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Over 71 India-backed terrorists killed in Balochistan operations: ISPR

Killing of militants serious blow to Afghan proxies

RAWALPINDI, (Agencies): Security forces have neutralised over 70 India-sponsored Fitna al-Khawarij and Fitna al-Hindustan terrorists in multiple operations conducted in Balochistan over the past four days, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Sunday.

The killing of the terrorists delivered a serious blow to Indian-backed Afghan proxies, the military's media wing said in a statement. The ISPR said that intelligence agencies identified multiple hideouts of militants in the Shaban area of Quetta district, posing a threat to the local population.

"Based on credible intelligence, Pakistan Security Forces launched a swift operation against the terrorists in Ziarat and surrounding areas on September 21," it added.

Security forces engaged terrorists and cleared multiple hideouts during operation Shaban, the ISPR said, adding that 33 militants have been killed so far during intense exchanges of fire, with weapons, ammunition and explosives also recovered.

It said that the operation was intensified over the last 72 hours, resulting in the killing of 23 more terrorists, while security forces have also cleared a vast area and relieved local communities of the threat posed by militants.

The clearance operation is continuing until complete neutralisation of the threat, the military's media said.

In a separate intelligence-based operation in Nushki district on September 25, security forces targeted a militant hideout, killing 11 terrorists, while six more were killed in Mand, with a large cache of weapons and ammunition recovered.

"As the Pakistan Army's operation progresses, more than 71 terrorists have been killed so far in Operation Shaban and other areas of Balochistan in last 96 hours," the ISPR said. The military's media wing said that the Afghan Taliban regime's involvement in terror activities in Pakistan, backed and sponsored by India, continues to cause loss of precious lives and threatens peace and stability. It pledged that the counterterrorism campaign will continue with full resolve, with security forces and law enforcement agencies remaining committed to eliminating foreign-sponsored and supported terrorism from the country. Pakistan has witnessed a sharp rise in cross-border terrorist incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan, since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021.



KARACHI: Renowned businessman Hamza Tabani presents a commemorative shield to Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani during a luncheon hosted by Hamza Tabani in honour of Chairman Senate Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani and Sindh Governor Nehal Hashmi



QUETTA: Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail distributes certificates and commemorative shields among the participants of the concluding ceremony of the 21st National Workshop Balochistan.

Development of Balochistan vital for Pakistan's overall economic, national development: Governor

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, while addressing the 21st National Workshop Balochistan, said that the participants must have benefited extensively from the knowledge, experience and insight of experts during the workshop and, through mutual dialogue and consultation, gained a better understanding of the major challenges facing Balochistan and Pakistan. Therefore, he said, converting this collective wisdom into practical measures would be the true success of the workshop.

He congratulated the organizers and all distinguished participants of the 21st National Workshop Balochistan. Addressing the participants of the concluding ceremony of the National Workshop, Governor Balochistan Jaffar Khan Mandokhail said that when they return from the workshop today, their responsibilities would not have ended but rather increased further. He said they were expected to use the knowledge, experience and insight gained here to bring about positive change in their respective institutions, sectors and society. He said that there was a need to adopt a joint and sustainable strategy to create employment and skills-development opportunities for the youth of Balochistan, promote economic activity, strengthen social justice and address issues such as economic instability. Governor Mandokhail said that Balochistan has the geographical potential to connect Pakistan with the regions of Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East.



QUETTA: Dr Safia Mengal along with Zara Khan awarding prize to the winner of Bridal Makeup Competition.

Balochistan to gain prominent place on national, int'l tourism map

QUETTA, (VoM Report): In accordance with the vision of Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Ahmed Bugti and the directives of Parliamentary Secretary for Tourism and Culture Nawabzada Mir Zareen Khan Magsi and Secretary Culture and Tourism Hamidullah Khan Nasir, an important ceremony was organized by the Balochistan Tourism Department on the occasion of World Tourism Day.

The purpose of the ceremony was to highlight Balochistan's remarkable cultural and historical heritage, natural beauty and vast tourism potential, as well as to further strengthen ongoing efforts for the promotion of tourism in the province.

Director General of the Iran Cultural Centre Abolhasan Miri, Director Tourism Balochistan Gahram Bakhshi Baloch, senior officials of the Culture and Tourism Department, representatives of relevant institutions and a large number of civil society members participated in the ceremony.

The ceremony emphasized the importance of highlighting Balochistan's vast tourism potential, historical heritage and natural beauty at the national and international levels.

Addressing the participants, Director Tourism Gahram Bakhshi Baloch said that Balochistan is among the country's unique provinces in terms of natural beauty, historical heritage and cultural diversity, and that there are vast opportunities for the promotion of tourism in the province.

He said that the Balochistan Culture and Tourism Department is taking measures to introduce various tourist destinations of the province at the national and international levels, provide better facilities to tourists and promote tourism activities.

Gahram Bakhshi Baloch said that Balochistan's historical sites, mountain ranges, coastline, desert landscapes, natural valleys, ancient archaeological sites and unique cultural traditions hold special attraction for domestic and foreign tourists. He said that the promotion of tourism is not limited to recreation; rather, it can create new employment opportunities for local communities, promote small businesses and improve the local economy.

President commends security forces on successful anti-terrorism operations in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari, Sunday, commended the security forces for their successful operations against terrorists in Balochistan. The president lauded the security forces for eliminating over 71 terrorists during "Operation Shaban" and others across various parts of the province, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

He said the successful operations against terrorists of Fitna-al-Khwarij and Fitna-al-Hindustan, operating under the patronage of India and the Afghan Taliban, were highly commendable.

Terming the clearance of numerous terrorist hideouts in Balochistan a major success for the security forces, the president emphasized that operations would continue until the complete eradication of terrorism fueled by foreign patronage and assistance.

"The sacrifices and services of our security forces in the fight against terrorism are a source of pride for the entire nation," the president added.

Iran insists on diplomatic solution after Trump rejects peace plan

Trump says he expects more talks with Iran this week, warns Tehran 'overplayed' hand

TEHRAN / WASHINGTON, (Agencies): Iran insisted on Sunday that only diplomacy can solve its conflict with the United States and Israel, after US President Donald Trump said he rejected an Iranian proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and end fighting.

"Our conditions are clear, and any move toward reopening the Strait of Hormuz is contingent on these conditions being met," Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi posted on social media. "Only a negotiated solution can get them out of this deadlock."

Iran announced a peace proposal last week at the UN General Assembly in New York, saying it had been transmitted to the Americans via Qatari mediators. Trump said on Saturday he rejected the plan, and argued that desperation was driving the Iranians' push for an agreement on the key waterway.

"They want to make a deal to open the Hormuz Strait immediately because they're losing so badly," Trump told reporters at the White House.

Keeping the door to diplomacy open, however, Trump told Axios in a phone interview on Sunday that he expected US negotiators to engage in more talks this week.

Araqchi said mediators facilitating Tehran's talks with Washington had not officially relayed a US rejection of the plan.

CM Bugti applauds Pakistan Navy's professionalism; advanced submarine capability

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti congratulated and paid tribute to the Pakistan Navy and its leadership on the first successful live weapons firing of the newly inducted submarine PNS/M Hangor. The Chief Minister said that accurately striking a target at a long range with an anti-ship cruise missile is clear evidence of the exceptional operational readiness, professional expertise and high combat capability of the Pakistan Navy's submarine force.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that Pakistan's armed forces have the full capability to deal with all kinds of challenges for the defense of the country and protection of national security. The successful weapons firing from the modern submarine reflects the country's defense capability and professional preparedness. The Chief Minister of Balochistan also appreciated the professional performance of Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf and all officers, personnel and staff associated with the induction and operationalization of PNS/M Hangor.

