Daily

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

ABC Certified

www.voiceofmillionsqta.com Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah Quetta

Jamadi-ul-Awwal 08, 1448 AH Vol: XX No. 68 Tuesday October 20, 2026 Pages 4, Price Rs. 5 Ph: 2823307

Pak, KSA 'satisfied' over progress under Makkah defence pact

CDF Munir and Saudi envoy discuss regional security dynamics, matters of mutual interest during meeting

RAWALPINDI, (Agencies): Pakistan and Saudi Arabia expressed satisfaction on Monday over progress under the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and stressed the need to strengthen defence cooperation, institutional linkages and strategic coordination.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of the Army Staff Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Rajeh Tami Albugamy at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

The two sides discussed matters of mutual interest and regional security dynamics, with a focus on further strengthening defence collaboration between the two countries.

Field Marshal Munir congratulated Dr Albugamy on his appointment as Saudi ambassador to Pakistan and expressed confidence that his tenure would contribute to further strengthening the longstanding fraternal ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia rooted in shared faith, mutual trust and strategic partnership.

The ambassador arrived in Islamabad on September 26 and since then has conducted several meetings with the country's top civilian and military leadership as Islamabad and Riyadh seek to deepen ties.

On October 14, President Asif Ali Zardari received Dr Albugamy's credentials at Aiwan-e-Sadr, reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to Saudi Arabia's security and defence. The president also called for stronger economic ties, highlighted opportunities for greater cooperation and acknowledged Saudi Arabia's financial assistance and support for oil supplies.

Two days later, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif met the Saudi envoy and reiterated Pakistan's commitment towards the kingdom's sovereignty, security and territorial integrity amid escalating Houthi attacks. During the meeting, PM Shehbaz described the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and the Makkah Joint Defence framework as significant milestones in bilateral relations. He also pledged to strengthen institutional mechanisms and expand cooperation across various sectors.



RAWALPINDI: Saudi Arabia's newly appointed ambassador to Pakistan Dr Rajeh Tami Albugamy calls on Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) and Chief of Army Staff (COAS) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir at the General Headquarters (GHQ).



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif witnesses MOU exchange between Ministry of Education and Federal Training and Gauth AI-based learning Platform

Expanding military conflict in Middle East not in anyone's interest: DG ISPR

Lt Gen Chaudhry says Saudi Arabia's sovereignty and territorial integrity remains a foremost priority for Pakistan, Houthi attacks on Islam's holiest sites has caused deep grief and anger among public, political and military leadership

RAWALPINDI, (Monitoring Desk): Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) Director General Lt Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry has said Pakistan may "evaluate" any request for direct military support from Yemen's internationally recognised government, as Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia continue.

"I think not in my knowledge that there has been any formal request. If there is any request, then that is for the government of Pakistan to evaluate that and respond to that," he said in an interview with Independent Arabia on Sunday, when asked whether Yemen's government had sought support from Pakistan.

The ISPR chief warned that the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement's (MJDA) collective deterrence could come into play if negotiations fail and military confrontation follows in the Middle East.

"If we are unable to come to a negotiated outcome and we turn into a military conflict, then this instrument of collective deterrence of the Makkah alliance will definitely come into play, as it is coming into play," Lt Gen Chaudhry said.

The MJDA between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye advanced significantly in a short period, he said, adding that the pact represented the combined thinking of the three countries. The regional powers signed the MJDA on August 7 during the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Summit for Joint Defence. Under the pact, an armed attack against any one of the three countries would be regarded as an attack against all three.



QUETTA: Deputy Speaker Balochistan Assembly Ghazala Gola expressing her views during the assembly session.

PM vows to ensure quality education for students in country through AI

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday said the government would provide all possible resources and facilities to Daanish schools, reaffirming its commitment to ensuring quality education and creating new opportunities for students, teachers and the younger generation across the country through artificial intelligence (AI).

Addressing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between the Ministry of Education and Gauth AI, the prime minister termed the agreement a significant step towards expanding educational opportunities and welcomed the provision of free subscriptions by the technology company.

