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First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE



## Balochistan to Shift Iran Border Travel to Passport System, Tightens Anti-Smuggling Measures

### SYED ALI SHAH:

Additional Chief Secretary (Home) Balochistan, Muhammad Hamza Shafqat, has reiterated that illegal and lawful trade is the provincial government's top priority. Speaking to the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he warned that illegal border trade, smuggling, and poppy cultivation will no longer be tolerated in the province.

### Passport-Only Entry at Iran Border

Hamza Shafqat announced that within one to two months, cross-border movement with Iran will switch to the One Document Regime

(ODR), requiring passport-based entry. Local permits will no longer be valid, ensuring stricter monitoring and control of border traffic.

The additional chief secretary stressed that claims that unemployment is responsible for law and order problems in Balochistan.

"Data shows that areas facing higher terrorism incidents actually have lower unemployment rates compared to other divisions," he said, highlighting the need to focus on security and governance rather than assumptions.

### Security Update on January 31 Attacks

Hamza Shafqat shared that nearly 400 individuals

were involved in attacks across the province on January 31, of whom 221 have been killed and about 221 are missing.

100 arrested. Investigations revealed that the Noshki attack was financially supported through poppy cultivation, emphasizing the link between illegal trade and terrorism.

The government will strictly prevent smuggling of essential commodities facing shortages in the province and across Pakistan. Issues related to Pakistani sugar trade in Balochistan are under review, and authorities will ensure that legal trade is fully protected.

**Business Community Voices Challenges**

Representatives of the Quetta Chamber of Commerce highlighted obstacles including unfair tax valuation, delays in import-export movement, and bureaucratic hurdles. They requested:

1. Extension of IFF period by six months

2. Permission for up to 10% mutilation of rollable scrap

3. Extended Taftan border operating hours

4. Free movement of goods through Bazaarche Business Terminal

Hamza Shafqat assured the business community that proposals would be reviewed seriously. The government plans to extend border operating hours and improve trade facilitation in coordination with

relevant departments.

Residents of border districts will receive free passport facilities, while financial assistance will be provided through the Benazir Income Support Programme. Children of workers registered with the Workers Welfare Board will gain access to free education at top institutions, and individuals seeking overseas employment may receive up to Rs700,000 in support.

The additional chief secretary urged the Quetta Chamber of Commerce and Industry to form a committee for regular coordination with the government to address trade and business challenges effectively.

**SBP fined Rs500,000 for denying maternity leave to employee**

### NEWS DESK:

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has been fined Rs500,000 for unlawfully denying maternity leave to an employee after a decision by the Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment Fouzia Waqar. The case was filed by Syed Basit Ali, an officer serving as OG-1 at the SBP Banking Services Corporation (BSC).

Following the birth of his son on April 4, 2025, he applied for 30 days' maternity leave on April 10. His request was refused because "no such leave existed under the prevailing policy of SBP," although maternity leave is granted to female employees under the Maternity and Paternity Leave Act, 2023.

Ali argued that SBP BSC falls under the administrative category of federal government, and therefore the act applies. He added that SBP and SBP BSC "cannot selectively adopt provisions of the Act, granting maternity leave while denying maternity leave under the same statute."

SBP's counsel countered that the bank, as an autonomous entity, is not bound by the act and that maternity leave had not been incorporated into its service rules. The arguments focused heavily on matters of jurisdiction. The complainant's case, presented evidence, including job advertisements and bidding documents, to show that SBP BSC adheres to federal regulations.

In her ruling, Waqar stated: "The denial of maternity leave to the Complainant, to which he is legally entitled as a father, while allowing maternity leave to female employees, constitutes clear gender-based discrimination."

The judgment imposed a fine of Rs500,000 on SBP, directing that Rs400,000 be paid to the complainant within 30 days, while the remaining Rs100,000 is to be deposited into the national treasury. SBP has also been ordered to grant Basit Ali 30 days' paid maternity leave and to update its leave policies to align fully with the Maternity and Paternity Leave Act, 2023.

Waqar further said, "Refusal to grant maternity leave is equivalent to harassment on the basis of gender."