Peace, brotherhood vital for Balochistan's development: Ali Madad

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Central Leader and Provincial Minister Haji Ali Madad Jattak has said that the focus of our politics is the development and prosperity of the people and improvement in their standard of living. Whenever the Pakistan Peoples Party has come to power, new avenues of development have opened in Balochistan.

He expressed these views while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the construction and expansion project of the Eastern Bypass–Sibi Highway. Commander Mulla Obaidullah Bareach, Haji Muhammad Gul Shahwani, Tikkari Hamid Bangulzai, Haji Noor Muhammad Rakhshani, Anwar Mengal, Dr. Rashid Qureshi, and other personalities were also present at the ceremony.

Terrorist elements cannot create unrest in Balochistan: CM Bugti

Says people of Balochistan stand with the security forces and law-enforcement agencies for establishment of peace and the elimination of terrorism

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Chief Minister Balochistan Mir Sarfraz Bugti, while appreciating the successful operations conducted by the security forces in the Shaban area of Quetta district, as well as in Nushki and Mand, said that the sacrifices of the security forces in the war against terrorism are a matter of pride for the nation.

Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that during Operation Shaban, the security forces effectively cleared several hideouts of terrorists, while 33 terrorists have so far been killed during the operation. Over the past 72 hours, another 23 terrorists have been killed.

He said that during an intelligence-based operation in Nushki district, 11 terrorists were killed, while six terrorists of Fitna-tul-Hindustan were killed in Mand. A large quantity of weapons and ammunition was also recovered during the operations.

Mir Sarfraz Bugti said that during the past 96 hours, more than 71 terrorists have been eliminated in Operation Shaban and other areas of Balochistan, which is an important development in the ongoing operations against terrorism.

The Chief Minister said that the security forces, by effectively targeting terrorist hideouts, have significantly reduced the threats faced by the local population. Terrorist elements cannot create unrest in Balochistan through their nefarious designs. He said that the people of Balochistan stand with the security forces and law-enforcement agencies for the establishment of peace and the elimination of terrorism.



BAKU, AZERBAIJAN: People attend commemoration ceremony for the Azerbaijani soldiers who lost their lives in 2nd Karabakh War, during the 6th anniversary of the Karabakh Victory Day at the Military Martyrs' Cemetery

Pakistan categorically rejects Afghan Taliban's 'frivolous and baseless' Nuristan allegations

ISLAMABAD, (Agencies): Pakistan on Sunday categorically rejected allegations made by the Afghan Taliban regime linking Pakistani security forces and intelligence agencies to alleged violence in Afghanistan's Nuristan province, calling the claims "frivolous, baseless and devoid of any truth". The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting issued a fact-check statement rejecting the Taliban's accusations, including allegations that Pakistani agencies had recruited or trained former Afghan security personnel or facilitated Daesh or any other terrorist group operating in Afghanistan. "Not a shred of evidence has been produced to substantiate Pakistan's involvement — no identities, documents, communications, forensic evidence or independent verification," the statement said. The fact-check came in response to a statement issued by the Afghan Taliban's Ministry of Defence, which claimed that several groups affiliated with Daesh, along with what it called elements of subversion, had crossed the Durand Line into the Kamdesh district of Nuristan with the support of Pakistani militias. The Taliban claimed their security forces had killed 28 of the alleged infiltrators and captured 32 others alive, while the rest fled back across the Durand Line.

Meanwhile, the ministry also dismissed a video circulating on social media to support the claims, saying it merely showed a few unarmed individuals who were not even properly dressed or equipped, in what appeared to be a pre-planned video shoot by an Afghan Taliban regime "well known for lies and fabricated claims."

The statement pointed to successive reports by the United Nations and other neutral international organisations documenting the presence and activities of various terrorist groups inside Afghanistan, saying attempts to manufacture a Pakistani connection could not obscure the reality that these groups continued to find sanctuary and a permissive environment for growth on Afghan territory.



A child is seen sheltering in a school in Jabalia Refugee Camp in Jabalia, Gaza, Palestine.

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

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Food insecurity in Palestine

Something deeply contradictory is happening in the West Bank. Hunger is rising dramatically, but the international institution charged with fighting hunger, the World Food Program (WFP), is being forced to retreat. On Sept. 1, 2026, the WFP announced a reduction in the number of people receiving food assistance in the West Bank from 400,000 to 200,000, because of a critical funding shortage. Yet WFP estimates that in the West Bank 900,000 people are now food insecure, more than twice the level of two years ago. Seventy-six percent of households have experienced a significant decline in income, and one-third cannot afford nutritious food.

The economic crisis in the West Bank is not new. Since 2019, Israel has withheld parts of Palestinian customs revenue. That withholding intensified after Oct. 7, 2023, while Israel simultaneously laid off approximately 200,000 Palestinian workers who had previously been employed inside Israel. These two sectors — customs revenue and labor income from Israel — are the single largest sources of income for the Palestinian economy in the West Bank.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, the cost of living rose by 53.67% across the Palestinian territories in 2024, while purchasing power fell by 34.93% in the same period, with a further 12% decline in 2026.

Since October 2023, right after the genocidal war started in Gaza, the intensified settler violence, prolonged and escalating Israeli military operations, severe movement restrictions, demolitions, and widespread displacement in the West Bank have all eroded Palestinian livelihoods and contributed to increased food insecurity. A broader crippling economic crisis is pushing people to the breaking point.

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has separately found that agricultural families face loss of access to agricultural and grazing land; access constraints and checkpoints; water shortages; demolition and displacement; settler violence; job losses; declining household income; and rising food, input and transportation costs. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported more than 1,600 settler attacks resulting in casualties and property damage between January and August 2026, affecting 275 Palestinian communities.

Palestinians are becoming increasingly dependent on food assistance not because food has simply disappeared, but because their ability to produce food, earn income, reach land, move to work, and sustain livelihoods has been progressively weakened. The West Bank is not running out of food. Food remains available in West Bank markets, but many Palestinians simply cannot afford it. Families who once earned their living from their land have been displaced or had livelihoods destroyed, and are increasingly unable to reach land or employment because of movement restrictions. Unemployment has risen to about 30%, while food insecurity has risen from about 11% two years ago to more than a quarter of the West Bank population today. A crippling economic crisis "is pushing people to breaking point". This reminds us of Amartya Sen's classic insight about entitlement failure: Famines and starvation occur not because there is an absolute shortage of food, but because specific individuals or groups lose the legal, economic, or social ability to acquire food.

While the situation in the West Bank deteriorated significantly, the WFP says the immediate cause is a lack of funding, not a judgment that conditions have improved. Indeed, it says exactly the opposite. It needs an additional $386 million for Gaza and the West Bank for the six months beginning September 2026. Funding pressure is also affecting Gaza. WFP cut the cash value of assistance there by 40%, affecting 1.5 million people in Gaza, including one million who receive monthly food assistance.

The most recent UN Appeal requested about $4.06 billion for the occupied Palestinian territory, with roughly 92% of required funds directed toward Gaza and just over 8% toward the West Bank, reflecting the enormous scale of Gaza's needs. Gaza's catastrophic humanitarian situation understandably commands extraordinary international attention. The problem is not that Gaza receives too much attention or assistance—it remains severely underfunded as well. Rather, the question is whether the enormity of Gaza's crisis has made it easier for a different but rapidly worsening food-security crisis in the West Bank to remain internationally invisible.

