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First Digital, Print Daily of Balochistan

Editor: Asim Khan.

# QUETTA VOICE

Rs.10.00 Vol.VII:No:119

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Tuesday 27, January, 2026



## Road Closures During Crisis Risk Lives in Balochistan

**Syed Muhammad Qassem:**

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

Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti 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 Sarfraz 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 cooperate 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.

### 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 newly released 2026 United States National Defence 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 With US forces already withdrawn from Afghanistan and Trump's "America First" doctrine back in play, many in Islamabad feared renewed marginalisation.

Prevailing assessments suggested that Washington would further deepen strategic ties with India, intensify pressure on Pakistan 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 Defence 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 defence strategy issued under the Biden administration, which explicitly termed China the "most consequential strategic competitor", the 2026 document avoids framing Beijing as an existential enemy.

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

It said 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 Americans but that China can also accept and live under", the blueprint said, adding that, therefore, the US would deter China by "strength, not confrontation".

### 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.

A heavy exchange of fire continued between the police and the terrorists for approximately twenty minutes. Additional contingents, including an armored personnel carrier (APC), Quick Response Force (QRF), and Rapid Response Force (RRF), were immediately dispatched from Police Lines Bannu to the scene.

During the subsequent search operation, the bodies of two militants were recovered and taken into police custody. Regional Police Officer Sajjad 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-based operation in the Karbala 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 Quetta team 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 security personnel raided the suspects' hideout, they came under heavy fire, triggering an intense exchange of gunfire.

During the initial phase of the encounter, Sanaullah Agha was reportedly injured and managed to flee the scene. The operation continued for several hours with security forces completely cordoning off the area. Interim firing continued throughout the day as forces tightened the noose around the militants. By



around 4:00 pm, CTD officials confirmed that Sanaullah Agha and his two brothers were killed in a police encounter, bringing the operation to a successful conclusion. The deceased were wanted in multiple terrorism-related cases

and were considered highly dangerous. Sanaullah Agha had recently drawn attention on social media after a controversial video surfaced in which he used offensive language against senior police officials, including the

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 surrounding 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, unannounced load shedding, and complete administrative silence. Every year, citizens are told to "bear with the situation" as temperatures fall and heaters, stoves, and geysers turn useless. Yet the authorities responsible — Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and the federal energy managers — continue to operate 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 reforms are 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 issues as a seasonal inconvenience rather than a governance failure?

**Desperate** 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 deep-rooted policy imbalance 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 Repeated Excuses and Decades of Mismanagement**

The SSGC's performance adds another layer of frustration. Each year, the company offers the same explanations — "excessive demand," "pipeline pressure issues," "technical challenges." Yet no one explains why these problems remain unresolved despite decades of complaints. Why have there been no significant infrastructure upgrades? Why has the company failed to introduce a clear winter management plan for Quetta? Why is communication with consumers absent? The unannounced nature of the load shedding exposes a complete disregard for the public convenience. When outages are not

scheduled or announced, families cannot plan meals, heating, or even basic daily routines. Hospitals and clinics struggle to maintain warm environments 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 mismanagement 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 winter gas plan, proper infrastructure investment, honest communication with the public, and real accountability for SSGC.

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

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

**Qaseem 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. Born into privilege, raised in opulent 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 parks 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 elements, or addressing systemic inequality often takes a backseat to protecting 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

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

Abraham Lincoln, born into poverty, presided over 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 leaders

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 family name; 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.



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 means, dedicated his life to nonviolence, 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.

Dynastic politics, in contrast, remains a structural barrier to progress in Pakistan. Leaders born into privilege often see public service as an entitlement rather than a responsibility. Their compromised independence, obsession with status and perks, and reluctance to confront entrenched interests make them ill-

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 family name; 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 rules and conventions. 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. Moreover, 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 other international organizations must step up and play a pivotal role in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict. The concept that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend" has been a longstanding principle

in international relations. In this context, it should translate into a resolute 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 humane world 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 also 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.





## President Zardari to embark on 4-day official visit to UAE

**NEWS DESK:** President Asif Ali Zardari will depart on a four-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates on Monday, according to the Foreign Office (FO).

The president, accompanied by a high-level delegation, will undertake the visit from January 26 to 29, the FO statement said.

"During the visit, the president will hold high-level meetings with the UAE's leadership to review the full spectrum of bilateral ties, especially on the domains of trade and economic people-to-people ties."

The discussion will also focus on regional and international issues of mutual interest, the FO added.

It highlighted that Zardari's trip, which follows the brief visit of UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Pakistan last month, "reflects the deep brotherly ties between the two nations and reaffirms commitment to transforming the strong friendship between Pakistan and the UAE into a mutually rewarding partnership."

During the UAE president's first official visit to Pakistan on December 26, the leadership of the two countries held "substantive talks" focused on further strengthening the longstanding bilateral relations.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Al Nahyan also met in Rahim Yar Khan on December 30, where they both discussed ways to enhance cooperation in a wide range of sectors.

On January 13, the two countries agreed to sign a formal agreement on "pre-immigration clearance" for Pakistani nationals visiting the Gulf country.

## Federal funding for provincial health schemes ruled out

**NEWS DESK:** The federal government has decided it will not extend funding for provincial health coverage in any form, including insurance, in strict compliance with the 18th Constitutional Amendment and asked the provinces to consider providing full-fledged health insurance on a contributory basis.

The decision comes in the wake of recent engagements and approvals for extending the Prime Minister's Sehat Sahulat Programme (SSP), valued at about Rs40 billion, to three federally administered territories: the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and Gilgit-Baltistan (GB), launched earlier this month.

Against this backdrop, internal proposal to include the population of Sindh's impoverished Tharparkar district under the SSP were not supported.

It was argued during meetings of the Central Development Working Party (CDWP) and the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (NEC), on the recommendation of a special committee constituted by the prime minister, that the inclusion of a single district would open the door for similar demands from other provinces, even though health is a devolved subject, documents seen by Dawn show.

Centre asks provinces to move towards contributory health insurance

At a high-level meeting chaired by the prime minister on Jan 2, the continuation of the programme beyond June 30, 2025, was approved until June 30, 2027 "for AJK, GB and ICT only", according to a Prime Minister's Office directive dated Jan 9, 2026.

Subsequently, the modified programme with a revised capital cost of Rs40.2bn was approved by the ECNEC "in light of the prime minister's directive for the continuity of the programme beyond 30-06-2025 till 30-06-2027 for all permanent resident families of AJK, GB and ICT under universal health coverage (UHC) scope".

Under an earlier decision of ECNEC of Aug 7, 2025, a special committee led by the planning minister to review the entire SSP since its inception in 2015 and way forward noted that the health programme had completed its life on June 30, 2025, after availing multiple revisions and time extensions.

"There-fore, the programme should be shifted to the current budget," the committee said.

It also directed the Ministry of National Health Services to submit a Project Completion (PC-IV) report and propose a thin structure to sustain activities and provide indoor healthcare services and protection from catastrophic health expenditures for vulnerable populations. The committee said this limited

scope was in line with the programme's original intent at the time of its launch.