Providing maternity leave while denying maternity leave constitutes gender discrimination. Childcare is not solely the responsibility of women, and refusal

of maternity leave undermines the shared responsibility of parents and the best interests of the child."

The ruling further emphasized that statutory rights cannot be overridden by internal policies, and that federal institutions,

including autonomous bodies, are bound by constitutional guarantees and welfare legislation.

The order came after the Ombudsman rejected the long-standing claim of institutional autonomy used to deny statutory rights. State Bank of Pakistan is owned, controlled, and supervised by the Federal Government, and SBP Banking Services Corporation, as its wholly owned subsidiary, cannot escape the application of federal welfare legislation," the Ombudsman added.

## Balochistan Rolls Out Ramazan Relief Package for 328,000 Families

### Staff Reporter:

Quetta: As Ramazan begins, the Balochistan government has launched a province-wide relief package for 328,000 families struggling with rising living costs. Speaking at a press conference in Quetta, Director General PDMA Jehanzeb Khan said the initiative is aimed at ensuring that no deserving household is left without basic food support during the holy month.

The relief package, one of the instructions of the Chief Minister, the Ramazan Relief Package, will reach 328,000 low-income families in all districts of the province.

Supplies have already been delivered to over 20 districts, allowing distribution to begin within a week.

To improve transparency and restore public trust, the government has revised the distribution process this year.

Relief items will be handed out through an eight-member District Coordination Committee, formed to ensure fair distribution and prevent corruption.

The PDMA chief assured that the quality of ration would meet set standards and that the assistance would strictly be limited to deserving families.

"This support is meant for those who truly need it," he



said, adding that monitoring mechanisms are in place at every level. Each relief package has been prepared to cover a family's food requirements for around 15 days, providing timely relief during the most demanding part of Ramazan.

Jehanzeb Khan said the government remains committed to delivering aid with dignity, transparency, and care, calling the relief package a step toward easing the daily hardships faced by vulnerable communities during the holy month.

## QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

**SBKWU Teacher Recruitment Scandal Raises Alarms for Pakistan's Education System**


**Editorial:** Serious questions have emerged over the secondary teachers recruitment process conducted by Sardar Bahadur Khan Women's University (SBKWU), triggering a widespread concern about merit, transparency, and accountability in Balochistan's education system. It is essential to clarify a point that has caused public confusion: the advertised posts were NOT for SBKWU itself.

The university was only assigned the responsibility of conducting tests and interviews for Secondary School Teacher recruitment across Balochistan. According to initial findings, hundreds of candidates who had failed were allegedly declared successful during the teacher recruitment process.

Given the scale of the exercise, involving thousands of applicants for secondary teaching positions across the province, such irregularities cannot reasonably be described as clerical mistakes.

The magnitude strongly suggests organised manipulation, carried out with the involvement or protection of influential individuals rather than the actions of a single official. This issue strikes at the heart of education governance in Balochistan. Secondary school tests, despite the academic founders of students, and any compromise on merit directly damages learning outcomes.

In Balochistan, where literacy rates remain among the lowest in the country, flawed teacher recruitment further deepens an already critical education

crisis. Reports that deserving candidates were sidelined only intensify public frustration and mistrust.

All anti-corruption and accountability institutions must take immediate action.

A transparent, independent, and timely investigation is necessary to identify those responsible for manipulating the recruitment process conducted under SBKWU's authority. Accountability must reach every individual involved, regardless of status or influence.

It is not merely an administrative controversy; it is a matter of justice and the future of Balochistan's education system. If credibility in teacher recruitment collapses, public trust in institutions will collapse with it. Balochistan cannot afford integrity is at stake.

Improving the education sector has always been the hallmark of all successive governments in Balochistan. Every government has allocated substantial funds to improve the education sector and quality of education to enable students to compete on national and international level. Health and education, all successive governments declared their priorities.

Former Chief Minister, Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch led nationalist government allocated around 24 percent of budget to the province in comparison with other parts of the country. Dr. Baloch's government also declared emergency and announced implementation of article 25-A of the constitution to enroll all out of school children in Balochistan. The number of out of school children in Balochistan is currently over 1 mil-

lion. However, independent sources put the number high as compared to the official data. There are conflicting figures about the exact number of out of school children in Balochistan.