The international community should not wait until hunger in the West Bank reaches the catastrophic levels witnessed in Gaza before deciding that it deserves attention. Hunger prevention means acting before deprivation becomes famine.

The global humanitarian aid system faces a severe funding crisis, with worldwide contributions from developed countries dropping to an estimated $33.3 billion in 2025. This left 64 million fewer people receiving aid. While severe humanitarian funding crises continue, the acute hunger risk in 2026 reached 266 million people because of various conflicts, mostly in the Middle East and Africa. The ongoing war against Iran by the US and Israel threatens global food security by closing the Strait of Hormuz, cutting off vital fertilizer shipments, and driving up energy and transport costs. As a result, food prices are skyrocketing everywhere, and humanitarian aid is the first to be adversely impacted by it. The UN estimates that an additional 45 million people will face hunger against the backdrop of a cut in funding.

Over the last few years, instead of reaching the "Zero Hunger" commitment of the international community, extreme conditions driven by widespread starvation, destitution, and acute malnutrition resulted in tens of thousands of preventable deaths. Famine was officially declared in Sudan in 2024 and 2025, and in the Gaza Strip in 2025. Yet, the impacts were not felt equally. The combination of reduced funding and restrictive politics means women, children, elderly people, and displaced people were the hardest hit.

No actor currently has the capacity to replace WFP at the required scale. OCHA describes WFP as the largest provider of food assistance in the West Bank and says the reduction will significantly constrain the overall humanitarian response.

The WFP cut is the immediate news reminding us of food insecurity in Palestine, but the current situation in the West Bank is more severe than the WFP's temporary budget crisis. It is ultimately about the transformation of Palestinians from a people able to sustain themselves through land, work, and local economies. The Palestinian people are losing their food sovereignty and are increasingly dependent on humanitarian assistance. Humanitarian assistance is supposed to be a temporary response to an emergency situation, not a substitute for people's ability to feed themselves. International law requires the right to food as a legal entitlement for all. The right to food is not the right to receive food aid. It is the right to have sustainable, physical, and economic access to culturally acceptable, adequate food in dignity. The right to food is far from being a humanitarian charity; it is a legal entitlement that sustains livelihoods and guarantees freedom from hunger. There is also an accountability mechanism if there is a violation of the right to food. Therefore, WFP's inability to bring food assistance might be a temporary problem, but the responsibility of donor governments and the international community is a permanent legal obligation under Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Proxy wars reality

DRANUM NAZ

Understanding Middle Eastern politics through slogans, emotional claims and a single narrative of "secret conspiracies" may be convenient, but history is rarely that simple. One question, however, deserves serious consideration: did the balance of power in the Middle East change after Iran's 1979 revolution in a way that weakened the possibility of a united Arab front against Israel?

To answer that question, we need to move beyond slogans and examine history, wars and developments on the ground.

It would be historically inaccurate to suggest that Arab states never fought Israel. In 1948, the armies of Egypt, Transjordan, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq participated in the war, while Saudi Arabia also dispatched a military contingent that fought under Egyptian command.

In 1956, Egypt confronted Israel, Britain and France during the Suez Crisis. In 1967, Egypt, Jordan and Syria went to war with Israel. Within six days, Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Then came the 1973 war. Egypt and Syria launched a surprise attack on Israel, placing the Israeli military under considerable pressure during the initial phase. By the end of the war, however, Israel had regained much of its military position. The conflict also had consequences far beyond the battlefield: Arab oil-producing states imposed an oil embargo on the United States and some Western countries, sending shock waves through the global economy.

The first historical lesson, therefore, is clear: Arab states did fight Israel, but Arab unity was neither permanent nor uniform.

What changed in 1979?

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 represented a fundamental geopolitical and political transformation in the Middle East. The pro-Western monarchy of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown and replaced by an Islamic Republic under Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The new Iranian leadership made the projection of the revolution and opposition to Western influence important elements of its foreign policy.

A new form of regional competition began to emerge.

Rather than relying exclusively on conventional warfare, Iran expanded its regional influence through relationships with armed groups, providing varying degrees of financial support, training, weapons and political backing. This network is now commonly described as Iran's regional armed network or the "Axis of Resistance".

It has included Hezbollah in Lebanon, several armed groups in Iraq, the Houthis in Yemen and some Palestinian groups.

But an important qualification is necessary.

It would be an oversimplification to claim that Iran simply created proxies in every Arab country that had fought Israel. Hezbollah, for example, emerged in Lebanon during the 1980s amid the Israeli occupation of southern Lebanon and the particular political and social circumstances of the Lebanese Shia community. Iran and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps subsequently provided it with substantial financial and military support.

Similarly, Iran's role in Syria became closely associated with its support for Bashar al-Assad's government. In Iraq, the influence of Iran-aligned militias was shaped by the political and security vacuum following the 2003 US invasion and later by the war against the Islamic State. In Yemen, the roots of the Houthi movement lie in local Zaydi politics and a prolonged conflict with the Yemeni state. Iran later provided the Houthis with varying forms of support, including technology and training. To describe the Houthi movement simply as an "Iranian creation", however, would ignore its complex local origins.

Did Iran's proxy strategy make Israel safer?

This is an important question, but it cannot responsibly be answered with a simple "yes" or "no".

On the one hand, Iran has supported armed groups that have carried out attacks against Israel. Its relationships with Hezbollah and Hamas are prominent examples. The Houthis have also launched missiles and drones towards Israel and attacked shipping in the Red Sea linked to Israel.

On the other hand, Iran itself has directly attacked Israel. In April 2024, Iran launched a large-scale drone and missile attack directly against Israeli territory for the first time. Regional groups aligned with Iran also became involved in the wider confrontation. It is therefore inaccurate to claim that Iran has never fired a shot at Israel.

The more meaningful question may be different: Has the confrontation between Iran and Israel contributed to diverting Arab states from the possibility of a common anti-Israel front towards dealing with their own competing security concerns?

There is a strong case for viewing this as one of the significant regional consequences.

Lebanon: Resistance or a State Within a State?

Hezbollah emerged in the name of resistance to Israel and developed into a powerful military force opposing Israeli presence in southern Lebanon. Over time, however, it also became a major actor within Lebanon's political system.

This creates a fundamental dilemma. When a country has an exceptionally powerful armed organisation operating alongside the regular state military, questions of sovereignty and decisions about war and peace become considerably more complicated.

Lebanon's predicament, therefore, is no longer simply a matter of Israel versus Hezbollah. It involves the Lebanese state, domestic politics, Iran, Israel and a range of regional actors whose interests intersect and often conflict.

Syria: From the Israeli Front to Civil War.

Syria fought Israel in 1948, 1967 and 1973. But after 2011, Syria itself became engulfed in a prolonged and devastating civil war.

Iran supported the government of Bashar al-Assad, while Hezbollah and other armed actors also fought on the government's side. The conflict severely damaged Syria's military and economic capabilities.

It would nevertheless be an unjustified attribution of motive to claim that Iran "destroyed Syria simply to prevent it from fighting Israel". Such a claim would require compelling evidence.

The reality was considerably more complex. Syria's war involved the government, opposition groups, Islamic State, Russia, Iran, Turkey, the United States and Israel, among others, with different actors pursuing different objectives at different stages.

