Singapore has invested heavily in vocational education, IT and training (VET). This system provides students with practical skills and hands-on experience to prepare them for a range of jobs.

The government has also established the Singapore Skills Partnership, which aligns with the needs of the industry. Higher education has been a key priority. Singapore has a number of high-ranking universities, including the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological University.

These universities attract top talent from around the world and provide students with access to world-class facilities and resources. Singapore has also introduced policies to encourage students to pursue degrees in STEM fields, which are critical for the country's industrial development. The government provides funding for research and development in these fields.

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businesses to develop their own solutions to real-world problems. Science and technology education is a key focus in Singapore's economic success. Research institutes in the country, such as the Singapore Institute of Technology, are emerging futuristic areas, including biotechnology, nanotechnology, and clean energy. One of the most notable examples is the Biopolis, a research and development hub for biomedical sciences.

The Biopolis, established in 2003 and is home to several research institutes, including the Singapore Genome Consortium, the Genome Institute of Singapore, and the Singapore Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology. The Biopolis has been successful in attracting top talent from around the world and has helped establish Singapore as a center of biotechnology innovation in Asia.

The innovation and entrepreneurship hub has also been important drivers of Singapore's economic success. The government has established a number of programs, such as tax incentives for startups, grants for R&D, and incubators for new businesses. The government has also established a number of innovation clusters, such as the Fusionopolis and the JTC LaunchPad, which bring together researchers, entrepreneurs, and investors to collaborate and develop new technologies.

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investment. A number of government agencies have been concluded with other countries, making it easier for Singaporean companies to do business and access markets in other countries. The Singapore Economic Development Corporation (EDC) has established a number of economic zones and industrial parks, offering incentives for companies to set up operations in Singapore.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) has played a key role in Singapore's economic development. According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, Singapore was the third-largest FDI host in the world in 2020, after the US and China. FDI has helped Singapore transfer technology and knowledge, and boost exports. It has also helped establish a strong entrepreneurial spirit in Singapore, as many foreign companies have established R&D centers and innovation hubs in the country.

Singapore has established a stable and predictable business environment with minimal corruption, efficient regulatory framework, and low tax rates. The government's 'Ease of Doing Business Index' consistently ranks Singapore as one of the easiest countries in the world to do business in. The government has also established a number of programs, such as tax incentives for startups, grants for R&D, and incubators for new businesses.

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he federal government of Pakistan has refused to accept a crucially important recent interpretation of the constitution by the Supreme Court in almost all common law jurisdictions.

Among other reasons, the government asserts that simultaneous elections should be held in all provinces - Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa - at the same time. The government first argued that the terms and financial constraints prevent it from conducting elections immediately - arguments that were rejected by the court.

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people in Punjab from the right to elect their representatives. As the constitution provides for a caretaker government and the Election Commission of Pakistan is supposed to be free and fair elections regardless of the executive in power and the party in power.

While a chief justice issued the order, it is clear that everyone can agree that interpretation of the constitution falls within the competence of the Supreme Court in almost all common law jurisdictions.

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does not have a supermajority in the National Assembly. If the current government really believes that provincial and national elections should always happen simultaneously, it can call for a referendum to amend the National Assembly. If it is re-elected with the required supermajority, it can pass a constitutional amendment in the next parliament.

Looking at other federations, one finds non-synchronized elections around the world. In Canada, Ontario held its elections in 2022 whereas federal elections were held in 2021. If we look at our neighbour, state elections in India are held in different years. Karnataka, formerly Mysore, is holding its state elections in 2023 to elect all 224 members of the Karnataka Legislative Assembly. The Lok Sabha, the lower house of the Indian parliament, is scheduled to hold elections in May 2024.

Like other big federations, Pakistan cannot synchronize all provincial and national elections with the government indefinitely. Imagine a future where Punjab gets a supermajority in the National Assembly. What would happen then? Would Punjab live under an authoritarian government for the next few years?

Delaying elections in an attempt to avoid ramifications for democracy for generations. The Supreme Court cannot put its stamp of approval on anti-constitutional demands, therefore,

SC bench headed by CJP Bandial delisted, cause list denotified

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Ata Bandial was delisted on Wednesday.