He said the first 4,000 subscriptions being gifted by Gauth to Pakistan would help students and teachers benefit from modern educational tools. Of these, 1,000 subscriptions would be allocated to teachers associated with the government's Daanish schools initiative.

The prime minister said the government had provided all possible facilities to students, adding that Daanish schools was a magnificent educational institution offering free education. "There is no dearth of resources, and the government will provide all possible resources to the Daanish schools," he said, reiterating the government's resolve to support the institutions and their students. Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja said the initiative reflected the prime minister's vision of promoting information technology-led development and improving the education sector through modern digital solutions. She said TikTok had made its AI technology available for Pakistan, while the paid versions of Gauth AI were being launched in Pakistan, making it the first country after the United States to receive this facility. Regional Director of Global Public Policy at ByteDance Ltd Maria Kohan, said technology had the potential to inspire creativity, unlock opportunities and transform lives, particularly in the field of education. She said ByteDance had already been contributing to educational awareness through TikTok, adding that its dedicated STEM feed, launched in Pakistan in partnership with the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication and the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, was helping young people explore educational content in new ways.

Pakistan to work closely with Tajikistan for promotion of regional peace: DPM

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar called on the Prime Minister of Tajikistan, Qohir Rasulzoda, in Dushanbe on Monday, highlighting Pakistan's disaster management expertise and highlighting the potential for bilateral cooperation through the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). The DPM/FM thanked the prime minister for the warm hospitality extended to him and his delegation and appreciated the arrangements for the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting. He also congratulated Tajikistan on the 35th anniversary of its independence, a DPM's Office news release said.

The two leaders reviewed bilateral relations and reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, energy, connectivity, defence and culture, as well as promoting people-to-people exchanges. They also underscored the importance of cooperation on climate change and water security. They also exchanged views on regional developments. The DPM/FM reiterated Pakistan's commitment to working closely with Tajikistan to promote regional peace and deeper economic integration.

Elimination of terrorism top priority of Balochistan govt: CM Bugti

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has pledged to maintain the province's counterterrorism campaign until militant threats are eliminated and durable peace is firmly established, while honoring the security personnel who lost their lives in recent operations. In a statement issued Monday, the chief minister commended the professionalism, operational readiness and sacrifices of the security forces engaged in counterterrorism efforts across Balochistan.

He paid tribute to the personnel following operations in Kalat and Gwadar in which four suspected militants were reportedly killed. Provincial authorities described the suspects as elements backed by India, saying the operations reflected the effectiveness and resolve of law enforcement agencies in confronting militant threats. Bugti said the sacrifices made by security forces in the fight against terrorism deserved national acknowledgment and appreciation.

Home Minister vows to implement meaningful reforms in provincial prison system

QUETTA, (VoM Report): Balochistan Home Minister Mir Ziaullah Langove has directed authorities to accelerate efforts to improve the provincial prison system, with greater emphasis on efficient administration, healthcare and the provision of essential facilities for inmates. He issued the directives while presiding over a high-level meeting convened to assess prison administration, ongoing reform measures and the welfare of prisoners across the province. Additional Home Secretary Hamza Shafqaat, Inspector General of Prisons Asim and other senior officials attended the meeting, during which participants examined a range of issues affecting the functioning of provincial correctional facilities. The meeting reviewed existing administrative arrangements as well as the medical services and other basic facilities available to prisoners. Officials also briefed the minister on ongoing initiatives and presented proposals aimed at addressing shortcomings in prison management.

Langove stressed that improving healthcare for inmates should remain a key component of the government's broader prison reform agenda. He called for practical steps to ensure prisoners have access to necessary medical treatment and other basic services. The home minister said stronger administrative mechanisms and institutional improvements were essential for making correctional facilities more effectively managed and ensuring better service delivery to inmates.

Commissioner directs to ensure timely completion of development schemes

QUETTA, (VoM report): Quetta Division Commissioner Zeeshan Lashari has ordered education authorities to restore 155 nonfunctional schools across the division, while directing measures to improve teacher attendance, increase enrollment and curb student dropouts.

