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Pakistan strikes terror camps, hideouts in border region with Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan carried out "calibrated" air strikes against terrorist hideouts near the Afghan border and conducted intelligence-based ground operations that killed a total of 37 terrorists following a series of deadly attacks in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P), the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MoIB) said on Monday. "In the aftermath of recent multiple terrorist incidents inside Pakistan against the innocent people of K-P, a well-planned intelligence-based ground operation was carried out by security forces around Kohat, Hangu and Thal, followed by calibrated Air Strikes against the hideouts and safe havens of terrorist organisations responsible for these attacks, said MoIB in a statement. The development emerged after 23 people, including 15 police personnel, were martyred in the blast at a mosque in Kohat's Police Lines during Friday prayers. Eight terrorists were also killed during a subsequent search and clearance operation. Later, Ittihadul Mujahideen Pakistan (IMP), led by Afghanistan-based Hafiz Gul Bahadur, claimed responsibility for the deadly bombing and rampage involving multiple attackers.

The ministry, in a statement, further said that on September 20, security forces conducted an intelligence-based ground operation against a group of terrorists in Kohat and Hangu districts. "As a result of precise and skilful engagement, nine khwarij belonging to the Indian proxy Fitna al-Khawarij were sent to hell, while several were injured." "Moreover, based on credible intelligence, selective targeting of terrorist camps and hideouts belonging to Fitna al-khwarij and its affiliates has also been carried out in the border region with Afghanistan with precision and accuracy," it added. The statement said three targets were destroyed in precision strikes, including a training centre for suicide bombers. It said 28 terrorists, along with several suicide bombers, were killed, while large quantities of weapons and ammunition stored at the centres and hideouts were also destroyed. The ministry said Pakistan had always strived to maintain peace and stability in the region, but the safety and security of its citizens remained its foremost priority. "It is a matter of grave concern that Afghanistan continues to remain a hub of terrorism. The threat to Pakistan emanates from Afghanistan. In this context, our action precisely targeted the terrorist hubs. Maximum precautions were taken, and it was ensured that no collateral damage occurred," the MoIB said. It further stated that the counterterrorism campaign, Ghazab lil Haq, being carried out by Pakistan's security forces and law enforcement agencies under the "Azm-e-Istehkam" framework, would continue at full pace to eliminate what it described as the menace of foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country.



ISLAMABAD: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman addresses a press conference



TEHRAN: Iran's Interior Minister Eskandar Momeni meets with Pakistan's Interior Minister Syed Mohsin Raza Naqvi

JUI-F will support no-confidence motion 'if tabled': Maulana Fazl

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Monday that his party would support a no-confidence motion against the government if one was tabled, warning that the ruling coalition would become a minority government if the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) withdrew its support.

Addressing a press conference, Maulana said the opposition was not currently in a position to bring a no-confidence motion and that no such move was under consideration at present. However, he made clear that JUI-F's position was that the government could neither be formed nor sustained without the party's support. He called for an in-camera session of Parliament House to brief the nation on the country's situation, saying closed-door meetings of parliamentary leaders served no purpose.

"The nation is being kept unaware of the entire situation," he said, adding that problems should be brought to parliament while those sitting in government remained silent. Maulana said the government's writ was absent in two provinces, with street crimes rampant in Sindh and banks being looted in broad daylight in Balochistan.

"There is no system capable of protecting banks or citizens," he said. He revealed that a JUI-F senator, Abdul Shakoor Khan, had been stopped at the airport the previous day and prevented from travelling to China.

He also said ministers in his province were being stopped on roads. "When some parties announced protests, Islamabad was filled with containers," he said. Maulana said the country was under increasing debt pressure, inflation had risen sharply, and the public's suffering had no remedy.



QUETTA: Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti offering fateha for the departed soul of Senator Naseebullah Bazai.

Expanding tax net in Balochistan among govt's top priorities, says Nosherwani

QUETTA, (VoM Report): An important meeting was held under the chairmanship of Provincial Minister for Finance and Minerals Mir Shoaib Nosherwani regarding the performance of the Balochistan Revenue Authority (BRA), improvement in tax collection and expansion of the revenue base. Secretary Finance Jahangir Kakar, Chairman Balochistan Revenue Authority Abdullah Khan and other relevant officials attended the meeting.

During the meeting, a detailed review was conducted of the decisions taken in the previous meeting and the progress made on them. It was decided that the audit process of companies, hotels, hospitals and various other sectors would be made faster, more effective and transparent so that provincial revenue could be increased while ensuring transparency in the tax system.

It was informed on the occasion that the Balochistan Revenue Authority's office in Gwadar has been made operational, which will further improve the monitoring of tax-related matters and the provision of services to taxpayers in Gwadar and surrounding areas. In addition, it was decided to bring jewelers, bakeries, property dealers, car showrooms, water supply companies and other relevant business sectors into the tax jurisdiction of the Balochistan Revenue Authority.

It was also agreed to accelerate measures to include YouTubers and individuals and organizations associated with online businesses in the tax jurisdiction of the Balochistan Revenue Authority in accordance with legal requirements.

Addressing the meeting, Provincial Minister for Finance Mir Shoaib Nosherwani said that expanding the tax net in Balochistan, making the tax collection system transparent and documenting business activities are among the government's priorities. He directed the relevant authorities to ensure effective implementation of tax laws along with providing facilities to taxpayers.

He said that incorporating modern business trends and the online economy into the tax system is also an important need of the time.

PM condoles death of Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Monday, expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the death of Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, brother of UAE Vice President and Prime Minister; and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum.

"Sheikh Ahmed bin Rashid Al Maktoum devoted his life to the service of Dubai and the United Arab Emirates with honour and dignity. Pakistan deeply appreciates his valuable services and pays tribute to his memory with respect and admiration," PM's Office in a post on X handle, quoted the prime minister as saying.

The prime minister extended his heartfelt condolences and sympathies to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Al Maktoum family, and the people of the United Arab Emirates.

He also prayed to Allah Almighty to bless the departed soul with the highest place in Jannat-ul-Firdous and grant the bereaved family strength and patience to bear this profound loss.

Human resources more important than natural resources: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that our real success will come when students of public-sector universities feel that their abilities, knowledge, and future are valued and respected on this very land. Our utmost effort is to ensure that our youth not only improve their own future but also play their role in building the future of the country and the nation.

In this regard, a Vice Chancellor is not merely the head of an institution of higher education; rather, he also plays a key role in shaping the future of the younger generation, promoting modern research, and determining the intellectual direction of society.

Through our joint efforts, we have succeeded in taking all public universities to a higher level in terms of both quality and quantity, which is a matter of pride and happiness for everyone.

He expressed these views while speaking with the Vice Chancellor of the University of Gwadar, Professor Dr. Razzaq Sabir, and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Turbat, Professor Dr. Gul Hassan, at Governor House Quetta. On this occasion, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that the vast coastal belt of Balochistan has enormous economic and commercial potential for the future.

Gwadar and Turbat are not only geographically important but also possess exceptional potential in terms of the blue economy, maritime trade, fisheries, coastal management, and marine resources.

Anti-polio drive launched in 32 high-risk districts of Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Health Secretary Mujeeb ur Rehman Panezai said that a seven-day anti-polio campaign has been launched in 32 high-risk districts of the province, during which a target has been set to administer polio drops to 2.3 million children.

