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Flour Prices Rise Across Balochistan, Families Struggle to Make Ends Meet

Syed Ali Shah:

For many families in Quetta and other parts of Balochistan, buying flour has become an everyday worry.

A fresh increase in prices has pushed this basic kitchen staple beyond the reach of countless households, hitting daily wage earners and low-income families the hardest.

In crowded markets, shoppers can be seen comparing prices in frustration, while many return home with smaller quantities than usual.

"Our income hasn't increased, but food prices keep going up," said a labourer at a local market, echoing the concerns of many others.

Shopkeepers and flour sellers blame the hike on supply issues linked to Punjab. According

to traders, court-related matters and administrative hurdles in Punjab have disrupted the smooth movement of wheat and flour, creating shortages in Balochistan.

Some sellers say they are now receiving limited stock, forcing them to sell at higher prices and restrict sales to just two or three bags per customer—an especially tough blow for poorer buyers.

Balochistan's Food Minister, Noor Muhammad Dumar has acknowledged the public's concerns.

He stated that the provincial government is closely watching the situation and will contact the chief minister of Punjab to advise against any steps that could interfere with the inter-provincial supply of wheat and flour. Ensuring smooth movement of food supplies is critical,

he said, stressing that shortages only worsen public suffering.

Meanwhile, citizens are urging the Balochistan Food Department to step in decisively—by stabilizing supplies, monitoring markets, and enforcing price controls.

For now, families across the province wait anxiously, hoping for swift action before an essential food item slips even further out of reach.

TTAP stages sit-in outside Parliament, seeks Imran Khan's admission to Shifa International Hospital

NEWS DESK:

A Tehreek-e-Tahaffuz-e-Ain Pakistan (TTAP) sit-in outside Parliament House was underway on Friday, vowing to continue the protest until Imran Khan is admitted to Shifa International Hospital in the federal capital.

In a post on X, the alliance said there would be no compromise on the health of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, adding that all PTI parliamentarians would participate in the sit-in outside Parliament.

The protest follows submissions made to the Supreme Court of Pakistan, where Advocate Salman Safdar informed the court—citing a report commissioned by the bench—that only 15% vision remained in Imran's right eye. The lawyer quoted the former prime minister as saying the loss followed medical complications in custody, sparking sharp criticism from opposition parties, who accused the government of allowing his health to deteriorate. "The government has cordoned off all roads leading to the Parliament. Gates of parliamentary lodges have been shut trapping MNA's and Senators inside," Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar said in his post on X.

Punjab Assembly Opposition Leader Moen Riaz Qureshi also said police closed the main



doors of the Parliament lounges as the group walked towards Parliament House.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry addressed concerns over Imran's eye condition, saying the matter should not be politicised and that appropriate medical care was being provided in line with medical advice. Speaking to the media outside Parliament on Friday, he said Imran had complained of an eye problem earlier and that any negligence, if proven, would carry responsibility.

He added that during a meeting with Imran's sister in October, she had told the media that his health was good, and again expressed satisfaction over his condition on December 2. He said Imran did not even mention any eye issue until mid-January.

The minister said that on January 16, Imran formally complained of eye discomfort, after which jail authorities transferred him to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences in accordance with medical requirements so his eye could be treated at a hospital.

He added that an experienced eye specialist had prepared a medical report and that the medical assessment would be compiled again.

Chaudhry said Imran would undergo medical examinations wherever recommended by doctors. "If there is a need to send him to any doctor at Al-Shifa Eye Trust Hospital, he will be sent," he said. Recalling events in January, he said that on January 16, it was recommended by a doctor that Imran be shifted to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences for an eye checkup. He added that it is also on record that he was not shifted at the request of PTI, but by the jail authorities and the government. Chaudhry noted that following Imran's procedure on January 24, a medical report was issued by the doctors, "and then there is a report by the lawyer," referring to PTI counsel Advocate Salman Safdar's submission to the Supreme Court.

Balochistan's Tree Plantation Drive Must Go Beyond Ceremonies

Quetta Voice Report:

Every spring, usually between February and March, Balochistan witnesses the launch of tree plantation campaigns. Saplings are planted at official ceremonies, photographs circulate on social media, and hopeful statements are issued about a greener future. While these efforts matter, they fall short of what the province truly needs.

Balochistan is one of the most climate-vulnerable regions in Pakistan and ranks among the hardest-hit areas globally by climate change. Rising temperatures, recurring droughts, shrinking water resources, and disappearing wildlife are no longer distant threats—they are daily realities for communities across the province. In such circumstances, tree plantation cannot remain a symbolic activity limited to headlines and hashtags.

What is required is a serious shift toward sustainable plantation. Planting a sapling is only the first step. Ensuring its survival—through protection, irrigation, monitoring, and community ownership—is what makes a difference. The success of plantation drives should be measured by how many trees survive after one, three, or five years, not by the number of photo sessions held.

The Forest and Wildlife Department must move beyond public-



licity-driven campaigns and focus on long-term environmental impact. Native and drought-resistant species should be prioritized while schools, universities, and

local communities must be made partners in protecting and nurturing plantations.

At a time when climate change threatens livelihoods,

Balochistan does not need unnecessary construction projects or decorative infrastructure. It needs a large-scale, province-wide plantation initiative—sim-

ilar to a plantation tsunami—with clear targets aimed at reducing the effects of global warming, improving air quality, and restoring ecological balance.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

Koh-e-Suleman and Pishin Divisions: A Necessary Shift Toward People-First Governance



Editorial: The announcement of the Koh-e-Suleman Division by Chief Minister Sarfraz Bugti marks a long-overdue administrative correction for an area that has remained distant from effective governance for decades. Declaring Rakhi as the divisional headquarters reflects a growing recognition that governance cannot succeed when decision-making centers remain far removed from the people.

For residents of Koh-e-Suleman, this step promises easier access to administration, faster service delivery, and greater state presence in everyday affairs.

Administering such a vast population through distant divisions has long strained public services, from

healthcare and education to revenue and law enforcement. In this context,

the establishment of a new division is not symbolic—it is an administrative necessity grounded in population realities and governance efficiency.

Alongside this development, the provincial cabinet's approval of the Pishin Division deserves equal attention. What now remains is the issuance of a formal notification by the Board of Revenue and its public inauguration by the Chief Minister.

Comprising Chaman, Pishin, Barshore Karezat and Killa Abdullah districts, Pishin Division also serves more than two million people. Delaying its notifi-

cation risks prolonging administrative congestion and public hardship in an already overburdened system. However, administrative restructuring must follow clear principles.

Divisions and districts should be created on the basis of population size, service demand, and administrative feasibility—not political ambition, tribal influence, or electoral engineering.

When designed for political gain, such reforms fail the common citizen.

If implemented with sincerity, the Koh-e-Suleman and Pishin Divisions can become models of people-centric governance—where administrative boundaries exist to serve citizens, not power corridors.

Amber Munir
Malnutrition in Balochistan shared in Quetta Voice on Wednesday, April 14, 2021 page 04. The article highlights the role of essential nutrients in human resource development along with a brief introduction of malnutrition, characterization of malnutrition, procedure of taking measurements of SAM and MAM cases, medical complications, community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM), infant and young child feeding (IYCF), etc.

Background: Surveys regarding National Nutrition Survey (2001-2002): The National Nutrition Survey conducted in 2001-2002 assessed the nutritional levels and health status of mothers and children in Pakistan. Data was collected through a questionnaire consisting of four modules including a household questionnaire, biochemical and clinical questionnaires, and a dietary form. Additional biochemical samples including serum retinol, serum ferritin, and zinc, were collected from mothers and children under-5. Urine samples were collected from mothers and children ages 6-12 years for iodine deficiency. The survey sampled 10,656 households from 700 primary sampling units.

National Nutrition Survey (2019): The NNS 2019 covered all provinces: Gilgit Baltistan (GB), Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), Sindh, Punjab, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). This included 1,500 enumeration blocks (EBs) villages and 30,000 households, with a 49% urban and 51% rural distribution.

National Nutrition Survey (2018): The 2018 Pakistan National Nutrition Survey (NNS 2018) is the largest national nutrition survey carried out in Pakistan. It is designed to provide policymakers, program managers, and academicians a unique set of nutrition-related data including environmental, anthropometric, and biochemical indicators.

National Nutrition Survey (2019): The aim of NNS 2019 is to undertake a field survey and generate district-specific nutrition information related to malnutrition (both undernutrition and overnutrition) and micronutrient deficiencies among women and children in Pakistan.