The committee said that "provinces, AJK and GB should continue their own social health protection schemes for the vulnerable populations".

The committee opposed the inclusion of "provincial districts via SSP" due to the fact that health was a devolved subject, and "if we start in one province, then there will be demand from other provinces too. Therefore, the provinces should implement their social health protection programmes for the vulnerable population through their own budgets".

It also cited the reduced Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP), which it said was already overstretched and unable to meet even the most critical federal liabilities.

The committee, however, recommended that after conversion of the completed project to the recurrent budget, the health ministry should, with provinces, design a pilot project on an affordable basis through "claim co-payments" on the pattern of Punjab, and a roadmap towards a full-fledged SSP on a contributory basis should be looked into.

The original SSP was approved on Feb 7, 2018, under the Prime Minister's National Health Programme Phase-II at a cost of Rs34bn.



## Balochistan Student Wins Silver at Global Science Olympiad in USA

### Education Desk:

Balochistan received international recognition as Arpanga Baryl, a Grade 6 student of Learning House School System, Quetta, secured a Silver Medal at the 7th Copernicus Natural Science Olympiad Global Final held in Houston, United States. She competed with students from more than 50 countries and proudly represented Pakistan at the prestigious international science competition.

During her visit, Arpanga also explored major educational landmarks in Houston, including the Houston Museum of Natural Science and NASA's Johnson Space Center, gaining valuable learning exposure beyond the competition.



The Copernicus Natural Science Olympiad is known for promoting scientific thinking, problem-solving, and global awareness among students. Her achievement highlights the growing academic potential of young students from Balochistan and reflects the region's emerging presence on the global education stage.

## Lawyer's request to celebrate Basant on Lahore court rooftop denied

**NEWS DESK:** A lawyer's unusual request, made on Monday, to celebrate the Basant festival on the rooftop of the Lahore Sessions Court, was formally rejected by the court.

Session Judge Tariq Khurshid Khawaja issued a written order after lawyer Yaseen Butt sought permission to hold the event on the court's rooftop. The court noted that its premises were a highly sensitive security zone.

The order emphasised that allowing such celebrations within court premises could pose serious security risks.

It further highlighted that the Lahore Sessions Court's roof was not designed or suitable for hosting such events. Considering the safety regulations. Authorities have divided Lahore into Red, Yellow, and Green zones to manage risks associated with kite flying during the upcoming festival. Strict standards of procedure have been approved ahead of the upcoming festival. Only registered kites and cotton string will be permitted, while glass-coated, chemical, and metal strings will remain banned. Each kite and string ball will be QR



The Lahore district administration approved the celebration of Basant from February 6 to 8 this year, allowing kite flying under an extensive set of safety regulations. Authorities have divided Lahore into Red, Yellow, and Green zones to manage risks associated with kite flying during the upcoming festival. Strict standards of procedure have been approved ahead of the upcoming festival. Only registered kites and cotton string will be permitted, while glass-coated, chemical, and metal strings will remain banned. Each kite and string ball will be QR

(quick response) code-registered to ensure traceability. Authorities will monitor kite flying round the clock through drones, social media surveillance, and dedicated control rooms. Strict action will be taken against rooftop illegal activities during Basant, such as firing guns and drinking.

Helmet use and safety wires would be mandatory for motorcyclists, while entry into Red Zones without antennas would be prohibited. Motorbikes would only be allowed in red zones if fitted with safety rods, and riding without a rod would incur a Rs2,000 fine.

## Karachi police form team to arrest those involved in Gul Plaza inferno

**NEWS DESK:** The Karachi police on Monday constituted a special team to make "all-out efforts" to arrest suspects in the Gul Plaza fire and to conduct an impartial probe into the incident.

An order issued by the office of South Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Syed Asad Raza stated that the five-member team was constituted for the "arrest of involved accused person(s) and impartial investigation" into the case.

The investigation team shall make all-out and diligent efforts to arrest the accused person(s) by utilising all available resources," read the notification, a copy of which is available with Dawn.

In a first information report (FIR) of the incident, dated January 23, the Karachi police said the fire was an "outcome of negligence and carelessness".

The case was registered against unknown persons as the police have not nominated any one in the case.

The special team will comprise the Garden Sub-divisional police officer (SDPO), the Khairat investigation deputy superintendent of police (DSP), the head of the Garden Central Investigation Cell, the station house officer of Nabi Bux police station — where the FIR was registered — and an investigation officer of the case.

The team was allowed to co-opt any of-



ficer/official from the South Zone police if it wanted "help to solve the case".

"Daily progress report shall be submitted to this office without fail," DIG Raza ordered, noting that "more than 80 lives have been lost".

"I will not take the name of anyone right now. Once the inquiry is over, it will come forward after that."

"We have mistakes; I admit it," the chief minister acknowledged, noting that even audits conducted in Islamabad were found unsatisfactory.

Asked about the possibility of the incident being a case of arson, the chief minister referred to the inquiry committee formed and stressed that it would "cover all aspects".

The Sindh CM pointed out that anyone who had any "facts" to share could approach the committee. "If we are

responsible, we will accept punishment."

However, he cautioned that all those "saying such things will also be held accountable".

Asked about the reported inadequate water supply during the rescue operation, the chief minister acknowledged:

"We have fire brigades but they are not enough."

Pinning the blame on "legacy issues" and "old laws", Murad noted that multiple departments — the KMC, Rescue 1122, the Sindh Integrated Emergency & Health Services, and the Home Department (which conducts fire audits) — were all involved in the same matter.

The Sindh CM announced that all such departments will be merged and work was underway for the required legislation.

During his media talk, Murad recalled the compensation an-

nounced for those affected — Rs10 million for the families of each deceased person and Rs5m for each shop-owner.

He further stated that with the help of Karachi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI), the Sindh government would compensate the financial losses incurred by the businesses, including the cost of their destroyed stock.

"Within a month, we'll reimburse the shopkeepers for their inventory losses."

Responding to a question about the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) demand to make Karachi a part of the "federal territory", the Sindh CM said it was not an appropriate time for such discussions in the wake of the tragic incident.

"We are ready for every debate, [but] I would not like to," he said.

"I am not asking you not to talk about this tragedy or about bringing improvement. But do not go towards such discussions that have no logic," the chief minister stressed.

Upon a reporter asking a question about the Sindh governor's criticism of the provincial government, CM Murad reiterated that the media was encouraged to give constructive criticism about the incident but asked journalists "not to add fuel to the fire".

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

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

dered the policemen sitting in a court's canteen to leave the premises immediately. Large numbers of lawyers under the leadership of IHCBA President Naem Gujjar were present outside

the Sessions Court building to be taken out at 11 am from the District Judicial Complex to the SSP office, in which a large number of lawyers will participate. Heavy contingents

of police were deployed outside the Islamabad High Court Bar Association and other sensitive areas. Earlier 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

Islamabad Bar Council and the IHC Bar held at the Bar office. The meeting participants strongly condemned the police's behavior toward the President and Secretary of the IHC Bar. They

also denounced the move to bar lawyers from attending the Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) 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 protests to mark the day.