To be precise, positive strides were made during Dr. Malik Baloch led government to improve the education sector.

For the first time in the history of Balochistan, 5000 teachers were appointed through national testing service and launching an effective campaign against growing cheating during examinations and introducing the education management and information system to ensure the presence of teachers in schools.

Track record shows, teachers were always recruited on political basis with no merit and transpar-

ency in the recruitment process. This has ruined the entire education sector. Dr. Malik Baloch, the then minister on education, Sardar Raza Muhammad Barrech led rallies against cheating to create awareness among the people regarding the curse of cheating in educational institutions.

After the removal of Sardar Raza Barrech as an advisor on education and transfers senior bureaucrats Ghulam Ali Baloch and Saboor Kakar an effective campaign was taken to improve the quality of education in Balochistan.

Now again the portfolio of education has been awarded to Sardar Yar Muhammad Rind who belongs to Pakistan Tehrik e Insaf (PTI). Mr. Rind has made announcements to what he claimed

revolutionary changes. However, improvement in education sector, enrollment of school children in schools and improving quality of education needs a multi-pronged strategy. Senior bureaucrat Ghulam Ali Baloch who had already served as secretary education has again been posted.

Mr. Baloch is taking a number of initiatives to improve schooling and trace out ghost schools and teaches across the province.

However, political speech breeders appear to be major obstacles in his way.

Despite being the poorest province of Pakistan, Balochistan spends over 70 billion rupees on primary, middle, secondary and higher education in the province.

The province spends thousands of rupees per month on what he claimed

nately, neither the quality nor the education standard meet national standards what to speak about international standards. Poor quality of education is the result of poor capacity of teachers that needs to be improved to compete on national and international level.

The Balochistan government has announced to enroll 70000 kids in government run schools in the province. However, ground realities negate claims of the provincial government. So far, the government has not been able to mobilize the civil society, media, political parties and tribesmen to make sure maximum enrollment of kids in educational institutions of the province. Coordinated efforts and combined strategy by all segments of society can ensure implementation of article 25-A of the Constitution.

## Taftan border and Balochistan Govt's response

**Quetta Voice Analysis**

The sudden arrival of thousands of Zaireen at Pak-Iran border Taftan posed a serious challenge for government of Balochistan to make sure their screening and conduct medical tests in the aftermath of outbreak of COVID-19 in neighboring Iran. The federal government closed the border with Iran at Taftan on February 23rd to halt the spread of deadly coronavirus.

All of a sudden over 4,000 Zaireen, students, tourists and traders gathered at Taftan, Pakistan's bordering town with Iran. The poorly equipped health department, too less in number tried to conduct screening and tests of those entered from Iran. However, many managed to flee from the administration and used their own means of communication to reach Quetta on way to their home provinces. The drivers were paid heavy fares by those fleeing the quarantine centers at Taftan.

Perhaps, in the beginning, the Balochistan government and Islamabad did not realize the gravity of situation. A wind-blowing tent quarantine center was established to keep the



Zaireen and others to halt the spread of virus. However, the laboratory to diagnose the deadly disease and conduct tests of novel corona virus could not be arranged at the border soon after the closure of border. The National Institute of Health (NIH) dispatched machinery and laboratory to conduct the diagnosis of novel corona virus at the border. Before installation of the laboratory, the health officials used to send tests of suspected patients to Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi for diagnosis.

Though, it was imperative to install laboratory soon after

the closure of the border to make sure proper screening and diagnosis of the people.

Apart from corona virus, the Balochistan government appeared to be concerned about the security of Zaireen as well.

In the past, Zaireen were frequently targeted by terrorists on Quetta-Taftan highway. Since then, the Balochistan government has been providing security and law enforcers escort long convoys of buses from Quetta to Taftan all the time.

The Chief Minister, Sardar Balochistan, Jam Kamal Khan has been closely monitoring the unfolding situation and at the time directing the concerned quarters to halt the spread of novel corona virus. However, loopholes in the system caused the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.