Malnutrition status in Balochistan: Balochistan is the most under-developed of Pakistan's provinces, with a high proportion of children under five years of age who are stunted (52%) and 16 percent of who are wasted. Moreover, the prevalence of anemia among children in this age group is 57%

and nearly 49% among women of childbearing age. Numerous factors are thought to contribute to child undernutrition in Balochistan, including sub-optimal infant and young child feeding (IYCF) practices; frequent child infections (especially diarrhea diseases and measles); maternal nutritional deficiencies and/or illness and death; absence/inadequacy of micronutrient supplementation; and household food insecurity and gender inequity.

A survey conducted by the National Nutrition Cell revealed that 49% of women in Balochistan were suffering from malnutrition. Moreover, the ratio of maternal anemia was 49%, anemia among children below five years was 57% and iodine deficiency among women was 29%.

Balochistan Nutrition Program for Mother and Children (BNPMC)

In response to the challenging nutrition situation in the province, the Department of Health (DoH) launched the Nutrition Program for Mothers and Children (BNPMC) in 2016. They implemented nutrition activities among the rural and urban population of seven selected districts. The total population of these districts is 1,654,613, of which estimated target populations include 132,369 pregnant and lactating women (PLW). Stakeholders include the DoH, Peoples Primary Healthcare Initiative (providing health services at Basic Health Units in the districts), and local NGOs.

The total cost of the above project was 1,492.62 million PKR (US\$14.21 million) of which 80% were provided by the World Bank and 20% by the Government of Balochistan. A major part of the funding

(41%) was allocated to strengthen institutional arrangements which include staffing, technical assistance for capacity building, strengthening coordination mechanisms, addressing malnutrition among children and PLW (37%), and addressing micronutrient malnutrition (13.6%).

Future Plans
The aforesaid program ended in December 2019 and was limited to seven districts; whereas the malnutrition situation continues to exist in 22 districts of Balochistan.

Therefore, the Government of Balochistan has assigned DoH and PPHI to extend nutrition intervention in 22 districts for which project proposals are ready; implementation is expected from July 2021.

The author is a program officer in PPHI



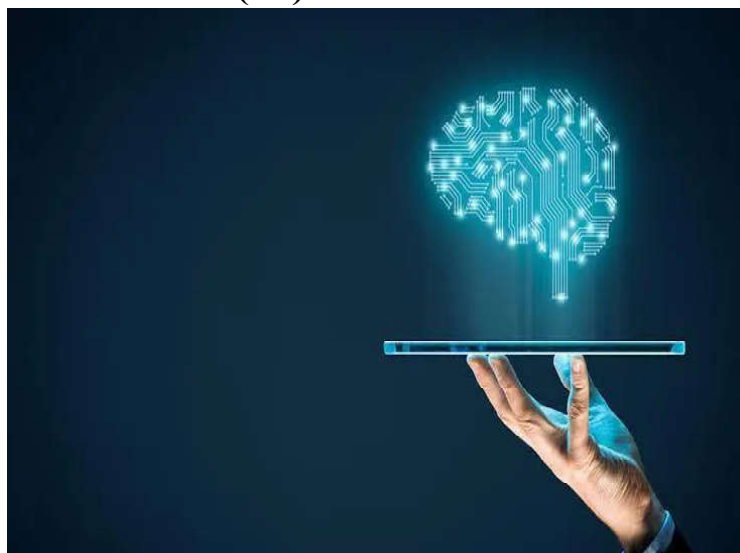
THE DILEMMA OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) WEAPONS

Masoor ul Hassan
The danger associated with autonomous and semi-autonomous weapons systems is unacceptable. There exist a near consensus that such weapons must not be completely AI-controlled.

The design must include appropriate levels of human judgment while resorting to them. This line of thought gains more credence when the present degree of global polarization is taken into view. The international order is tilting towards autocracy and the likelihood of employment of these weapons is becoming a reality. The norms and values of world politics were subjected to heavy Trumpian Strain in the recent past when the competition of naked power showed its ugliness in international relations.

The Genesis of warfare

The history of warfare is as old as the human race. The Book of Genesis states that Cain killed Abel to satiate his vengeance. Ever since vengeance, confrontation and bellicosity have remained more pervasive than cooperation and amiability in human relations. The perception of life as a zero-sum game breeds selfishness and consequent animosity between in-



dividuals, groups, or states. Instincts of survival and procreation are reflexive thus natural for all living organisms including us humans.

War, being one of the forms of human relations,

received due attention alongside increased societal complexities. War, being

sapiens from other living entities is the quest for controlling the forces of nature like wind, water, fire, and Sunlight for enhancing the level of physical comfort and peace of mind. This pursuit did improve amenities of life over time but alongside increased societal complexities. War, being

one of the forms of human relations, attracted the attention of social scientists for defining ethical and moral issues.

Caine, who may have used a sharp stone, a strong branch of a tree, or simple brute force to strangle Abel, would be flabbergasted if he were to visit our times. The civilization we live in

today took centuries over centuries to materialize. The use of electromagnetic spectrum was considered a game-changer

The use of electromagnetic spectrum was considered a game-changer before Counter Measures (ECM) were developed which then was countered by Electronic Counter Measures (ECM).

When the lethality of weapons created a situation of mutually assured destruction (MAD) the situation became unacceptable. Various treaties like Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty

(START), and many more were signed to avert the unacceptable destruction of the human race.

Exercising restraint was never so important

Exercising restraint was never so important before the development of autonomous weapons: chemical, biological, radiological, and

nuclear. The Perils and Promises of Artificial Intelligence

Harnessing the field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in warfare brought a paradigm shift in

the modus operandi of warfare. It eliminated the requirement of direct human involvement in selecting and engaging targets. Even the smartest of the weapons were hitherto launched and guided by humans.

This development has given rise to the debate of ethics and morality all over again. António Guterres, the UN Secretary-General joined the skeptics on Twitter where he

wrote in March 2019, "Autonomous machines with the power and discretion to select targets and take lives without human involvement are politically unacceptable, morally repugnant and should be prohibited by international law."

Word count (592) Group captain Masoor ul Hassan served as Fighter Pilot in the PAF.

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QAU and another M.Sc. Strategic Studies from KU. He can be reached at masoorulhassan@gmail.com

UK terrorism ban on Palestine Action group unlawful, court rules after appeal

NEWS DESK: Britain's ban on pro-Palestinian campaign group Palestine Action as a terrorist organisation was ruled unlawful by London's High Court on Friday, though the ban will temporarily remain in place and the government said it would appeal against the decision.

Palestine Action was proscribed in July, having increasingly taken "direct action" against Israel-linked defence companies in Britain, often blocking entrances or spraying red paint.

Britain argued the group's actions amounted to terrorism, citing a 2024 raid on a factory of Israel's largest defence firm Elbit Systems, in which prosecutors said activists caused around £1 million (\$1.4 m) of damage and a police officer was hit with a sledgehammer.

Ban followed break-in at air base

Palestine Action was banned shortly after a June break-in at the Royal Air Force's Brize Norton air base, in which activists damaged two



planes, an action described by Prime Minister Keir Starmer as "disgraceful".

Lawyers representing Huda Ammori, who co-founded Palestine

Action in 2020, argued at a hearing last year that the move was an authoritarian restriction on the right to protest.

Judge Victoria Sharp said Palestine Ac-

tion "promotes its political cause through criminality and the encouragement of criminality".

The High Court nonetheless ruled the ban was a disproportionate

interference with the right to freedom of expression, though the ban was not lifted ahead of a further hearing to decide whether it should remain pending an ap-

peal. Interior minister Shabana Mahmood said in a statement: "I intend to fight this judgment in the Court of Appeal."

Government defeat follows "not guilty" ver-

dicts The ban put Palestine Action on a par with Islamic State or al Qaeda and made it a criminal offence to be a member, carrying a maximum 14-year prison sentence.

More than 2,000 people have since been arrested for holding signs in support of the group though Friday's ruling could lead to any criminal charges being dropped. London's Metropolitan Police said following the judgment that it would focus on gathering evidence where people expressed support for Palestine Action rather than making arrests.

Civil liberties groups, including Amnesty International, had called for the ban to be lifted and Irish novelist Sally Rooney said it could even lead to her books being withdrawn from sale due to her public support for Palestine Action. The British government argued prosecution only prevented support for Palestine Action and had not prevented people from protesting in favour of the Palestinian cause.

The High Court, however, said it could cause pro-Palestinian protesters to "exercise self-restraint in terms of what they say and what they do".

UN extends mandate of Taliban sanctions monitoring team amid regional security concerns

NEWS DESK: The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution extending by one year the mandate of the Monitoring Team that supports the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee, which oversees sanctions imposed on the Taliban.