The fall of the Assad government in 2024 also represented a major setback for Iran's regional network.

Iraq and Yemen: What Is the Real Story?

Iraq fought Israel in the 1948 war and also participated militarily in the conflicts of 1967 and 1973. But the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 transformed the country's political and security structure.

In the resulting environment, Iran-aligned Shia militias acquired considerable influence. Their importance increased further during the war against the Islamic State.

Yemen presents another complicated picture. The Houthi movement emerged from local political and social conflicts, but its military relationship with Iran subsequently deepened. Houthi missiles and drones have been used against regional targets, including Saudi Arabia, and against Israel.

It is therefore difficult to sustain the argument that Iranian-aligned armed groups target Muslims but never Israel. The available record shows otherwise.

Qatar Raises a New Question.

Recent tensions involving Iran and the United States have highlighted another reality: the costs of war are not merely military. They are economic as well.

Damage to Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG infrastructure following Iranian missile attacks led QatarEnergy to invoke force majeure on gas supplies. Severe disruption to shipping through the Strait of Hormuz also affected the global LNG market.

By September 2026, QatarEnergy had warned that the Hormuz crisis could affect the schedules of new LNG projects, while disruptions were also affecting gas availability and prices in Asian markets.

The question, therefore, is not simply: "Who is whose agent?"

The more important question is: Who ultimately pays the economic price of regional wars?

The answer is straightforward. Wars are not fought only by armies. Ports, energy routes, industries, employment and ordinary citizens also bear their costs.

Is "Greater Israel" Becoming a Reality?

This is another subject that requires an examination of facts rather than emotion.

The term "Greater Israel" has been used in different ways by religious, historical and political movements. Some extremist and nationalist groups have advocated visions of expanded Israeli borders. But treating such visions as a settled, universally accepted or operational policy of the Israeli state would be misleading.

More importantly, drawing a territory on a map and permanently controlling that territory are two very different things.

The 1967 war provides an important example. Israel captured the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Yet the Sinai was subsequently returned to Egypt under the Egypt-Israel peace treaty.

Even today, permanently controlling a large territory requires much more than advanced aircraft, drones, missiles and technology. Governance, population, water, infrastructure, economic sustainability, local resistance and long-term political administration are fundamental challenges.

The war in Gaza has also demonstrated that military superiority and a political settlement are not the same thing. A military force may inflict enormous damage on a territory, but establishing sustainable political control is a fundamentally different challenge.

By September 2026, the humanitarian situation in Gaza remained severe, with a large proportion of its roughly 2.1 million inhabitants displaced or facing shortages of essential services and other serious humanitarian difficulties.

The real danger may not be the map, but the fragmentation of power.

The central problem of the Middle East may not simply be whether a particular country dreams of reaching "from the Nile to the Euphrates".

The deeper problem is that regional states have struggled to translate their collective potential into effective power because of internal divisions, sectarian conflicts, economic dependencies, weak institutions and external intervention.

Israel, on one side, enjoys strong military and political support from the United States. Iran, on the other, has expanded its regional influence through non-state armed groups. The Gulf Arab states have relied heavily on the United States, advanced weapons systems and diplomatic partnerships for their security.

The result is that the traditional model of state-versus-state warfare has increasingly been supplemented—and in some cases displaced—by multi-layered conflicts involving proxies, missiles, drones, cyber operations, economic pressure and political competition.

And in this entire process, ordinary people often pay the highest price.

What really changed after 1979?

Israel did not suddenly become invincible after 1979. Nor can it be established that Iran entered into a secret arrangement with Israel to eliminate the military power of the Arab states.

But a major historical transformation did take place.

The Arab-Israeli conflict ceased to be the Middle East's only central strategic confrontation.

It became intertwined with the Iran-Saudi rivalry, Shia-Sunni political competition, the US-Iran confrontation, Turkey-Arab tensions, domestic civil wars and the growing power of non-state armed groups.

That transformation made the regional balance of power far more fragmented and complicated.

If the question is whether the Arab states presented a more unified state-based front against Israel before 1979 than they did afterwards, the historical record suggests that the regional power structure became considerably more fragmented after 1979.

But if the question is whether Iran is secretly protecting Israel, such a claim would require credible evidence. The available record instead shows a prolonged and intense confrontation between Iran and Israel, involving both direct attacks and proxy warfare. Perhaps this is the bitterest lesson of the Middle East's long conflict:

The problem is not only the strength of one's adversary. It is also the fragmentation of one's own strength.

If the Arab world genuinely seeks to play an effective role in advancing Palestinian interests and protecting its broader collective interests, slogans alone will not be enough. It will require stronger state institutions, greater economic self-reliance, political stability, regional diplomacy and sustained cooperation.

History also teaches us that wars are not won only on battlefields.

Sometimes nations lose when they become so consumed by the urge to settle solvable political problems through force that they leave no room for negotiation.

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Hindutva and the limits of Indian diplomacy

DURDANA NAJAM

India likes to present itself as a voice of peace, dialogue and the Global South. Prime Minister Narendra Modi speaks of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam - the world as one family - and promotes Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas. India has also repeatedly spoken of an era of dialogue and diplomacy rather than war.

But South Asia has a right to ask a simple question: do India's actions towards its neighbours match its rhetoric?

The recent unrest in Nepal provides a disturbing starting point. Violence following a Hindu religious procession in Sunsari exposed growing communal tensions in a country with a long tradition of religious coexistence. Hindu nationalist organisations with links to India have expanded their presence in Nepal, while Hindu identity is increasingly being used for political mobilisation. During Nepal's constitutional transition, Hindu nationalist groups in India openly lobbied for the restoration of Nepal's Hindu-state status.

This is not the first time India has intervened deeply in Nepal's political affairs. During Nepal's 2015 constitutional crisis, the Indian government itself acknowledged maintaining close contact with Nepal's political leadership and monitoring the situation closely. India denied imposing a blockade, while Nepal and others blamed the disruption of supplies on the border crisis. The larger point is that India has long regarded developments in Nepal as a matter of vital strategic interest. The question is whether that interest has now acquired an ideological dimension.

This brings us to Hindutva. The problem is not Hinduism, but the political idea that Hindu identity should occupy a dominant position in the definition of the Indian nation. When that idea becomes the basis of politics, Muslims and other religious minorities inevitably face the question of whether they are being treated as equal citizens or as communities expected to live within a Hindu-majoritarian national framework.

This concern is not merely theoretical. Human Rights Watch has documented increasing vilification of Muslims, discriminatory policies and unlawful demolitions of Muslim homes and properties under the BJP-led government. Its 2026 report also records attacks against Christians and other minorities.

The continuing demolition of Muslim religious and historic sites makes the question even more uncomfortable. Indian authorities have generally cited encroachment, unauthorised construction or development requirements in individual cases. But when mosques, shrines and other Muslim sites are repeatedly removed or challenged, it inevitably raises a larger question: is India merely dealing with illegal structures, or is a new political narrative also attempting to reduce the visible presence of its Muslim history? Recent demolitions of mosques in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh have intensified that debate.

India's Muslim history cannot simply be removed from the national story. It is part of India's history, just as its Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain and other traditions are. If Hindutva seeks to redefine India primarily through Hindu civilisation, its influence beyond India deserves scrutiny as well. The contradiction becomes sharper over water.

India placed the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance in April 2025. The treaty governs rivers vital to Pakistan's agriculture and economy and had survived wars and decades of hostility. On August 31, 2026, the Permanent Court of Arbitration ruled unanimously that the treaty remained fully in force and that the grounds cited by India did not justify its suspension. India rejected the ruling.