Although, the Chief Minister issued statements, precautionary measures through print, electronic and shares videos on social media to sensitize the people about the deadly virus. Nevertheless, the virus penetrated and made its way from Taftan to Sukkur prompting the Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah to say that Zaireen were not properly screened at Pak-Iran border

Opposition political parties in Balochistan in general and the Balochistan National Party ideologue, Sanaullah Baloch have strongly criticized the Jam Kamal led government for what they call its failure and incompetency to contain the coronavirus.

Political parties, members of civil society and legal fraternity had also objected over the establishment of quarantine center at Mian Ghundi area of Quetta. They feared spread of deadly virus after establishment of center near the city rather they demanded of the government to shift the Zaireen to their home provinces directly from Taftan.

To be precise, the virus has already penetrated and now it is time for all political parties from left to right and religious to nationalists to join their hands to contain its spread.

The government needs to take all stakeholders including political parties, media, civil society and lawyers to evolve a combined strategy in the province to tackle the situation. It is not alone the job of government rather every individual to play his/her role to contain the virus before it is too late.

## Balochistan's education sector, implementation of article 25-A



## Bangladesh's JI-led coalition submits poll complaints

**NEWS DESK :** Bangladesh's Islamists-led coalition has lost its chance to form the country's next government in this week's polls, submitted complaints to the Election Commission on Sunday, challenging results in 32 constituencies.

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), led by Tariqul Haque, — scion of one of the country's most influential political dynasties — celebrated a sweeping victory in the South Asian nation of 170 million after general elections on Friday.

They won the first polls since a 2024 uprising ousted the authoritarian government of former prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

The alliance won 212 seats, compared with 77 for the Jamaat-e-Islami-led alliance, according to the Election Commission. The alliance identifies 32 constituencies where their candidates were 'unfairly defeated' — Jamaat chief Shafiqur Rahman con-



Both Jamaat-e-Islami and ally the Nationalist Party (NCP) — former student leaders who spearheaded the uprising — reported attacks on their supporters. NCP loyalists marched through Dhaka University campus against the BNP on Friday.

Police spokesman AHM Shahadat Hossain said three men were deployed to keep the peace. "Over 150,000 police personnel were trained to tackle pre- and post-election violence," Hossain said.

The Election Commission said turnout was 59 per cent across 299 of the 300 constituencies where voting was held.

Only seven women were directly elected, although a total of 50 seats reserved for women will be allocated to parties according to their share of the vote.

Four members of minority groups won seats, including two Hindus — a population that makes up roughly seven percent in Muslim-majority Bangladesh.

## US flies nuclear microreactor in first airlift demo for rapid nuclear deployment

**NEWS DESK:** The US Department of Energy and Defense on Sunday for the first time transported a small nuclear reactor on a cargo plane from California to Utah to demonstrate the potential to quickly deploy nuclear power for military and civilian use.

The agency partnered with California-based VelaR Atmos to fly one of the company's Ward microreactors on a C-17 aircraft — without nuclear fuel — to Hill Air Force Base in Utah. Energy Secretary Steven Wright and Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment Michael Duffey were on the C-17 flight with the reactor and its components, and hailed the event as a breakthrough for US nuclear energy and mil-

tary logistics.

The microreactor gets closer to deploying nuclear power when and where it is needed to give our nation's warfighters the tools to win in battle," Duffey said.

President Donald Trump's administration sees Ward nuclear reactors as one of several ways to expand US energy production.

Trump last May issued four executive orders aimed at boosting domestic nuclear deployment to meet growing demand for energy for national security and competitive advantage.

The Energy Department in December issued two grants to help accelerate the development of small modular reactors. Proponents of microreactors have also touted them as energy

sources that can be sent to far-flung and remote locations to offer an alternative to diesel generators, which require frequent deliveries of fuel. But sceptics have argued that the industry has not proven that small nuclear reactors can generate power for a reasonable price.

"There is no business case for microreactors, which even if they work as designed — will produce electricity at a far higher cost than large nuclear reactors, not to mention renewables like wind and solar," said Edwin Lyman, director of nuclear power safety at the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The Energy Department has three microreactors under development, including one for VelaR's reactor, which will be transported from the Nevada National Security Site to the San Rafael facility, Wright told reporters.