All 15 council members voted in favour of the US-drafted resolution, renewing the Monitoring Team's mandate until February 17, 2027. The extension comes amid mounting international concern over Afghanistan's deteriorating security situation, the growing influence of multiple terrorist groups, and the potential for regional destabilisation.

Pakistan, which supported the resolution, stressed the ongoing threat posed by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), ISIL-Khorasan (ISIL-K), Majeed Brigade, and Al-Qaeda.

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, said these groups "have been responsible for some of the most heinous terrorist attacks against Pakistan," citing

recent attacks that killed 80 people this month alone.

"Once again, Afghanistan soil was used by these groups to plan and orchestrate attacks against neighbouring countries," he said, urging the Taliban to prevent the use of Afghan territory for terrorist operations.

"It is for the Taliban to decide what path they wish to choose for Afghanistan: whether the path to isolation or the path to peace and prosperity as a responsible member of the international community," he said.

The ambassador also highlighted the council's concerns over the wider humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. "The resolution rightly emphasises the dire human rights conditions, particularly for women and girls, economic collapse, political exclusion, and the challenges posed by drug trafficking," he said.

"Through this resolution, the council has sent a clear message that Afghanistan territory should not serve as a safe haven for terrorists and that all member states must prevent ransom payments or political

concessions benefiting hostage-takers or terrorist groups."

The UN Monitoring Team's 37th report, released this week, paints a grim picture of Afghanistan as a base for multiple terrorist organisations. It noted that the de facto Afghan authorities continue to provide a "permissive environment" for groups, particularly TTP.

The report cited rising regional anxiety over cross-border attacks, the radicalisation of vulnerable communities, and the exploitation of commercial satellite communications and artificial intelligence by militant groups.

While Afghan authorities insist no terrorist groups are present in the country, the Monitoring Team stated that "no UN member state supported that assessment." Although the authorities have taken action against ISIL-K and control some external activities of other groups, TTP, one of the largest terrorist groups operating from Afghanistan, has intensified attacks on Pakistani security forces and state institutions. A November 11 attack on an Islamabad courthouse killed 12 people, marking the first such strike in the capital in several years. Despite operational setbacks, including the killing of deputy emir Mufti Muzahim in October, the group remains a serious threat.

The Monitoring Team warned that TTP could deepen cooperation with Al-Qaeda-aligned groups, potentially expanding the threat beyond the region.

On Al-Qaeda, the report said the group's

intent and capability for external operations remain unchanged. It continues to serve as a training and advisory hub, particularly for TTP and "favors spectacular attacks aimed at attracting global media attention, highlighting the continued threat beyond the immediate region."

Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), not listed under UN sanctions, remains active in southeastern Afghanistan, especially in areas influenced by the Haqqani Network. The report indicated AQIS leaders Osama Mahmoud and deputy Yahya Ghauri are believed to be in Kabul, with the group's media cell operating from Herat.

Member states warned that AQIS increasingly focuses on deniable external operations, possibly under cover groups such as Ittihad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan, likely to avoid causing difficulties for the Taliban.

While regional Middle East powers, including Turkey, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Qatar, as well as major emerging nations such as Pakistan and Indonesia, have joined the board,

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Latest counts in a vote seen as the South Asian nation's first truly competitive election in years gave the BNP and its allies at least 212 of the 299 seats up for grabs, domestic TV channels said. The opposition Jamaat-i-Islami and its allies won 70 seats in the Jatiya Sangsad, or House of the Nation. The Election Commission put the BNP at 181 seats, the Jamaat-i-Islami at 61 and others at 7, with full official results not expected before noon (11am PKT) on Friday.

The BNP, which returns to power after 20 years, thanked the people soon and called for special prayers on Friday for the nation and its people.

"Despite winning ... by a large margin of votes, no celebratory procession or rally shall be organised," the party said in a statement.

The National Citizen Party (NCP), led by youth activists who played a key role in toppling Hasina and was a part of the Jamaat-led alliance, won just five of the 30 seats it contested.

At BoP meeting, Trump to announce Gaza funding plan, ISF troop deployment

NEWS DESK: President Donald Trump will announce a multi-billion dollar reconstruction plan for Gaza and detailed plans for a UN-authorised stabilisation force for the Palestinian enclave, at the first formal meeting of his Board of Peace next week, two senior US officials said on Thursday.

Delegations from at least 20 countries, including many heads of state, are expected to attend the meeting in Washington, DC, which Trump will chair on February 19, the officials told Reuters on condition of anonymity.

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Bangladesh's BNP wins sweeping election majority, promises stability

NEWS DESK: The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) won an overwhelming two-thirds majority on Friday in general elections, a result expected to bring stability after months of turmoil following the ouster of former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a Gen Z-led uprising in 2024.

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Dubai's DP World replaces leader after he is named in Epstein emails

NEWS DESK: Dubai's DP World named a new chairman and chief executive officer on Friday, replacing its former leader Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, after the Epstein files revealed frequent correspondence between him and the convicted sex offender.

"DP World announced the appointment of His Excellency Essa Kazim as chairman of its Board of Directors and the appointment of Naveen Narayan as Group Chief Executive Officer," the group said in a statement published by the Dubai media office.

The statement did not mention Sulayem. Described by Jef-



frey Epstein as one of his "most trusted friends", Sulayem was group chairman and chief executive officer of DP World, one of the largest port operators on the globe. He is cited more than 9,400 times

in the documents recently released by the US Department of Justice, which revealed close ties between the two men.

They maintained regular correspondence from 2009 to 2018, exchanging

messages on intimate matters, meetings, introductions and business opportunities.

The correspondence suggests he visited the US sex offender in his home several times, including on his island.



A clear outcome had been seen as key for stability in the Muslim-majority nation of 175 million after months of deadly anti-Hasina unrest disrupted everyday life and industries such as garments, in the export of which Bangladesh is No. 2 globally. "A strong majority gives BNP the parliamentary strength to pass reforms efficiently and avoid legislative paralysis. That alone can create short-term political stability," Selim Rahman, an economics professor at the University of Dhaka, told Reuters.

BNP leader Tarique Rahman is widely expected to be sworn in as prime minister. The son of the party's founder, former president Ziaur Rahman, he returned in December to the capital, Dhaka, from 18 years abroad.

In its manifesto, the

BNP promised to prioritise job creation, protect low-income and marginal households and ensure fair prices for farmers. "If the factories run regularly and we get wages on time, that's what matters to us. I just want the BNP government to bring back stability so more orders come to Bangladesh and we can survive," Jona Begum, 28, a garment worker and mother of two, told Reuters after the results. BNP supporters celebrate overnight. The Islamist Jamaat-i-Islami conceded defeat late on Thursday night once trends became clear, but said in a statement on Friday that it was "not satisfied" with the process and asked its followers to stay patient.

Now in exile in New Delhi, Hasina had dominated Bangladesh politics along with Rahman's mother, Khaleda Zia, day.

while his father was a leading independence figure who ruled from 1977 to 1981 before he was assassinated.

The BNP win with more than 200 seats is one of its biggest, surpassing its 2001 victory with 193, although Hasina's Awami League, which ruled for 15 years and was barred from contesting this time, secured a bigger tally of 230 in 2008.

But elections of other years were boycotted by one of the main parties or were contentious. Overnight, throngs of supporters cheered and shouted slogans at the BNP headquarters in Dhaka as the scale of the party's landslide became clear. Turnout exceeded the 42 per cent of the last election in 2024, with media nearly 60pc of registered voters participated in the election on Thursday.

Inter-Divisional Talent Hunt Boxing starts

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Boxing Federation (PBF) has commenced the Inter-Divisional phase of the National Talent Hunt Boxing Championship on Saturday under its ongoing nationwide

talent hunt program. According to PBF President Lieutenant Colonel (R) Nasir Ijaz Tung, the initiative is being organized in collaboration with the Pakistan Army with the primary objective of iden-

tifying and promoting emerging boxing talent across the country. In Punjab, the competitions are being held at the Sports Complex of the University of Agriculture Faisalabad, where around 300 male

and female boxers are competing in three age categories: Under-17, Under-19, and Under-22. Nasir Tung stated that two teams will be selected from Punjab following the four-day competition, while sim-

ilar selection trials will be conducted in other provinces to identify top-performing boxers for the next stage.

He expressed gratitude to the Pakistan Army for its full support, noting that their coop-

eration is playing a vital role in introducing fresh talent and strengthening boxing at the grassroots level.