Water is not an ordinary instrument of geopolitical pressure. For Pakistan, the Indus system is a matter of agriculture, food security and human survival. How does the language of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam sit with using control over a vital resource as leverage against a neighbour?

The same question arises from regional economic cooperation. SAARC has effectively been paralysed since the 2016 summit was cancelled after India withdrew from the Islamabad meeting following the Uri attack. Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan and Sri Lanka subsequently also stayed away. India participates actively in the G20, BRICS, SCO, Quad and BIMSTEC, so it is clearly not opposed to multilateralism. The question is whether it prefers regional arrangements in which its enormous weight gives it greater influence, rather than an institution where India and Pakistan sit as equal members.

Afghanistan presents another contradiction.

India has chosen to engage the Taliban. In January 2025, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri met Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, with both sides discussing expanding relations, trade and development cooperation.

There is nothing inherently wrong with diplomatic engagement. But if India has access to Kabul, why has it not used that access to help reduce tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan? China has actively attempted to mediate between Kabul and Islamabad, while Turkey has also worked with both sides to promote dialogue. India has the diplomatic channels to do the same if it chooses to. This is particularly relevant because a UNSC-mandated monitoring report found that the Taliban continued supporting the TTP and that this contributed to increased frequency and lethality of terrorist attacks in Pakistan. The report also identified growing operational links among the TTP, Al Qaeda, ISIL-K and the BLA.

India's engagement with Kabul may serve legitimate strategic interests. But strategic engagement and peace-building are not necessarily the same thing.

India is unquestionably the largest power in the region. But there is a fundamental difference between regional leadership and regional dominance.

Leadership means allowing neighbours to prosper, respecting their constitutional choices, keeping vital resources outside political confrontation, supporting regional institutions and using influence to reduce conflict. That is why India's slogans deserve to be tested against its conduct. Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam sounds noble. Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas, Sabka Vishwas sounds inclusive. But the region will ultimately judge these principles not by speeches in Delhi, but by what happens to its water, trade, security, connectivity, minorities and sovereignty.

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Iran "has not attacked any country in 200 years": Masoud Pezeshkian

Says Iran no longer trusts negotiations with the United States

TEHRAN, (Monitoring Desk): President Masoud Pezeshkian has told Al Jazeera that Iran no longer trusts negotiations with the United States after previous rounds of talks were followed by attacks and sanctions, as Tehran awaits a response to its latest proposal to end the war.

"We have no trust in the American side and do not know on what basis an understanding can be reached with it," Pezeshkian told the Qatar-based broadcaster in an interview aired on Saturday.

Pezeshkian and Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi visited the US this week for the United Nations gathering of world leaders and proposed a deal that would end fighting in the US-Israel war on Iran and unblock the Strait of Hormuz within seven days.

Araghchi told reporters on Friday that initial steps would take four to five days, the Strait of Hormuz would reopen on the sixth day and "on day seven, the talks with the US will be started for the final deal on mutually agreed subjects," referring to Iran's nuclear programme.

Under the plan, Washington would lift its naval blockade of Iranian ports, waive sanctions on Iranian oil sales, release an estimated $12bn in frozen Iranian assets and observe a ceasefire covering the region, including Lebanon and Yemen.

In return, Iran would reopen the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of the world's traded oil and gas passed before the war, and which has become Tehran's main point of leverage.

Pezeshkian told Al Jazeera that mediators Qatar and Pakistan are conveying Iran's messages to Washington.

He said the negotiations are based on the previous memorandum of understanding (MoU) reached by the two sides in June, and the US must clarify its position on that agreement, which lapsed last month.

The war began in late February, when the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran that killed Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Pezeshkian also denied that Iran was responsible for blocking the Strait of Hormuz, saying the US "closed the routes before us". He described the closure as "a natural response when routes are cut off to Iran".

He said the crisis could be resolved through negotiations rather than force, and that the waterway would reopen to commercial shipping if talks ended the war.

Pezeshkian called the US the aggressor in the conflict, saying Iran "has not attacked any country in 200 years".

He said the US and Israel had dragged regional countries into the war in the belief that the Iranian system "would collapse within days".



Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan addresses the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York



In Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, all 50 districts have been declared disaster areas due to flooding caused by heavy rains.

Russia accuses Europe of doing 'everything it can to thwart' prospect of Ukraine peace talks

NEW YORK, (Agencies): Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Saturday accused European countries of doing "everything they can to thwart" prospects for peace talks between Russia and Ukraine during an address to the UN General Assembly in New York.

Lavrov accused the West of "pumping" Ukraine with weapons and helping Kyiv target civilians and civilian infrastructure with drones and missiles. "The West aspires to inflict a strategic defeat on Russia, but these aspirations will result in the warmongers being led into a strategic dead end," he said. Turning to the Middle East, Lavrov said Russia was convinced it was time to resolve the "main issue" in the region by ensuring Palestinian statehood based on "countless" UN decisions.

He also urged the US to immediately release former Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife.

Trump rejects Iran's latest proposal for indirect talks in New York

WASHINGTON, (Agencies): US President Donald Trump said on Saturday he had rejected an Iranian proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and end fighting in the Middle East. Iran raised the initiative at the UN Assembly in New York, saying it had been transmitted to the Americans via Qatari mediators and that it could reopen the strategic waterway and put an end to hostilities in the region within seven days.

But in comments to reporters at the White House, Trump said: "I reject their proposal. ... I rejected their deal. "They want to make a deal to open the Hormuz Strait immediately because they're losing so badly," he said before leaving for Tennessee. "We're winning tremendously. "They want to make a deal and I think that's fine, I like making a deal too. What they want to do is immediately open the Hormuz Strait ... because they have no money coming in, because they get their money from the Hormuz Strait," Trump said. The US has imposed an economic blockade on Iran to put pressure on Tehran to lift its blockade of Hormuz, which has drastically reduced shipping through the strait, even though Trump again asserted that the US had control of the waterway.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that Trump had rejected the Iranian proposal, citing unnamed US officials. It said Trump was privately sceptical that Iran would meet his demands and had told his staff that he sees a renewed bombing campaign as likely after the November US midterm elections to Congress.

Death threats against Muslims sent to 9 schools across Canada

TORONTO, (Agencies): Canadian police have launched multiple investigations after nine Muslim schools received an email threatening mass violence against Muslims, with authorities deploying additional officers around schools and mosques, according to CBC News.

The Muslim Association of Canada (MAC), which operates the targeted private schools, reported the threat to police in several cities and to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police after the same message was sent to schools in different parts of the country.

The email, reviewed by CBC News, contained explicitly anti-Muslim rhetoric and threatened Muslims with deportation or killing. The sender, who identified themselves as "Jehu, Citizen Vigilante," claimed large numbers of Canadians were prepared to take up arms.

The message also referenced an upcoming referendum in Alberta and threatened that Muslims would be "deported or slaughtered," adding that the threatened violence would occur regardless of the result. The scale of the threat prompted investigations involving several police forces and specialized hate crime units. Peel Regional Police in the Greater Toronto Area increased its presence near mosques and schools as its hate crime unit opened an investigation. Police said enhanced patrols would remain in place through the weekend. London Police Service, which is investigating a threat received by a local school, said it was working with other law enforcement agencies to determine possible connections between the incidents.

Authorities said potential offenses could include uttering threats, criminal harassment and inciting hatred.