He said that the absence of any reported polio case in Balochistan for the past two years is an important achievement. However, the presence of poliovirus in environmental samples remains a major challenge, and vigorous measures are continuing to eliminate it.

In his statement, the Balochistan Health Secretary said that the Health Department's teams are continuously working to eradicate polio in the province, and vaccination points have been established at various locations where children are being administered polio drops.

He said that no polio case has emerged in Balochistan during the past two years. However, merely having no reported cases is not enough; it is also necessary to ensure that environmental samples remain continuously negative.

Hub backbone of Balochistan's industrial development: Saira

HUB, (VoM Report): Commissioner Lasbela Division Saira Atta has said that District Hub holds the status of the backbone of Balochistan's industrial development. Following the rollout in Quetta, the Government of Balochistan has taken technical measures to deploy digital surveillance infrastructure in the industrial district of Hub. The integration of high-resolution AI monitoring into the Safe City Project has helped in preventing street crime.

She expressed these views while speaking to relevant officials during her visit to the surveillance center of the Safe City Project in District Hub on Monday. ASP Adnan briefed the Commissioner Lasbela Division about the measures taken regarding security monitoring of the city through surveillance cameras.

State pursuing policy of zero tolerance against anti-state elements: CM Bugti

Pays tribute to security forces for successful operation against terrorists in Aphankoh, Prom area of Panjgur; says operations by security forces against terrorists continuing in Balochistan

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti has paid tribute to the security forces for their successful operation in Aphankoh, Prom area of Panjgur. The Chief Minister said that under Operation Radd-ul-Fitna 3, operations by the security forces against terrorists are continuing in Balochistan.

Acting on information about the presence of terrorists of Fitna al-Hindustan in Aphankoh, Prom area of Panjgur, the security forces conducted an operation, as a result of which four terrorists were killed. A large quantity of modern weapons and ammunition was also recovered from the possession of the terrorists killed during the operation.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that the security forces have made unparalleled sacrifices in the war against terrorism, and the nation is proud of its brave security forces.

He said that operations will continue until the complete elimination of terrorism, and that the state is pursuing a policy of zero tolerance against anti-state elements.

The efforts of the security forces for the establishment of peace and stability are commendable.



QUETTA: A delegation of female teachers led by Faiza Shah called on Balochistan Governor Jaffar Khan Mandokhail.

Pakistan calls for stronger bilateral cooperation with Iran

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi arrived in Tehran at the head of a delegation and was welcomed by his Iranian counterpart and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, according to ISNA. Regarding the visit, Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Esmail Baghaei had earlier said that the visit is taking place within the framework of bilateral relations.

He described the relations between the two countries as very good and said: "Our relations, especially in the last few months, have been growing in all areas." Baghaei added that "During this visit, it is planned to discuss the understandings that have already been made between the two countries, including at the level of presidents."

Baghaei on Saturday said there is no plan to exchange any specific messages regarding mediation.

Naqvi, who has been actively involved in the mediation process alongside Chief of Army Staff and Chief of Defence Forces Field Marshal Asim Munir, is slated to discuss matters related to attacks by the Yemeni Houthi group on Saudi Arabia's oil and economic infrastructure, and how to revive the stalled peace talks with the US, official sources who spoke earlier to Anadolu added. Islamabad has already warned that the recent escalation in Yemen would further complicate the already complex regional scenario.

This is Naqvi's sixth visit to Tehran since the US and Israel launched war against Iran in February.

Pakistan has remained the primary mediator between Iran and the US throughout the war, and has maintained close contact with both sides.

US President Donald Trump spoke by phone with Yemeni President Rashad al-Alimi on Sunday, four people familiar with the matter said, discussing the advances of the Iran-backed Houthis around a vital global waterway.

Alimi requested US support for his Saudi-backed government in its fight against the Houthis, who this month took key areas along the Bab al-Mandeb strait in a lightning offensive.



QUETTA: Chairperson Balochistan Commission on the Status of Women Kiran Baloch signs a MoU with Educational and Youth Empowerment Society.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Tuesday September 22, 2026

Israel becomes major source of tension in US

With less than two months to go, hyperbole seems to characterize every major American election cycle in our era, but the 2026 US midterm elections are fraught with exceptional tensions.

US presidents and their parties generally fare badly in midterm elections, and Donald Trump's popularity ratings are some of the lowest ever recorded for a president at this point in his second term. Moreover, the first year of Trump's second term progressed even more wildly than the same period during his first term. The revolving door for top-level administration posts is once again spinning. Trump's unpredictable policy decisions – often tweeted in the early morning or blurted out impromptu to the press – whipsaw markets and societies around the world.

In the US, Trump unleashed DOGE on the "administrative state" and immigration enforcement agency ICE on the general population. Despite claiming to have ended, at last count, eight wars, Trump is more known for extracting Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro from Caracas in early January and teaming up with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to attack Iran on Feb. 28. The ongoing wrestling match with Tehran – now six months old – has exacerbated the US economy's inflationary trends, especially for everyday costs such as groceries and gasoline. If Trump and the Republicans emerge from November's polls with control of Congress, Trump will feel justified and vindicated in his choices. And Congress, already paralyzed for the past 20 months, will remain comatose until 2029 at least.

However, neither of the major US political parties appears poised for victory in November. President Trump's erratic, personalized decision-making looks like a double-edged sword for his party. His base stands fervently behind him despite the increasingly ominous poll numbers, and his hand-picked candidates tend to do well. But different candidates face their own specific election landscapes, and some understand that distancing themselves from Trump may result in more favorable election outcomes. Just as importantly, a significant bloc of former high-profile Trump supporters has broken with Trump over US policy toward Israel, and a large section of the Republicans' younger voter demographic seems to have followed them.

The Democrats, for their part, are in even worse condition. Throughout their 2024 election debacle, the Democrats appeared lost and leaderless. Riven by a generational split pitting younger, emerging figures against a cohort of old-guard stalwarts (usually close to the Clintons, Bidens, or Obamas), the Democratic National Committee (DNC) decided to stay the course. The result was President Joe Biden's reelection bid, subsequent late exit, and Vice President Kamala Harris' taking his place, which was decided by the party's leadership, not the party faithful. Not only did the Democrats lose the presidency, but they also lost control of the House of Representatives.

Finger-pointing started immediately, but now, only two months before the 2026 midterms, no clarity has emerged, nor has reorganization been implemented. The Democrats' generational discord over issues and tactics continues unabated, their leadership remains elderly and ineffectual, and the DNC's refusal to honestly dissect what went wrong in 2024 casts a pall over the party. Instead of benefiting from the Republican Party's Trumpian disorder, the Democrats struggle on a daily basis to project an image of unity.

As with the Republicans, US policy toward Israel has become the key issue driving the Democrats' internal dissent: older and moderate Democrats want to continue the party's traditional support for Israel, while younger and progressive Democrats want to end US aid for Israel. That also means that American policy toward Israel has emerged as a dominant issue across the entire US political spectrum.

The last time both of the major US political parties concurrently experienced such ideological chaos was the 1920s. During that decade, the Republicans, once America's progressive party, under the Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge administrations, became the conservative party of industrialists and big finance. President Herbert Hoover could then do nothing but watch helplessly as the US economy cratered in October 1929.