Following the divisional round, successful boxers will advance to the Provincial Champi-

onships in the third phase, where they will further showcase their abilities. The National Talent Hunt Program is designed to reinforce grassroots boxing and produce future national and international cham-

ions. The PBF President reaffirmed that the joint commitment of the Pakistan Boxing Federation and the Pakistan Army is to elevate Pakistan boxing to a competitive and respected position on the global stage.



ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari addresses the participants of the 6th International Workshop for Leadership and Stability (IWLS) during an interactive session at Aitwan-e-Sadr.

Profiteering will not be tolerated during Ramadan: Commissioner Hazara

ABBOTTABAD (INP): Commissioner Hazara Fayyaz Ali Shah on Friday directed all district administrations to ensure strict price control, uninterrupted electricity and footproof security during Ramadan 2020, declaring that providing maximum relief to the public is the government's top priority and that no negligence will be tolerated.

Chairing a high-level meeting at the Commissioner Office Abbottabad, he said Ramadan teaches patience, tolerance and brotherhood, urging traders to respect the sanctity of the holy

month and refrain from profiteering, while instructing officials to remain fully vigilant to safeguard public interests across the division. Deputy Commissioners of all eight districts of the region briefed the Commissioner on preparations for Ramadan, including meetings of Price Review Committees, market management plans and security arrangements.

The meeting reviewed measures to ensure price stability of essential commodities, establishment of Sasta Bazaars, transparent auction processes in fruit and vegetable markets, un-

interrupted electricity and water supply, improved sanitation, and footproof security during the holy month. Commissioner Fayyaz Ali Shah directed that district-level monitoring teams be issued clear SOPs to ensure effective price control. He instructed Price Control Magistrates to conduct daily market inspections and take immediate action against overcharging and profiteering.

To promote transparency, it was decided that auction processes in fruit and vegetable markets would be video recorded and electricity during Sehri, Iftar and Tarweeh.

through social media.

The Commissioner also ordered preparation of special relief packages for deserving and underprivileged families, directing district administrations to identify beneficiaries and deliver assistance to their homes in a dignified manner.

The meeting further emphasized keeping Rescue 1122 and hospital emergency services fully functional, managing traffic congestion in markets through designated parking areas, taking action against illegal parking, and ensuring uninterrupted electricity during Sehri, Iftar and Tarweeh.

JUI-F senior leader Abdul Ghafoor Haideri hospitalised after heart attack

ISLAMABAD (INP): Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, the central Secretary General of JUI-F since 1995, was admitted to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) late on Wednesday night after suffering a heart attack.

Doctors said Haideri's condition is being closely monitored and that he is receiving treatment at the cardiac unit of the hospital.

Maulana Fazlur Rehman visited the hospital to inquire after Haideri's health. He was accompanied by Balochistan provincial member Maulana Abdul Wasey, Senator Kamran Murtaza, and several other senior leaders of the party, who expressed concern and prayed for his speedy recovery.

A seasoned politician, Haideri has served as Deputy Chairman of the Senate of Pakistan since March 12, 2015, and has held the post of

central Secretary General of JUI-F since 1995. Born in June 1957 to Muhammad Azam Lehi in the Kalat district of Balochistan, Haideri received his early education in his native village before completing his religious studies in 1979.

He passed examinations conducted by the Waqaf-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia, Pakistan's largest federation of Islamic seminaries. In 1984, he established Jamaat Wali Ullah in Kalat and taught there until 1990.

His political activism dates back to the 1970s, when he participated in the Tehrik-e-Khatm-e-Nabuwat in 1974 and the Tehreek Nizam-e-Mustafa in 1977, during which he was imprisoned twice.

Haideri was elected general secretary of the JUI-F in Quetta district in 1983 and was arrested again on August 14 that year during the Movement for the Restoration of Democracy campaign against the government.

PM vows to integrate Radio Pakistan with modern technologies

ISLAMABAD (INP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has reaffirmed his government's commitment to integrate Radio Pakistan with modern technologies, particularly with Artificial Intelligence, in order to transform the national broadcaster into a more effective instrument for public service, education, health and national development.

In his message on the occasion of World Radio Day, he said our government, under the Digital Pakistan Vi-

sion, is promoting innovation in media and IT sectors so that Pakistan can achieve a prominent position in the field of knowledge and technology.

The Prime Minister said Radio Pakistan, since the creation of Pakistan, had served as a powerful medium of communication, which united the nation, raised awareness and promoted the accessibility of information.

He said the history of Radio in Pakistan has been remarkably illustrious in many ways, particularly for

its vital role in promoting agricultural development, environmental awareness, culture and public enlightenment. Shehbaz Sharif said as the world is rapidly

entering the digital era, Radio is also harmonizing itself with modern day requirements.

The Prime Minister also called for making a pledge to harmonize Radio Pakistan and Artificial Intelligence as a testament that communication system can be transformed into more effective and inclusive with integration of technology and human

creativity. The Prime Minister said Pakistan is also taking practical steps to introduce this cutting-edge technology, equipping the young generation with modern skills and aligning the media sector with international standards.

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NADRA announces mobile registration facility for Pakistanis in UAE

ISLAMABAD (INP): The National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) has introduced a new facility for Pakistanis residing in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

In a message shared on social media, NADRA announced that its mobile registration team, accompanied by officials from the Pakistan Consulate, will visit Ras Al Khaimah.

Pakistani nationals living in Ras Al Khaimah will be able to apply for new identity documents, as well as request modifications or renewals with ease.

The mobile registration service will be available on Sunday, 15 February 2020, from 8:00am to 4:00pm at the Pakistan Centre in Ras Al Khaimah. In addition, overseas Pakistanis who wish to apply for NICOP or other identity documents, or seek their renewal or amendment, have been advised to use the Pak-Identity mobile application. Such applicants may also visit

the Pakistani consulates in Dubai and Abu Dhabi, or approach NADRA offices during visits to Pakistan.

NADRA stated that citizens using the Pak-Identity app are not required to stand in queues or wait, as all services and facilities are accessible directly via their mobile phones.

Earlier, the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) introduced a new online identity verification system, "Nishan-e-Pakistan", aimed at modernising the verification process.

The current facility introduced by NADRA would also allow both government institutions and regulated private sector organisations to access secure and authenticated verification services through a single digital portal.

Registration, subscription and access procedures will now be completed online, removing the need for lengthy paperwork and repeated approvals.

Pakistan calls for multilateral cooperation against terrorism

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan has called for resolution of Kashmir Dispute, stronger multilateral cooperation, and action against terrorism.

This was emphasized by Chairman Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani during a meeting with President of the UN General Assembly Annalena Baerbock on the sidelines of the Annual IPU Parliamentary Hearing 2020 at the UN headquarters.

The Chairman Senate underlined that while the UNSC resolutions on Kashmir remained unimplemented, India has taken further destabilizing action in unilateral holding the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance, arguing that this unlawful action constituted a blatant violation of the Treaty's provisions and established principles of customary international law.

He said such actions threaten the lives and livelihoods of over 240 million Pakistanis and set dangerous precedents, particularly at a time when climate stress and water scarcity demand cooperation and strict respect for international agreements. The Chairman Senate underscored that the people of Pakistan strongly support the United Nations' mission of promoting international peace and security, sustainable development, and the protection of human rights.

Speaking on the occasion, the President of the UN General Assembly conveyed her condolences to the government and people of Pakistan on the loss of lives in the recent terrorist incidents in Pakistan. She said it is in the interest of all countries to fight terrorism together.

PMD predicts cold, dry weather across country

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast mainly cold and dry weather across most parts of the country during next 24 hours.

The PMD said the prevailing cold and dry spell is likely to persist in most regions during the coming days.

However, the hilly regions are expected to remain partly cloudy with very cold conditions during morning and night hours. Light rain and light snowfall may occur at isolated places in Gilgit-Baltistan.

In the federal capital and adjoining areas, weather is expected to remain dry, with cold temperatures during early morning and night hours. Gusty winds are likely to blow during the daytime.

Most districts of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa will experience cold and dry weather, while upper districts are expected to remain very cold during morning and night.

Partly cloudy conditions are forecast in northern areas, where light rain or light snowfall may occur in Chitral, Dir, Swat and surrounding localities.

In Punjab, dry weather will prevail in most districts, accompanied by cold conditions during morning and night. Murree, Galiyat and nearby areas are expected to remain cold and dry, while gusty winds may affect central and southern parts of the province during the daytime.

Sindh will continue to experience mainly dry weather, while Balochistan is likely to remain partly cloudy and dry in most districts, with cold conditions in northern regions during morning and night.