The day was observed 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

India's state terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. The posters, displayed by Hurriyat organizations, carry slogans like "India's Republic Day is a Black Day for Kashmiris" and "UN must act to deliver justice to Kashmir".

European Union leaders joined India's Republic Day parade as the guests of honour on Monday, a day before New Delhi and Brussels are expected to seal a long-awaited free trade agreement.

Military bands and horse and camel cavalry units paraded through capital New Delhi, while fighter jets buzzed overhead and India's latest military hardware was put on display.

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

The fanfare also featured Indian air defence systems - including missiles and drones - that were deployed in the four-day conflict with arch-enemy Pakistan last year.

European Council President Antonio Costa and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen are both in attendance, before an EU-India summit Tuesday, when the two sides are widely expected to announce a landmark free trade deal and security partnership.

They had been working on a trade agreement for over a decade before US President Donald Trump's trade tariffs rebuffed India and the 27-nation EU to expedite their efforts last year.

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

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

The report further revealed that hotel management used a manual alarm system, due to which people present in the hotel received information after facing a delay. The report said that the Civil Defence Department issued a notice to the management of the hotel about two and a half months ago, but the hotel management ignored it. 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-

ment became unconscious, and they were making failed attempts to rescue them from the site. Earlier, police arrested two suspects following the tragic fire incident at the Indigo Hotel in Gulberg. An FIR No. 237/26 has been registered at Gulberg Police Station, confirmed by the spokesperson for the DKG Operations.

According to the FIR, the fire that broke out at the hotel a day earlier caused damage to valuable goods and property. According to the spokesperson, the arrested accused include nominated suspects Kamil and Bilal. The spokesperson said that raids are underway to arrest the other three nominated suspects, identified as Fazil Ahmed, Nadeem Mirza and Aatif.

## 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, with heavy downpours lashing Chaman city 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, Azad Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Murree and the Galiyat, with snowfall likely in mountainous regions, while several districts of Punjab, including Lahore, are also expected to receive rain. Sindh is forecast to see rainfall starting today as well.

Reports said that after a three-day break, intermittent rain has resumed in Chaman as well as northern, eastern and western parts of Balochistan. While plain 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 in the city was suspended due to the severe cold, causing serious difficulties for residents in accessing drinking water and other basic necessities.

In Qalat and its adjoining areas, the second snowfall of the year blanketed the region in white, intensifying the cold, while gas pressure in households dropped sharply. Light snowfall was also reported in the Quetta valley and nearby areas, while Mastung, Noshki and Kharan received rain. At Lakpass, heavy snowfall began in the evening and continued through tonight and tomorrow, further worsening the cold conditions.

On the instructions of Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfaraz Buzdar and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, the Provincial Disaster Management Authority has been placed on high alert in view of the an-

ticipated snowfall and adverse weather. All snow-clearing units have been directed to remain alert and operational. The chief minister has ordered hourly situation reports and stated that he is personally monitoring developments.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Army successfully evacuated a female patient from Leepa Valley in Azad Kashmir to the Military Hospital in Rawalpindi as part of a rescue and relief operation. The evacuation was carried out by helicopter after heavy snowfall completely cut off ground access to the valley. Local residents praised the army's professionalism, swift decision-making and commitment to public service. According to the Met Office, cold weather persists in Islamabad and Rawalpindi, with rain accompanied by thunder expected this evening and night. Cold winds are blowing, and the temperature was recorded at five degrees Celsius. Heavy snowfall is forecast in Murree

and the Galiyat during the afternoon. Islamabad is expected to experience winds blowing at a speed of seven kilometres per hour, with humidity levels exceeding 50 per cent.

In Lahore, cold weather continues, with the temperature recorded at eight degrees Celsius and humidity at 71 per cent. Cloud cover stands at 72 per cent, with light fog present in the atmosphere. Daytime temperatures are expected to rise to around 15 degrees Celsius. Lahore's air quality index was recorded at 179, though the city is not currently listed among the world's most polluted cities.

Karachi remains under the grip of icy winds, with minimum temperatures dropping between nine and 13 degrees Celsius. The Met Office forecasts that the minimum temperature today will range between nine and 11 degrees, while the maximum is expected to remain between 20 and 22 degrees Celsius. Karachi currently ranks tenth among the world's most polluted cities.

## Mushaali Mullick calls for special peace board on Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (INP): Hurriyat leader Yasin Malik's wife, Mushaali Mullick, has called for the establishment of a special Board of Peace for Kashmir, similar to efforts being discussed for Gaza, saying the long-running dispute must be placed at the center of global peace initiatives.

In a statement, she said Kashmiris were 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-

fort for peace must include Kashmir as a core agenda item.

Mushaali Mullick warned that Yasin Malik's life was at risk and demanded his immediate release. She also called for the revival of the peace process initiated in 2000, saying that a just and fair resolution of the Kashmir issue is the only guarantee of lasting peace in the region. Describing Kashmir as one of the world's most sensitive and dangerous nuclear flashpoints, she urged the international community to act responsibly to prevent further instability.

## Info Minister felicitates newly elected office bearers of Lahore Press Club

ISLAMABAD (INP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaulah 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 extended felicitations to Salman Qureshi on his election as Senior Vice President, Alzaal Talib as General Secretary, Nasira Ateeq and Madiha Almas as Vice Presidents, Salik Nawaz as Finance Sec-

retary, and Imran Sheikh as Joint Secretary of the Lahore Press Club. Tarar pledged all possible support for the welfare of journalists, emphasizing that the Press Club serves as a strong voice of the media fraternity and plays a vital role in promoting professional values and unity.

He emphasized that press clubs serve a vital role in fostering professional values and enhancing unity among journalists. The minister voiced 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 Naqvi on 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 advanced system aimed at ensuring real-time oversight of passport operations across Pakistan and abroad.

A 24/7 monitoring room and call centre have also been made operational, while the emergency travel document system has been fully digitised at the minister's instructions.

During the visit, Mohsin Naqvi was briefed on the Secure Hybrid Intelligence 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 on the occasion, the interior minister said the Pakistani 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.

He said the introduction of the advanced monitoring system would further improve the performance of the passport department, noting that the security features of Pakistani passports had been upgraded in line with International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) standards. The interior minister added that the installation of modern automatic-German machines had enhanced the

department's operational capacity, while the fully automated passport printing process had eliminated human intervention altogether. During his visit, Mohsin Naqvi also inspected the e-monitoring room, call centre, forensic laboratory and the modern production unit in the Directorate.

Officials briefed the minister that a digitally integrated dashboard would allow daily operations and staff performance to be monitored and evaluated, while the new system would also automatically identify overcrowding at passport offices. They added that under the network management system, backlogs and machinery status would also be continuously monitored.



LAHORE: Rana Ihsan 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.



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



**LORALAI:** Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Loralai Range Junaid 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 Legal Sardar Nasrullah Khan Hamza, SDPO Kareem Mandokhail, SHO City Police Station Shahed Muhammad Asghar Tareen, Sub-Inspector

Muhammad Sharif Mosakhel, and SHO Marra Tangi Noor Muhammad.

