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Editor: Asim Khan.

QUETTA VOICE



**Strategic reset in
Washington 'good
news' for Pakistan**

NEW DESK:

A year after United States President Donald Trump returned to the White House, Pakistan appears to be among the quiet beneficiaries of a significant shift in Washington's strategic thinking. The shift, reflected in the 2026 United States National Defense Strategy (NDS) signals a departure from Washington's decades-old posture of viewing China as the primary global threat, a recalibration that Pakistani officials and analysts say eases Islamabad's foreign policy challenges.

When Trump assumed office for his second term, there was visible unease in Pakistan. With US forces already withdrawn from Afghanistan and Trump's "America First" doctrine in play, many in Islamabad feared renewed marginalisation.

Prevailing assessments suggested that Washington would further deepen strategic ties with India and pursue a more confrontational approach toward China, a scenario that would have complicated Pakistan's delicate regional balancing act.

However, developments over the past year have unfolded differently.

Pakistan has seen an improvement in engagement with the Trump administration, while India-US relations have shown signs of strain.

The release of the 2026 Defense Strategy has further reinforced this trend, offering what officials describe as "strategic breathing space" for Islamabad. At the core of the new policy is a redefinition of US threat perception. Unlike previous strategies, particularly the 2022 defense strategy issued under the Biden administration, which explicitly termed China the "most consequential strategic competitor", the 2026 document avoids framing Beijing as an existential en-

emy. The strategy makes clear that Washington is not seeking confrontation with China, nor does it aim to weaken or isolate it.

It says the US does not seek to dominate, humiliate or strangle China but "to ensure that neither China nor anyone else can dominate us or our allies". Instead, the US wants "a decent peace, on terms favourable to us, in which the world can both accept and live under", the blueprint said, adding that therefore, the US would deter China by "strength, not confrontation".

Road Closures During Crisis Risk Lives in Balochistan

Syed Muhammad Qaseem:

QUETTA: Balochistan is facing a severe weather emergency, and the entire provincial government machinery is fully engaged in rescue and relief operations. Chief Minister

stated that protecting human lives and ensuring the timely delivery of relief supplies to affected areas is the government's top priority.

The Chief Minister emphasized that protests and road blockades during this critical

time are not political actions but are tantamount to endangering human lives.

He said that road blockades are equivalent to sabotaging rescue and relief activities, causing delays in reaching affected populations.

Mir Sarfaraz Bugti stated

that political differences can be addressed later, but human lives cannot wait.

The provincial government will not allow any distraction from its responsibility to safeguard the public.

He urged all political and social forces to demonstrate

responsibility and cooperation with the government.

According to the Chief Minister, saving lives is the foremost priority at this moment, and instead of creating obstacles, everyone must stand shoulder to shoulder with the people.

**Attack on police vehicle
in Bannu foiled,
two militants killed**

NEWS DESK:

A militant attack on a police vehicle in Bannu's Domel area was successfully repulsed and two militants were killed.

Police recovered weapons and ammunition from the killed militants.

According to police officials, the police vehicle was on routine patrol when assailants, who were lying in ambush, suddenly opened indiscriminate fire on the police party.

According to official details, a CTD team had launched the operation at around 8:00 am after receiving intelligence about the presence of Sanaullah Agha and his associates. The operation involved a large convoy comprising nearly 30 to 35 vehicles. As the team approached the suspected hideout, they came under heavy fire, triggering an intense exchange of gunfire.

During the initial phase of the search operation, the bodies of two militants were recovered and taken in police custody.

Regional Police Officer Sajid Khan and District Police Officer Yasir Afridi confirmed the incident and appreciated the Domel police for their timely and effective response.

CTD Kills Most-Wanted Terror Suspect Sanaullah Agha, Two Brothers in Major Operation in Pishin

Asmatullah Hanafi:



Pishin, January 26: The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) carried out a major intelligence-led operation in the Kharhala area of Pishin on Monday, killing most-wanted terror suspect Sanaullah Agha along with his two brothers during a prolonged gun battle.

According to official details, a CTD team had launched the operation at around 8:00 am after receiving intelligence about the presence of Sanaullah Agha and his associates. The operation involved a large convoy comprising nearly 30 to 35 vehicles. As the team approached the suspected hideout, they came under heavy fire, triggering an intense exchange of gunfire.