In Kashmir, cold and partly cloudy weather is expected, with very cold conditions during early morning and night hours. Gilgit-Baltistan may witness partly cloudy skies along with light rain and light snowfall at isolated locations.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry chairing a high-level review meeting on the Sea-to-Steel initiative at Port Qasim.

Ramazan moon likely to be sighted on Wednesday

ISLAMABAD (INP): Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) on Friday announced that the new moon of Ramadan 1447 AH is expected to be born on February 17 at 5:01 pm Pakistan Standard Time (PST), setting the stage for a high probability of moon sighting the following evening (Wednesday - 18 February).

According to the space agency's astronomical assessment, by the time of sunset on February 18, the moon's age will reach approximately 25 hours and 48 minutes-

a duration considered highly favourable for visibility. The SUPARCO further noted that the interval between sunset and moonset along Pakistan's coastal belt is expected to be around 59 minutes, providing ample opportunity for observation. "Based on key astronomical parameters, the chances of sighting the new moon with the naked eye on the evening of February 18 are very bright," the statement said. "Consequently, the first day of Ramadan is likely to fall on February 19, 2020." However,

SUPARCO emphasized that the official commencement of the holy month will be determined by Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan, the country's sole authorized body for moon sighting, which will make its final announcement after receiving and verifying testimonies from across the nation.

The beginning of Ramadan marks a spiritually significant period for Muslims, characterized by fasting from dawn to sunset, increased prayers, and acts of charity.

In this regard an important meeting of Ruet-e-Hilal Commi-

tee has been convened in Peshawar on February 18. The meeting will be chaired by Chairman Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Pakistan Maulana Syed Abdul Khair Azad. In which the sighting of the moon of the month of Ramadan will be decided and announced. Members of Central and Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Peshawar will participate in the meeting.

Maulana Syed Muhammad Abdul Khair Azad said that the committee made special arrangements for sighting the moon of Ramadan.



JAMSHORO: Federal minister for planning and development and special initiatives Ahsan Iqbal giving shield to students during DMS Tech Expo 2020 final year projects exhibition & job fair at Sindh University Jamshoro.

Farm credit surges to Rs1.41tr in six months

NEWS DESK: Agricultural credit disbursements surged to record Rs1.412 trillion in the first half of FY26, while the number of borrowers edged up to 2.57 million.

Chairing a meeting of the Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) on Thursday, State Bank Governor Jameel Ahmad said that in FY25 the agricultural credit disbursement had hit a record Rs2.577tr, marking a 16 per cent year-on-year increase.

The meeting reviewed agricultural credit performance and discussed measures to strengthen inclusive and resilient farm finance.

To accelerate borrower expansion, particularly among small farmers in underserved and unserved areas, Mr Ahmad urged banks to fully utilise SBP initiatives, including the Risk Coverage Scheme for Small Farmers and Underserved Areas and Zarkheze, the central bank's flagship digital platform for agricultural lending.

SBP chief urges banks to fully utilise initiatives for small farmers.

Mr Ahmad said Pakistan's economy had regained macroeconomic stability and was moving towards a more durable growth path. Real GDP growth reached 3.7pc in the first



quarter of FY26, while full-year growth is projected at 3.75pc to 4.75pc. The committee reviewed progress under Zarkheze, described as a major step towards the digital transformation of

agricultural credit delivery. The platform enables digital onboarding for farmers, standardised credit assessment, integration with land and crop information, and end-to-end loan trace-

ability. It also ensures financing is used for quality agricultural inputs through an integrated vendor network.

The governor said Zarkheze must be scaled up as a core delivery channel, particularly to make small-ticket lending commercially viable and expand outreach beyond traditional high-volume regions. He urged banks to ensure the timely processing of

applications, strengthen internal ownership of the scheme, and further develop the vendor ecosystem to improve farmers' access to certified inputs and advisory services. Mr Ahmad also

as partnerships with fintechs, agri-tech firms and microfinance institutions to enhance outreach.

The meeting discussed the development of an Upgraded Crop Loan Insurance Scheme (CLIS+) framework under the Asian Development Bank-funded Pakistan Insurance Transformation Programme to strengthen the sector's resilience against calamities.

The proposed scheme aims to expand crop coverage, establish an insurance consortium for improved risk-sharing and farmer payouts, and introduce technology-based calamity assessment alongside loss-of-income support. The ADB's Solidarity Fund will also support extending coverage to non-borrowing farmers and the development of a National Insurance Policy for Agriculture.

In addition, the ACAC deliberated on scaling up Electronic Warehouse Receipt Financing to improve post-harvest liquidity, reduce distress sales and strengthen market linkages.

The committee underscored the need to expand accredited warehousing infrastructure and enhance bank participation in warehouse receipt-based financing.

Risk-averse capital drives hybrid deals

NEWS DESK: Pakistan's startup ecosystem, once a headline-grabbing post-Covid-19 success story that attracted aggressive venture capital chasing growth and buzzworthy "disruption," is now entering a more cautious and structurally different phase.

With investors increasingly prioritising risk-adjusted returns and shifting capital towards safer assets such as gold, the funding landscape is undergoing a transformation marked by a decisive move away from speculative equity rounds towards hybrid financing structures that now dominate capital flows.

The shift was highlighted during Invest2Innovate (I2I)'s "Ecosystem Signals 2026" event, where industry leaders discussed the findings of Pakistan's Capital Landscape Brief 2024-2025 and outlined emerging investment trends shaping the ecosystem. Aleena Khan, Deputy Director Growth & Strategy at I2I, highlighted that total startup funding doubled to \$74 million in 2025 from \$34 million in 2024, while deal activity also increased from eight deals to 16 deals.



However, the nature of capital changed significantly as hybrid financing, combining equity with debt, surged dramatically and accounted for nearly 89% of all capital raised in 2025, underscoring a structural shift in investor behaviour rather than a broad-based revival in venture capital.

During the period under review, hybrid financing surged from just \$1 million in 2024 to \$66 million in 2025, representing 89% of total capital. Misbah Naqvi, an early-stage investor, noted that Pakistan's

evolving funding environment reflects broader trends across emerging markets.

"Pakistan's landscape has changed, but many of these changes are not unique to Pakistan," she said, adding that investors globally are adopting diversified financing mechanisms to manage risk exposure.

Naqvi highlighted that Pakistan already has venture debt criteria and instruments that founders can utilise, providing alternative financing channels beyond traditional equity rounds. However, she cautioned that the ecosystem remains incomplete without successful exits.

NEWS DESK: The fragile external financing system of Pakistan is one of the main reasons for the weak economic structure of the country, as heavy reliance on foreign loans continues to expose the economy to sudden shocks, business leaders and economists said.

They added that the external debt profile remains tilted towards short-term borrowing, leaving little room for policy mistakes. "The government must immediately begin serious negotiations with friendly nations to secure longer repayment periods and ease pressure on foreign exchange reserves," said Raja Wassem Hassan, Vice Chairman of the Pakistan Industrial and Traders Associations Front (PIATF).

According to Hassan, without extending the maturity of loans, the risk of recurring balance-of-payments stress will continue to haunt the economy.

Official data shows that Pakistan's total external debt and liabilities stood at around \$134.5 billion as of September 2025, with a significant

portion either short-term or maturing within a few years. Foreign exchange reserves have improved and crossed the \$21 billion mark in January 2026; however, inflows from multilateral institutions and friendly countries are providing temporary support, while repayment obligations will remain heavy throughout 2026 and beyond.

Hassan said recent diplomatic developments, including closer ties with Gulf states, reports of potential Saudi

and UAE investment, and improving relations with the United States, are positive signals. However, he cautioned that geopolitical alignments can shift quickly.

"Economic strength must be the real shield. Without strong buffers and self-reliance, external partnerships alone cannot guarantee stability," he added.

He pointed out that a neighbouring regional economy managed to negotiate better trade terms during Trump-era tariff pressures because

it had stronger reserves and export diversification. In contrast, limited export growth and a narrow industrial base have reduced Pakistan's bargaining power.

Pakistan's exports remained around \$32 billion in FY25, far below potential, while imports continued to outpace export earnings despite compression measures.

The trade deficit, though reduced from previous highs, still poses structural challenges.

Dr Saleem Ahmed, a

senior economist, said the economy cannot depend on rollovers and short-term deposits forever. "Debt maturity extension should be treated as a strategic priority, not a temporary fix. At the same time, structural reforms in taxation, energy pricing and industrial productivity are essential to reduce external dependence," he said.

According to Ahmed, sustainable growth of at least 5-6% annually is required to stabilise the debt-to-GDP ratio, which has remained close to 70% in recent years.