That disaster paved the way for New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt's rise to the national stage, where, as president, he cemented the once-conservative Democratic Party's metamorphosis into a more liberal party of the working classes and common people during the 1930s. The Democrats began focusing on socioeconomic issues that comprised traditional politics and policy, while the Republicans have increasingly relied on culture wars and charismatic figures for votes since that era.

US policy toward Israel, though often defined as a foreign policy issue, is intricately enmeshed in both parties' histories. Democratic President Harry S. Truman initiated US recognition of Israel, largely because he needed votes in 1948. The Republican Party's evangelical base has long seen the modern state of Israel's existence as fundamental to its beliefs. US policy toward Israel has thus been a prominent issue in US politics for many decades, but never has it played such a central role in the nation's current political climate. Both parties are now wracked by dramatic infighting because of Israel, and Israel has become a major source of tension in American society as the November midterms approach. Which party will successfully engineer a fundamental redefinition of its stance on Israel, a subject that includes vital cultural, military, political, and religious elements? The answer to that question may well determine who controls Congress during the coming decade.

Why more provinces?

SALEEM QAMAR BUTT

The ongoing speculative and confusing discussions on the need to have 'more provinces', later altered to 'more administrative units', were triggered after the worthy Interior Minister made a speech confessing 'System Collapse'; besides, describing the 'manifold increase in population' as the main problem and the need to improve the 'System' by further division of the State of Pakistan into more provinces. Ostensibly, the statement was made as a tester to gauge public opinion as well as the controversial Form 47 ruling club's response. As planned, the said speech and remarks created panic, confusion, jubilation and a range of other feelings expressed by different stakeholders as per their hopes, aspirations and fears. Besides, so far it has served as a partial distraction from unaffordable energy prices, crippling inflation, political victimisation and the tricky 'walk on a tightrope' on the external front.

One needs to analyse the ongoing rudderless statements and discussions about the need to create more provinces in Pakistan, keeping in mind some international and domestic cases. For example, the dissolution of the Ottoman Khilafat/Empire into a large number of countries, division of Sudan, Indonesia and Malaysia; and internally, the tragedy of Pakistan resulting in the turning of East Pakistan into Bangladesh, the One Unit formula, LFO, late 1960s deliberations on more provinces and administrative units in Pakistan, like what was done in Spain, and General Musharraf's Devolution of Power through Local Bodies. And above all, the present state of law and order, terrorism mixed with insurgency and proxy wars, poor economy, people's miseries due to maladministration and missing timely justice, crippling inflation and public disorientation.

Global reorganisations demonstrate two distinct phenomena: state fragmentation driven by central collapse versus administrative sub-division within stable borders. Planned and successfully executed by the Big Powers in pursuance of their strategic interests, a few examples are cited here to clear the mist. The Ottoman Khilafat/ Empire's collapse after WW-I was an external Balkanisation driven by imperial decay, foreign intervention (Sykes-Picot), and ethno-religious nationalism. It illustrates how central suppression of regional identities leads to violent breakup rather than peaceful internal reform. Malaysia & Singapore's (1965) separation was a mutual expulsion triggered by irreconcilable political and ethnic differences (Malay supremacy vs. Chinese economic dominance) between Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew and Kuala Lumpur's central leadership. As for Sudan (2011), South Sudan's secession followed decades of civil war driven by religious, racial and resource neglect by the Arabised North. Decentralisation came too late, making secession the only viable end to the conflict. Another example is that of Indonesia (Post-1998 Pemekaran); following the secession of East Timor, Indonesia (comprising a large number of islands) launched massive administrative decentralisation (Pemekaran), expanding its provinces from 26 to 38. This internal restructuring successfully neutralised separatist movements in places like Papua and Aceh by redistributing central revenues down to regional elites.

Now let's briefly look at the Historical Trajectory of Administrative Formations in Pakistan. Pakistan's internal boundary conflicts stem from attempts to engineer administrative maps for political leverage; i.e., in 1955, the 'One Unit Scheme' merged West Pakistan into 1 province to offset East Bengal's majority (with more than 60 districts). Again, in 1970, the 'LFO & Dissolution' by Gen. Yahya restored 4 provinces; East Bengal won the majority in the 1970 elections, resulting in the 1971 dismemberment of Pakistan due to a host of reasons; and post-1970s frozen boundaries have maintained the status quo despite population growth and peripheral neglect. A detailed study would reveal the pros and cons as well as reasons for the non-realisation of such lofty but knee-jerk initiatives.

The ongoing, slowly revealed parameters for Creating New Constitutional Provinces (e.g., South Punjab, Hazara, Karachi) and Empowering Divisions/Districts within Existing 4 Provinces are purportedly meant to create Federal Balance, Balanced National Assembly and Senate seats; break Punjab's single-handed political hegemony, while preserving the existing constitutional balance and avoiding political deadlocks in Parliament. Better Governance & Delivery is expected to bring provincial capitals closer to peripheral populations (e.g., South Punjab, Southern Balochistan) and decentralise service delivery without creating redundant bureaucratic capitals. On the financial side, High Cost & Overhead includes setting up new provincial assemblies, secretariats, high courts and governorships, while the speculated financial Low looks at utilising existing civil service structures and local government legislation. As for the Pros and Cons of creating New Provinces, the Pros may offer Administrative Efficiency, i.e., regions like South Punjab (Multan/ Bahawalpur) or peripheral Balochistan face immense delays because capital cities (Lahore/Quetta) are hundreds of kilometres away. New provinces would automatically receive dedicated shares from the National Finance Commission (NFC) award, bypassing provincial capital hoarding. Smaller provinces eliminate the dominant status of any single unit, forcing coalition-building at the centre. Obviously, the ruling two parties in Punjab and Sindh will have serious reservations due to the risk of losing their monopoly in politics. On the dangerous flip side, redrawing boundaries along linguistic lines (e.g., Seraiki, Hazara, Muhajir) risks deepening ethnic fault lines and triggering violence in multi-ethnic hubs like Karachi, further promoting Ethno-Linguistic Polarisation. Article 239 requires a two-thirds majority in both Houses of Parliament and the affected provincial assembly, making consensus politically difficult and potentially causing Constitutional Deadlock. Establishing administrative infrastructure for 4 to 8 new provinces would divert funds away from basic social services.

International experts reject the simplistic explanation that national/military disasters are merely the product of individual incompetence or "operator error". Instead, they argue that such catastrophes are systemic, highlighting the place of national/military misfortune at the individual, organisational, and national-political levels. For fault-finding, focusing solely on the individual obscures deeper systemic issues. Individuals within political and military hierarchies do not operate in a vacuum; they are constrained by cognitive biases, institutional groupthink, and established mental paradigms. Therefore, even competent leaders are frequently trapped, blinded, or paralysed by the party/organisational machinery and information flows surrounding them; routine reliance on individual brilliance is a flawed safety strategy.