During the initial phase of the search operation, the bodies of two militants were recovered and taken in police custody.

Regional Police Officer Sajid Khan and District Police Officer Yasir Afridi confirmed the incident and appreciated the Domel police for their timely and effective response.

Inspector General of Police Balochistan, the Deputy Inspector General, and the Superintendent of Police Pishin.

Following the operation, CTD teams launched a clearance and search operation in the sur-

rounding areas to rule out the presence of any remaining suspects. Video footage of the operation has also emerged, while authorities say further details will be shared after the completion of post-operation assessments.

QUETTA VOICE

Editor: Asim Khan

How Long Will Quetta Pay the Price for SSGC and Federal Negligence?



Editorial: Quetta is once again at the mercy of a winter crisis that has become all too familiar: low gas pressure, power outages, load shedding, and complete administrative silence. Every year, citizens are told to "bear with the situation" as temperatures fall and heat becomes scarce, and generators turn useless. Yet the authorities responsible—Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and the federal energy managers—continue to do their job without accountability.

A City Freezing While Authorities Look Away

The people of Balochistan are right to ask: Why must Quetta suffer the same crisis every winter while no structural reform is introduced? Why are consumers forced to pay heavy bills for a service that barely exists? And why do officials in Karachi and Islamabad continue to treat Balochistan's gas issue as a second-tier concern, rather than a governance failure?

Despite Balochistan being an energy-producing re-

gion, its residents struggle every winter for the very resource extracted from their own soil. This contradiction reflects a deeper divide in the federation, where Balochistan remains last on the priority list—not because of a shortage of resources, but because of a shortage of political will.

SSGC's Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement

The SSGC's performance adds another layer to the frustration. Each year, the company offers the same explanations—"excessive demand," "pipeline pressure issues," "technical malfunctions," etc.—but none of these explanations explain why these problems remain unresolved despite decades of complaints. Why have there been no significant improvements? The answer lies in the company's failure to introduce a clear winter management plan for Quetta? Why is communication with consumers absent? The hollow nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for public convenience. When outages are

scheduled or announced, families cannot plan meals, heating, or even basic daily routines. Hospitals and clinics struggle to manage their emergency departments for patients. Small businesses suffer. And in a city where temperatures can drop below freezing, such negligence is not just inconvenient—it is dangerous.

Federal Government's Weak Oversight and Balochistan's Low Priority

The federal government cannot escape responsibility either. Energy management is a national issue, and the pattern of winter management in Balochistan reflects weak oversight, poor planning, and an unfair allocation of resources. The silence of policymakers during these crises sends a clear message: Quetta's suffering is not a priority.

What Quetta needs is not another round of hollow statements. It needs a transparent, long-term plan, proper infrastructure investment, honest communication with the public, and real accountability for SSGC.

Oaseem Shah: Politics in Pakistan has long been dominated by dynastic families, where power is inherited rather than earned. While such politicians often claim experience and continuity, their record exposes a harsh truth: hereditary leadership breeds entitlement, detachment, and compromise, leaving ordinary citizens' struggles ignored. Built into privilege, rooted in affluent homes, and educated in elite institutions, dynastic leaders are often insulated from the harsh realities of poverty, unemployment, and social injustice. For them, bungalows, luxury cars, armed convoys, and protocol perks are not luxuries but assumed necessities. Over time, these comforts transform into entitlement, making public service a secondary concern.

Worse, dynastic politicians are bound by political debts, family obligations, and elite alliances, which forces them to compromise on issues critical to national interest. Challenging corruption, confronting anti-political forces, or addressing systemic inequality often takes a toll on their personal and family power. This creates a leadership class that is cautious, compromised, and frequently unwilling to act decisively for the public good.

In contrast, self-made leaders emerge from struggle, not inheritance, often from

Hereditary Politics vs. Self-Made Leaders: Why Privilege Fails the People

Abraham Lincoln: born into poverty, preserved the United States during its gravest crisis and abolished slavery—proving that real leadership grows from struggle, not comfort.

Pakistan's political landscape has its share of self-made politicians who are able to

humble or poor backgrounds. They are intimately familiar with the hardships of ordinary citizens, and their leadership is based on empathy, accountability, and courage. Free from the constraints of dynastic obligations, self-made politicians are able to

ture. More recently,

Imran Khan, initially a

cricket superstar, built a political movement emphasizing accountability and reform, rooted in public engagement rather than family power. These leaders exemplify that real leadership is earned, not inherited,

equipped to address pressing social and economic challenges. As long as politics is dominated by inherited privilege, the needs of the poor and marginalized remain sidelined, and reforms remain superficial.