He issued the directives while chairing an online review meeting focused on the state of educational institutions, infrastructure requirements and ongoing development initiatives in the division. Deputy Commissioner Quetta Mehrullah Badini, Deputy Commissioner Quetta West Munir Ahmed Durrani and senior education officials participated in the meeting, which reviewed the operational status of schools and various challenges confronting the education sector. Officials informed the commissioner that 155 schools in Quetta Division were currently nonfunctional, while nine educational institutions in Quetta were facing encroachment issues.

CM Bugti stresses equal access to breast cancer treatment in remote areas

Terms women's health a shared responsibility; seeks stronger public support for breast cancer patients

QUETTA, (APP): Balochistan Chief Minister Mir Sarfraz Bugti has emphasized that awareness, early diagnosis and access to treatment are fundamental to an effective fight against breast cancer, stating that protecting women's health is a shared responsibility of both the government and society.

In his message issued from the Chief Minister's Secretariat on the occasion of Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the chief minister said that timely diagnosis significantly improves the chances of successful treatment. He urged women to prioritize their health and seek guidance from qualified medical professionals instead of ignoring any unusual changes or symptoms. Mir Sarfraz Bugti noted that effective awareness campaigns are essential to eliminating fear, misconceptions and social stigma associated with breast cancer. He said such efforts would enable women to speak openly about their health concerns and seek timely medical advice without hesitation.

Highlighting the challenges faced by women in remote areas of the province, the chief minister stressed the need to expand access to breast cancer awareness, screening and treatment facilities across Balochistan. He said women living in far-flung regions should have equal opportunities for early diagnosis and appropriate medical care. Sarfraz Bugti also underscored the importance of providing encouragement and social support to women affected by breast cancer. Rather than facing fear or isolation, patients should receive compassion and assistance from their families and communities, he said. The chief minister called upon families, healthcare professionals, educational institutions and civil society organizations to play an active role in raising awareness and supporting breast cancer patients.



Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi addresses Global Security Forum in Doha, Qatar

Peace requires continuous efforts

Pakistan worked relentlessly to bring US, Iran to negotiating table: Naqvi

DOHA, (Monitoring Desk): Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi has said achieving peace between the United States and Iran requires patience, trust and sustained efforts, stressing that lasting peace cannot be secured in a single meeting.

Addressing the Global Security Forum in Doha on Monday, Naqvi said Pakistan had made every possible effort to bring Washington and Tehran to the negotiating table. He added that there were moments when tensions escalated sharply, but Islamabad did not give up its efforts.

His remarks come amid mounting regional tensions, as Yemen's internationally recognised government forces continue to fight Houthi rebels, who are also targeting Saudi Arabia. The kingdom reported intercepting four drones on Saturday, followed by further interceptions on Sunday, amid repeated Houthi attacks.

Meanwhile, efforts to revive US-Iran dialogue remain stalled, with both sides at odds over the terms for resuming negotiations.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Sunday that Tehran's proposal to reopen the Strait of Hormuz within seven days remained on the table, but progress depended on Washington's response to Iran's conditions. Iran's demands include lifting the US blockade on its ports, easing sanctions on its oil exports and ending hostilities across regional fronts, while Washington wants Iran's nuclear programme addressed as a priority.

Against this backdrop, Naqvi praised Qatar's diplomatic efforts to mediate between the United States and Iran, saying Islamabad and Doha had worked together to prevent further escalation in the region.

"Peace cannot be achieved in a single meeting. It requires patience, trust and continuous efforts," Naqvi said, underscoring the need for sustained diplomatic engagement to resolve conflicts.

The interior minister also said Chief of Defence Forces (CDF) Field Marshal Syed Asim Munir and Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani had worked for more than 16 hours without a break during the Swiss peace talks.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani artists present a cultural dance during the Pakistani Cultural performance a special cultural performance organized by PNCA in honor of the Bangladesh cultural troupe at PNCA

THE VOICE OF MILLIONS

Tuesday October 20, 2026

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.

The writer is a former Associate Professor at the Department of Mass Communi-cation, NAML University, Karachi.