Economic growth has remained modest. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected GDP growth of around 3.6% for FY26 under a stabilisation scenario, whereas the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) is projecting growth in the range of 7.5-4.75%. While inflation has eased from its peak of around 38% in 2023, high borrowing costs and tighter monetary policy have slowed industrial expansion. Private sector credit growth has remained weak, reflecting cautious business sentiment.



PAVE Scheme rolls out EV subsidies, easy financing

NEWS DESK: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Engineering Development Board (EDB), Hamad Ali Mansoor, said that under the Prime Minister's PAVE (Pakistan Accelerated Vehicle Electrification) Scheme, the process of providing electric bikes, rickshaws and loaders on easy instalments, along with subsidy payments, has commenced.

The initiative aims to provide the public with affordable and environmentally friendly transportation while reducing the country's dependence on fuel.

Under the scheme, electric bikes are being offered a subsidy of up to Rs80,000, which is being directly transferred to the approved bank accounts of applicants through the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

In addition, electric bikes and rickshaws are being provided on easy instalments through bank leasing.

Mansoor added that the government plans to provide approximately Rs9 billion in subsidies during the



current fiscal year under the PAVE Scheme, with a target of exceeding Rs100 billion in subsidies by 2030.

In the first phase of the scheme, subsidies are being provided to 41,000 recipients of electric vehicles, including 40,000 electric bikes and 1,000 electric rickshaws and loaders.

He said the transfer of subsidy amounts to

approved applicants in the first phase is progressing rapidly.

He further stated that the second phase of the scheme is about to begin and plans to provide subsidies on more than 78,000 electric vehicles.

He clarified that only individuals who obtain electric bikes, rickshaws or loaders through an approved procedure under the

PAVE Scheme will be eligible for the government subsidy.

The EDB CEO said that under the scheme, electric bikes are being made available on easy instalments to students, youth and women.

He added that the government initiative is expected to help reduce fuel import bills, combat environmental pollution and promote alternative energy sources.

Short-term inflation decreases 0.59 per cent

NEWS DESK: Short-term inflation in Pakistan, measured by the Sensitive Price Index (SPI) for the week ending on February 12, decreased 0.59 per cent, according to data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

The SPI-based inflation has been on an upward trend for the past few weeks, mainly driven by a surge in prices of perishable products, pulses, and meat.

Major decreases noted during this time period were in the prices of eggs (17.61pc), followed by tomatoes (12.02pc), chicken (6.34pc), onions (2.73pc), potatoes (2.49pc), salt (1.69pc), and LPG (1.57pc), wheat flour (1.31pc), and sugar (1.12pc).

Major increases were in the prices of bananas (7.62pc), garlic (4.35pc), pulse mash (2.69pc), chilies powder (1.68pc), mutton (0.80pc), beef



(0.37pc), mustard oil (0.34pc), shirting (0.31pc), cigarettes (0.24pc), vegetable ghee 1Kg (0.08pc), and georgette (0.02pc).

The year-on-year data show a 4.26pc increase.

The major influences contributing to this annual trend were an increase in tomatoes (73.36pc), wheat flour (83.82pc), gas charges

for Q1 (29.85pc), chili powder (15.20pc), beef (12.70pc), eggs (11.76pc), bananas (11.67pc), firewood (11.40pc), LPG (10.75pc), powdered milk (9.89pc), shirting (8.82pc) and gur (8.81pc).

Major decreases were seen in the prices of potatoes (44.68pc), garlic (30.78pc), onion (23.81pc), onions

(22.04pc), chicken (20.13pc), tea lipton (13.95pc), salt powder (12.52pc), pulse masoor (10.88pc), and petrol (1.33pc).

The weekly SPI base year 2015=16=100, covers 17 urban centres and tracks the prices of 51 essential items across all expenditure groups and quintiles.

Zimbabwe pull off shock win over Australia at T20 World Cup

NEWS DESK: Zimbabwe beat a depleted Australia by 23 runs on Friday in Colombo to pull off the biggest shock of the T20 World Cup so far.

After posting 169-2 in their 20 overs, thanks mainly to Brian Bennett's classy 64 not out, Zimbabwe had Australia 29-4 before dismissing them for 146 in 19.3 overs.

The Zimbabweans, ranked 11th were always in control against their second-ranked opponents in the Group B game at R. Premadasa Stadium after opening bowlers Blessing Muzarabani and Brad Evans ripped out Australia's top order.

There were sensational scenes at the venue as a group of Zimbabwe fans dressed in their team jerseys celebrated the win with a traditional dance.

"It is a huge win for us," said Bennett.

"There are fans who have come all the way from Zimbabwe and they have enjoyed the game and it is a special feeling



today to get a win here." Muzarabani was the pick of the bowlers finishing with 4-17.

"I was really happy that today really came off," said Muzarabani,

who was named player of the match.

"I also believe that everyone really bowled well. We missed Richi (Ngarava), but Brad (Evans) really bowled

well. The next step 'It's really good to beat Australia, but it will also be nice to qualify for the Super Eight. So we'll be thinking about the next step."

Australia retained hope of a rearguard victory when Glenn Maxwell and Matt Renshaw put on 77 for the fifth wicket.

But once part-time

leg-spinner Ryan Burl induced one of the short game's great players, Maxwell, to drag on to his stumps for 31, they were never in the hunt and tumbled from 106-4

to 146 all out.

Opening batsman Bennett's unbeaten 64 off 56 balls was an exercise in controlled aggression as he rarely went the aerial route and found the boundary seven times.

It was the 22-year-old's 10th half-century in T20 internationals.

"It was the type of wicket you have to do the hard yards," said Bennett.

Zimbabwe thrashed Oman in their opener and their last two group games will be against Ireland and Sri Lanka.

Co-hosts Sri Lanka have also won both their matches so far.

"We are in a good position to go to the next round having won two out of two," said Bennett.

Ryan Burl and Bennett put on 70 for the second wicket, a record stand for Zimbabwe in T20 World Cups after an opening partnership of 61 with Tadiwanashe Marumani.

Australia beat Ireland on Wednesday, but with matches to come

against Sri Lanka and Oman, another defeat could see them on the plane home after the group stage.

Without their captain Mitchell Marsh for the second match, and the previously ruled out pace spearheads Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood, Australia's campaign in the 20-nation tournament is in danger of falling apart at the first hurdle.

The former champions were left with more to worry as Marcus Stoinis was struck on his left palm attempting a return catch halfway through his third over.

The all-rounder was accompanied off the field in pain. He did come out to bat but scored only six.

"Stoinis was going to bat higher and him not being able to bat higher was a blow," said Renshaw, who top scored with 65.

"Medical staff will examine how bad his injury. We weren't good enough today. There is time for flair in T20 cricket.

ICC invites major Asian stakeholders to Pak-India Feb 15 T20 clash for talks to 'melt ice': report



NEWS DESK: The International Cricket Council (ICC) has invited all five Asian stakeholders for talks to de-escalate matters on the sidelines of the high stakes Pakistan-India T20 World Cup match on February 15, reported Bangladesh news outlet Prothom Alo.

The World Cup, featuring 20 teams divided into four groups, began on Saturday. Originally, Bangladesh had been included in the slate but requested the International Cricket Council (ICC) to shift its matches from India to Sri Lanka after its star player, Mustafizur

Rehman, was released from the Indian Premier League following objections from ruling party activists. The ICC declined the request and replaced Bangladesh with Scotland.

Pakistan took a principled stand in support of Bangladesh and protested the ICC's decision, a move that further strained relations with the governing body. The federal government also ordered the team not to play the match against India in Colombo. The situation was finally resolved after a round of meetings in Lahore with ICC and Bangladesh Cricket

Board (BCB) officials earlier this week that led to the government approving Pakistan's participation in the much-anticipated match against India.

In an interview with Prothom Alo, a Bengali-language daily, on Wednesday BCB President Aminul Islam was questioned about efforts from his side to ease tensions with India to which he responded: "The ICC has taken a decision in this regard. The five major Asian stakeholders play a central role in world cricket. During the India-Pakistan World Cup match on the 15th, the ICC

wants representatives from these five Asian nations to attend together, watch the match and engage in dialogue. "Questioned if it should be taken as an "attempt to ice-melting step", the BCB chief replied: "You may interpret it that way."

Islam had also visited Lahore and met Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Mohsin Naqvi. He had requested Naqvi to ask the government to allow Pakistan to play the match against India.

Islam discussed the delicate diplomatic manoeuvres undertaken to ensure that Bangladesh's stance would not adversely affect the ongoing cricketing tensions between India and Pakistan. He told the outlet that the agenda of his trip focused on protecting Bangladesh's interests while trying to find a way to persuade Pakistan to play against India.