In the end, self-made leaders rooted



challenge entrenched interests, fight corruption, and prioritize public service over personal gain.

History provides numerous examples of such leaders. Globally, Nelson Mandela, imprisoned for decades under apartheid, led South Africa to justice and reconciliation. Lula da Silva, a former factory worker, became Brazil's president and implemented programs that lifted millions out of poverty.

who contrasted sharply with dynastic elites. Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan), born into modest circumstances, dedicated his life to advancing education, and the rights of the Pashtuns. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, though from a relatively well-off family, rose through political activism and mass mobilization rather than relying solely on inheritance, leaving a profound imprint on Pakistan's political cul-

ture. More recently, Imran Khan, initially a cricket superstar, built a political movement emphasizing accountability and reform, rooted in public engagement rather than family power. These leaders exemplify that real leadership is earned, not inherited,

equipped to address pressing social and economic challenges. As long as politics is dominated by inherited privilege, the needs of the poor and marginalized remain sidelined, and reforms remain superficial.

In the end, self-made leaders rooted

in struggle, empathy, and public service are the only hope for meaningful change. True leadership requires more than a structural brief or protocol perks; it requires vision, courage, and the willingness to put the people above privilege, comfort, and personal gain. For Pakistan, the challenge is clear: move away from dynastic entitlement and empower leaders who have earned the right to lead.

Illegal Israeli Attack on Gaza Hospital Sparks Outcry over Violation of Human Rights

By Samiullah:

In recent years, the Israel-Palestine conflict has witnessed numerous escalations, resulting in the tragic loss of countless lives and extensive damage to infrastructure. Among the most shocking incidents in this ongoing conflict is the illegal Israeli attack on a hospital in Gaza, which has sparked international outrage and underscores the pressing need for international intervention to protect the most vulnerable individuals caught in the crossfire.

The Inhuman Act: Targeting Hospitals:

War, even when waged between states with longstanding conflicts, is subject to laws and customs. The fundamental principle of international humanitarian law is to protect civilians, including the wounded, children, and the elderly. Hospitals are meant to be sanctuaries in times of conflict, places where the injured can receive medical care without fear of attack. Yet, the attack on a hospital in Gaza flagrantly violated these principles and sent shockwaves through the international community.

The Impact of the Attack:

The repercussions of the attack on a hospital in Gaza were catastrophic. Innocent civilians, including chil-



dren, the wounded, and the elderly, were directly affected by this grave violation of international law. Lives were lost, and the injured faced dire circumstances with limited access to medical care. More-

over, such actions further fuel the cycle of violence in the region, making it increasingly difficult to achieve a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

International Responsibility:

The United Nations and powerful nations must step up and play a pivotal role in addressing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The concept that "the enemy is my friend" has been a longstanding principle in international relations. In this context, it should translate into a robust commitment to safeguard the rights and safety of the most vulnerable. Powerful nations should exert diplomatic pressure on the conflicting parties

to adhere to the rules of war and peace.

Thucydides' Insights: Rules of War and Peace:

The ancient Greek historian Thucydides,

in his timeless work "History of the Peloponnesian War," underscored the importance of rules in times of war and peace. He argued that upholding these rules is not a sign of weakness but an essential

element of the international order. The attack on a hospital in Gaza stands as a blatant violation of these principles and underscores the necessity of enforcing them.

To Sum Up:

The illegal Israeli attack on a hospital in Gaza serves as a stark reminder of the tragic consequences that the Israel-Palestine conflict continues to impose on innocent lives. It is imperative for the international community to unite in its efforts to promote peace, protect the most vulnerable, and ensure the principles of war and peace are upheld.

As Thucydides noted, these principles are not a sign of weakness but the cornerstone of a just and human-centered order.

It is high time for the United Nations and powerful nations to take proactive measures to end the suffering and work towards a lasting solution in the region.

About the Author:

The author, Mr. Samiullah, holds an M.Sc. in International Relations from Quaid-i-Azam University in Islamabad and is a law graduate. He currently serves as the Public Relations Officer for the Ministry of Information and Public Relations in Balochistan. His unique perspective on international relations and conflict resolution adds depth and authority to this article.