However, even small generators result in a significant amount of radioactive waste, Lyman said.

Other experts have said designers are not compelled to consider waste at inception, beyond a plan for how it will be managed.

Waste disposal of nuclear waste remains an unresolved issue, the Energy Department is in talks with a few states, including Utah, to host sites that could represent fuel or handle permanent disposal, Wright said.



## Fury mounts over 'false' claims against UN rapporteur

**NEWS DESK:** TOP European government officials who led a smear campaign against United Nations special rapporteur for the Palestinian territories, Francesca Albanese, have failed to apologize or withdraw their claims for her resignation, even after multiple reports confirmed the allegations were based on a fabricated quote.

France 24 and Reuters verified that Albanese had indeed described Israel as the "common enemy of humanity" during a forum in Qatar earlier this month, an allegation levelled by Israeli officials and echoed by European ministers.

Transcripts of the event show she was referring to a global system of finance and weapons. Yet diplomats from



France, Germany and Italy have so far declined to condemn the record Amnesty International has demanded that European states immediately withdraw their accusations. Its secretary general, Agnès Callamard, said ministers

in Austria, Czechia, France, Germany and Poland backed Albanese on the basis of a "deliberately truncated video" that gravely misrepresented her remarks.

"The ministers that have

disinformation must be accounted for merely deleting the video and the media — as some have done," Callamard said. "They must publicly apologise and retract any calls for Francesca Albanese's resignation."

## Israeli strikes kill 12 in Palestine

**NEWS DESK:** Gaza's civil defence agency reported that Israeli strikes killed at least 12 people since dawn on Sunday, while a military official said the attacks were in response to ceasefire violations.

Despite a US-brokered truce that entered its second phase last month, violence has continued in the Palestinian territories between Israel and Hamas blaming each other for violating the agreement.

The civil defence agency said 12 people were killed in northern Gaza and another 12 were injured.

Five people were killed and several injured when an air strike targeted a tent sheltering displaced people in northern Gaza and another 12 were injured.

The Al-Shifa and Nasser hospitals confirmed they had received the bodies of at least seven people.

"The agency doesn't understand ceasefires or truces," said Osama Abu Askar, who lost his nephew in the Jabalia city of Khan Yunis, the agency said, adding that one more was killed in Israeli shelling in Gaza.

Five more were killed and several injured when an air strike targeted a tent sheltering displaced people in northern Gaza and another 12 were injured.

But, as Rio's world famous carnival parade approached, the tribute became a political headache.

Opposition parties and politicians have filed a flurry of lawsuits alleging that Lula is benefiting from what they claim is an illegal form of political campaigning ahead of this year's presidential election. The president hopes to be elected for his fourth consecutive term in October.

Courts have already rejected all but one of the lawsuits, including one that asked judges to stop the parade from taking place.

But more could be filed if critics believe politicians used the event, scheduled to happen on Sunday night, to add to their political clout.

Still, Lula is planning to watch the samba school Academicos de Niteroi sing and dance in Rio, his aides told Reuters, but he won't be speaking at any moment.

The president's wife, Rosangela "Janja" da Silva, plans to take part

in the parade and review people familiar with the government's thinking told Gazz.

"It's not campaigning," said Tiago Martins, a designer at Academicos de Niteroi. "It's a plot that tells the life story of a man who, despite all obstacles, got to the president."

Critics disagree, pointing for example, to mentions of the number 13 in the song's lyrics, the same one that Lula and his Workers Party used to sing.

"This is the kind of thing you see in a Soviet republic, in North Korea, an ode to the great leader," said lawmaker Van Hattum, a leader of the opposition Novo Party, which filed one of the lawsuits against Lula.

The parade designed by Academicos de Niteroi describes the

results with relative calm. At least two people were injured in clashes, while scattered acts of vandalism and assaults were reported in several districts, police said.

But despite weeks of turbulence ahead of the polls, voting day passed without major unrest and the country has so far responded to the results with relative calm.