The Registrar's Office issued a notification denotifying cause list. All the cases scheduled for hearing before the bench have also been delisted. The notification read:

The bench, that includes Justice Mandukhel and Justice Athar Minullah, was to hear 12 cases.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court bench headed by Chief Justice Umar Ata Bandial could not come to the Supreme Court due to ill health. A doctor examined the Chief Justice at his residence and the security squad that was to bring the Chief Justice to the Supreme Court was also sent back.

The Registrar's Office, in the meantime, announced three benches who would hear the cases today. The bench number would comprise Justice Juzal Ahsan, Justice Aminuddin Khan, Bench number 3 would include Justice Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Isha Malik and Justice Shahid Waheed, while Bench 4 would comprise Justice Muneeb Akhtar and Justice Mazahir Ali Akbar Naqvi. INP



QUETTA: People busy in filling their water pots from filtration plant at Inskab road.

US dollar snaps losing streak against Pakistani rupee

ISLAMABAD: The US dollar bulldozed the winning streak of the Pakistani rupee on Wednesday in the interbank market and went up by a healthy margin.

According to the data made available by the forex dealers, the greenback on the first day of trading after Eid holidays appreciated by 83 paise against the local currency and was currently being traded at Rs284.30.

During the last trading day on Thursday, the Pakistani rupee had regained its upward momentum against the US dollar, appreciating by 0.15% during trading in the inter-bank market. The local currency had settled at 283.47, an increase of 42 paise.

Before Eid holidays, the rupee remained largely stable against the US dollar as the market dealers awaited resumption of the

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility (EFF), which has remained stalled since last year.

In a key development, Pakistan's current account posted a massive surplus of \$1.5 billion in March against a (revised) deficit of \$36 million in February 2023.

Cumulatively, the current account deficit reduced to \$3.4 billion in July-March FY23 against a deficit of \$13 billion in July-March FY22, the SDB said in a statement.

This is the first surplus on a monthly basis since November 2020 when the Covid pandemic had brought the global economy to a standstill. However, experts believe that maintaining a current account surplus is "unsustainable" in the long run because if Pakistan opens its economy,

imports will rise and the deficit will return.

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Before Eid holidays, the rupee remained largely stable against the US dollar as the market dealers awaited resumption of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Extended Fund Facility (EFF), which has remained stalled since last year. INP

Six burnt to death in van-truck collision in Gojra

GOJRA: Six people burnt in a fire that broke out following a collision between a van and a mini-truck near Dharam Kot Stop in Gojra on Wednesday.

According to Rescue 1122, the identity of the deceased was difficult to ascertain as the bodies were badly burnt.

The rescue operation was immediately shifted to Tehsil Headquarters (THQ) Hospital.

The rescue operation was underway till the filing of the report. The death toll was expected to increase. INP

Four drown at Karachi's Manora Beach

KARACHI: The body of one of the four people who drowned in the sea at Manora Beach in Karachi Tuesday, was recovered by a rescue team on Wednesday.

According to rescue officials, the deceased was identified as Anas (15) and that his body had been moved to the nearest police station.

Meanwhile, the search for remaining missing bodies is ongoing. INP

Girl shot dead in Lahore over free-will marriage

LAHORE: A young girl, who left her home to marry a man of her own choice, was shot dead by her family in the name of "honour" in the limits of Ghaziabad area of Lahore on Wednesday.

According to the police, she had brought her back home following a reported reconciliation and eventually shot her dead. INP

Oil tanker hit flattens mosque in Attock

ATTOCK: A mosque in Jund Jehsi of Attock District was completely destroyed after an oil tanker hit its wall on Wednesday.

According to the police, the unfortunate accident occurred at Pindi Gheb Road Dhok Chishtian in Jund Jehsi. The oil tanker lost control of oil tanker sparked a massive fire after slammed the mosque's wall. INP

Pakistan to attend India-hosted SCO Defence Ministers' moot this week

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif will join the meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) defence ministers virtually this week, confirmed Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch on Wednesday.