Misfortunes occur when incompetent, shortsighted, submissive and power-hungry national leaders demand military instruments to achieve objectives that are politically or logistically unfeasible; and the reverse is equally true in the case of Pakistan. Here I am compelled to quote a few lines from my published piece, "Living a Lie": 'Have we learned relevant lessons from our National Misfortunes (loss of East Pakistan being at the top) and from other natural calamities? Does our present political system ensure true public representation, or is it the continuation of a vicious cycle keeping the people deprived at the hands of the second/third generation of hereditary, incompetent, corrupt and unworthy rulers? Is our judicial system free and fair? Is timely and free justice available to the people? Is the economy of Pakistan in the hands of patriotic technocrats or in the hands of IMF/WB representatives, who are always worsening the economic crises and further complicating the asphyxiating debt traps? Has any Pakistani Government ever satisfactorily ensured provision of affordable food, shelter, clothing, energy, education, and health care to the common citizens of Pakistan? Is freedom of speech, freedom from oppression, freedom of movement and safe travel, safety of life and property, family/self-respect, and, more importantly, respect for people's mandate available in Pakistan? Have we undertaken honest retrospection of all consequential national decisions taken in the past to ensure that the present national decisions are thoroughly debated in both houses of Parliament, people taken onboard and then implemented to achieve the National Interest of Pakistan, i.e. Security and Well-being of the People of Pakistan?' Ultimately, 'National/ Military Misfortunes' happen as an inherent risk of weak political institutions and complex, overstretched military systems. Putting one's own house in order in the political, economic and security domains needs to be Pakistan's top priority, which is not likely when the largest and most popular political party in the country is secluded and kept on the anvil along with its incarcerated leadership.

Coming back to the subject of this column, opponents of new constitutional provinces, including this scribe, advocate empowering divisions (headed by Commissioners) and local governments (Article 140A). By delegating financial and administrative powers directly to local elected representatives at the district level, the state can address regional grievances without altering provincial boundaries. Creating a new province in Pakistan requires a constitutional amendment that alters the country's territorial boundaries (Article 1(2)). This process is governed by Article 239 of the Constitution of Pakistan, which sets a high bar to ensure broad national and regional consensus. However, to manage political pressure without passing a constitutional amendment, successive provincial governments have relied on administrative decentralisation rather than territorial division. In 2020, a dedicated South Punjab Secretariat was established, with separate Additional Chief Secretaries and Secretaries operating out of Multan and Bahawalpur. 'Ring-fenced development budgets' (around 32% of the total Punjab Annual Development Programme) were also allocated specifically for southern districts.

In my opinion, breaking the opposing state into pieces is not just an idiom but a reality. National strength lies in unity, not in further geographical division, which is prone to further foment racial, linguistic and sub-nationalism. Instead, we need to improve performance in the fields of justice, education and overall administration/ public services by having more Administrative Divisions/Districts with strictly apolitical administration under close vigil/oversight. The monopoly and blackmailing by the ruling class, which always finds a place in Parliament, can best be addressed through free and fair elections like those held in most European countries. Does one need to repeat here all the ills, such as ethnic, linguistic, sectarian, haves and have-nots/privileged and unprivileged class hatred, political divisions and maladministration due to the weak writ of law and justice, which are already shaking the foundations of Pakistan? Won't division into more provinces add to the existing fissiparous, flustered and standalone sub-nationalist tendencies? Won't it further facilitate manipulation of the state's affairs by domestic power wielders and external movers and shakers? Needless to say, such a serious subject should follow a deliberate approach involving the intelligentsia, the public at large, a truly representative government and a comprehensive all-parties parliamentary debate on the floors of both houses. That should be followed by due scrutiny by constitutional experts and a referendum to decide whether Pakistan needs more provinces or more Administrative Units/ Districts within each existing province and Federal Territory.

The writer is a retired senior army officer with experience in international relations, military diplomacy and analysis of geo-political and strategic security issues.

Battles for the waterways

IMRAN MALIK

After instigating the US' war on Iran, Israel smartly manoeuvred itself out of the Persian Gulf theatre of war, leaving the US alone to suffer the ravages of this rather unwarranted, extravagant, senseless military (mis)adventure. Far from being brought to an acceptable closure, this Gulf War seems to be expanding, menacingly. A stop-start war has already been on between the US and Iran in the Persian Gulf-Hormuz Straits region since February 2026. Now the Red Sea-Bab-el Mandab front has also been activated by the Iran-backed Houthis. To compound matters even further, some Iraq-based pro-Iran militias too have joined the fray by attacking the East-West oil pipeline in northern Saudi Arabia. Most critically, the holy city of Makkah has been threatened by a drone attack. Could both these attacks possibly be false flag operations (by hostile external powers?) aimed at curtailing Saudi exports of oil, intensifying global oil shortages, escalating the Saudi-Houthi conflict, firing up the sentiments of the Muslim World and creating conditions for Pakistan and Turkiye to be sucked into the battle under the Makkah Defence Alliance (MDA) protocols? Is it a deep strategic manoeuvre to pitch Muslim against Muslim again - (Iraq-Iran war, 1980-88)? KSA is thus under a multidimensional assault and on the horns of a serious strategic and geoeconomics dilemma. Iran apparently has the initiative, escalation control and is determining the limits, pace and dynamics of the war. The US appears reduced to just reinforcing failure in all dimensions - military, economic, diplomatic, technological, logistical and above all political! The ME has a very distinctive physiology. The Persian Gulf-Hormuz Straits and the Red Sea-Bab el Mandab complexes are on either flank of the Arabian Peninsula. Both appear as two menacing albeit complementing jaws of a strategic vise that have all countries on the Arabian Peninsula, in the Persian Gulf and their phenomenal fossil fuel, mineral deposits/reserves, in its vicious hold and grip. Some regional players like Iran, Oman and Yemen, including Houthis, dominate them by virtue of their unique geographies. Debilitating pressures can therefore be exerted on these countries by tightening the "jaws" (either choke point) at will. The Hormuz Straits controls all forms of shipping to and from the Persian Gulf. Countries like Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, KSA, Iran, etc. use it as the primary trade route. The Bab el Mandab, the southern gateway to the Suez Canal, controls all East-West trade between Asia-Europe and beyond. Crucially, KSA was transferring its oil from Abqaiq to Yanbu through the 1200 km East-West oil pipeline and exporting it through the Bab el Mandab, as the Hormuz Straits were closed due to the war in the Persian Gulf. Now the Houthis have moved to acquire control of the Bab el Mandab, thus literally enclosing KSA in an excruciating stranglehold, not allowing it any direct access to its usual SLOC/ trade routes through the Red Sea-Bab el Mandab.

Prior to the war, these choke points were just waterways used peacefully for regional and world trade, especially oil, gas, fertilisers, foodgrains, petrochemicals, critical minerals and other commodities. However, the US-Israel Combine's failing, floundering war on Iran has transformed the strategic dynamics that now define them. A massive struggle is thus on to gain unilateral control over them. The US-Israel Combine and Iran are slugging it out in the Persian Gulf-Hormuz Straits region, while the pro-Iran Houthis and the Saudis, along with the Internationally Recognised Government (IRG) of Yemen, are clashing to gain control of the Red Sea-Bab el Mandab complex. Gaining unassailable control of both or either one waterway-choke point will bring that state into a strategically advantageous, decisive and unambiguously assertive, imposing position in the region. Furthermore, this Gulf war has precipitated a massive paradigm shift in the Middle East's (ME) strategic environment. It has now started engendering unintended albeit critical, strategic ramifications, much to the consternation of regional states and the downright detriment of all regional and global economies. Crucially, the main thrust of the war effort has now shifted from the military to the economic dimension. This paradigm shift will define the nature of future wars too, especially in the ME. Unsurprisingly, the vital choke points of Hormuz Straits and Bab el Mandab are now radiating decisive strategic effects. They stand virtually weaponised now. Their inevitability in geoeconomics and operational strategies during wars is now well established. Together, these two attributes give them decisive influences in regional and global geopolitics and geoeconomics. The waterways-choke points can thus be termed simultaneously as strategic vulnerabilities and/or strengths, depending upon whether a state controls them or not. Once controlled by hostile powers, these waterways-choke points could threaten peace and the well-being of regional nations/states. The most critical implication of this war, however, is that these waterways-choke points have now become vital battle spaces, the veritable centres of gravity, whose control or otherwise could spell the difference between victory and defeat in this and future wars as well. Furthermore, these waterways-choke points have now emerged as vital pivots of power and will henceforth define the geostrategic, geoeconomic and geopolitical dynamics of not only the region but, by implication, the world as well. This brings into focus the inevitability of acquiring a controlling and overwhelming oversight on either or both of these waterways-choke points to either establish a state's hegemony of the region and/or instituting an international regime to ensure free and open navigation for all types and forms of shipping, trade, etc. In the current strategic environment in the ME, the control of these waterways-choke points will thus be decisive, either way; in finding an amicable, mutually acceptable closure to the Gulf War or prolonging it endlessly!