Addressing the media, DIG Junaid 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 drug leader Siddiq Waneci. He disclosed that during the operation, well-known criminals Sohbat son of Wali, tribe Jalalzai, resident of Hospital Mohalla, and Hanif alias Sheen, tribe Tarrah, resident of Murghi Khana

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 pistols, one shotgun, and a Toyota X Corolla 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 Waneci are ringleaders of inter-district criminal gangs and have multiple cases registered against them in Loralai, Ziarat, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, and the Crime Branch.

Arrests of other gang members are expected soon based on their identification. DIG Junaid Ahmed Sheikh also stated that Loralai Police have launched a

## 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.

Director Relief Operations Mir Attaullah Mengal said PDMA teams have been fully mobilized since the onset of snowfall and rainfall.

Continuous snow-clearing operations are underway during day and night to prevent road blockages and minimize inconvenience to the public.

He noted that timely and effective measures have enabled PDMA to keep all major highways operational despite severe weather conditions, emphasizing that uninterrupted traffic flow and public safety remain top priorities.

On the special instructions of Chief Minister Balochistan

Mir Sarfraz Bugti and Chief Secretary Shakeel Qadir Khan, PDMA machinery and personnel are on constant standby under the supervision of Director General Jahanzeb Khan.

Continuous efforts are being made to secure snow-affected routes and make them safe for traffic.

The DG PDMA has appreciated the professional performance and preparedness of field staff, instructing them to ensure an immediate response to any emergency situation while utilizing resources efficiently.

Speaking to media representatives, Attaullah Mengal said that the protection of lives and property and the timely provision of relief during rain and snowfall are PDMA's foremost priorities. He urged the public, particularly travelers and tourists, to avoid unnecessary road trips and adopt precautionary measures, and

He also noted that during the previous snowfall, PDMA successfully prevented the closure of major highways and rescued several stranded individuals and vehicles.

## Commissioner Naserabad Chairs Key Security & Administrative Meetings, Orders Action on Law and Order, Drug Smuggling

**NASERABAD:** Under the chairmanship of Commissioner Naserabad Division, Salahuddin Nozairi, important meetings of the Joint Intelligence Coordination Committee (JICC), Divisional Threat Assessment Committee, and Divisional Monitoring Committee were held.

The meetings reviewed the overall law and order situation across the division, existing challenges, and various administrative matters.

With a focus on effective and sustainable solutions to public issues.

The meetings were attended by Deputy Inspector General of Police Naserabad Division Asif Munir, Deputy Commissioner Naserabad Captain (R) Zulfiqar Ali Kakar, Senior Superintendent of Police Naserabad, officials

from CTD, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant departments.

During the sessions, detailed discussions were held on law disputes, the overall security situation, action against elements involved in drug production and smuggling, registration of religious seminars (madaris), improvement of the traffic system, relocation of the bus terminal in Dera Murad Jamali, and provision of alternative spaces for street vendors to ensure public convenience.

DIG Police Asif Munir and Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Zulfiqar Ali Kakar briefed the participants on various matters, highlighting current security measures and future strategies to maintain peace and stability in the division. Addressing the meetings, Commissioner

Salahuddin Nozairi emphasized that coordinated, effective, and sustainable measures are the need of the hour to resolve public problems. He directed authorities to give special attention to the resolution of land disputes through mutual consultation, within the legal framework, and by maintaining public trust to ensure permanent solutions. The Commissioner instructed that the bus terminal located in the center of Dera Murad Jamali city should be shifted to the newly constructed terminal outside the city to reduce traffic congestion.

He also directed that street vendors be provided with suitable alternative locations so that their livelihoods are not affected while improving the city's traffic and civic management. He further directed that no unnecessary check posts should be established and that only joint check posts

be maintained, where representatives of all concerned agencies are present, to prevent undue inconvenience to the public.

Reviewing complaints received through the public complaint portal, the Commissioner stressed the importance of timely and sustainable resolution.

He reiterated that the protection of life and property of citizens is the government's top priority, and all necessary steps must be taken to ensure safe and fear-free travel for the public.

Expressing serious concern over the growing menace of narcotics, Commissioner Ziarat, Abdul Qudous Achakzai, in view of the ongoing snowfall in the district.

The meeting was attended by PDMA Relief and Rescue Officer Naveed Khan, Assistant Commissioner Sajjad ur Rehman, and officers

## DC Ziarat Chairs Emergency Review Meeting Amid Snowfall on CM Balochistan's Directives

**ZIARAT:** On the directives of Chief Minister Balochistan, Sarfraz Bugti, a review meeting was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ziarat, Abdul Qudous Achakzai, in view of the ongoing snowfall in the district.

The meeting was attended by PDMA Relief and Rescue Officer Naveed Khan, Assistant Commissioner Sajjad ur Rehman, and officers

from PDMA, Police, Gas, Health, Roads, Public Health Engineering (PHE), Irrigation, and other concerned departments.

During the meeting, a detailed briefing was given on the current snowfall situation and preparedness measures of various departments.

Addressing the participants, Deputy Commissioner Abdul Qudous Achakzai directed all departments

to remain on high alert during the snowfall. He instructed the Roads Department to ensure that main highways and link roads remain open.

while the Health Department was directed to keep hospitals fully prepared to deal with any emergency situation.

The Deputy Commissioner advised tourists and the general public to avoid un-

necessary travel during the snowfall.

He added that in case of any emergency, citizens and tourists can contact the District Administration or the DC Office. "He assured that the District Administration Ziarat, keeping in view the hardships faced by the public, will utilize available resources to take effective and timely measures to facilitate residents and visitors.



## Deputy Commissioner Gwadar Urges Citizens to Avoid Unnecessary Travel Amid Ongoing Rainfall and Weather Alerts



**GWADAR:** In light of the ongoing rainfall in the district and the weather alerts issued by the Meteorological Department and PDMA,

Deputy Commissioner Gwadar, Naequebullah Kakar, has advised citizens to avoid unnecessary travel. He specifically urged fishermen to refrain from going to the sea for fishing due to the hazardous weather conditions, emphasizing that this precaution would help prevent any potential loss of life or

property. The Deputy Commissioner stated that the protection of citizens' lives and property is the top priority of the district administration.

He confirmed that all relevant departments have been put on high

alert to ensure safety during this period. Furthermore, he assured the public that the district administration is fully prepared to handle any emergency situation, with a 24/7 standby to protect and assist citizens in need.

## MBBS & BDS Interviews Underway in Quetta Under DC Supervision, Merit-Based Selection Assured

**QUETTA:** Under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Quetta, Mehresh Badini, the interview process for MBBS and BDS candidates is currently in progress. On this occasion, the Additional Deputy Commissioner (General) and Additional Deputy Commissioner (Revenue) also conducted interviews of the candidates and carried out thorough verification of their academic cre-

ditentials. During the interviews, candidates' educational documents, domicile certificates, and other required credentials were carefully scrutinized to ensure a

transparent and merit-based selection process. According to the District Administration Quetta, after the complete verification of all candidates' documents, the final merit

lists will be officially issued. The District Administration Quetta remains fully committed to ensuring an admission process based on merit, transparency, and fairness.