The SCO is a key regional forum comprising Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and India. It focuses primarily on the areas of trade, finance, commerce and socio-economic cooperation among the SCO member states.

Currently, the presidency of the forum is held by India, which is organising a series of events.

The two-day long defence ministers' moot is scheduled to begin Thursday (April 27) in New Delhi. China's Defence Minister Li Shangfu will also attend the SCO meeting, marking his first trip to India since the 2020 Galwan incident.

Chinese State Councilor and Defence Minister Li Shangfu will attend a defence ministers' meeting among members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation from Thursday to Friday

in India. He will make a speech and meet with head of delegations from other countries, Chinese Defence Ministry, China's state-run Global Times tweeted.

The Russian defence minister will also attend the event with theme, "SECURE SCO". Besides permanent states, Belarus and Iran will also participate as observer countries.

Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari will also be leading the Pakistan delegation to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Council of Foreign Ministers meeting being held on May 4 and 5 in Goa, India.

Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch had confirmed the development while briefing the media persons in Islamabad on Thursday.

She said the foreign minister is attending the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers meeting at the invitation of the current Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

Ms. Baloch said the participation in the meeting reflected Pakistan's commitment to the SCO Charter and processes and the importance that Pakistan accords to the

region in its foreign policy priorities.

The spokesperson said Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had also attended the last meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers held in July last year in Tashkent.

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Series of Online activities launched to showcase Chinese Tea Culture in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: In order to give tea a greater role to play in enhancing friendly dialogue and mutual learning between civilisations, the worldwide event "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" will be held on and around May 21.

The International Tea Day. It will be organised by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China in cooperation with international organizations and Chinese embassies, consulates and missions abroad. The event will be held in various cities of Pakistan through the means of overseas China Cultural Centers and China National Tourist Offices.

In honour of the upcoming International Tea Day as well as our upcoming Tea Yaji event, China's Cultural Center in Pakistan is happy to announce the release of our brand-new Chinese tea video series and Harmony - Yaji Cultural Salon. These series of online activities include video and photography exhibitions such as "The Tea Road", "Chinese Tea Culture", "Tea story of Fujian", "Tea culture of Hubei", "Tea Culture of Yunnan", "Tea + Pot", "Jiangsu Tea Culture and Xing Zisha Exhibition", "Technique of Making Pu'er Tea", "Enshi Yulu Green Tea of Hubei",

"Charm of Water, Charm of Jianguo-Virtual Workshop Series", "Explore the Timeless Ritual of Tea Ceremony From Jianguo", Grand documentary series on Chinese Tea and World and much more. The centuries-old tea culture has attracted new interest worldwide with the addition of "the traditional tea processing techniques and associated social practices in China" to the Representative List of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since it was first consumed in China, tea serves as a bridge between China and the rest of the world as well as a symbol. INP



Quetta, Administrator Quetta Tariq Javed Mengal giving gift to Consul General German Karachi Dr. Rudiger Lotz after meeting at a local hotel.

China's national digital policy seeks to use data as a strategic resource

BEIJING: The fourth National Nations World Data Forum was held in Beijing on Wednesday from April 24 to 27, bringing together specialists, practitioners, and stakeholders from various sectors and regions to share ideas, highlight innovations, and foster partnerships for better data to pursue sustainable development.

This international forum offers a chance to look into China's national digital strategy-driven approach to data governance.

According to Gwadar Pro, China's national digital policy seeks to use data as a strategic resource and a production component for national security, global influence, and economic and social growth.

This strategy reflects

China's political structure, cultural beliefs, and commitment to community interests over individual rights.

Poverty eradication is the first case of China's approach to data governance. Since the Reform and Opening-up in 1978, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty, including the historic achievement of eradicating absolute poverty in 2020.

To end poverty, it is essential to identify the poor and focus on action. Therefore, China created a comprehensive system for gathering, verifying, analyzing and applying data on poverty at the national, provincial, county, village and household levels.