Lawyers bar police from entering Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) premises

ISLAMABAD (INP): Islamabad High Court Bar Association (IHCBA) restricted police from entering its premises after lawyers gathered outside the sessions court's building in the federal capital on Monday. The lawyers or-

dered the policemen sitting in a court's session to leave the premises immediately. A large number of lawyers under the leadership of IHCBA President Naeem Gujjar were present outside the Sessions Court were de-

ployed outside the Islamabad High Court building and other sensitive areas.

Later on Saturday, the Islamabad High Court Bar Association announced a three-day

strike which will start from January 26 to 28, to protest the allegedly unfair treatment and unprofessional attitude of the police.

The decision was reached during a joint session of the IHC Bar Council and the IHC Bar held at the Bar office.

The meeting par-

ticipated strongly and demanded an immediate end to the harassment of the legal community.

Leadership ap-

pealed to the legal fraternity to abstain from appearing in court on January 26. They reaffirmed their commitment to the rule of law and expressed their determination to maintain lawyer unity.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

Kashmiris observe Indian Republic Day as Black Day

ISLAMABAD (INP): Kashmiris worldwide, including those on both sides of the Line of Control, observed India's Republic Day on Monday as Black Day to highlight New Delhi's continued denial of their UN-recognized right to self-determination.

According to Kashmir Media Service, the All Parties Hurriyat Conference and other pro-freedom organizations have called for protest to mark the day.

This was ob-

served with Kashmiris holding rallies and protest demonstrations in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan, while their sympathizers organized anti-India demonstrations and rallies in world capitals to draw the international community's attention to the so-called security mea-

sure of a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. The posters, displayed by Hurriyat organizations, carry slogans like "Indian Republic Day is a Black Day for Kashmiris" and "UN must act to deliver justice to Kashmir."

Leaders from the European Union joined India's Republic Day parade as the guests of honour on Monday, a day before the annual Indian air defence systems -- including missiles and drones -- that were deployed in the four-day conflict with arch-enemy Pakistan last year. India's defence minister is forecast to see rainfall starting today as well.

Reports said after a three-day break, a team of Indian naval experts in Cimarron will review the damage to the ship, which was severely damaged in the October 26 naval clash with the Indian navy.

On the instructions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister Ursula von der Leyen are both in attendance, as the two sides are widely expected to announce a peace deal and security partnership.

They had been working on a trade agreement for over a decade before US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs pushed India and the European Union to expedite their efforts last

year. The occasion inspires us in our collective resolve to make a better developed India," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said before the parade.

"The occasion inspires us in our collective resolve to make a better developed India," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said before the parade.

Pakistan, Myanmar pledge to promote shared prosperity

ISLAMABAD (INP): Pakistan and Myanmar have expressed their commitment to cooperation across diverse sectors, including religious, tourism, people-to-people and cultural exchanges, trade, economy, and science with a view to promoting shared prosperity.

The resolve was expressed during a joint press statement by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi, and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, Thaw Swe, following delegation-level talks in Islamabad on Monday.

Deputy Prime Minister said our discussions remained very productive and comprehensive. He underscored the importance of advancing engagement towards sustained, structured and results-oriented initia-

tives to advance cooperation in capacity building.

Ishaq Dar said the visit of Myanmar's Foreign Minister to Pakistan reflects the importance that both countries attach to revitalizing and strengthening Pakistan-Myanmar relations. He said that all contentious issues should be resolved through dialogue and diplomacy. He also emphasized the importance of further deepening economic and academic linkages. The Deputy Prime Minister said Pakistan and Myanmar enjoy cordial and friendly relations. He said Pakistan's relationship with Myanmar is keen to further enhance the cooperation across a wide range of mutually beneficial fields. In his remarks, the Foreign Minister of Myanmar thanked the government of Pakistan.

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Automatic alarm system of Indigo Hotel not working when fire breaks out

LAHORE (INP): An automatic fire alarm system installed at the Indigo Hotel Lahore incident said that the automatic fire alarm system of the hotel was not functioning at the time of the fire.

It was further revealed that hotel management used a manual alarm system due to which people present at the hotel received information after facing a fire. The Civil Defence Department issued a notice to the management of the hotel about two and a half months ago, but the hotel did not take any action.