The battles for the waterways-choke points are thus truly on!

This ill-intentioned Gulf War has already transformed the ME's strategic environment in a profound and emphatic manner. Its paradigms are being determined anew. Iran's strategy has been extremely successful during the war. It manoeuvred superbly to shift its focus away from regime change, elimination of its nuclear programme, destruction of its economy and military, etc., to the control of the Hormuz Straits. Now opening the Red Sea—the Bab el Mandab front has added another critical, strategic dimension to the war. At the moment, the Gulf War is characterised by the battles for these waterways-choke points!

From mere naval features on the major SLOC and international-intercontinental trade routes, these waterways-choke points have now started to define the paradigms of power and control over regional and global geopolitics and geoeconomics. In particular, the supply chains of vital oil, gas, petrochemicals, critical minerals, etc., will now become dependent upon the vagaries of regional geopolitics, at any given point in time. Free and open navigation in international waters and the laws of the seas may need to be discussed, reviewed, and revised anew. Iran does not seem inclined to cede any form of control of the Hormuz Straits to any external power/forum (less Oman), while the US has driven itself into a strategic cul-de-sac by its shifting strategic objectives, unfathomable operational strategies, and inexplicable conduct of the war. It will perhaps not accept unilateral Iranian control and monopoly over either waterway-choke point. A veritable clash of interests and wills is thus already on. The Houthis are permitting all shipping through the Bab el Mandab except Saudi tankers and commercial ships. Quite unsurprisingly, the US declined to intercede and act against the Houthis when asked by the Saudis to do so. These choke points are thus already providing overwhelming leverage to states/groups that dominate and control them. These states/groups will exercise domineering oversight on international trade through them, holding it, if need be, to ransom at will. They will henceforth negotiate and bargain from a position of incomparable strength and superiority.

The foremost impact of this newly acquired advantage will be evident when the closure of this Gulf War is nigh, whenever! Moreover, once a state/ power acquires control of these waterways-choke points, they will start exuding unmistakable deterrent effects as well. Hostilities, planned, threatened, or manifested against such a state will have direct and proportionate bearings on the status of the choke point—open, selectively open, or closed for international shipping! Therefore, in all probabilities, control over them will deter, to a great extent, all or most future military, economic, diplomatic, technological, media campaigns, wars, or sanctions regimes against these states/groups. With time, these waterways-choke points will potentially evolve into inevitable pivots and/or tools of coercion in the hands of the states that control them, too. These could then be applied to impose their will, pursue their vital national interests, and establish a given state's power, sphere of influence, and hegemony in the region. Thus, their impact on regional geopolitics would be critical, decisive, albeit potentially coercive in nature. Critically, this will redefine the regional balance of power, too, which may no longer be restricted to the relative strengths of the opposing militaries only. It could yet become a function of military preponderance on one side countered by domineering, imposing economic leverage on the other.

US says 'door is open' for Iran to return to talks

UN, Gulf Cooperation Council chiefs condemn Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): US Ambassador to the UN Mike Waltz said on Sunday that the "door is open" for Iran to return to negotiations to end the conflict in the Middle East.
Speaking at an Al-Monitor Live event in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, Waltz said the Trump administration believes time is on its side in the conflict with Iran, which began Feb. 28.
"I do believe that to be the case," Waltz said when asked by Al-Monitor senior adviser Andrew Parasiliti whether Washington believes time is on its side.
He added that the "door is open for Iran to come back to the negotiating table," while dismissing as "fantastical" reports that Tehran has demanded an end to US sanctions and reparations as conditions for renewed talks.
"The Iranian regime is at its weakest point since 1979 and it's getting weaker," Waltz said, citing economic pressure and the collapse of Iran's currency.
"They're going to come back [to talks], I hope peacefully and diplomatically." On Gaza, Waltz described the administration's approach as a "new type of multilateralism" and said talks with Israel on implementing President Donald Trump's 20-point Gaza plan could "move forward after the elections are settled," referring to Israel's Oct. 27 parliamentary election.
The plan includes a Palestinian technocratic administration, reconstruction and an International Stabilization Force, while negotiations over Hamas' disarmament and an Israeli withdrawal have stalled. Waltz claimed there were "prospective members" interested in joining the Abraham Accords, to normalize relations with Israel, but did not name them. He also welcomed Israel and Morocco's decision earlier this month to exchange ambassadors.
On Iraq, Waltz praised Prime Minister Ali al-Zaidi's efforts to bring Iran-backed militias under state control, saying Iran's "weakened state" could create an opening to curb their influence.
Meanwhile, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) head Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi on Sunday strongly condemned Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia, warning that the group's targeting of civilian objects poses a severe threat to regional peace and security.
Guterres received Albudaiwi in New York on the sidelines of the GCC chief's participation in the 81st session of the UN General Assembly, according to a statement from the GCC Secretariat General.
"Both officials strongly condemned the Houthi militia's attacks against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and their deliberate targeting of civilian objects,



BERLIN, GERMANY: AfD Co-Chairs Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, along with the party's candidate for state premier in Berlin, Kristin Brinker, and its candidate for state premier in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, Leif-Erik Holm arrive to hold a joint press conference on the election results following the elections held in the German states of Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern



Rawya Hassan, a mother of seven, sits with her children outside their hut at the al-Bireen camp for displaced people who fled fighting between the Houthis and forces of Yemen's internationally recognized government, Taiz province, Yemen.

Specialist rape courts to be rolled out across UK to hold more perpetrators to account

LONDON, (Agencies): The UK will introduce courtrooms for specialist rape and serious sex offences across England and Wales in a bid to put victims front and center of the criminal justice system, the prime minister announced Monday.
Every Crown Court in England and Wales will get at least one courtroom specifically set up to hear rape and serious sexual offence cases over the next two years, helping to hold more perpetrators to account, the government said in a statement.
According to the plan, rape cases will be prioritized in the courts, reducing uncertainty and delays for survivors, with specialist upgrades introduced, including private waiting rooms and entrances for victims.
"New approach will put victims front and centre of the criminal justice system," it noted.