Islam revealed that Pakistan had initially taken a firm stance, refusing to play the match against India in the ongoing T20 World Cup.

Italy dream of cricket 'in Rome, Milan and Bologna' after historic win at T20 World Cup



NEWS DESK: Italy have ambitions of hosting top-class cricket from Rome to Milan and Bologna after a historic and emotional first T20 World Cup victory.

The lowest-ranked side in the 20-team tournament hammered Nepal by 10 wickets on Thursday at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium.

The win, in just their second match at their debut T20 World Cup, left some of the Italy players in tears of joy.

Brothers Justin and Anthony Mosca — who hail from Sydney — powered the team's chase of 124 to achieve

a famous triumph with more than seven overs to spare.

None of the Italy team was born in the country far better known for its football than its cricket.

But the victory meant everything to them and after hitting the winning runs, the 34-year-old Anthony raised his arms to the sky, roared and shed a tear.

"I don't think you'll see many players cry on the field after a win in the group stages," stand captain Harry Manenti said.

"I think you've got to appreciate what Italy cricket is bringing to the

game, understand that the passion is slightly different with the Italians.

"We will bring that everywhere we go, no matter the level of the tournament or the level of opposition. "England loom next, at Kolkata's Eden Gardens on Monday.

Italy's cricket federation says it has about 1,800 players and around 100 clubs, but it is struggling for a natural cricket pitch.

Manenti hopes their World Cup exploits will help change the whole face of the sport in the country.

"We want other teams to host us and build facilities that host them back and that's our goal as a team," said Manenti, whose brother Ben also plays for the side.

That will provide opportunities for kids who are currently in Italy learning the game at a school level to see us playing in Rome or Milan or Bologna."

Italy lost their opener to Scotland by 73 runs but bounced back in style to stun Nepal, who had given heavyweights England a mighty scare on Sunday.

The feat was achieved without South Africa-born skipper Wayne Madsen, who dislocated his shoulder in the Scotland defeat.

Italy is in the middle of the Winter Olympics, but their coach John Davison says the cricket team deserves its moment in the headlines there and beyond.

"This will be front-page news in a lot of publications in Italy," said the former Canada captain.

For us to get that sort of exposure and maybe knock the Winter Olympics off the back page of the sports would be unbelievable for cricket in the country and just bring some attention to us."

Sociedad down Athletic in Spanish Cup semi-final first leg

NEWS DESK: Real Sociedad took control of their Copa del Rey semi-final tie with a 1-0 first-leg win at Athletic Bilbao as Benat Turrientes struck in the second half in the Basque derby on Wednesday.

The clash between the long-time rivals was finely balanced in the first half, but the visitors were the more composed of the two sides and are well-placed ahead of the return leg at San Sebastian's Anoeta on March 4.

La Real, unbeaten

in 10 matches since Pellegrino Matarazzo took charge in mid-December, were sharper in a lively first half at San Mames but found Athletic's second-choice goal-keeper Alex Padilla, deputising for Unai Simon in the Cup, in fine form. Padilla first produced a sharp save to thwart Pablo Marin's close-range effort from a counter-attack in the 25th minute and then denied Jon Martin with a reflex stop after Carlos Soler's pinpoint free kick six minutes

later. Mikel Oyarzabal went close for the visitors soon afterwards, while a last-ditch sliding tackle prevented Inaki Williams from capitalising on an Athletic counter-attack before halftime.

Padilla continued his heroics in the second half, pulling off a brilliant one-handed save within a minute of the restart to keep out Oyarzabal's low strike from the edge of the box. From the rebound, Marin struck the post.

Athletic coach Ernesto Valverde introduced Nico Williams

in the 55th minute, but the Spain forward, still recovering from a persistent groin injury, struggled to provide a decisive spark. The breakthrough finally came in the 62nd minute when Athletic's defence was caught trying to play out from the back.

Carlos Soler's interception for Sociedad set up Goncalo Guedes, whose chip over the advancing Padilla fell invitingly for Turrientes to dispatch the ball into the empty net.



Trent return can help Arbeloa's Real Madrid move forward

NEWS DESK: Trent Alexander-Arnold's Real Madrid career has not got off the ground yet but, fit again after injury, the England right-back could be crucial for the Spanish giants in the second half of the season. With Alvaro Arbeloa's side still taking shape following the coach's arrival in January, Alexander-Arnold has the chance to make himself a key part of the club's battle for silverware.

Pellegrino Matarazzo's in-form Real Sociedad visit the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday in La Liga, in what promises to be an enticing clash.

Arbeloa's Madrid are looking to move two points clear of Barcelona and take the lead in La Liga before the Catalans visit Girona on Monday.

Former Liverpool full-back Alexander-Arnold, who came off

the bench last weekend as Madrid beat Valencia, could potentially start for the first time since December 3.

After a decent early showing for Madrid at the Club World Cup last summer, hamstring and thigh injuries have stopped him settling in, limiting him to 12 appearances across all competitions this season.

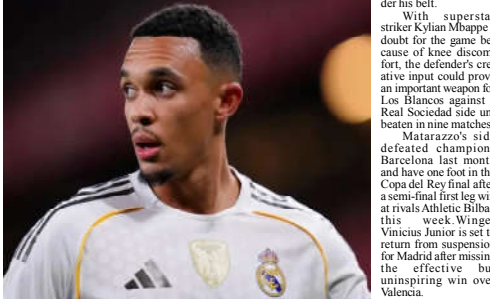
"After (he's had) a long time out, we will proceed with caution,"

said Alexander-Arnold's return, with Spanish newspaper AS reporting Madrid's aim is for him to start against Benfica in the Champions League play-off round on February 17.

Even if Arbeloa uses veteran Dani Carvajal or youngster David Jimenez to start against Real Sociedad, the expectation is for Alexander-Arnold to get more crucial minutes under his belt.

With superstar striker Kylian Mbappe a doubt for the game because of knee discomfort, the defender's creative input could prove an important weapon for Los Blancos against a Real Sociedad side unbeaten in nine matches.

Matarazzo's side defeated champions Barcelona last month and have one foot in the Copa del Rey final after a semi-final first leg win at rivals Athletic Bilbao this week. Winger Vinicius Junior is set to return from suspension for Madrid after missing the effective but uninspiring win over Valencia.



By-Election Schedule Issued for NA-256 Khuzdar

Muhammad Zeeshan: The Election Commission of Pakistan has announced the complete schedule for the by-election on National Assembly seat NA-256 Khuzdar, which became vacant after the resignation of Muhammad Akhtar Mengal.

According to the official schedule, the Returning Officer will issue a public notice on February 18, 2026.

Nomination papers can be submitted from February 20 to February 24.

The preliminary list of candidates will be published on February 25, while scrutiny of nomination papers will be completed by March 4.

Appeals against the decisions of the Returning Officer may be filed before the appellate tribunal by March 9.

Decisions on these appeals will be announced by March 16, the same day the revised list of candidates will be released.



will be released.

March 17 has been set as the final date for withdrawal of nomination papers, after which the final list of

contesting candidates

will be published. Election authorities have stated that necessary arrangements will be made to ensure a smooth and

held on Sunday, April

5, 2026. Election authorities have stated that necessary arrangements will be made to ensure a smooth and

transparent electoral process. Voters of NA-256 have been urged to participate actively and exercise their democratic right.

13 killed, 9 injured in traffic accident on M9 Motorway in Karachi

NEWS DESK: Thirteen people were killed and nine others were injured in a traffic accident involving an oil tanker and a passenger bus on the M9 Motorway at Ansari Bridge near DHA City, according to officials.

After the accident, a significant quantity of oil spread on the M9 Motorway, causing difficulties for rescue workers who avoided using electrical equipment for fear of fire.

As a result, they had to manually cut apart the vehicles to retrieve the bodies of the injured.

Malir Superintendent of Police (SSP) Dr

Abdul Khaliq told Dawn that 13 people

had died in the accident and nine others were injured.

He said that the initial investigation showed that the oil tanker was on its way to Karachi, while the passenger bus was Sanghar-bound.

He said that the bus was coming from the wrong direction, which led to the accident.

He said that as a result, the oil tanker overturned and fell onto the van.

The police official said that the rescue operation had been completed;

however, combustible materials were being removed from the oil

tanker.

Rescue 1122 spokesman Hassanul Hasbe Khan told Dawn that four vehicles were involved in the fatal accident: an oil tanker, a passenger bus, a passenger van and a trailer carrying goods.