Waterloo Regional Police also opened a hate crime investigation and conducted safety planning at an affected school, while Ottawa police increased visibility around religious institutions and the school involved in its complaint.

Ottawa authorities said there was no information indicating a specific or imminent threat to religious or educational institutions in the city. The threats come against the backdrop of a sharp rise in reported hate crimes in Canada.

Police-recorded hate crimes increased from 1,817 cases in 2018 to 4,882 in 2024, according to Statistics Canada figures cited by CBC. Anti-Muslim incidents rose from 84 to 229 during the same period.

Hate crimes targeting Jewish people have also increased significantly, rising from 331 reported incidents in 2020 to 920 in 2024. Nabil Sultan, a spokesperson for MAC, said the organization had previously encountered hateful messages but had never seen a single threat directed at so many of its schools. The latest incident has also renewed concerns stemming from the 2021 killing of four members of the Afzaal family in London, Ontario. The Muslim family was deliberately struck by a truck while out for an evening walk in an attack a Canadian judge later ruled was an act of terrorism.

Sultan told CBC the new threats were a reminder that fears of anti-Muslim violence had not disappeared. At Abraar Elementary School in Ottawa, one of the targeted schools, police were deployed outside as families arrived and left.

Principal Mohammed Saleem told CBC that the severity of the language and explicit threats against children came as a "total shock." The school informed parents and prepared teachers to discuss the situation with students while consulting police over security measures.



Hundreds of people marched against the use of fur during Milan Fashion Week in Italy. Protesters walked through the city streets carrying banners and signs protesting the use of fur.

Pope Leo urges leaders not to remain 'indifferent' to Mideast suffering

PARIS, (Monitoring Desk): Pope Leo XIV on Saturday celebrated an open-air mass in front of hundreds of thousands of faithful in Paris after riding in the popemobile along the iconic Champs Elysees to the cheers of huge crowds clutching French and Vatican flags.

The leader of the world's 1.4 billion Catholics is on a four-day trip to France, a secular country with deep Catholic roots, on the first official papal visit to France in nearly two decades. In the highlight of the visit's second day, the 71-year-old pope led believers in a mass at Place de la Concorde, where a giant white canopy had been erected to serve as a makeshift altar. Dozens of screens were installed to allow worshippers to follow the hour-and-a-half-long service. The trip stirred visible enthusiasm and spiritual fervour among the faithful. The pope's prayers were accompanied by choir and organ music as the sun broke through the grey skies.

"It is truly good and pleasant when brothers and sisters come together and glorify the greatness of God," said Pope Leo, dressed in white liturgical vestments. Over a stretch of more than two kilometres, some 700,000 people had gathered all the way beyond the Arc de Triomphe, the Vatican said. The city centre was sealed off for the service, with helicopters circling overhead and snipers positioned on rooftops.

Some people sitting on the pavement hugged their knees and dropped their heads in concentration as they listened to the pope's voice echo across the Champs Elysees.



U.S. actress Hannah Einbinder (C) takes part in a protest ahead of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to the 81st United Nations General Assembly in New York City, U.S.

Bangkok declares flood disaster as torrential rain inundates city

BANGKOK: Heavy rain and flooding have largely paralysed the Thai capital, Bangkok. All 50 districts of the greater Bangkok area have been declared disaster zones,

Thai media outlets reported on Saturday. Around 30 centimetres of rain fell within 48 hours.

The broadcaster Thai PBS reported that the authorities have converted temples and schools in the capital into emergency shelters.

Road traffic has ground to a halt in many parts of the city.

Further heavy rainfall is expected up to and including Sunday.

Thai PBS said public sector employees have been instructed to work from home on Monday and Tuesday.

Schools will also remain closed, according to the Khaosod newspaper.



PARIS: Several thousand people gathered at Place de la Republique to demand stronger action on climate change following a summer marked by extreme heat, wildfires and drought in France.

Saudi Arabia calls for int'l cooperation to protect navigation, reduce regional tensions

NEW YORK, (Monitoring Desk): Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan on Saturday called for serious international cooperation to protect freedom of navigation and stressed that any arrangements for regional security should be comprehensive.

"Protecting international navigation is a shared responsibility that requires serious international cooperation," he said in an address to the 81st session of the UN General Assembly in New York, where he is heading the Saudi delegation.

Prince Faisal added that Riyadh supports efforts to reduce tensions in the region and stressed "the importance that any arrangements for its security be comprehensive."

The top Saudi diplomat also voiced support for initiatives aimed at de-escalation, particularly efforts by Qatar and Pakistan, saying they can help restore regional stability. On Palestine, Prince Faisal said obstructing humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip and attempts to displace Palestinians constitute violations of international law. He also said the continued expansion of illegal Israeli settlements represents a serious violation of international law and international humanitarian law.

On Syria, Prince Faisal reiterated Riyadh's rejection of any violations that threaten the country's security and stability.

He also welcomed the US decision to remove Syria from its list of state sponsors of terrorism.

Turning to Iraq, Prince Faisal affirmed Saudi support for Iraq's sovereignty, security, and stability.

He stressed that Iraqi territory should not be used as a launching point for attacks against neighboring countries.

Sudanese doctors accuse RSF of looting hospital in recaptured town in North Kordofan

KHARTOUM, (Agencies): The Sudan Doctors Network on Saturday accused the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of looting Sodari Rural Hospital in North Kordofan state, destroying its medical equipment, and leaving it in ruins.

The independent medical group said in a statement that the hospital had served more than 50,000 families before the war. It accused the RSF of attacking and looting the facility's infrastructure, devices, and medical equipment.

The damage has deprived residents of essential health services at a time of severe humanitarian and health needs in the area, the network said.

It called the looting and destruction of health facilities a direct attack on the right to healthcare, saying it undermined the health system's ability to serve civilians.

The network urged the international community and humanitarian and rights organizations to condemn the violations, help protect health facilities in conflict areas, and press RSF leaders to halt attacks on medical sites and hold those responsible accountable.

There was no immediate comment from the RSF on the accusations.

On Friday, the Sudanese army said it had taken control of the city of Sodari in North Kordofan and inflicted personnel and equipment losses on the RSF.

The army has recently made advances across large parts of North Kordofan following clashes with the RSF, citing the capture of 11 areas in the state.

On Sept. 6, the army announced that it had seized Hamrat al-Wiz in the Jabra al-Sheikh locality of North Kordofan.

Since late July, the army has taken control of wide areas of North Kordofan after retaking Bara as well as Jabra al-Sheikh and Umm Sayala, while securing the main road linking Bara with Omdurman, west of the capital Khartoum.



BEIRUT: People gather to commemorate Lebanese children who lost their lives in Israeli attacks.

German unions in 15 cities protest govt's planned social reforms

BERLIN, (Agencies): Trade unions across Germany staged demonstrations in 15 major cities on Saturday to protest social policy reforms planned by the federal government.

The protests were organized by the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) and several affiliated unions under the slogan, "Your work, your health, your pension — you earned them."

Thousands of people gathered in front of Berlin's city hall, with demonstrators carrying banners and signs reading, "Money to social services not war," "Daycare centers not fighter jets," "(Chancellor Friedrich) Merz must go," "We workers are angry with Merz," "Enough is enough," and "Social rights know no borders."

DGB head Yasmin Fahimi, speaking at a demonstration in the western city of Essen, criticized the government's planned reforms in areas including pensions and healthcare, as well as calls to extend working hours.