China's Xi to pay state visit to US this week, with 'world peace' on agenda

BEIJING, (Monitoring Desk): China's President Xi Jinping will pay a state visit to the US this week, Beijing confirmed on Monday, saying the Chinese and American leaders will exchange views on world peace amid Iran war.
"At the invitation of President of the United States of America Donald J. Trump, President Xi Jinping will pay a state visit to the United States from September 23 to 25," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. This will be Xi's first state visit to the US since September 2015, when he visited at the invitation of then President Barack Obama. Later, Xi met Trump during his first term in 2017. He visited the US in 2023, and met then President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' summit, but not at the level of a state visit. The upcoming visit between Wednesday and Friday comes after Trump paid a state visit to China in May.
"The exchange of visits by the two presidents within the span of a half a year will mark a milestone of historic significance," Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun told reporters in Beijing.
President Xi "will have in depth exchange of views with President Trump on major issues concerning bilateral ties and world peace and development," Guo said. Xi has paid five visits to the US since becoming president in 2013. "Head of state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable role in providing strategic guidance to China-US relations.

Kremlin says no progress made in Ukraine negotiations

Russia open for talks, continuing its 'special military operation'

MOSCOW, (Agencies): Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Monday said no progress has been made in negotiations to end the Russia-Ukraine war, state news agency TASS reported.
Peskov said Moscow continues its "special military operation," the term Russia uses for the war in Ukraine, but remains open to negotiations.
"As for resuming trilateral negotiations, we are open to it. Yes, we are continuing the special military operation, and our military is working to achieve the set objectives. But we do hope that we will ultimately resume trilateral negotiations," Peskov said.
US envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner visited Moscow on Sept. 5 for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin before traveling to Kyiv on Sept. 6 for discussions with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
While no breakthrough was announced, after the meetings Trump said the Russian president wants to reach a deal to end the war, and suggested a trilateral meeting with Putin and Zelenskyy could take place.
Moscow and Kyiv have also signaled interest in resuming trilateral negotiations, with October discussed as a possible timeframe.
On Russia's parliamentary election, Peskov said Ukraine launched "massive attacks" during voting in an attempt to disrupt the process. "It constitutes sabotage. It is also an attempt to disrupt these elections. It had no effect," he said.
Russia's three-day election for the 450-seat State Duma, the lower house of parliament, ended Sunday amid continuing Ukrainian drone attacks.
Russia's Defense Ministry said Ukrainian forces attempted a mass attack on Russian territory using drones and Flamingo cruise missiles "to disrupt the State Duma election," adding that Russian air defenses and military aviation destroyed 1,951 drones and eight long-range cruise missiles over a 24-hour period.
Moscow Mayor Sergey Sobyanin said Russia repelled the largest drone attack on the capital to date, with more than 1,600 drones intercepted, including about 450 approaching Moscow.
It was Russia's first parliamentary election since the war in Ukraine in February 2022, with voting also held in Russian-controlled parts of Ukraine, a move Kyiv and many Western governments reject as unlawful.



PARIS: Thousands of people took to the streets to protest a bill that they claim would "legitimize the use of violence" by the police and gendarmerie.

Over 3,000 migrants remain on streets of Spain's Ceuta, says government

GENEVA, (Monitoring Desk): More than 3,000 migrants, including several hundred minors, are still living on the streets of Spain's North African enclave of Ceuta, the government said Monday.
Territorial Policy Minister Angel Victor Torres gave the estimate in an interview with Spanish public broadcaster TVE on Monday. Torres said transfers to accommodation facilities designated under a government decree would continue in the coming days, with another site to be opened if necessary. "We hope that in just a few weeks everyone will be relocated and the return files will begin to be processed," he said. Between 150 and 200 migrants are voluntarily returning to Morocco each day, according to Torres, with 160 doing so over the past 24 hours. He said only people entitled to international protection and minors who cannot be reunited with their families would remain in Spain, adding that most of the recent arrivals from Morocco were not expected to qualify for protection.
The government intends to transfer unaccompanied minors to mainland Spain to prevent overcrowding in Ceuta. Torres also condemned an attack on Sunday on a Ceuta Assembly lawmaker.



TOKYO, JAPAN: Travelers are seen inside Tokyo's Haneda Airport as hundreds of flights are canceled due to the approaching Typhoon No. 25.

EU rejects Russian polls in 'occupied' Ukraine

BRUSSELS, (Agencies): The EU on Monday rejected Russia's parliamentary elections held in occupied Ukrainian territories and warned that those involved would face sanctions.
The State Duma elections, held from Sept. 18 to 20, highlighted the "continued and deepening erosion of democracy" in Russia, the EU foreign policy chief said in a statement on behalf of the bloc.
The EU "unequivocally" condemned the organization of "so-called elections" in annexed Crimea and Sevastopol, as well as occupied parts of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia and Kherson regions.
It described the votes as a violation of international law, including the UN Charter, and of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.
"The European Union reiterates that it does not and will never recognise either the holding of these so-called 'elections' in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine or their results," the statement said.



On the first day of the Russian National Figure Skating Team's test performances in Moscow, the athletes showcased their new programs. At the CSKA Arena, where the event took place

Italy moves to cap foreign students with limited Italian skills in classrooms

ROME, (Monitoring Desk): Italy's conservative government led by Premier Giorgia Meloni plans to introduce a decree limiting the number of foreign students with poor Italian-language skills in classrooms, sparking criticism from educators and migrant advocates who say the measure risks creating new barriers to integration.
The proposal would give legal force to a guideline introduced in 2010 that recommended foreign students account for no more than 30% of a class but was rarely enforced, particularly in neighborhoods with large immigrant populations.
Education Minister Giuseppe Valditara has said the cap would apply only to non-EU students with little or no knowledge of Italian, rather than to all foreign pupils. Schools would assess language proficiency and educational preparedness, with the limits aimed at students requiring significant language support.
The decree is also expected to require some foreign parents to attend Italian-language courses and to ban the wearing of burqas and niqabs in schools.
Supporters say the measures are needed to improve educational outcomes and integration, but critics argue they focus on restrictions rather than investment in schools serving large immigrant populations.
Italy has about 930,000 foreign students, equal to 11.6% of the national school population, according to the latest data available. Nearly two-thirds, about 607,000, were born in Italy, while roughly 323,000 were born abroad.
Although the national figure is well below the proposed threshold, immigrant populations are concentrated in some urban neighborhoods and northern regions, raising questions about how the policy can be implemented in practice.
School leaders have warned that some schools, particularly in migrant-heavy districts, have few alternatives for placing students.

Bardot's personal belongings to go under hammer in Paris

PARIS, (Agencies): Personal belongings of late French actress and singer Brigitte Bardot, including the ballet flats that inspired an iconic Repetto shoe and a diamond-set ring, will go under the hammer Monday in Paris. French auction house Millon will offer 285 lots from Bardot's homes in Paris and the southern French resort town of Saint-Tropez at Hotel Drouot, one of France's best-known auction venues. The collection includes clothing, furniture, photographs, jewelry, musical instruments and everyday objects, as well as memorabilia from Bardot's career and her later life devoted to animal protection. Among the highlights are Repetto ballet flats. Millon said Bardot asked French shoemaker Rose Repetto in 1956 to create a flat, flexible shoe inspired by ballet footwear but suitable for everyday wear. The resulting Cendrillon model became associated with Bardot after she wore it in the 1956 film "And God Created Woman." Jewelry in the sale includes a Mellerio ring set with a 3.67-carat diamond, while other lots include guitars, an Olivetti Lettera 22 typewriter, hats, perfume bottles and furniture from Bardot's homes.