Thanks to the system, China accomplished what they called "Targeted

Efforts in Six Areas" which means they identified the underprivileged, targeted social programs, distributed resources, addressed the causes of poverty, tracked development, and thoroughly assessed results.

China also innovated its approaches to reducing poverty using big data and digital technology, including e-commerce, mobile payments, online education, telemedicine, and other similar projects.

Another example of China's approach to data control is green development. China has made remarkable progress in improving its environmental quality, growing its capacity for renewable energy, expanding its forestry, and reducing its carbon intensity. China is making strides in both green technology and green finance. INP

All Covid indicators recede further in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: All indicators of Covid-19 have receded further in Pakistan as the daily number of tests dropped to a little over 500.

The country has registered just seven Covid infections with no fatality during the last 24 hours (Tuesday), showed the data released by the National Institute of Health (NIH) on Wednesday morning.

According to the NIH data, the death toll in the country remained the same at 30,656 whereas the number of total infections now rose to 1,380,610 after adding the fresh seven cases.

During the last 24 hours (Tuesday), 515 tests were conducted throughout Pakistan whereas the positivity ratio stood at 1.36%. The number of patients in critical care stood at 121NP

Five dacoits shot dead in Ghotki encounter

GHOTKI: Five dacoits were killed in an alleged police encounter in Ghotki on Wednesday.

According to police, the encounter with the dacoits took place during patrolling on Qadirpur Link Road. The identity of the deceased dacoits could not be ascertained.

Their bodies were shifted to Ghotki Hospital.

Three accused were held in injured condition in three separate police encounters in Hyderabad.

The first encounter took place in the limits of City police station, the second Phallai police station and the third Fort police station.

The accused held in injured condition were shifted to Civil Hospital. They were identified as Sarwar Oudh, Ajmal Rajai and Younis Rajput.

The police recovered pistols and a stolen motorcycle from them. The accused had opened fire on the police, and they were injured in retaliatory firing, the police spokesperson said.

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BANNU: Deputy Speaker National Assembly Zahid Akram Durran inaugurating NADRA office Mirian District Bannu.

Pakistanis among 57 migrants drown in shipwreck off Libya

TRIPOLI: The Libyan coastguard personnel have recovered the bodies of 57 migrants including a child after their Europe-bound boat sank off the North African country's coast. No fewer than 37 bodies including from Pakistan have died after their boat sank in the Mediterranean shores in western Libya.

The Voice of America reported that about 80 passengers boarded the boat which was off for Europe at around 2:00 am on Tuesday. The victims were migrants from Pakistan, Syria, Tunisia, and Egypt.

One survivor, Bassam Mahmoud from Egypt, recounted that an argument had ensued as the boat was sinking but the man in charge refused to stop. "We kept fighting until someone caught up with us. The scene was horrific and some died in the water in front of me."

A coast guard named Fathi al-Zayani said several bodies, including that of a child, were recovered off Qarabull in eastern Tripoli. A Red Crescent aid worker in western Tripoli also disclosed that they had recovered 46 bodies in the past six days from the beach and they were all "illegal migrants" from one boat. The aid worker whose identity was not disclosed noted that more bodies were expected to be washed up in the coming days. The coastguard also came to the aid of at least four survivors of the

shipwreck who were able to swim to shore after the sinking. It is the latest migrant tragedy off North Africa, after a migrant boat sinking last week west of Tripoli killed at least 34 people. Authorities in the town of Garabulli, about 50 kilometres east of Tripoli, were alerted to the presence of bodies floating in the water a few metres from the shore. They recovered the corpses of 10 men and a girl and placed them in white body bags, and rescued the survivors who were too exhausted to flee on foot. Lying on grass, the survivors tried to catch their breath and regain strength after receiving food and drink from the rescuers. INP

Monkeypox spread: Airport staff directed to accelerate screening of passengers

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Health has directed authorities to accelerate screening passengers at airports, and set up isolation hospitals in hotspots to contain the spread of monkeypox disease.

The ministry announced that 87,000 confirmed cases of monkeypox have been reported globally. So far, Globally, 119 deaths have been reported in various countries due to the virus.