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.

The writer is a public policy analyst based in Lahore. She can be reached at durdananajam1@gmail.com

BISP, UN Women, WFP join hands to strengthen gender-responsive social protection

ISLAMABAD, (APP): The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP), UN Women and the World Food Programme (WFP) on Monday signed a Joint Statement of Collaboration to strengthen gender equality, women's empowerment and inclusive social protection services for millions of women across Pakistan.

The collaboration aims to transform social protection beyond financial assistance by enabling women to understand and claim their rights, access safe and dignified services, and benefit from opportunities for skills development, livelihoods, entrepreneurship and financial independence. With more than 10 million women receiving quarterly financial assistance under the Benazir Kafaalat Programme, BISP provides a major platform to advance women's empowerment and improve their economic and social well-being.

Senator Rubina Khalid, Chairperson of BISP, said the programme remained firmly committed to advancing gender-responsive social protection, promoting women's economic empowerment and making its services more inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

"Our collaboration with UN Women and WFP will help ensure that social protection services are safe, accessible and responsive to the needs of women and vulnerable communities," she said.

She said the joint efforts would strengthen awareness of rights and entitlements, counselling, maternal and child health, and service quality at Benazir Nashonuma centres.

The collaboration would also promote women's skills development, livelihoods, entrepreneurship, financial and digital inclusion, while supporting the safety of female frontline staff and encouraging shared responsibilities within families.

By improving institutional coordination and harmonising efforts, the partnership aims to expand opportunities for women's economic self-reliance and improve service delivery for BISP beneficiaries across the country, she added.

Jamshed M. Kazi, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan, said social protection was one of the most effective tools for advancing gender equality when designed with women rather than merely for them.

"Pakistan has built one of the largest cash transfer programmes for women anywhere. Our shared ambition is to see this system, reaching millions of women, go beyond financial assistance to strengthen their voice, their safety and their economic choices, while engaging men and families as partners in that change," he said.



A firefighter works at the site of a Russian jet drone strike in Kyiv, Ukraine.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (right) meets with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov (left), who is visiting the capital Tehran for official talks.

Yemeni govt forces bomb Houthi positions in Taiz as conflict escalates

SANAA, (Agencies): Yemeni government forces bombed Houthi positions west of the city of Taiz in southwestern Yemen on Monday as fighting continues to escalate in the war-torn country.

The media center of the Taiz Military Axis said airstrikes targeted Houthi sites in the Al-Rubaie area west of Taiz. It did not immediately provide details on casualties or damage resulting from the strikes. There was no comment from the Houthis on the attack. On Sunday, Yemeni government forces said that they targeted Houthi gatherings and positions in Taiz, Lahij and Al-Dhalea in the country's southwest. Yemen has been mired in conflict since the Houthis seized Sanaa and several provinces in 2014, prompting a Saudi-led coalition to intervene in 2015 in support of Yemen's internationally recognized government. Fighting intensified in September, with the Houthis taking control of several key areas in Al-Hudaydah and Taiz provinces.

Monsoon floods, landslides kill 68 across India, Nepal in 72 hours

LUCKNOW, (Agencies): At least 68 people were killed in northern India and Nepal in the past 72 hours after heavy rain triggered floods and landslides across the region, authorities said Monday.

In India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, 56 people died and more than 1,000 houses were damaged over the past three days, the Relief Commissioner's office said in a statement.

Neighboring Nepal, already reeling from the catastrophic Aug. 26 flood, was hit by new flooding and landslides that killed 12 people since Thursday.

"Since Thursday, 12 people have died in rain-related disasters such as floods and landslides," Shanti Mahat, spokesperson for Nepal's disaster authority said, adding that seven more were missing.

Scientists have warned in recent years of an increase in extreme weather events across South Asia, linking them to rising temperatures and changing climate patterns. The flooding in Nepal last month, triggered by a glacial mountain collapse on the China-Nepal border, killed more than 1,400 people and left thousands missing.

Uttar Pradesh, home to more than 240 million people, frequently experiences rain and thunderstorms during the annual monsoon season from June to September.