The agency also said that one person was killed by Israeli gunfire in Beit Lahia in north Gaza.

Five people were killed and several injured when an air strike targeted a tent sheltering displaced people in northern Gaza and another 12 were injured.

The Al-Shifa and Nasser hospitals confirmed they had received the bodies of at least seven people.

Men stood in prayer ahead of the funeral, facing the corpses in the hospital compound.

A military official said Israeli forces attacked in response to Hamas violations of the ceasefire agreement.

and they've still targeted us. Israel operates on this principle — saying one thing and doing another," Askar told AFP.

Dozens of relatives and mourners gathered at Nasser Hospital, where the bodies of some of those killed were laid out in coffins made.

Men stood in prayer ahead of the funeral, facing the corpses in the hospital compound.

"The violation included an identification of several armed terrorists, who took cover behind a yellow line and adjacent to IDF troops, likely after exiting underground infrastructure in the area," the official said.

"Create a yellow line in the vicinity of the IDF troops, while armed, is an explicit ceasefire violation, and demonstrates how Hamas systematically violates the ceasefire agreement with intent to harm the troops," the official added.

## Carnival tribute to Brazil's Lula in Rio sparks political backlash

**NEWS DESK:** When Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva visited a samba school in Rio de Janeiro last week he based his carnival parade this year on his journey from factory worker to president, he broke the rules and then shamed for pictures holding the school's flag.

But, as Rio's world famous carnival parade approached, the tribute became a political headache.

Opposition parties and politicians have filed a flurry of lawsuits alleging that Lula is benefiting from what they claim is an illegal form of political campaigning ahead of this year's presidential election. The president hopes to be elected for his fourth consecutive term in October.

Courts have already rejected all but one of the lawsuits, including one that asked judges to stop the parade from taking place.

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"This is the kind of thing you see in a Soviet republic, in North Korea, an ode to the great leader," said lawmaker Van Hattum, a leader of the opposition Novo Party, which filed one of the lawsuits against Lula.

The parade designed by Academicos de Niteroi describes the

president's childhood in the country's impoverished Northeastern region and his mother's

journey to Sao Paulo with her children in search of a better life.

"I saw myself in my children's eyes, frightened and empty. With my heart in pieces, I set out in search of love and of my dreams," the lyrics

Artists at Academicos de Niteroi sought the president's authorisation to use his life's story last year, before the samba school was granted permission to use the lyrics.

As they sang the

lyrics they had written for the parade, Lula became emotional and cried, people who were in the meeting told

Reuters. He later described it as a tribute to his mother, Dona Lindu, rather than to himself.

Lula's aides acknowledged the political sensitivity of the moment to Rio.

After the lawsuits multiplied, the president's team consulted legal advisers to clarify whether restrictions apply during the pre-carnival period.

Ministers attending the parade were instructed to remain seated in the audience, not to speak with the president in the parade itself, avoid public funds for travel, and not make any election related gestures, statements, or live posts on social media.

Lula will speak publicly at the parade.

Opposition figures argue the precautions show the government knows the tribute crosses legal lines.



in the parade are under review, people familiar with the government's thinking told Gazz.







## England survive Italy scare to reach T20 World Cup Super Eights

**NEWS DESK:** England survived a scare to qualify for the Super Eights at the T20 World Cup on Monday as Italy's wretched run chase of 203 fell agonisingly short in a pulsating match in Kolkata.

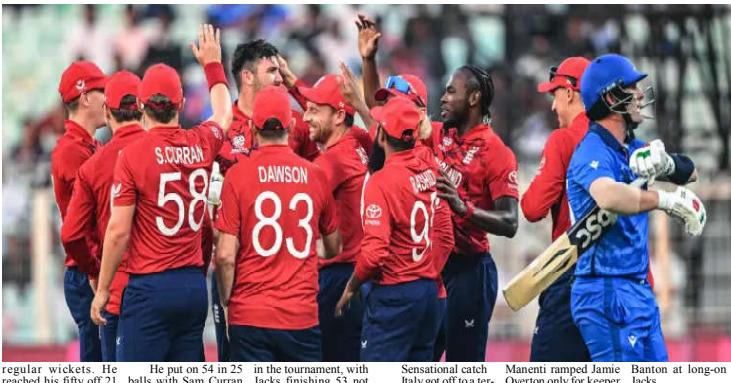
Will Jacks scored the fastest T20 World Cup century for England as they made 202-7, their highest total of the tournament so far, and eventually won by 24 runs.