In Pakistan, 22 samples of suspected cases have been referred to the

National Institutes of Health (NIH), Islamabad since May 2022.

The first case of monkeypox in Pakistan has been confirmed by the International Centre for Zoonotic Diseases (ICZD) returning to Pakistan. The patient returned and has been isolated at PIMS Hospital, the ministry said.

However, sources said one of the two likely patients of monkeypox is under observation at PIMS hospital where a dedicated isolation ward has been established.

In Pakistan, 22 samples of suspected cases have been referred to the

The spokesperson of the ministry, however, claimed there is still no sign of local transmission of the disease in Pakistan. He said the risk of international spread of the monkeypox disease in Pakistan is low.

The authorities concerned have been ordered to improve screening of passengers at airports.

However, sources said the issue has not moved beyond documentation, and Islamabad airport employees have not been provided any safety equipment.

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LAHORE: Former Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar addressing press conference at Muslim League House in Provincial Capital.

Ship carrying 37 Pakistanis from Sudan port reaches Jeddah: F

ISLAMABAD: A ship carrying 37 Pakistani nationals from Sudan — where fighting between the army and paramilitaries has killed and wounded hundreds — arrived in Saudi Arabia's Jeddah on Wednesday, the Foreign Office (FO) said.

Evacuation plan for Pakistani nationals in Sudan continues. The ship carrying 37 Pakistani nationals from Port Sudan arrives in Jeddah, it said in a tweet.

They were received by CG in Jeddah, Khalid Majid on arrival at Jeddah Port. We are grateful to the Government of KSA for its support & hospitality, the FO added.

According to the Saudi Arabia Foreign Ministry, the boat with 1,687 citizens from more than 50 countries arrived in the kingdom today, which is the largest rescue effort by the Gulf state to date.

The group was "transported by one of the Kingdom's ships, and the Kingdom was keen to provide all the basic needs of foreign nationals in preparation for their departure," it said in a statement.

Fighting broke out in Sudan on April 15 between forces loyal to army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his deputy-turned- rival Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

At least 459 people had been killed and more than 4,000 wounded as of Tuesday across Africa's third-biggest country, according to UN agencies.

A three-day US-led seafarer strike and paramilitaries claimed to have seized a major oil refinery and power plant.

Saudi Arabia has received several rounds of evacuees by air and sea, starting with boats that arrived in Jeddah on Saturday carrying 150 people including foreign diplomats and officials.

On Monday, a C-130 Hercules military plane flew dozens of South Korean civilians to Jeddah's King Abdullah Air Base, and a boat ferried nearly 200 people from 14 countries across the Red Sea from Port Sudan.

Thirteen of the civilians who arrived on Wednesday were Saudi, while the rest came from countries across the Middle East, Africa, Europe, Asia and North and Central America, the foreign ministry statement said.

All told, 2,148 people have been evacuated to the kingdom from Sudan so far, including more than 2,000 foreigners, the statement added.

A day earlier, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari had said that more than 200 Pakistanis were evacuated to safety in chaos-torn Sudan, bringing the total number of rescued nationals to 700.

Foreign Secretary Sushree K. Srisna said that the Government of Pakistan is providing "if overseas Pakistanis, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs continues to lead in the relief and rescue of Pakistanis in Sudan. Today, another convoy carrying 211 Pakistanis dispatched from Khartoum has arrived in Port Sudan," the minister said in a statement.

The ceasefire between Sudan's warring generals entered its second day today but remained fragile after witnesses reported fresh air strikes and paramilitaries claimed to have seized a major oil refinery and power plant.

The pause was not fully upheld, with attacks on headquarters, attempts to gain ground, air strikes, and explosions in different areas of the capital. UN Special Representative Yvonne Dierckx told the Security Council a day earlier.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the heads of coalition parties at PM House in Federal Capital.

Mobile phone, car imports see sharp decline in ongoing financial year

ISLAMABAD: The ongoing financial year has seen a significant dip in the import of mobile phones and cars.

In the first nine months of the current financial year, the import of mobile phones fell by 71% and cars 80%, according to a report of the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

From July 2022 to March 2023, the import bill of mobile phones was \$462.7 million, while the same bill for the period in the preceding year was \$1.6 billion.