The Relief Commissioner's office said the latest deaths occurred during a spell of "exceptionally heavy rain" after a "depression over the Bay of Bengal moved inland and intensified rainfall across the region."

Israeli extremists call to renew Gaza settlements, West bank war

GAZA, (Agencies): Israel has continued to violate the U.S.-backed truce in Gaza Strip, killing at least four people late Sunday, according to medical sources, while extremist groups demanded the Palestinian enclave be opened up to illegal settlements.

In the latest attack, a Palestinian was killed and two others were injured when an Israeli quadcopter opened fire on tents housing displaced people in the al-Tawam area in northwestern Gaza, a medical source told media.

Earlier, Palestinian Shadi Abu Hasira was killed when an Israeli drone struck a civilian vehicle in the al-Sinaa area south of Gaza City, according to a medical source at al-Shifa Hospital.

In southern Gaza, 17-year-old Tariq al-Masri died from serious wounds sustained in Israeli gunfire in central Khan Younis, while 28-year-old Uday Adli al-Assar was killed in an Israeli drone strike on the al-Mawasi area west of the city, earlier Sunday.

Seven Palestinians were injured in separate Israeli drone strikes in Gaza City, including two near the White Mosque in the al-Shati refugee camp and five near tents housing displaced people around the Sheikh Radwan neighborhood market.

Also Sunday, several Israeli ministers and lawmakers joined thousands of Israeli illegal settlers in a vehicle convoy toward the Gaza border, demanding the reestablishment of illegal Israeli settlements in the Palestinian enclave, Israel's Channel 7 reported.

The convoy, led by the Nachala Settlement Movement alongside other right-wing groups, was heading to a gathering point in northern Gaza before a rally near the enclave's northern border.

Organizers are pressing the Israeli government to restore settlements in Gaza, arguing in a message to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that a long-term security solution requires a settlement presence there.

Nachala leader Daniella Weiss, who joined the convoy, said thousands were arriving with housing equipment and preparing to reestablish a presence at Nisanit, an Israeli settlement in the northern Gaza Strip that was dismantled and evacuated in August 2005, as well as elsewhere in the enclave.

Israel evacuated its illegal settlements in Gaza in 2005 under a unilateral disengagement plan.

Smotrich calls for war on W. Bank

Separately, far-right Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich called Sunday for launching a war in the occupied West Bank, similar to Israel's genocidal war in the Gaza Strip.

Tel Aviv "should do there (West Bank) what we did in Gaza," Smotrich told Israeli newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth.

Smotrich repeated his call to dismantle the Palestinian Authority, which exercises limited control over parts of the West Bank. His remarks come amid tighter Israeli restrictions on Palestinian movement in the West Bank, including checkpoint closures and roadblocks that isolate communities and hinder access to work, homes and essential services.

Since Israel began its war on the Gaza Strip in October 2023, the Israeli army and occupiers have stepped up attacks in the West Bank, killing over 1,206 Palestinians, injuring more than 13,300 and arresting nearly 26,000, according to Palestinian figures.

The attacks include demolishing homes and other structures, burning mosques, bulldozing farmland, preventing farmers from accessing their land, displacing Palestinians and expanding illegal settlements.



Protesters gathered for the second time in downtown Guadalajara, Jalisco state, Mexico, as part of the "Great March for Water."

Germany vows strong support for Int'l Criminal Court amid US attacks

BERLIN, (Agencies): Germany on Monday pledged strong support for the International Criminal Court (ICC) amid recent attacks by US President Donald Trump against the UN court.

"International rules are only as strong as the willingness to stand up for them. Especially at a time when international institutions are increasingly being called into question, we must clearly stand by them together with our global partners," Foreign Minister Johann Wadephul said in a statement.

"Germany will do its part to ensure that the ICC remains capable of acting even under pressure," Wadephul added. He was scheduled to visit the ICC in The Hague later in the day and meet his Dutch counterpart, Tom Berendsen. The ICC ensures justice precisely where national justice systems are unable or unwilling to do so, according to Wadephul.