**TENDER NOTICE**

The Health Department, Government of Balochistan, through the Health Sector Reform & Management Unit (HSRMU) / Project Management Unit (PMU), invites electronic bids for religious societies for the execution of the following work for the year 2026. TSE No. 25281615722. Only electronic bids will be submitted. No physical bids required. Note: As per GPR rules, all bidders must be registered with the BPPRA Electronic Procurement System (EPPS) before bid submission. Bid Security 2%.

S. No.	Class of Object	Estimate
1.	Nursing Internship Programme (24 Months)	\$9,000,000

Procurement shall be carried out under the Baluchistan Public Procurement Rules, 2014. Eligibility Criteria: As per NIT requirements. Presence in the Active Tenderer List (ATL), BPPRA Registration Certificate (BPPRA). The bidding firm must not be currently blacklisted by any procuring agency of Pakistan. Completion of two (02) assignments of similar nature and complexity worth PKR 70,000,000 each in the previous three (03) years. Accumulated turnover of at least PKR 80,000,000 during the previous three (03) consecutive years. Must be a legally registered public-sector university or a not-for-profit academic/research body in Pakistan. Minimum 05 years of institutional experience in health education, training, or clinical capacity-building. Evidence of own Nursing Department, with recognized Nursing/Health programs/Departments. The bidder shall submit a signed undertaking on its official letterhead confirming that, if awarded the contract, it will deliver the complete Nursing Internship Programme for the full contract duration (24 months) strictly as per TORs, approved work plan, and contractual obligations, with payments linked to verified deliverables; any material deviation/non-performance may lead to withholding of payments/penalties and termination for default, as per applicable laws. Bidder must possess valid ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 21001:2018 certifications (issued by an accredited certification body) covering educational/training services relevant to nursing/health education, and shall submit attested copies of both certifications along with scope and validity dates. Procedure of Procurement: Single Stage - Two Envelope Bidding Procedure. Bid Security: The bids must accompany Bid Security in the form of Bank Guarantee / Deposit of Cash equivalent to 2% of the offered bid amount, issued in the name of the undersigned by a scheduled bank. Tender Documents: The NIT & Bidding Documents can be obtained/downloaded electronically from [www.bppra.gov.pk](http://www.bppra.gov.pk). Issuance of Tender Documents: Complete Bidding Documents can be viewed on the same website from the date of publication of the NIT. Last Date of Bid Submission: Bid can only be submitted electronically, latest by 12<sup>th</sup> February 2026 at 2:00 pm through the supplier dashboard. Tender Opening: All tenders/Technical will be opened on the same day at 3:00 pm in the EPPS System. Address: House No. 26-A, Chaman Housing Scheme, Airport Road, Quetta. Phone: 081-2584129. Email: [atf@hsrmu.gov.pk](mailto:atf@hsrmu.gov.pk)

Section Officer (Admin)  
Health Department,  
Government of Balochistan

PRO No. 3452/26-01-2026

## 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, modernising and facilitating trade through its land ports. For a country that repeatedly declares exports and trade competitiveness as national priorities, such an authority should have been created long ago.

Yet the commercial value of this reform cannot be judged by legislation alone. Institutions 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 bilateral trade flows through land routes, Pakistan's borders with neighbouring countries are either

closed, intermittently disrupted, or subject to unpredictable restrictions.

Trade with India remains frozen. Commercial flows with Afghanistan are repeatedly interrupted. Trade with Iran remains marginal due to US sanctions.

Geography should have been Pakistan's commercial advantage. In purely economic

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

Instead, political risk aversion and security-driven 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 raw materials, and selected agricultural products, through border trade.

Even this constrained exchange benefited producers and consumers 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 continues to allow limited inflows, mainly pharmaceutical raw materials, out of necessity.

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

This raises costs for

Pakistani businesses and consumers while encouraging informal and illegal trade.

A sensible first step would be to restore direct imports of essential industrial raw materials, such as plastics, as was the case prior to 2019.

Concerns that such trade would disproportionately benefit India overlook basic production economics. Paki-

stani industry depends heavily on imported raw materials, intermediate goods, and machinery.

Access to competitively priced inputs from a nearby market would lower production costs and improve export competitiveness globally.

For sectors 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 offers a useful comparison. Despite serious political tensions, scrapping of several bilateral projects, and India limiting Bangladeshi access to exports through its ports, 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 economic cost.

A similar logic applies to Pakistan's western border. Trade with Afghanistan had started increasing over the last few years. 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 piled into the safe-haven asset amid rising geopolitical uncertainties.

Spot gold was up 2.2 per cent at \$5,089.78 per ounce by 6:56am GMT, after earlier touching 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, 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.

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

The latest catalyst "is effectively this 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.

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

Over the weekend, he said he would impose a 100pc tariff on Canada if it followed through on a trade deal with China.

He has also threatened to hit French wines and champagnes with 200pc tariffs, in an apparent effort to pressure French President Emmanuel Macron into joining his Board of Peace initiative.

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.

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

Meanwhile, a rising yen dragged the dollar broadly lower on Monday, with markets on alert for possible intervention in the yen and investors cutting dollar positions ahead of this week's Federal Reserve meeting.

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

Each and every factor leads to the dent in the economy of the country where the urge to earn foreign exchange continues. The leaders are frequently travelling seeking a few million or billion USD as loan to keep up with the need of meeting the inevitable financial demands but least attention is being given to overcome this dilemma and crisis.

Why then a country blessed by the Creator of every means available begs. The saying goes, "The intelligent learn from other's mistakes while the fools learn from their own", can the policymakers be worse than the fools to repeatedly commit the same mistakes rendering the country to fall in a deep financial quagmire?

In the need for short-term benefit, the hen that laid the golden eggs has been eaten and

now without any golden eggs, the only option left, leads to begging for just enough to keep the country going, it's so pathetic. Seafood, once a major source of foreign exchange earnings, can be revived to its former prominence, provided corruption is curtailed to an extent as it may be impossible to curtail it one hundred per cent.

There is still a short time left to protect coastal fish and marine life to benefit the fisherfolk and the country's financial wealth to generate foreign exchange earnings. It is imperative to focus on these high-impact actions before it is too late and the matter reaches a point of no return.

Individual actions

- 1-Restrict the use of fermented sardines/ small fish for poultry feed.
- 2-Choose sustainable seafood: Use guides like Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch to avoid over-fished species.
- 3-Reduce chemical runoff: Use non-toxic garden products and minimise fertilisers; excess nutrients cause "dead zones" in coastal waters.
- 4-Eliminate plastic: Single-use plastics endanger marine life and degrade into harmful microplastics.
- 5-Fish responsibly: Adhere to local size and bag limits to ensure juvenile fish reach breeding age.
- 6-Community policy efforts

1-Protect key habitats: Advocate for the preservation of mangroves, seagrass beds, and coral reefs, which serve as vital nurseries for 25% of all marine life.

2-Support marine protected areas (MPAs): These "underwater parks" allow fish populations to recover and spill over into fishing zones with full participation of the local fisherfolk.