"We will not allow the social gains we have achieved over the years to be taken away from us," Fahimi said, stressing that workers had earned their social protections over decades.

She argued that the government's planned reforms would not benefit workers and said a strong economy could not be built by cutting social security protections and increasing the burden on employees.

Fahimi said a strong economy requires investment, good wages, and increased purchasing power. She also called for reliable economic conditions, the preservation of international competitiveness, and modern infrastructure.

In a written statement, the DGB said approximately 175,000 people participated in demonstrations across Germany.

The union confederation said job security, quality healthcare, and adequate retirement incomes should not be subject to negotiation.

"We oppose policies that cut social benefits and restrict workers' rights," said the DGB.

Provision of basic facilities at tourist destinations essential for promotion of tourism sector: Ayaz

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Speaker of National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has said that the tourism sector can play a vital role in strengthening the national economy, creating employment opportunities and projecting Pakistan's positive image across the world.

He said, "Pakistan possesses immense potential for tourism owing to its natural beauty, historical sites, cultural diversity and rich religious and civilisational heritage."

He expressed these views in his message on the occasion of World Tourism Day, observed every year on 27th September.

The Speaker said that Pakistan's Northern areas, majestic mountain ranges, the ancient Indus Valley Civilisation and the Gandhara Civilisation are important tourism and cultural assets of the country.

He said that Pakistan has vast opportunities for the development of tourism and that growth of the sector could not only contribute to the national economy but also create new employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for local communities, youth and women.

Ayaz Sadiq said that this year's theme for World Tourism Day is "Tourism and the Digital Agenda for Redefining Tourism".

He said that the effective use of modern technology and artificial intelligence could make the promotion of tourist destinations, travel planning and provision of timely information and better services to tourists more effective.

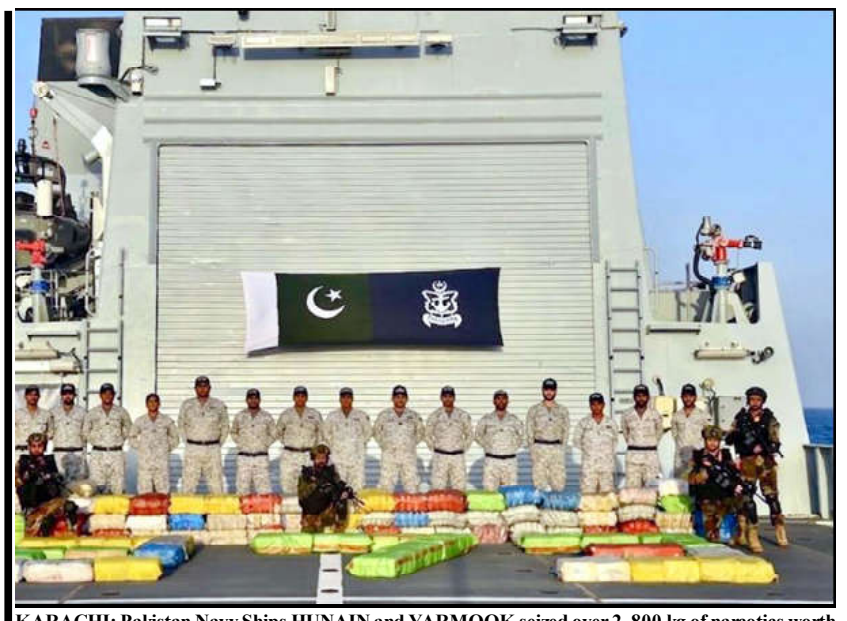
The Speaker said that provision of basic facilities at tourist destinations, improvement of infrastructure and communication networks were essential for promoting tourism.

He emphasised that along with the development of tourist destinations, due attention must also be given to the protection of the natural environment, historical sites and cultural heritage.

Ayaz Sadiq also stressed the need for effective cooperation among the federal and provincial governments, relevant institutions and the private sector for the promotion of tourism.

He also added that tourists from across the world can experience Pakistan's natural beauty, historical sites, cultural diversity and traditional hospitality, saying that Pakistan warmly welcomes visitors from around the world with its renowned tradition of hospitality.

Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah, in his message on the occasion, said that Pakistan's beautiful tourist destinations, diverse cultural heritage and historically significant sites were national assets.



KARACHI: Pakistan Navy Ships HUNAIN and YARMOOK seized over 2, 800 kg of narcotics worth approximately USD 750 million during a joint counter-narcotics operation in the Arabian Sea.



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar addressing the annual meeting of Foreign Ministers of the G-77 and China in New York.

President Zardari invites global travellers to discover Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari has called for ensuring that technological advancements and artificial intelligence in the tourism sector remain responsible, inclusive and beneficial to the local communities.

Extending his greetings to the people of Pakistan, the global tourism community and travellers on the occasion of World Tourism Day 2026, being observed on September 27, the president, in a message, highlighted how digital transformation is reshaping the industry.

He said this year's theme, "Digital Agenda and Artificial Intelligence to Redesign Tourism", highlighted the changes technology and artificial intelligence are bringing to how people plan their journeys, discover destinations, and experience different cultures. The president said Pakistan has a remarkable diversity of landscapes and experiences, from the mountains of the north and the ancient civilizations of the Indus Valley to its Islamic and Gandhara heritage, cities, deserts and coastal areas.

Pakistan committed to peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with int'l law: DPM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister / Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar, Saturday, expressed deep concern over the prevailing security situation in the region and the Middle East, and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law.

He underscored the need for Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Member States to harness their collective potential to promote peace, resilience, and shared prosperity for the region's nearly half a billion people. The DPM/FM chaired the 27th Informal Meeting of the Council of Ministers (COM) of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in New York, on the sidelines of the 81st Session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. Pakistan is currently chairing the ECO Council of Ministers for 2026–2027 under the theme "Reviving Regionalism for a Resilient ECO."

The meeting was attended by Foreign Ministers and senior representatives of ECO Member States.

The deputy prime minister expressed gratitude to ECO Member States for reposing confidence in Pakistan and reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to advancing the Organization's objectives and strengthening regional cooperation.

Contraceptive commodities should be treated as essential health products: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Vice President Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Sherry Rehman, on the occasion of World Contraception Day, called for sustained investment in girls' education, women's economic participation, quality healthcare and voluntary family planning, stressing that Pakistan's demographic challenge must be addressed as a critical human capital and development priority.

Senator Rehman said Pakistan's current population stood at 259.3 million, with an annual population growth rate of 3.7 percent and a total fertility rate of 3.6 children per woman. She noted that 17.3 percent of couples have unmet family planning needs, while contraceptive use remains at only 34 percent.

She stressed that Pakistan's rapidly growing population, projected to reach approximately 390 million by 2050, was placing increasing pressure on the country's resources, public services and human capital. What was once viewed primarily as a potential "demographic dividend" risked becoming a "demographic drag" in the absence of adequate investment in education, healthcare, employment and family planning.

Senator Rehman had strongly endorsed the federal government's decision in the 2026–27 federal budget to abolish the 18 percent General Sales Tax (GST) on contraceptives, reducing the tax from 18 percent to zero. She said the measure was an important step towards improving the affordability and accessibility of contraceptive commodities for families across Pakistan.

She stressed that contraceptive commodities should be treated as essential health products, adding that financial and other barriers to accessing them must be removed. "Easy, affordable and quality access to voluntary family planning is essential to reducing unintended pregnancies, improving maternal and child health, and ensuring the well-being of families. The removal of the 18 percent GST on contraceptives is an important step towards making these essential health products more accessible."