Italy, the lowest-ranked team in the tournament, had tried to pull off a sensational upset when Grant Stewart and Jaspreet Singh blasted 21 off Adil Rashid's final over, the 17th of the chase, including the winning run.

That left 30 needed off 21 balls, but it proved too much and Italy were all out off the last ball of the match for 178.

Most of England's batsmen got good starts earlier, Harry Brook won the toss and chose to bat.

But only Jack's capitalised as Italy kept chipping away with



regular wickets. He reached his fifty off 21 balls, while Stewart and Manenit's 25\* all effort against the West Indies in Kandy in 2012.

Jacks took the game by the scruff of the neck after England stuttered after 50, then passed 200 for the first time

in the tournament, with Jacks finishing 53 not out off 22 balls to win a guarantee England's passage to the Super Eights along with the already-qualified West Indies from Group C, South Africa and India.

Sensational catch. Italy got off to a terrible start in the Super Eights, with Jamie Overton (15) for the seventh.

Ios Buttler then pulled off one of the catches of the tournament.

Italy captain Harry

Manenit ramped Jamie Overton only for keeper Buttler to come and take a stunning one-handed grab at full stretch.

Italy rebuilt briefly from 22-3 with Ben Manenit racing to 60 off 25 balls before he was caught by Tom Banton off Rashid to

make it 135-5 in the 15th over, it seemed Italy's hopes of pulling off only the third successful 200-plus chase in the history of the World Cup might be over.

But Stewart had other ideas, blasting 45 off 23 balls to keep Italy in the hunt.

England were earlier 56-2, but had the six-over powerplay, having lost both openers.

Buttler, who has failed to pass 30 in the tournament so far, continued his run of low scores with 11.

Tom Banton off to a rapid start before also falling for 28 off 15 balls with two sixes.

Both were caught attempting big shots and, when James Vince followed suit for 23, England were wobbling at 67-3 in the eighth over.

Brook took a four and a six off the first two balls of JJ Smuts' third over.

He edged the next ball to wicket-keeper Gian-Piero Meade, trying to cut and England were 92-4 after 11 overs before Jacks took charge.

## Morikawa wins at Pebble Beach

**NEWS DESK:** Collin Morikawa claimed a tense victory at the Pebble Beach Pro-Am in California on Sunday, fending off a final-day charge by top-ranked Scottie Scheffler that included three eagles.

Double major-winner Morikawa had not triumphed on the PGA Tour since 2023, but started the day in joint-second with Scheffler in the final hole in blustery conditions to win by a stroke on 12 under par.

"It's special for a lot of reasons," said Morikawa, who used to win to announce that he and his wife are expecting their first child.

"We just started telling people this week, and we said, 'We better get to Pebble Beach to announce it to the world, if I was able to come out and win,'" he said.

Back in the state where he was born and raised, Morikawa pulled clear of a crowded leaderboard down the stretch with a superb 30-foot putt for birdie on the 15th, and another birdie.

With benign conditions turning gusty in the final hole, Morikawa hooked his tee shot on 17 and could only manage a bogey from the ocean-side rough.

He faced an agonizing 20-minute wait on



The 18th fairway as Jacob Bridgeman, in the preceding group, played a shot from a cliff edge and landed back into the ocean. But a birdie on 18 was enough to seal a single-stroke win over Australia's Min Woo Lee and Scottie Scheffler and Tommy Fleetwood a further shot back.

"I tried to look out

in the ocean as many times as I can. I love being on the beach," said Morikawa, of the delay.

"Pebble Beach... not many places can be this place in the world."

Lee – chasing his

second PGA Tour win, after a debut victory last

week.

Pushing hard for the finish line, Scheffler

missed long on four con-

secutive holes, picking up two bogeys in that stretch. Still, Scheffler finished with another eagle for a 66 and the joint lead at 10 under par, just as winds picked up for the remaining players on the course.