3-Participate in cleanups: Removing debris from beaches prevents waste from entering the food chain.

4-Restrict fishing by trawlers within 12 nautical miles of the coast with the participation of the local fisherfolk by legally empowering them.

5-Restrict the use of illegal nets that should be punishable by serious consequences.

6-For the provincial governments to empower the Pakistan Marine Security Agency and the Coast Guard to ensure compliance with fishing policies as the governments of Sindh and Balochistan seemed to have miserably failed in this matter.

### SBP maintains policy rate at 10.5pc

**NEWS DESK:** The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) maintained its key policy rate at 10.5 per cent on Monday during its Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting.

Brokerage house Topline Securities noted that this "came as a surprise" as a majority of their participants were expecting a rate cut.

According to the Monetary Policy Statement released by the State Bank, while headline inflation was 5.6pc in December 2025, core inflation steadied around a higher level of 7.4pc.

The external current account posted a deficit of \$244 million in December 2025, leading to a \$1.2 billion deficit during the first half of FY2026. Weak exports were driven by a sharp drop in food exports, particularly rice, while high-value-added (HVA) textile exports remained resilient. However, sustained growth in workers' remittances and ICT services helped in containing the current account deficit.

As a result of this, the MPC noted that inflation and the current account were broadly unchanged, while the

outlook for economic growth had improved. Based on this, the committee believed it prudent to hold the policy rate unchanged at the current level to ensure price stability and sustainable economic growth.

Since its last meeting, the committee noted that real GDP growth was provisionally reported at 3.7pc year on year for the first quarter of the FY2026, led by the industry and agriculture sectors. Auto sales, domestic cement dispatches, Petroleum, Oil

and Lubricants (POL) sales (excluding furnace oil), fertiliser off-take, and imports of machinery and intermediate goods recorded notable growth, suggesting sustained domestic demand.

Large-scale manufacturing (LSM) posted growth of 8pc year on year and 10.4pc year on year in October and November 2025, raising LSM growth to 6pc during July-November FY2026, according to the committee's findings. Their findings also posted that the latest

information in agriculture pointed to encouraging prospects for the wheat crop. These favourable developments in the commodity-producing sectors were expected to provide further energy to the services sector.

The MPC noted that this improved upon earlier estimates of GDP growth, now projecting it in the range of 3.75-4.75pc for FY2026, expecting this momentum to strengthen further in FY2027, supported by a faster reduction in the policy rate.

Representatives of Shandong Rainbow Agricultural Technology Co and Pakistan's Uqab Corporation said the collaboration aimed to modernise peanut cultivation, said a press release issued on Satur-

day. Shandong Rainbow Overseas Project Coordinator Qian Hong told Wealth Pakistan that the company planned to introduce improved peanut seeds and build a local supply chain.

Representatives of Shandong Rainbow Agricultural Technology Co and Pakistan's Uqab Corporation said the collaboration aimed to modernise peanut cultivation, said a press release issued on Satur-

### Pakistani, Chinese firms to upgrade peanut seeds



**NEWS DESK:** A Chinese agricultural technology firm and a Pakistani agribusiness company have entered into a partnership to introduce improved peanut seeds and build a local supply chain.

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## T20 World Cup: Naqvi briefs PM Shehbaz on 'ICC matter', says final decision to come by Friday or Monday

**NEWS DESK:** Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said that he briefed Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the "International Cricket Council (ICC) matter" saying that a "final decision will be taken either on Friday or next Monday".

According to a handout by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Naqvi had called on the premier in Islamabad earlier today.

"Naqvi gave a detailed briefing to the prime minister on the current situation between the ICC T20 World Cup and the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB)," the handout said.

Subsequently, Naqvi, also the chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), stated that he had a "productive" meeting with PM Shehbaz.

"I briefed him on the ICC matter, and he directed that we resolve it while keeping all op-



tions on the table. It was agreed that the final decision will be taken either on Friday or next Monday," the post read.

The development comes as questions

have been raised about Pakistan's participation in the tournament following the ICC's decision to replace Bangladesh with Scotland.

Bangladesh were

replaced by Scotland on Saturday, which is scheduled to begin next month.

Following their refusal to tour India over safety concerns in the

wake of soured political relations between the Asian neighbours.

The governing ICC rejected Bangladesh's request to move their matches to tournament

co-host Sri Lanka, saying it was not feasible to change the schedule so close to the February 7 start of the tournament.

Hours before the ICC had announced its

decision, Naqvi had said that Bangladesh was being treated unfairly and should be allowed to participate in the tournament.

At the time, he had

said that Pakistan's participation was still not confirmed.

"The prime minister is not in Pakistan right now. When he returns, I'll be able to give you our final decision," Naqvi had said.

Meanwhile, the International Cricketers' Association said on Sunday that the absence of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup was a sad moment for the game and should serve as a call for stakeholders to work towards uniting the sport, not dividing it.

"The withdrawal of Bangladesh from the T20 World Cup, and resulting absence of a valued cricketing nation from cricket's pinnacle international T20 event, is a sad moment for our sport."

The Bangladesh players and fans, and one that requires deep reflection," World Cricketers' Association (WCA) Chief Executive Tom Moffatt had said in a statement.

## Bowlers, Abhishek fire India to T20 series win over New Zealand

**NEWS DESK:** Inspired bowling and a 14-ball fifty by opener Abhishek Sharma led India to a crushing eight-wicket series-clinching win over New Zealand in the third T20 international on Sunday.

Pace bowler Jasprit Bumrah with figures of 3-17 and leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi (2-18) kept New Zealand down to 153-9 after India elected to field first in Guwahati.

Left-hander and Abhishek then hit an unbeaten 20-ball 68 and skipper Suryakumar Yadav made 57 not out as India romped home with 10 wickets to spare to take an unbeatable 3-0 lead in the five-match series.

It was the ninth straight T20 series win for reigning T20 World Cup champions India.

The series is a

warm-up ahead of the T20 World Cup starting on February 7 in India and Sri Lanka.

"This is the brand of cricket which we want to play, irrespective of our batting first or chasing," said Suryakumar. "For example, if we are 24 for 3 or 44 for 4 tomorrow, we know how to bat."

New Zealand quick Matt Henry bowled Sanju Samson with the first ball of India's chase but the hosts soon took charge with Ishan Kishan and fellow left-hander Abhishek hitting a flurry of fours and sixes.

The pair put on 53 runs off 19 balls before Kishan fell for 28 off 16, but Abhishek missed out to India's second fastest in the format.

Abhishek missed out on his mentor Yuvraj

Singh's fastest T20 fifty record for India by two balls. Yuvraj scored a fifty in 12 balls in 2007.

Abhishek kept up the attack with Suryakumar, who hit his second successive fifty in his 26-ball knock. The duo put on an unbeaten stand of 102 to underline India's status as the world's number one-ranked T20 team.

India's bowlers set up victory with the pacers taking three wickets inside first six overs including Harshit Rana dismissing Devon Conway for the fifth time in successive white-ball matches.