Tanker struck by unknown projectile in Strait of Hormuz

LONDON, (Monitoring Desk): A tanker transiting the Strait of Hormuz was struck by an unknown projectile Monday, leaving two crew members with minor injuries, the UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) said. In an incident warning, UKMTO said it received a report involving a vessel making an inbound transit through the strategic waterway. "Military authorities have informed UKMTO that a tanker conducting an inbound transit was struck by an unknown projectile," it said. Two crew members sustained minor injuries, while the vessel continued to its next port of call under its own power, according to the warning.



ALEPPO: A woman shows a tray during Syria's first pistachio festival

Trump says planned 250-foot arch to serve as military complex for drones, snipers

WASHINGTON, (Monitoring Desk): US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that his administration's planned 250-foot (76-meter) triumphal arch near Arlington National Cemetery will also serve as a military complex housing drones, snipers and ammunition.
Trump said on his Truth Social platform that he had agreed to convert the planned arch "at the strong request" of the US military and "for National Security purposes."
The planned "Military Complex/Triumphal Arch" will "house, store, and have the rapid ability to use large numbers of drones, plus Snipers, on both the roof and plaza areas," he said.
He added that the facility would store "large quantities of sniper ammunition."
"There will be no facility like this anywhere in the World," he stated.
The administration had previously presented the arch as a tourist attraction commemorating the US' 250th anniversary, with plans including an observation deck, according to Washington Post.
Construction could begin as early as November, while a federal judge is considering a legal challenge seeking to halt the project.
Veterans, advocacy groups and historic preservationists have opposed the project, arguing that the structure would overshadow the nearby Arlington National Cemetery and is too large for the site. Republican Don Beyer, a Virginia Democrat whose district includes the cemetery and Reagan National Airport, criticized the proposal to use the site for drones. "Putting a drone launching site directly in the landing path for DCA is a stupid, dangerous, and unworkable idea," the Post quoted Beyer as saying.
The White House did not respond to the newspaper's questions about Trump's announcement, while the Interior Department also did not comment.
A Pentagon spokesperson said there was nothing to add beyond Trump's statement.
The administration has said it does not need congressional authorization for the arch, citing authorization granted by lawmakers about a century ago for a similar project near the site.

Govt to adopt permanent strategy ahead of PTI Sept 27 long march: Naqvi

LAHORE, (Monitoring Desk): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi said the government will adopt a permanent strategy to handle the planned Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) long march towards Islamabad, warning that the country will not be allowed to remain shut for 10 to 20 days due to demonstrations.

Addressing a press conference in Lahore, Naqvi said the government would take measures "once and for all" to prevent a repeat of such situations.

"This time, it will not happen that they [protesters] come and the country remains closed for 10 or 20 days," he said.

Naqvi's remarks came as the PTI prepares for a nationwide protest and march towards Islamabad on September 27, demanding the release of its incarcerated founder Imran Khan and supremacy of the Constitution. Addressing the presser, the interior minister said the government could not repeatedly tolerate such a situation and would seek a permanent solution.

"This time we will find a permanent solution. We cannot tolerate such a situation again and again," he said.

Naqvi said the government would fully implement the Islamabad High Court's orders if the PTI proceeded with the march. "If they hold a long march, the Islamabad High Court's order will be implemented in letter and spirit," he vowed.

Naqvi also urged the PTI leadership to reconsider its approach: "Do not cause harm to yourselves and your people through the approach you are taking."

He said the PTI leadership itself was divided over whether to hold the long march, adding that many within its leadership did not want to proceed.

Naqvi also said the government would provide medical treatment to PTI founder Imran Khan within the framework of the law.

"Whatever is in the law for treatment, we will do it, not on their demand," he said, adding that Imran's medical check-up had already been conducted the previous night. While speaking on the country's economic situation and rising petroleum prices, the interior minister said: "I do not want to speak much about the economy. Petrol prices increase according to the global market."



LAHORE: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi addresses a press conference



NEW YORK: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar arrives in New York to participate in the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly

Pakistan, Armenia enters new chapter in bilateral ties: President

President Zardari felicitates Armenia on 35th Independence Day

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has extended warm felicitations to the government and the people of the Republic of Armenia on the 35th Independence Day of their country, annually observved on September 21.

In his message to President of Armenia Vahagn Khachaturyan, the president said that Pakistan and Armenia had entered a new chapter in their bilateral relations.

Building on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries last August, President Zardari expressed confidence that Pakistan and Armenia would further strengthen their ties and expand mutually beneficial cooperation in areas of common interest for the peace, progress and prosperity of their peoples.

Pakistan advocates comprehensive approach to prevent conflicts through dialogue: DPM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister (DPM/FM), Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday reaffirmed Pakistan's steadfast commitment to international peace and security, and to an effective and inclusive multilateral order with the United Nations (UN) at its centre, in a message issued on the International Day of Peace.

In the message issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the deputy prime minister and foreign minister said the day served as a significant reminder that dialogue, diplomacy, and adherence to the purposes and principles of the UN Charter remained the only means of achieving sustainable peace.

He called on the international community to fulfil its responsibilities by upholding the UN Charter, respecting international law, and pursuing the just and lasting settlement of disputes through peaceful means. Highlighting Pakistan's role as a long-standing and leading troop contributor to UN peacekeeping, the foreign minister said the country's enduring commitment to the maintenance of international peace and security was well established. He said Pakistan continued to advocate a comprehensive approach to preventing and resolving conflicts through dialogue and diplomacy.

Global leaders converge on NY for 81st UNGA to tackle conflicts; Pakistan to push for dispute resolution

UNITED NATIONS, (APP): With security tightened around the UN headquarters in New York, the 81st UN General Assembly Tuesday opens its high-level debate on a high-stakes agenda addressing Artificial Intelligence (AI) regulation, climate change, systemic inequality, and the ongoing crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and the Middle East.

These crises come at a defining moment for the UN as the organization's efforts aimed at halting wars and easing civilian suffering remain paralyzed, while funding cuts have weakened it capacity.

This pivotal session will culminate in the appointment of a new Secretary-General, taking place against the backdrop of Pakistan's expanding diplomatic influence and rising international profile.

Top Bangladeshi diplomat Khalilur Rahman is presiding over the session, held under the theme "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All."

More than 130 heads of state and government, including Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, will take part in the annual debate which begins on Sept. 22 when US President Donald Trump will be among the first speakers. PM Shehbaz is set to address the 193-member Assembly on Sep 25.

"The Prime Minister is coming to the UNGA in the backdrop of unprecedented prominence and profile of Pakistan at the global stage," Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said in an interview with APP correspondent.

In this regard, he referred to developments: from the crushing defeat of the Indian aggression in May 2025, to championing peaceful settlement of disputes, to the high-stakes mediation between Iran and the United States, to the landmark Pak-Turkish-Saudi Makkah Pact.

The prime minister, Ambassador Asim Ahmad added, will be representing Pakistan, "confident, ready and willing to play its role for regional and global peace and stability."

In his address to the Assembly, according to diplomatic sources, PM Shehbaz will present Pakistan's perspective on the evolving regional and international security environment and emphasize the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, restraint and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

These principles have been a consistent feature of Pakistan's foreign policy and have also guided our approach during Pakistan's current term on the UN Security Council, it was pointed out.

The prime minister will highlight Pakistan's active diplomatic engagement and meditation efforts aimed at preventing escalation, promoting dialogue and contributing to peace and stability in the region, the sources said.