The gas pipeline that was lying beside the boiler suddenly exploded. The boiler was installed in Basement No. 1. Huge smoke engulfed the basement after which all members who were in the base-



LAHORE: Rana Ihsaan Afzal Khan, Coordinator to the Prime Minister for Commerce, cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the Mega Leather Show at the Lahore Expo Center, marking the opening of the major international exhibition showcasing Pakistan's leather industry and export potential.

Fresh westerly wave brings more snow, rain across Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (INP): A fresh western weather system has entered Balochistan, triggering rain and snowfall across several parts of the province, including Quetta, the provincial capital and its surrounding areas and submerging low-lying localities.

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, further rain and snowfall are expected in different parts of the country until tomorrow.

The forecast indicates rain in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Murree and the Galyat, with snowfall likely in mountainous regions, while several districts of Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan. While plains areas experienced heavy rainfall, mountainous regions received intense

snowfall. Following the rain and snow, icy winds swept the region, pushing temperatures in Chaman below the freezing point. Power supply was suspended amid the severe cold, causing serious difficulties for residents in accessing drinking water and other basic necessities.

In Quetta and its adjoining areas, the second snowfall of the year blanketed the region in white, intensifying the cold, while gas pressure in the region dropped sharply. Light snowfall was also reported in the Quetta valley and nearby areas, while Mastung, Noshki and Kharan received rain. At Lakpash, Murree and Saindher, it is also expected to continue through tonight and tomorrow, further worsening the cold conditions.

Reports said after a three-day break, a team of Indian naval experts in Cimarron will review the damage to the ship, which was severely damaged in the October 26 naval clash with the Indian navy.

On the instructions of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Indian Prime Minister Ursula von der Leyen are both in attendance, as the two sides are widely expected to announce a peace deal and security partnership.

Mushaal Mullick calls for special peace board on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (INP): Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik's wife, Mushaal Mullick, has called for the establishment of a special Board of Peace for Kashmir, according to a media release.

Mushaal Mullick said that for peace must include Kashmir as a core agenda item.

In a statement, she said her husband was observing India's Republic Day as a "Black Day," accusing India of continuously denying the Kashmiri people their right to self-determination.

She stressed that any genuine global ef-

forts must be guaranteed for lasting peace in the region. Describing Kashmir as one of the world's most sensitive and dangerous flashpoints, she urged international community not to remain inactive to prevent further instability.

He also extended

his congratulations to Salman Qureshi on his election as Senior Vice President, Afzaal Talib as General Secretary, Nasir Attar and Madiha Ali as Vice Presidents, Salik Nawaz as Finance Sec-

Info Minister felicitates newly elected office bearers of Lahore Press Club

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar on Monday extended felicitations to the newly elected leadership of the Lahore Press Club.

In his statement, the minister congratulated Arshad Ansari on being elected President of the Club.

He also emphasized that press clubs serve a vital role in fostering professional values and enhancing unity among journalists. The minister expressed confidence that the new leadership of the Lahore Press Club



ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of Denmark to Pakistan, Ms. Maja Mortensen, called on the Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Dr. Musadik Malik.

Naqvi launches advanced passport monitoring, printing system

ISLAMABAD (INP): Interior Minister Mohsin Raza Naqvi, Monday, formally inaugurated a state-of-the-art monitoring system for passport applications, printing and overall performance at the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports in Islamabad.

Interior minister visited the Directorate General of Immigration and Passports, where he launched the monitoring system aimed at ensuring real-time oversight of passport operations across Pakistan and abroad.

A 24/7 monitoring system, which has also been made operational, while the emergency travel document system has been fully digitized with the minister's instructions.

Mohsin Naqvi said

During the visit, Mohsin Naqvi was briefed on the Secure Hybrid Intelligence for Knowledge-Based Response Analytics (SHIKRA) system. He appreciated the performance of the Director General of Immigration and Passports and his team for introducing a modern, technology-driven monitoring mechanism. Speaking of the system, the minister said the Pakistan passport system had now been aligned with those of the world's best-performing countries. He said the new system would enable real-time monitoring of passport applications and deliveries both within Pakistan and overseas.

The interior minister added that the installation of modern automatic German machines had enhanced the

department's operational efficiency. The automated passport printing process had eliminated human intervention altogether.

During his visit, Mohsin Naqvi also inspected the forensic call centre, forensic laboratory and the modern production unit in the Directorate.