Rachin Ravindra fell for four to Hardik Pandya. Bumrah, who was named player of the match, then bowled wicketkeeper-batter Tim Seifert for 12 as New Zealand slumped to 34-

3. Glenn Phillips, who made 48 off 40 balls, and attempted to pull things back in a partnership of 54 for the fourth wicket with Mark Chapman before Bishnoi broke through.

Bishnoi, who made the Indian XI after nearly a year, had Chapman caught behind for 32 and later denied Phillips a half-century.

Wickets kept tumbling and despite skipper Mitchell Santner's 27 off 17 balls New Zealand fell well short of a testing total.

"I think I'll give credit to India with the ball as well," said Santner. "They made it really tough for us. Obviously wickets in the powerplay is key. And then for us to scrap to 150, we knew it would be a challenge from there."

**NEWS DESK:** Aryna Sabalenka extended her reign as tiebreak queen to reach the Australian Open quarter-finals for a fourth successive year.

Russia's Daniil Medvedev in action during the Australian Open match against Carlos Alcaraz joined her as Daniil Medvedev's campaign ended on Sunday.

Third seed Coco Gauff advanced to her third quarter-finals in a row, defeating 11th seed Iga Swiatek 6-1, 3-6, 6-3 victory over crafty Czech Karolina Muchova in a late-afternoon contest at Margaret Court Arena, while Alexander Zverev and Alex de Minaur eased through.

But three-times finalist Medvedev was handed another harsh lesson by his new nemesis Learner Tien, the Russian going down 6-4, 6-0, 6-3 to the American again at Melbourne Park.

"He played great, super-aggressive. Even when I was making good shots, he was making a better shot back," Medvedev said. "I didn't find many solutions today on the court, which is rare, and I didn't feel that many times my life like this."

Tien progressed despite a nosebleed in the first set that required lengthy treatment. He later said his nose was just dry.

"Every year since I've been coming here, the crowd support has been amazing," said Tien, the youngest men's quarter-finalist at

Melbourne Park since Nick Kyrgios in 2015.

MELBOURNE: Daniil Medvedev in action during the Australian Open match against Learner Tien of the US at Melbourne Park on Sunday.

— Reuters Twice champion and favourite Sabalenka was first out on a glorious morning, seeing off Canadian 19-year-old Victoria Mboko 6-1, 7-6(7/1) in a match of two halves.

The Belarusian was at her best as she crushed the teen in a 31-minute opening set and raced to a 4-1 lead in the second before Mboko

tried a thrilling fightback. Breaking Sabalenka twice on the way to a 6-6 lead, Mboko then hit a brick wall as the Belarusian raised her game to notch a 20th successive tiebreak win at Grand Slams, eclipsing Novak Djokovic's record of 19 between

Wimbledon 2005 and 2007.

PUSHED HARD: Sabalenka heaped praise on her young opponent.

"It's incredible to see these kids coming up on the tour," said the world number one, who has reached 13 successive Grand Slam quarter-finals.

Having taken down one young gun, Sabalenka gets a shot at another in the quarter-finals against 18-year-old American Iva Jovic, who thrashed Kazakh veteran Yulia Putintseva 6-0, 6-1 at John Cain Arena. The men's tournament has seen few surprises of the magnitude of Mboko

Jovic, with the final 16 shut out by seeded players for the first time at any Grand Slam in the professional era.

Top seed Alcaraz did his bit in preserving the status quo despite

facing arguably his toughest test during this tournament against 19th seed Tommy Paul, a semi-finalist in 2023.

Alcaraz appeared in cruise control in a 7-6(8/6), 6-4, 7-5 win over the afternoon sun at Rod Laver Arena.

The Spaniard has in the past struggled with precision and a lack of consistency in his serving technique.

He is now sporting a new-look serve that has become a handy weapon — and been compared to Djokovic's serve.

"I had a Djokovic message saying, 'you have to pay me,'" he said in his on-court interview.

Once a stubborn matchup for Alcaraz, Paul has now lost on three Grand Slam surfaces to the Spaniard following last year's quarter-final thrashing at the French Open and his 2024 defeat at Wimbledon.

**Kane double fires Bayern into Champions League Sabalenka, Alcaraz ease into Australian Open quarters**

**NEWS DESK:** Erling Haaland and Robert Lewandowski were the main attractions as Bayern Munich secured a 4-1 victory over Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga on Sunday.

Haaland scored twice, with Lewandowski adding two more goals in a dominant display at the Allianz Arena.

The victory moved Bayern to the top of the table, with Borussia Dortmund falling to second place.

Bayern's dominance in the league has been a topic of discussion, with fans praising the team's attacking prowess.

The match was a tactical battle, with Bayern's high press effectively disrupting Dortmund's play.

The result sets up a crucial clash between Bayern and Borussia Dortmund in the upcoming season.

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## Yamal stars as Barca beat Oviedo

**NEWS DESK:** "Barcelona reclaimed top spot in La Liga with a 3-0 win over Real Oviedo on Sunday, thanks to goals from Dani Olmo, Raphinha and an acrobatic Lamine Yamal effort.

After Real Madrid beat Villarreal on Saturday to take pole position overnight, the Catalans edged a point ahead again. Although Oviedo are bottom of the table with just two victories all season, Barca had to scrap for their victory as the visitors worked hard defensively to keep Hansi Flick's team at bay until the second half.

Eventually, the hosts' quality told at the partially-reopened Camp Nou and after Olmo opened the scoring, Barca never looked back.

The pick of the goals was Yamal's strike, an impressive volley from Olmo's cross to secure Barca's triumph.

They struggled to make inroads in a dry first half and their passing was unusually imprecise. Injured midfield maestro Pedri

Gonzalez watched on from the stands with an unimpressed expression.

Oviedo looked to attack on the counter and Houssein Hassan drew a save from Joan Garcia from long distance. At the other end Aaron Escandell made a fine stop at his near post to thwart Raphinha before half-

time. Barca came out with renewed energy for the second half and soon took the lead.

After Yamal and Raphinha pressed well in the box the ball broke loose to Olmo, who steered home Oviedo away a poor second goal after 57 minutes, with Raphinha running on to an undercooked back-pass

from David Costas and lofting the ball over Escandell.

Barcelona's third was expertly taken by Lewandowski, a potential fourth with a fine save.

Earlier on Sunday, Atletico Madrid cruised to a 3-0 victory over relegation-threatened Mallorca, with Alexander Sorloth, an own goal by David Lopez and a strike from substitute Thiago Almada ensuring Diego Simeone's side leapfrogged Villarreal into third place in the standings.

Atletico moved on to 44 points, three ahead of Villarreal.

On Saturday, Kylian Mbappe netted twice to earn Real Madrid a 2-0 win at Villarreal.

La Liga top scorer Mbappe reached 21 goals for the season in the competition to help Real see off a spirited Villarreal side, who are now fourth.

Arbeloa's side have won three consecutive matches across all competitions and victory at Villarreal could be a vital step in the revival of their season.