He will also outline Pakistan's priorities on a range of pressing international issues, including sustainable development, climate change, counter-terrorism, Islamophobia, global economic challenges, UN reform and the advancement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The prime minister will underscore the need for greater international cooperation to address the interconnected development, economic, climate and security challenges faced by developing countries.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal inspects a tractor during the Pakistan International Auto Show 2026, organized by the Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers at the Expo Centre

Hundreds of flights cancelled as Typhoon Dujuan nears Japan

BAKU, (AZERTAC/APP): Typhoon Dujuan forced the cancellation of at least 275 flights in Japan on Monday and prompted warnings of potentially record-breaking rainfall as the storm nears Tokyo, according to the Economic Times.

The typhoon, which is accompanied by high winds, has also led to the early closure in the capital of one the world's biggest video game trade fairs and knocked out power for thousands.

The Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) warned on Sunday that rain and winds were expected to intensify even before the typhoon's arrival.

"The total rainfall through Tuesday could exceed the average monthly rainfall for September, resulting in record-breaking heavy rain," the agency said.

The typhoon's wind speeds were at 144 kilometres (89 miles) per hour as the storm was approximately 110 kilometres from Hachijojima, one of Tokyo's farthest islands.

On Monday, more than 4,000 households in Chiba, next to Tokyo, were without power, while the JMA and local authorities warned residents of heavy rain and possible landslides. Japan Airlines cancelled 120 domestic and 15 international flights, while All Nippon Airways cancelled 140 domestic flights. Railway operators in Tokyo and neighbouring regions suspended services on some lines.

Tokyo Game Show, one of the world's biggest video game trade fair which kicked off on Thursday, was called off on Monday, its final day.



QUETTA: Provincial Finance Minister Mir Shoaib Nosherwani chairs a meeting regarding performance of Balochistan Revenue Authority.

DPM Dar arrives in New York for UNGA session

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Monday arrived in New York to participate in the upcoming high-level week of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement. According to the Foreign Office, Dar was received by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad, Ambassador of Pakistan to the United States Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Consul General New York Aamer Ahmed Atozai and officers of Pakistan's Mission to the UN and Consulate in New York. According to the FO, FM Dar "has a full programme of high-level engagements in the week ahead." The foreign minister "will participate in ministerial forums and deliver Pakistan's statements and interventions on key issues of importance to Pakistan, including bilateral, regional and international priorities across the UN agenda."

Alongside accompanying Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, FM Dar "will hold a series of bilateral meetings with his counterparts.



QUETTA: Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly and Provincial President of Pakistan Peoples Party's Women Wing Ghazala Gola cutting a cake to celebrate the birthday of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari.

Altaf Wani for international action to protect fundamental rights of Kashmiris in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR), led by Chairman Altaf Hussain Wani, has urged the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to intervene over the reported attachment of ancestral properties in Kachama, Kupwara, under India's Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). According to a press release received here on Monday, the appeal concerns around 15 kanals of land and residential properties belonging to Abdul Majid Qureshi and Parvaiz Ahmad Qureshi. Recent reports citing a Jammu and Kashmir Police order say the properties include 15 kanals and seven marlas of land and two houses and were attached in connection with FIR No. 276/2022 registered at Police Station Kupwara. Police documents reportedly describe the properties as alleged "proceeds of terrorism."

KIIR, however, disputes the allegations and says the action raises serious human rights and due-process concerns. The institute alleges that Abdul Majid Qureshi fled to Azad Jammu and Kashmir in the late 1990s after facing harassment following the killing of his brother Mustafa Qureshi. It further alleges that Parvaiz Ahmad Qureshi, Mustafa Qureshi's son, was detained and subjected to torture before relocating to AJK in 2018. The institute said the property attachments raise concerns about arbitrary deprivation of property, collective punishment of displaced persons, possible misuse of counter-terrorism legislation and the lack of independent review.

KIIR has asked the OHCHR to investigate the circumstances and legality of the attachments, urge a suspension of enforcement pending an independent review, monitor the application of the UAPA in IIOJK, and facilitate access for independent human rights observers.

Wani said attaching the homes and assets of a refugee who, according to KIIR, fled persecution amounted to a serious injustice. He called for international action to protect fundamental rights

Imran's sisters Uzma, Noreen detained under 3-MPO following Aleema's detention

LAHORE, (Monirtoring Desk): Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan's sisters Noreen Niazi and Uzma Khan have been detained under Section 3 of the Maintenance of Public Order, 1960 (MPO), an official said on Monday, a day after Aleema Khan was detained and shifted to Kot Lakhpat jail. Lahore deputy commissioner issued the detention orders under the 3-MPO following a recommendation from the police, according to the DC Office.

The two sisters of Imran, who remains incarcerated in Adiala jail, have been detained for 30 days.

Following their detention, Noreen and Uzma were shifted to Kot Lakhpat jail, where their other sister, Aleema Khan, had been transferred following her detention.

The detentions come ahead of PTI's nationwide protest, including a planned long march on Islamabad on September 27 to demand the release of Imran and supremacy of the Constitution.

Pakistan to develop proper electricity market in coming years: Leghari

ISLAMABAD, (Monitoring Desk): Pakistan has taken a major step towards shifting its power sector from a single-buyer model to a competitive electricity market, with the Power Division inviting proposals for the country's first electricity wheeling auction.

The Power Division has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the auction under the Competitive Trading Bilateral Contract Market (CTBCM) framework.

Under the new mechanism, businesses and industrial consumers will be able to purchase electricity directly from power producers on a competitive basis, marking a significant shift in the way electricity is bought and sold in the country. According to the plan, around 800 megawatts of electricity will be auctioned over the next five years, with 400MW being offered in the first auction.

Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Leghari welcomed the launch of the auction process, congratulating Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and the nation on the development.

Addressing the occasion, Leghari said the government currently purchases electricity under a centralised system and supplies it to consumers, adding that questions had frequently been raised over the terms and conditions governing power procurement.

He said the new system would gradually take the government out of the electricity purchasing process. "From today, the government is practically stepping out of electricity procurement," the minister said, adding that neither the government would be compelled to purchase electricity nor would power producers have the right to force the government to buy their electricity.

Under the competitive framework, electricity producers and consumers would be able to enter into transactions directly, while the buying and selling process would be based on greater transparency.

Leghari said the new mechanism would initially be introduced for industrial and large electricity consumers, particularly those using more than one megawatt.

He said the country would gradually develop a proper electricity market in the coming years.

Funeral prayers offered for six martyred Pak Army personnel

PESHAWAR, (APP): Funeral prayers were held in Peshawar for six Pakistan Army personnel who embraced martyrdom during an exchange of fire with terrorists belonging to Fitna Al Khwarij in Hangu.

Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Faisal Karim Kundi, the Peshawar Corps Commander, senior civil and military officials, and the families of the martyrs attended the funeral prayers.

The six Pakistan Army martyrs who embraced martyrdom in exchange of fire with Khawarij in Hangu included Captain Abu Zar Farooq, Lieutenant Shiraz Babar, Sepoy Shakeel Ahmed, Sepoy Hamza, Sepoy Muhammad Usman Aziz and non-combatant Ghulam Sajjad.



BERLIN: German socialist Left Party's lead candidate for Governing Mayor of Berlin, Elif Eralp (C), makes statements alongside party officials on election results at the state parliament

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