This year, in March, there was a 92% decline in the import of mobile phones, as per the official report.

On the other hand, the import of cars saw a decline of 80% in the first nine months of the current financial year.

Cars worth \$708.2 million were imported from July 2022 to March 2023, according to the report.

During the same period last year, cars worth \$1.51 billion were imported.

Pakistan likely to see longest spell of torrential rains from Today

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast the longest spell of torrential rains across the country from April 27 (Thursday) to May 3 (Wednesday) and warned of flooding in several areas of Balochistan, Punjab, and Sindh, including Karachi.

According to the Met Office alert issued on Wednesday, the westerly system has developed depression in the Arabian Sea, the effects of which have started coming to move towards the coast of Pakistan.

Under the influence of this weather system, the hot weather is expected in Karachi on April 27 while the temperature is likely to increase by 38 degrees Celsius.

Consequently, torrential rains are expected in Sindh and Balochistan from April 28 to May 3 with occasional squalls, the Met Office said. However,

US expresses strong views over import oil deal between Pakistan, Russia

WASHINGTON: The United States has expressed views over the recent import oil deal between Pakistan and Russia.

Pakistan had confirmed its first-ever order to import crude oil from Russia at a price 20% cheaper than the market in the face of macroeconomic challenges. The first oil ship will arrive at Karachi port in mid-May.

During the daily news briefing in Washington on Tuesday, a journalist asked about America's reaction to Pakistan's recent purchase of its first oil ship from Russia.

US State Department spokesperson Vedant Patel stated Pakistan took a sovereign decision. "Each country is going to make its own sovereign decisions as it relates to its energy supply."

He said one of the reasons that the United States, through the G7, has been a big proponent of the price cap is to ensure that steps are not being taken to keep Russian energy off the market because we understand that this is a demand.

"We also need to take steps to ensure that Russians — Russian energy markets are not turning out to be a windfall for Putin's war machine. And so, again, countries will make their own sovereign decisions. We have never tried to keep Russian energy off the market," he added.

Pakistani student shines on international art festival

GANSU: A 13-year-old Pakistani student, Bagueer Dawar shines on a Belt and Road online art festival with his piano solo "The Detective".

Representing China-Pak Educational Cultural Institute Pakistan, his performance clip was shortlisted and showcased in the Light of Hope unit of the first-ever 100 Sister Schools Initiative Online Art Festival hosted by Gansu Provincial People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and Gansu Provincial Education Department, China.

Born into a hybrid family with his mother Chinese and his father a Pakistani, Bagueer Dawar has been living and studying in Islamabad.

His mother told China Economic Net that while developing his interest in art, he aspires to learn STEM disciplines and aims for internationally renowned high school and university.

So far, the online art festival has collected nearly 300 pieces of music and dance work from over 100 schools in 21 countries and regions.

In the smorgasbord of artistic works, the performers not only display the distinctive artistic forms in their respective countries but also demonstrate their mastery of Chinese musical instruments and dances such as Clapper.

Talk is a general name for all the Chinese folk art forms of narrating stories in the form of storytelling and singing.

Another power tariff hike on the cards

ISLAMABAD: Another power tariff hike is on the cards amid unrelenting inflation as the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has filed an application with National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) seeking an increase of Rs1.17 per unit, reported 24NewsHD TV channel on Wednesday.

The Nepra will conduct a hearing on this regard on May 2. The approval of the plea will put an additional burden on the electricity consumers.

Meanwhile, electric consumers and lifetime consumers will be exempted from this power tariff hike.

Court extends interim bail of Buzdar

LAHORE: An accountability court in Lahore on Wednesday extended the interim bail of former Punjab chief minister Usman Buzdar in the assets beyond means case till May 3 next.

Usman Buzdar appeared before the court in person and had his attendance marked.

During the hearing, Accountability Court Judge Sheikh Sajid Ahmed made interesting remarks.

He (Buzdar) looks like a "saint. I mean a gentleman, the judge remarked about Usman Buzdar that which the people in the courtroom burst into laughing.