Officials briefed the minister that a digitally automated system would allow data operations and staff performance to be monitored and evaluated, while the new system would also automatically identify overages at passport offices. This added that under the network management system, backlog and machinery status would also be continuously monitored.

Loralai Police Bust Two Inter-District Robbery Gangs, Recover Stolen Goods Worth Rs 7.5 Million



LORALAI: Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Loralai Range Jumaid Ahmed Sheikh and Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Loralai Malik Muhammad Asghar Usman held an important joint press conference at the SSP Office Loralai, where they shared details of major successful operations carried out by Loralai Police.

The press conference was attended by DSP Sardar Nasirullah Khan Hamzaizai, SDPO Kameem Mandokhail, SHO City Police Station, Shahrood Muhammad Ashraf Tareen, Sub-Inspector

Muhammad Sharif Moshkhan and SHO Marra Tangi Noor Muhammad.

Addressing the media, DIG Jumaid Ahmed Sheikh stated that Loralai Police conducted a successful operation late last night, arresting two organized inter-district networks of thieves and robbers,

including the notorious gang leader Sidiq Wanechi. He disclosed that during the operation, well-known criminals Sohbat son of Wali, tribe Lalazai, resident of Hospital Mohalla, and Hamafilas Sheen tribe Tarrah, resident of Murghi Kha

Mohalla, were arrested. Several stolen motorcycles and vehicles were recovered from their possession.

The DIG further revealed that a few days ago, during a robbery at a shop in Muhammadan Market, approximately 1,600 kilograms of electric wire worth around Rs 7.5 million was stolen. The stolen property has now been fully recovered.

Additionally, two

arrests, one shotgun, and a Toyota X Co

roda vehicle were also recovered from the arrested suspects.

The accused have

confessed to involve

ment in multiple theft and robbery incidents across various districts of Balochistan, and further recoveries are expected.

According to the DIG, the arrested suspects Sohbat and Siddiq Wanechi are ringleaders of inter-district criminal gangs and have multiple cases registered against them in Loralai, Ziarat, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, and the Crim Branch.

Arrests of other gang members have been soon based on their identification.

DIG Jumaid Ahmed Sheikh also

stated that Loralai Police have

strict anti-narcotics operation is a result of which poppy (opium) cultivation has nearly been eliminated across the district.

Indiscriminate action against drug dealers is ongoing, and strict operations and FIRs will also be registered against drug dens in areas recently merged from Leevies to Police jurisdiction. "Concluding the press conference, DIG emphasized that Loralai Police has fully committed to protecting the life and property of citizens, and uncompromising action against criminal elements will continue in the future.

PDMA Balochistan on high alert as snowfall, rain continue across province

QUETTA (INP): The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Balochistan has been placed on high alert as snowfall and rain continue to affect various parts of the province, with emergency teams working round the clock to keep highways open and ensure public safety.

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Pakistan's land port authority and the cost of missed opportunities

NEWS DESK: "When goods don't cross borders, soldiers will" – Frederic Bastiat.

Pakistan's recent decision to establish the Land Port Authority is, in principle, a sensible institutional reform.

After nearly two decades of discussion, the country now has a dedicated body tasked with regulating, managing and facilitating trade through its land ports. For a country that repeatedly declares exports and trade competitiveness as national priorities, this institutional change should have been created long ago.

Yet the commercial value of this reform cannot be judged by legislation alone. Its merits matter only when they operate within a policy environment that allows them to function. At present, Pakistan's regional trade environment remains severely constrained.

In this context, the Land Port Authority risks becoming an administrative structure managing limited activity rather than enabling a meaningful expansion of trade.

With the partial exception of China, where less than 5% of total trade flows through land routes, Pakistan's borders with neighbouring countries are either

closed, intermittently

disrupted, or subject to

unpredictable restrictions.

Trade with India re-

mains frozen. Commercial flows with Afghanistan are repeatedly inter-

rupted. Trade with Iran

remains marginal due to

US sanctions.

Consequently, should

have been Pakistan's

commercial advantage.

In purely economic

terms, this location should have supported Pakistan's emergence as a regional trading and transport hub.

Instead, political risk aversion and security policies have constrained the commercial use of this geography.

The experience with India starkly illustrates the scale of opportunity Pakistan is forgoing. Be-

fore August 2019, Pakistan permitted only a limited range of commodities, such as chemicals, plastic, metal and selected agricultural products, through border trades.