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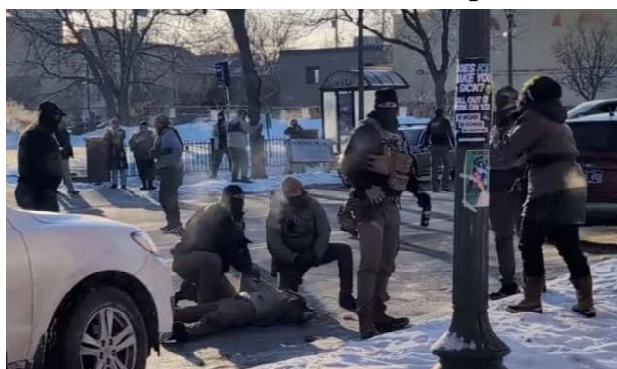
## Trump administration defends Minneapolis killing, disputes video

**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 evidence contradicted their version of events and as tensions grew between local law enforcement and federal officers.

As residents visited a makeshift shrine of flowers and candles in frigid temperatures and snow to mark Saturday's fatal shooting of Alex Prett, Trump administration officials stated that Prett assaulted officers, compelling them to shoot in self-defense. That account was at odds with videos recorded by bystanders.

Prett 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 National Guard troops and masked agents in a deportation effort with little precedent.

Minnesota Governor Tim Walz, a Demo-



crat, again called on Trump to pull federal agents out of the state, which has asked a federal judge to restrain what it says are unconstitutional excesses in Trump's surge.

"The victims are

Border Patrol agents," Gregory Bovino, a senior Border Patrol official, told CNN's "State of the Union" program. 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 and Democrats in the US Congress, who pointed to the bystander videos that show all Prett held in his hands was a

cellphone before agents grappled him to the ground and ultimately shot him at close range. Federal agents over the past few weeks have been met by countless angry residents protesting in the city's icy

streets, some of them blowing whistles. Thousands of people again filled the streets of Minneapolis on Sunday to protest against the surge in US Immigration and Customs Enforcement

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

Holding a phone, not a gun, Prett, 37, 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.

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

Several agents then take hold of Prett, who struggles with them, and force him onto his hands and knees. As the agents pin Prett 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 Prett's waistband area and stepping away from the

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

Darius 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 no one is communicating to me, based on my observation of how that team responded," Reeves said.

Minnesota officials say Prett had 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 that "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 "limited reopening" once it has recovered the remains of the last captive in the Palestinian territory.

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

Visiting US envoys had reportedly pressed Israeli officials to reopen the crossing during the weekend. World leaders and aid agencies have repeatedly pushed for more humanitarian corridors to be able to access Gaza, which has been devastated by more than two years of bombardment and depends on the inflow of essential medical equipment, food and other supplies.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Monday that Israel had agreed to a reopening "for pedestrian passage only, subject to a full Israeli inspection mechanism".

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

## Ferry sinking kills 18, leaves 24 missing in south Philippines

**NEWS DESK:** A ferry with more than 350 people onboard sank early Monday in choppy seas off the southern Philippines, killing at least 18 and leaving 24 still missing, the coast guard said.

The MV Trisha Kerstin 3 issued a distress signal around 1:50am (10:50pm PKT Sunday), a bit over four hours after it departed the Port of Zamboanga City on the southwestern tip of Mindanao, the coast guard said in a statement.

Video released by the governor of Basilan province showed barefoot survivors being wrapped in blankets and placed on gurneys, while victims of the sinking were carried past in body bags. The triple-decker vessel went down on nearly the same route where 31 people died in 2023 after a fire aboard the Lady Mary Joy 3 ferry. Both ships were owned by locally based Alcon Shipping Lines.

At least 317 people have so far been rescued, according to the most recent tally by the



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The ferry sinking in the south Philippines killed 18 people and left 24 missing. The vessel, the MV Trisha Kerstin 3, was carrying more than 350 people when it sank in choppy seas off the southern coast of Mindanao.



Philippine Coast Guard, with 18 confirmed dead and 24 still unaccounted for amid an ongoing search-and-rescue operation.

Sheryl Balondo, a rescuer in Isabela City, one of two municipalities where survivors were being taken, said their office had received more than 100 phone calls from concerned family members. "There's a tug in our hearts whenever

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## US storm leaves 850k without power

**NEWS DESK:** More than 850,000 customers in the US, as far west as New Mexico, were without electricity and over 10,000 flights were cancelled on Sunday during a monster winter storm that paralysed eastern and southern states with heavy snow and ice.

As snow, freezing rain and dangerously frigid temperatures swept into the eastern two-thirds of the nation on Sunday, the number of power outages continued to rise.

As of 10:47am EST (8:47pm PKT) on Sunday, more than 850,000 US customers were without electricity, according to PowerOutage.us, with at least 290,000 in Tennessee and 200,000 in Mississippi. Texas and Louisiana. Other states affected included Kentucky, Georgia, Virginia and Alabama.

More than 10,200 US flights scheduled for Sunday were cancelled, according to flight tracking website FlightAware.

Over 4,000 flights were cancelled on Saturday.

Washington, DC's



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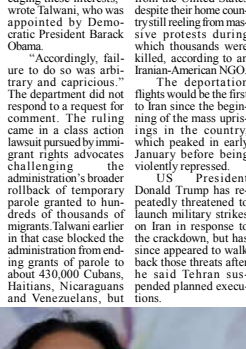
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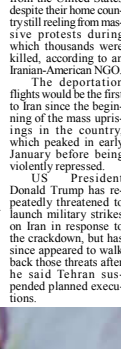
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## Judge blocks Trump's push to end legal status of migrants

**NEWS DESK:** A federal judge has blocked the Trump administration's push to terminate the legal status of more than 8,400 family members of US citizens and green card holders who moved to the United States from seven Latin American countries.

Boston-based US District Judge India Talwani issued a preliminary injunction late on Saturday that prevents the Department of Homeland Security from ending the humanitarian parole granted to thousands of people from Cuba, Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras.

They had been allowed to move to the United States under family reunification parole programmes that were created or modernised by Democratic President Joe Biden's administration.

Since Republican President Donald Trump succeeded Biden, his administration has ramped up immigration enforcement with \$170 billion budgeted for immigration agencies through September 2029, a historic sum.

Washington preparing to deport Iranians despite unrest, killings, says NGO

Under the family reunification programmes, US citizens or lawful permanent residents, also known as green card holders, could apply to serve as sponsors for family members in those

seven countries, letting them live in the US while they waited for their immigrant visas to become available.

The Homeland Security Department said on Dec 12 it was ending the programmes on the grounds that they were inconsistent with Trump's immigration enforcement priorities and were abused to allow "poorly vetted aliens to circumvent the traditional parole process."

The termination was originally set to take effect January 14, but Talwani issued a temporary restraining order blocking it for 14 days while she considered whether to issue Saturday's longer-term injunction Talwani said the department, led by Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem, had provided no support for its fraud concerns or considered whether individuals could feasibly

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Visiting US envoys had reportedly pressed Israeli officials to reopen the crossing during the weekend. World leaders and aid agencies have repeatedly pushed for more humanitarian corridors to be able to access Gaza, which has been devastated by more than two years of bombardment and depends on the inflow of essential medical equipment, food and other supplies.

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

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