The lawyer for Usman Buzdar contended before the court that his client had not done anything illegal. "Usman Buzdar is also a lawyer," he informed the court.

"Has this bail administered in a 'homeopathic way'?" the accountability judge questioned the lawyer for Usman Buzdar.

"We have prepared an answer to the questionnaire today, that will be submitted to the office of National Accountability Bureau (NAB)," Buzdar's lawyer told the judge.

The judge asked Usman Buzdar to talk to the court seriously, adding he was very strict in that matter.

The decision will be on merit. "If you are innocent, you will get justice. If you do not meet the merit, bail will not be given," the judge said.

After appearing before the accountability court, the former chief minister talked to the media and said that he was Imran Khan's soldier.

Thursday will be a victory day for judiciary, constitution, law: Sh Rashid

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief and former interior minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said on Wednesday that tomorrow (Thursday) will be an important and historic day. A day of victory for the judiciary, constitution and law.

Whoever would collide with the judiciary would be crushed. In a message on the social networking site Twitter, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said that the government which could not get approval for the money bill had ended Under Clause 7 of the Article 91, the President should ask the government to seek an immediate INP.



QUETTA: Consul General German Karachi Dr. Rudiger Lotz and Administrator Quetta Tariq Javed Mengal are inspecting GPO Chwok.

SC law clipping CJP's suo moto powers challenged

LAHORE: The Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023 — which aims to curtail the suo moto powers of the office of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) — has been challenged before the Supreme Court Lahore registry.

Attorney Shaukat Rana filed a petition with the Supreme Court's Lahore registry.

The petitioner maintained that the formation of benches in the top court is the administrative authority of the Chief Justice of Pakistan.

It argues that the right to appeal in suo moto cases is not possible without making constitutional amendments.

The petitioner urged the apex court to declare the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Act 2023 null and void.

It is pertinent to mention here that despite Supreme Court's directive, the National Assembly last Friday notified the conversion of Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill 2023 — which aims to curtail the suo moto powers of the office of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) — into an act.

National Assembly Secretariat notified that the bill of the Majlis-e-Shoora (Parliament) deemed to have been assented by the president (with effect from March 2, 2023) under Clause (2) of the Article 75 of the Constitution of Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

President Dr Arif Alvi, for a second time, refused to give his assent to Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 and sent it back to parliament, maintaining that the matter was now sub judice before the apex court.

The bill was approved by the federal cabinet on March 28 and then passed by both houses of parliament — the National Assembly and Senate.

The passed bill — the Supreme Court (Practice and Procedure) Bill, 2023 — aims at giving the power of taking suo moto notice to a three-member committee comprising senior judges including Chief Justice. It also aims to have transparent proceedings in the apex court and includes the right to appeal.

Regarding the suo moto powers, the bill states that every cause, matter or bench before the apex court would be heard and disposed of by a bench constituted by a committee comprising the CJP and two senior-most judges. It added that the decisions of the committee would be taken by a majority.

Regarding exercising the apex court's original jurisdiction, the bill said that any matter invoking the use of Article 184(3) would first be placed before the above mentioned committee.

The bill says that if the committee is of the view that a question of public importance with reference to the enforcement of any of the fundamental rights conferred by Chapter I of Part II of the Constitution is involved, it shall constitute a bench comprising not less than three judges of the Supreme Court of Pakistan which may also include the members of the committee. For adjudication of the matter.

The bill additionally said that a party would have the right to appoint its counsel of choice for filing a review application under Article 188 of the Constitution INP.

Gas meter rent increased from Rs40 to rs500 per month

LAHORE: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) has increased monthly rent for gas meters from Rs40 to Rs500 following a recent hike in gas tariff.

The authority issued a notification issued by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Wednesday, stating that the charges for gas meters have significantly increased.

Even if the customer does not use gas, the consumer has to pay a minimum amount of Rs500 per month, which is applicable from January 2023. Moreover, customers who have to pay three months' backlog in the account of meter rent and gas tariff.