It was not quite

enough for a foursome win.

"Anytime you've

got three eagles in one

round, good things are

happening... Proud of the way I played today," said Scheffler.

Defending champion

Rory McIlroy also

had a superb final

round, carding 64, but

was never in contention

after three doubles and a triple bogey earlier this

week.

## South Africa into Super Eights without playing UAE

**NEWS DESK:** South Africa qualified for the T20 World Cup Super Eights on Monday without playing the UAE, after their win over the United Arab Emirates was enough to send them through from Group D.

Azmatullah Omarzai was the hero for the Afghans, taking 15 in the UAE's 163-9 and scoring an unbeaten 40 to steer his side to a five-wicket win after a tense chase in New Delhi.

Afghanistan finished 162-5 with four balls to spare to keep alive their slim chances of moving into the next stage.

South Africa, semi-



finalists in 2024, became

the third team after the

West Indies and co-

hosts India to secure a Super Eights place.

Afghanistan will

need a big win in their

last group match against Canada on Thursday

to look primed to claim the

second Super Eight spot

from the group.

Sohail Khan top-

scored for UAE with 68

and put on a stand of 84

for the third wicket with

Alishan Sharaf, who

made 40.

"Next game, you

never know, it's a

game, we'll have to come

up with a good bat,

it's competitive of

the chances of making it

to the Super Eights,"

said Afghanistan cap-

tain Rashid Khan.

"We want to make

the country and our

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New Zealand, with

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against bottom-placed

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Sohail Khan top-

scored for UAE with 68

and put on a stand of 84

for the third wicket with

Alishan Sharaf, who

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"Next game, you

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## Brignone strikes Olympic gold again as Klaebo becomes first to win nine

**NEWS DESK:** Evergreen Italian Federica Brignone won her second gold medal of the Milan-Cortina Games on Sunday as Mikaela Shiffrin faded, while Norwegian cross-country skier Johannes Klaebo became the first Winter Olympian in history to win nine gold medals.

In April 2025, she suffered a broken leg after crashing in a race that required extensive surgery.

Brignone is fast

becoming one of the outstanding skiers of the 35-year-old skier who was

on the surgeon's table 10 months ago won her second gold in front of her home fans.

Already the winner of the super-G at these Games, Brignone

had a more medal chance, in

the slalom on Wednesday, when Lisa Vittozzi made the day even more delightful for the Italians as she put on a superb display of shooting to hit all 20 targets and win gold.

Vittozzi shot clean under pressure to win by a margin of 28.8 seconds over Norway's Maren Kirkeide who stormed back from two late misses to secure silver.

"I'm so happy,"

she said.

In Teheran, Klaebo

led the Norwegian 4x7.5-kilometre relay to a gold medal of his career, more than any man or woman has ever achieved in the Winter Olympics.

It was also his fourth gold medal of these Games and he has two more events still to come.

The Norwegian quartet were so far ahead of the others they were able to wave to the crowd with their ski poles in the home straight before he was greeted by his celebrating teammates.

The 29-year-old overtakes two of his compatriots who have won eight golds at Winter Olympics — former cross-country skiers Mari Bjoergen and Bjoern Daehlie, and former biathlete Ole Einar Bjørndalen.

## Quadruple chasing Arsenal rout Wigan

**NEWS DESK:** Arsenal powered into the FA Cup fifth round for the first time in six years as the quadruple chasers crushed Wigan 4-0 on Sunday.

Mikel Arteta's side routed the third-tier strugglers with four goals in the first 27 minutes of the fourth round at the Emirates Stadium.

Noni Madueke and

Gabriel Jesus struck

The Gunners are back in the last 16 for the first time since they won the FA Cup in 2020.

Their success that remains only major trophy of Arteta's reign.

Holding a four-point lead at the top of the Premier League table, Arteta's side

are 12 points clear of

Manchester City and

the top of the League

relegation zone and

led at the top of the

Championship table

and are 10 points clear

of the relegation zone.

Arteta's side are

now 12 points clear

of the relegation zone.

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