Even this constrained exchange benefits, on both sides. Since then, trade has virtually collapsed, political tensions have

escalated, and economic logic has been sidelined.

Despite the ban on direct imports from India, Pakistan has seen very limited inflows, mainly pharmaceutical raw materials, out of necessity.

In practice, much larger volumes of Indian goods now enter India through third countries.

This raises costs for

Pakistani businesses and consumers while encouraging informal and illegal trade.

Consequently, most exports of essential industrial raw materials, such as plastics, as was the case prior to 2019.

Conversely, importers such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, and light engineering, regional sourcing could

significantly improve margins and scale. The potential gains are substantial. World Bank estimates suggest that normalising trade with India could raise Pakistan's exports by up to 80%, an impact few domestic reforms could match within a comparable timeframe.

India-Bangladesh trade is a useful comparison. Despite serious political tensions, scrapping of several bilateral projects, and India limiting Bangladeshi access to exports through land, bilateral trade is rising and now exceeds \$10 billion, with India accounting for roughly 85% of the total exports.

Both countries recognise that disrupting trade would ultimately damage their own economies. As a result, India remains Bangladesh's second-largest trading partner after China.

Pakistan's continued refusal to draw this lesson carries a high and entirely self-inflicted cost.

A similar logic applies to Pakistan's western border. Trade with Afghanistan had started increasing over the last decade, with Pakistan's exports of pharmaceuticals, cement and cereals worth over \$1 billion.

Gold zips past \$5,100 to another high on safe-haven rush

NEWS DESK: Gold surged to a record high above \$5,100 an ounce on Monday, extending a historic rally as investors flocked to the safe-haven asset amid rising geopolitical uncertainties.

Spot gold was up 2.2 percent at \$5,089.78 per ounce at 6:56am GMT after earlier surging an all-time high of \$5,110.50. US gold futures for February delivery also gained the same amount to \$5,086.30 per ounce.

The metal soared 64pc in 2025, its biggest annual gain since 1979, driven by safe-haven demand as US monetary policy easing, robust central bank purchases including China's fourteenth straight month of buying in December, and record inflows into exchange-traded funds.

After consecutive record peaks over the past week and have already risen more than 18pc this year.

The latest catalyst is effectively the crisis of confidence in the US administration and US assets, that was set off by some of the erratic decision-making from the Trump administration.

last week", said Kyle Rodda, a senior market analyst at Capital.com.

US President Donald Trump abruptly stepped back on Wednesday from threats to impose tariffs on European allies as leverage to seize Greenland.

He has also threatened to rescind and champion new trade deals with China.

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Some observers fear the board could undermine the United Nations'

role as the main global platform for conflict resolution, though Trump has said it will work with the UN.

The Trump administration has caused a permanent rupture in the way things are done, and so everyone's kind of running to gold as the only alternative," Rodda added.

Meanwhile, a rising dollar dragged the dollar broadly lower on Monday, with markets on alert for potential policy decisions from the Fed and the US president.

A weaker dollar makes greenback-priced gold more affordable for holders of other currencies.

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It was revived to its former prominence, provided it can be sustained over an extended period.

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Trump administration defends Minneapolis killing, disputes video

NEWS DESK: Officials in US President Donald Trump's administration defended on Sunday the fatal shooting of a US citizen by immigration agents in Minneapolis, even as video suggested their version of events and as tensions grew between local law enforcement and federal officers.

As protesters gathered at a makeshift shrine of flowers and candles in frigid temperatures and snow to mark Saturday's fatal shooting of Alex Pretti, Trump administration officials insisted officers, compelling them to fire in self-defense. That account was at odds with videos recorded by bystanders.

It is the second American to be fatally shot by federal immigration officers this month in Minneapolis, where Trump, a Republican, has deployed thousands of armed and masked agents in a deployment effort with little precedent.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, a Demo-



crat, again called on Trump to pull federal agents out of the state, while also asking a federal judge to stay a program that it says are unconstitutional excesses in Trump's surge.

"The victims are

Border Patrol agents," Gregory Bovino, a senior Border Patrol official with the American Civil Liberties Union, told reporters. That official line, echoed by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem and other members of the

administration, drew outrage from local Democratic leaders and law enforcement officials in Congress, who pointed to the bystander videos that show all Pretti had in his hands was a

cellphone before agents grabbed him to the ground and ultimately shot him.