The increase in meter rent will not be applicable to consumers less than 0.9 cubic meters.

In November-December, meanwhile, customers with low gas consumption will be exempted from meter rent.

The spokesman said that gas is still cheaper than LPG wood and coal, on the other hand, the citizens found it injustice to recover the dues from the consumers.

Dar directs CDA to accelerate development projects for overseas Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has directed the Capital Development Authority (CDA) to fast-track the development projects for overseas Pakistanis.

He was chairing a meeting on CDA's projects for overseas Pakistanis in Islamabad on Wednesday.

The Finance Minister directed the CDA to hold balloting of the Nore Heights-1 sector, which is already developed for overseas Pakistanis before the 8th of next month.

The meeting was briefed on the provision of commercial and residential plots for overseas Pakistanis on an open auction basis.

It was informed that in the next phase, registration for plots in C-14 and C-16 sectors for overseas Pakistanis will be held. The registration desks have been established to facilitate the overseas Pakistanis.

Ishaq Dar directed that for the auction of commercial plots, incentives should be extended to those investors who pay the amount in US dollars so that foreign exchange reserves could be further bolstered. He also directed to expedite work on Kuri and Overseas Enclave projects and scheme for auction of plots in C-14 and C-16 sectors should be ready by mid of May INP.

Protest in Muzaffarabad against Modi's plan to hold G20 meeting in IIOJK

MUZAFFARABAD: A protest sit-in and rally were held in Muzaffarabad, today, to appeal to the G20 countries to boycott the upcoming meeting of the forum being hosted by India in the international- ly recognized disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Holdings banners with slogans calling upon the G20 members including Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Indonesia to boycott the controversial meeting, they also made a march from Bhan Wani Chowk to Ghari Pan Chowk.

Addressing the protesters, Fash-e-Hurriyat Jammu and Kashmir Chairman Uzair Ahmed said that the G20 countries should understand the nefarious designs of India behind the holding of the event in the disputed territory. He said the G20 countries should not forget that India is committing serious war crimes INP.

China-made Chery accelerates green travel in Pakistan

BEIJING: "As Chery continues to amplify its presence in Pakistan, apart from providing new generation automotive products and technologies to Pakistan, it is also contributing to play an active role in protecting the environment and building a greener Pakistan," said Song Huanli, country director of Chery Automobile in Pakistan.

Over the past few years, air pollution in Pakistan has increased dramatically, making Pakistan one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change caused by air pollution.

There is a need to reduce vehicle tailpipe emissions, and electric vehicles are an effective solution. However, because of the limited infrastructure (such as adequate charging facilities) needed to support a large-scale transformation of the transport sector, the transition from fuel-powered vehicles to electric vehicles cannot be completed overnight INP.

According to a Gwadar Pro' report, Chery's 1.5T hybrid engine, equipped with the TIGGO 8 PRO, can accelerate to a top speed of 7.5 seconds per 100

President Xi speaks with Ukrainian President on Phone

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping on Wednesday spoke with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on the phone on a long-tan perspective.

The two sides exchanged views on China-Ukraine relations and the Ukraine crisis.

President Xi noted that China-Ukraine relations, after 31 years of development, have reached a level of strategic partnership, boosting development and revitalization of the two countries.

Xi commended President Zelenskyy for stating, on multiple occasions, the importance he attaches to developing the bilateral relationship and advancing cooperation with China, and thanked the Ukrainian side for its strong assistance to the evacuation of Chinese nationals last year.

Mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is the political foundation of China-Ukraine relations. The two sides need to look to the future, view and handle the bilateral relations from a long-term perspective, carry forward the tradition of mutual respect and sincerity, and take the China-Ukraine strategic partnership forward.

China's readiness to develop relations with Ukraine is consistent and clear-cut. No matter how the international situation evolves, China will work with Ukraine to advance mutually beneficial cooperation.

President Xi pointed out that the Ukraine crisis is evolving in complex ways with major impacts on the international and global situation. China always stands on the side of peace. Its core stance is to facilitate talks for peace. He noted his proposals of four points about which must be done, four things the international community must do together and three observations INP.