Senator Rehman said Pakistan continues to face significant challenges in maternal and infant health, with approximately 11,000 maternal deaths every year, while 62 infants die before reaching their first birthday for every 1,000 live births.

She noted that increasing contraceptive use from 34 percent to 52 percent could potentially save the lives of approximately 3,800 mothers and 140,000 children, underscoring the importance of ensuring access to voluntary family planning services, information and quality reproductive healthcare.

She further noted that approximately 3.8 million abortions take place annually in Pakistan, with an estimated rate of 66 abortions per 1,000 women, reinforcing the need to reduce unintended pregnancies through accessible, voluntary and quality family planning services.



Counsellor Saima Saleem speaks during the general debate of the 81st Session of UN General Assembly in New York

Pakistan safe, attractive, competitive tourism destination: PM Shehbaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif said the government was actively pursuing measures to promote tourism across the country, strengthen tourism infrastructure, and create greater opportunities for employment and socioeconomic advancement for local communities and young people associated with the sector. In a message on World Tourism Day observed on 27 September, he said, "The government is committed to showcasing Pakistan to the world as a safe, attractive, and competitive tourism destination." "I pay tribute to the spirit of exploration, curiosity, and discovery shared by tourists and all those associated with the tourism sector in Pakistan and around the world."

"Tourism thrives on the appeal of breathtaking natural landscapes, ancient historical monuments, rich civilizational heritage, and diverse cultural traditions. By the grace of Allah Almighty, Pakistan is endowed with extraordinary natural beauty, a rich cultural and civilizational heritage, and an abundance of historical and religious sites, offering immense opportunities for the promotion and development of tourism."

"Pakistan's moderate climate, refreshing mountain landscapes, and picturesque valleys possess immense potential to attract tourists from around the world. The land of Pakistan is home to thousands of years of ancient civilizations, including the Indus Valley and Gandhara civilizations, and a rich cultural heritage. In the realm of religious tourism, Pakistan is home to historically significant and sacred sites of immense importance to followers of Sikhism, Buddhism, and other faiths," he continued.



Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan Emir Hafiz Naeem ur Rehman addresses a Press Conference in Mansoorah Lahore.

Saleem Khosa vows to ensure security of workers involved in development projects

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Provincial Minister for Communications and Works Mir Saleem Ahmed Khan Khosa has strongly condemned the attack on a construction company's camp in Nana Sahib Ziarat, Dukki, describing such incidents as attempts to disrupt development, reconstruction and economic activity in Balochistan. In a statement issued following the incident, the minister said targeting a company engaged in the construction of the Dukki-Chamalang Road was another attack by elements opposed to development and prosperity in the province. He stressed that all possible measures would be taken to ensure the security of workers involved in development projects. According to sources, armed assailants attacked the construction camp last night where workers engaged in the Dukki-Chamalang Road project were staying. Police personnel and local security guards deployed at the camp confronted the attackers, resulting in an exchange of fire. One security guard was killed in the attack while another sustained serious injuries, sources said.

Cooperation in modern sectors can further enhance Pak-Belarus relations: Gilani

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate of Pakistan Syed Yousaf Raza Gilani, leading a parliamentary delegation on an official visit to Belarus, visited the Minsk Scientific and Practical Center for Surgery, Transplantology and Hematology and the Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War, highlighting new avenues for cooperation between Pakistan and Belarus in advanced healthcare, technology, knowledge exchange and cultural heritage.

During the visit to the medical centre, Chairperson of the Council of the Republic Natalya Kochanova, Chairman Senate and the Pakistani delegation were briefed on Belarus' advanced capabilities in organ transplantation, robot-assisted surgery, AI-based diagnostics and CAR-T therapy. The delegation also witnessed a live procedure at the Centre's hybrid operating complex equipped with integrated CT and angiographic technologies.

The Chairman Senate appreciated Belarus' advancements in specialized healthcare and emphasized the potential for institutional linkages, professional and academic exchanges, sharing of expertise and cooperation in emerging medical technologies. At the Belarusian State Museum of the History of the Great Patriotic War, the delegation viewed exhibits documenting the immense human cost of the war, the resistance of the Belarusian people and their sacrifices during the liberation of Belarus. Chairman Senate paid tribute to the courage and resilience of the Belarusian people and appreciated Belarus' efforts to preserve its historical memory and heritage.

The Chairman Senate underscored that parliamentary engagement, people-to-people contacts, knowledge sharing and cooperation in modern sectors can further broaden and deepen Pakistan-Belarus relations.

AJK President highlights Pakistan's efforts for peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue

MIRPUR (APP): Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Dr Muhammad Najeeb Naqi has called for a peaceful settlement of the Kashmir dispute in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and the aspirations of the Kashmiri people, urging European parliamentarians to highlight their right to self-determination and the human rights situation in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of European Parliamentarians that called on him in the State metropolis on Friday, the AJK President's Office said on Saturday.

The president described the Kashmir dispute as an internationally recognised issue rather than merely a regional matter, adding that the Kashmiri people had been struggling for their political, human and democratic rights for decades.

He said durable peace in South Asia was closely linked to a just resolution of the dispute



MUZAFFARABAD: President AJK Dr. Muhammad Najeeb Naqi presenting shield to European Parliamentary delegation head Mary Khan.



QUETTA: Head Jahan Ara present shield to Station Director Radio Pakistan Quetta, Siddiqa Khan after Literacy Awareness Workshop organized by Balochistan Reforms Literacy Society.

Over 2800 kg narcotics seized in Arabian Sea

RAWALPINDI (APP): Pakistan Navy Ships HUNAIN and YARMOOK seized over 2,800 kg of narcotics worth approximately $ 750 million during a joint counter-narcotics operation in the Arabian Sea.

While on routine patrol, the ships intercepted a suspicious boat and recovered narcotics from concealed compartments during a boarding operation, said a news release issued by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR). Admiral Naveed Ashraf, NI, NI (M), T Bt, Chief of the Naval Staff, commended the officers and crew for their professionalism and vigilance, reaffirming Pakistan Navy's commitment to maritime security and combating illicit trafficking at sea.

Growth of tourism in Balochistan can diversify provincial economy: Zareen

QUETTA (APP): Parliamentary Secretary for Law, Tourism and Culture Nawabzada Zareen Khan Magsi has said that Balochistan, with its natural beauty, long coastline, towering mountains, historic sites, ancient heritage, and diverse culture, has immense potential to become a major hub for national and international tourism.

In his special message on the occasion of World Tourism Day, Magsi emphasized that tourism is not merely a source of recreation but a vital sector for economic activity, employment, cultural exchange, and local development worldwide. He noted that the growth of tourism in Balochistan could diversify the provincial economy and generate opportunities in remote areas.

Highlighting the province's geography, he pointed to the Makran coastal belt, Kund Malir, Hingol National Park, Gwadar, Pasni, and Ormara as unique coastal attractions, while Ziarat's juniper forests, Quetta's valleys, Khuzdar's Moola Chotok, and other mountainous regions offer vast potential for adventure and eco-tourism.

He added that the provincial government is actively promoting these sites as key tourism assets.

Zareen Magsi stressed that Balochistan's appeal is not limited to natural landscapes. Its historic and cultural heritage, traditional crafts, local cuisine, music, lifestyle, and centuries-old traditions provide a strong foundation for cultural tourism. Introducing these assets at national and international levels, he said

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