Federal agents over the past few weeks have been met by countless angry residents protesting the surge and the city's icy streets, some of them blowing whistles.

Thousands of protesters marched on the streets of Minneapolis on Sunday to protest against the surge and US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

agents, chanting and waving signs saying: "ICE OUT!"

Holding a phone, not gun

Videos of Saturday's killing, verified by Reuters, show Pretti holding a phone in his hand, not a gun, as he tries to help other protesters who had been pushed to the ground by agents.

Pretti can be seen filming while a federal agent pushes away one woman and shoves another woman to the ground. Pretti moves between the agent and the woman, then raises his left arm to shield himself as the agent pepper-sprays him.

Several agents then

take hold of Pretti, who

struggles with them and forces them onto his hands and knees.

As the agents pin Pretti down, some

one shouts what sounds like a warning about a gun.

Video footage then

appears to show one of

the agents removing a

handgun from Pretti's

wristband area and step-

ping away from the

group with it. Moments later, another agent points his gun at Pretti's back and fires four shots in quick succession. More shots are heard as another agent appears to fire first.

James Reeves, the former head of ICE's field office in Baltimore, told Reuters that federal agents' apparent lack of communication was troubling. "It's clear one is commanding to me, based on my observation of how that team responded," Reeves said.

Minnesota officials say people in a valid state permit to carry a concealed gun in public, which the US Supreme Court ruled was a constitutional right in 2022.

Videos speak for themselves

Brian O'Hara, the Minneapolis police chief, told the CBS "Face the Nation" program: "The videos speak for themselves," calling the Trump administration's version of events deeply disturbing.

Israel agrees to reopen Rafah crossing only for Gaza pedestrians

NEWS DESK: Israel said on Monday it would only allow pedestrians to travel through the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt as part of its "interim agreement" it has recovered the remains of the last captive in the Palestinian territory.

Reopening Rafah, a vital entry point for aid into Gaza, formed part of a truce framework announced by US President Donald Trump in October, but the crossing has remained closed since Israel took back control of it during the besieged Palestinian territory.

Visiting US envoys had reportedly pressed Israeli officials to reopen the crossing during talks in Jerusalem over the weekend.

World leaders and aid agencies have repeatedly pushed for more permanent ways to be able to access Gaza, which has been left devastated by more than two years of bombardment and depends on a tight blockade of essential medical supplies, food and other supplies.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Monday that Israel had agreed to a re-opening of the pedestrian crossing only subject to a full Israeli inspection mechanism.

The move would depend on "the return of all living hostages, a 100 per cent effort by Hamas to locate and return all deceased hos-



tages", it said on X.

It remained unclear whether the re-opening would allow people to travel to Gaza for treatment in Egypt or other countries.

The Israeli military said it was searching a camp in the Gaza strip on Sunday for the remains of the last captive, Ram Givli.

"Upon completion

of this operation, and in accordance with the

agreement reached

with the US, Israel will open the Rafah Crossing," said Netanyahu's office.

Last week

A spokesman for

Hamas' Ezzedine Al-

Qassam Brigades, Abu

Obeida, said on Sunday

the group had "pro-

vided mediators with all

the information in their

possession regarding the location of the captive's body,"

nyt", said it on X. "We're not clear where the re-opening would allow people to travel to Gaza for treatment in Egypt or other countries," Shaha said at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

Israeli media also reported that US envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner had urged Netanyahu to reopen Rafah during their Jerusalem visit.

Before the conflict erupted in October 2023, Rafah had been the only gateway connecting Gazans to the outside world and had been the international humanitarian lifeline to and out of the territory, home to 2.2 million people living under Israeli blockade.

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the group had "pro-

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possession regarding the location of the captive's body,"

referring to Givli.

Obeida added that

the remains of the

captain had been

turned, whether living or

dead. A non-commissioned officer in the Israeli police's elite Yesh Dina unit was killed in action on the

day of the attack and his

body was taken to Gaza

The first phase of

the US-backed ceasefire

had started on Sunday

and the deal will last

for two directions" this

week.

For Palestinians in

Gaza, Rafah is more than

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After the announcement came after Gaza's newly appointed administrator, Ali Shaath, said the crossing would open "both directions" this week.

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