He also corroborated the SSP's statement regarding the passenger bus travelling in the wrong direction.

However,

Motorway police, in a statement, said the accident was caused by the oil tanker's tyre bursting. The statement also confirmed the four vehicles were involved in the accident.

Mohsin Naqvi floats Imran Khan's possible transfer to Islamabad Model Jail in visit to facility

NEWS DESK: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Friday indicated that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder and Imran Khan may be shifted to the new under-construction Islamabad Model Jail.

The project, originally launched in 2011, has faced continuous delays over the past 14 years.

Its initial estimated cost of Rs3.9 billion has gone up to Rs18.2b and is expected to cross Rs20b by the end of January 2026.

The Islamabad Model Jail is being constructed on 90 acres of land in Sector H-11.

Imran is planned to have a capacity to house 2,000 inmates. It was decided last year to partially activate the jail by December 31, 2025, by completing Special Barrack No. 3 on an emergency basis. The high-security barrack was intended for the transfer of PTI founder and former prime minister Imran Khan from Adiala Jail, where he is currently incarcerated. However, the special barrack could not be completed, delaying his transfer once again.

Speaking to the media after a visit to the under-construction prison, the interior minister was asked whether Imran would also be moved to the new facility, to which he said, "If he has been sentenced by Islamabad, then he will come here."

The people [sentenced in] Islamabad will be brought here."

Discussing the jail's facilities, Naqvi said it would have complete medical facilities, including an advanced hospital.

He stated that ev-

ery facility would be available at the new jail. Naqvi's remarks came amid a political storm surrounding Imran's health.

Earlier today, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Tariq Fazal Chaudhry said the government would afford no negligence in Imran's eye examination and medical treatment, adding that arrangements would be made wherever ordered.

PTI counsel Advocate Salman Safdar submitted a Supreme Court-mandated report on Thursday after meeting the former prime minister in Adiala jail earlier this week.

Imran informed Safdar that his right eye was now functioning at only 15% capacity after he underwent a medical procedure at the Pakistani Institute of Medical Sciences last month.

Subsequently, a two-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Yahya Afridi and Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan ordered that Imran be granted access to his personal physicians in Adiala Jail and allowed telephone contact with his sons.

The revelations about his eye condition sparked outrage among opposition ranks and other politicians.

The Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Ain Pakistan also staged a sit-in outside Parliament House, vowing to continue the protest until Imran was admitted to a hospital in Islamabad.

Protest leaders said no compromise would be made on the PTI founder's health.

Inspection of jail facilities

The interior minister visited the jail and the new trainee officers' hostel at the National

Police Academy today, where he reviewed progress on key security and training infrastructure projects.

Officials briefed him that the jail project had now achieved over 85% completion in phase one and was expected to become functional within two months.

The facility will feature dual security walls, a digital monitoring system and a centralised control room.

During his inspection, Naqvi visited the barracks and expressed satisfaction over the pace and quality of construction, directing authorities to accelerate work through double-shift operations.

The interior minister also inspected the model room of the hostel being built for under-training assistant superintendents at the National Police Academy, issuing instructions to ensure high-standard accommodation for police officers.

He observed that enhanced infrastructure at the academy would improve the quality of police training nationwide. Designed to accommodate both convicted prisoners and under-trial detainees, the facility includes separate large barracks for women and juvenile detainees.

It will also feature a school for staff children, a 22-bed hospital for inmates and staff, a mosque, an imambarah, a church, a library and an auditorium.

The project's cost escalated due to persistent delays and a steep rise in construction material prices.

Over the years, multiple meetings regarding the project were held during the tenures of former prime ministers

NEWS DESK: Pakistan on Friday reiterated its call for Afghan territory to cease being used for terrorism against neighbouring states, urging steps to prevent "external spillover" from exploiting the situation, during a meeting of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

The UNSC unanimously adopted a draft resolution renewing the mandate of the Monitoring Team supporting the 1988 Afghanistan Sanctions Committee—responsible for overseeing the Taliban sanctions regime—for a further 12 months. All 15 Council members, including Pakistan, voted in favour of the resolution, extending the mandate until Feb. 17, 2027.

The draft was prepared and submitted by the United States. Speaking at the message to the Taliban Council, Pakistan's Per-



manent Representative to the UN, Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, voiced serious concerns over the continued presence of terrorist groups on Afghan soil, including Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and its Majeed Brigade, Islamic State Khorasan (ISIL-K), and Al Qaeda.

With the adoption of this resolution, the Council sends a clear message to the Taliban

authorities that Afghan territory should not be used to threaten or attack any country," the ambassador said, according to highlights of his remarks shared on X.

He added that the Council also expects all member states to ensure that kidnappers, hostage-takers and terrorist groups do not benefit—directly or indirectly—from ransom payments or political concessions, and to take measures to

secure the safe release of hostages.

"We call upon the Taliban to prevent terrorist groups from carrying out such actions with impunity and to effectively combat terrorism," Ahmad said, urging sustained and verifiable counterterrorism measures. The ambassador said the Council had spoken with a "unanimous voice" in highlighting Afghanistan's challenges and remained

committed to reviewing the sanctions regime as appropriate, taking into account realities on the ground. He expressed hope that the Monitoring Team would continue to report actively and support the work of the UNSC's 1267 Sanctions Committee.

"It is for the Afghan authorities to decide what path they wish to choose—whether the path of isolation or the path of peace and prosperity as a responsible member of the international community," he concluded. A day earlier, Foreign Office spokesperson Tahir Andrabi said a recent report by the UNSC's 1267 Sanctions Committee had "extensively supported" Pakistan's long-held position that terrorist groups—particularly the TTP—continue to operate from Afghan soil with operational space and support.

Media monitor reports continued underrepresentation of women, highlights potential of digital platforms

NEWS DESK: A report by the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP) released on Thursday found that women in Pakistan continued to be underrepresented in the media, although digital platforms offered greater space for their participation and visibility.

The Pakistan National Report 2025 was released by the GMMP's Pakistan partner, Uks Research Centre.

It was based on the monitoring of the news landscape in May 6 last year—a day marked by severe military and political tensions along the Line of Control with India—which shaped the news content and the visibility of women across different platforms.

The data captures not just a single day's news, but the outcome of decades of institutional and societal factors that shape women's visibility in Pakistani media," the report said, adding, "On a day that was dominated by overwhelming national security coverage, these findings show broader systemic trends."

According to the report, the monitoring was based on nine print newspapers, six television channels, the state-owned Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation radio channel, and four news-based websites.



Thirteen volunteers participated in the monitoring, including Uks staff and students from various universities.

It found that women constituted only 11 per cent of news subjects across traditional media (print, television and radio), reflecting "their marginalisation in the coverage of politics, economy, crime, and sports."

Across these platforms, they appeared most frequently in arts, culture, and celebrity reporting (60pc) and science and health (28pc), but were nearly absent in the hard-news areas highlighted above, ranging from 0-10pc in each area as well as in Gender-Based Violence

(GBV) coverage.

Notably, in digital media platforms highlighted greater inclusivity, as women made up 26pc of subjects in internet news. They were also visible in politics (22pc), science and health (33pc), and legal issues (33pc), and were "central" to all monitored GBV stories (100pc).

These findings illustrate a consistent platform-based gap, with online news offering women a higher likelihood of visibility," the report stated.

It further said that the role of women in news production remained "extremely limited", with men dominating reporting roles

across all media.

In addition, print bylines by women comprised 5pc of the total, while radio showed 100pc female reporting on the monitoring day—although the report warned against generalisation due to a small sample size.

The report added that of the 29pc of news reported or presented by women, 96pc of them were field reporters.

"Women reporters were largely absent from producing stories about men as subjects. On the other hand, men reported almost all the stories that featured women subjects," it added.

GBV coverage on

the monitoring day was limited, with only a single story recorded in traditional media. Online outlets, however, addressed sexual harassment and technology-facilitated violence and often also talked about broader gender inequality and rights-based perspectives, it said.

Meanwhile, women's visibility as central subjects was limited, with only 15pc of news stories featuring women as the main focus, according to the report. Women's news subjects primarily represented government officials or politicians and were rarely in roles providing personal experience or as experts.

In addition, the report highlighted that women were identified by their family roles or status in 15pc of cases compared to only 2pc for men.

A greater percentage of men were reported as victims, while photographs "disproportionately showed men" over women, and direct quotes were overwhelmingly given by men, with only 10.5pc of quotes attributed to women.

"Overall, only 1pc of the news content challenged gender stereotypes, and only 1pc of stories highlighted issues of gender equality or inequality between women and men," it said.