The US does not recognize the ICC and has increasingly imposed sanctions on the court and its representatives. Since 2002, the ICC has prosecuted the most serious crimes, including genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The US has accused the court, among other things, of acting out of political motives. Last week at the UN General Assembly, Trump called on ICC member states to withdraw from the court.

Wadephul said Germany knows from its own history where it can lead when state power disregards the rule of law and humanity, referring to the Nazi era.



A Palestinian woman mourns during a funeral ceremony in the Daraj neighborhood of eastern Gaza City for 75 Palestinians, including women and children, whose bodies were recovered months after being buried under the rubble of homes destroyed in Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip

US military rejects Iranian claims of controlling Strait of Hormuz

WAWSHINGTON, (Agencies): The US military on Monday rejected an Iranian commander's claim that Tehran maintains operational control over maritime traffic through the Strait of Hormuz and the Gulf. "Iran has no navy because American forces sank it," US Central Command (CENTCOM) said on US social media company X. The command maintained that Tehran exercises no authority over the vital chokepoint, saying thousands of commercial vessels had passed through and more than 1 billion barrels of crude had transited in recent months.

The statement came after Iranian state media cited Army Chief of Staff and Deputy Coordinator Rear Adm. Habibollah Sayyari as saying that naval forces under the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps exercise full control over the waterway and the Gulf. Sayyari asserted that the army's naval forces oversee the eastern approach into the Indian Ocean, warning that the forces would not permit maritime transit. Both nations have traded accusations over blockades in the vital corridor amid the seven-month Iran war that began with large-scale strikes by the US and Israel in late February.



British comedian and actor Russell Brand, along with his wife Laura Brand, appeared at Southwark Royal Court in London to face charges of rape and sexual assault.

British-US relationship "closest alliance of two nations on earth: Wes Streeting

LONDON, (Agencies): UK Defense Secretary Wes Streeting on Monday described the UK-US relationship as "the closest alliance of any two nations on earth."

He made the remarks at the Labour Party conference in Liverpool, a day after a suspected terror plot targeting RAF Fairford, a UK military airbase in Gloucestershire, in southwestern England.

A major incident was declared Sunday in a village near the base that hosts US Air Force operations, with 85 households evacuated after police arrested five men in connection with an investigation involving suspected offenses under the Explosives Act.

"There is a live police investigation and I can't provide much further detail than that which is reported," Streeting told the conference. "But I do want to say that our friendship with America is the closest alliance of any two nations on earth, and we will always stand together against those who hate our freedom and those who wish us harm." He praised British security services, armed forces and police for their response to the incident. Streeting also announced a £6 billion ($8 billion) contract to build docks for Britain's nuclear submarines, describing it as "one of the biggest defense procurement decisions in a generation." "There is neither an economic nor a moral justification for Britain's defense sector hiring thousands of workers from abroad when we have one million young people out of work here at home," he said. "But solving that problem needs more than words; it demands bold action, and that's why today the chancellor and I are taking one of the biggest defense procurement decisions in a generation: the contract to build the docks for our nuclear subs, our ultimate deterrent, £6 billion worth of work," he noted.

"Today, we commit to that contract staying in this country, supporting thousands of British jobs for years," he said.

Pope Leo warns against 'illusion' of rearmament

METZ, FRANCE, (Agencies): Pope Leo XIV warned Monday against the "illusion" of rearmament and denounced the "senseless slaughter" claiming countless lives around the world.

"Today, sadly, war has returned, even to Europe: a new 'senseless slaughter,' claiming countless civilian lives every day," the pope said at the Robert Schuman Conference Centre in Metz, France.

He stressed the need for patient dialogue and negotiations while being willing "to give up some positions for the greater good of peace." The pontiff acknowledged that Europe's search for peace should not be confused "with a naive form of pacifism."

"However, we must also guard against the illusion that rearmament is the answer," he added. Underlining that promoting peace is an active task, he urged people to ask whether they were truly making "creative efforts" for world peace.

"We must also ask whether we are simply seeking to 'stem the tide of war' and better prepare ourselves for wars that we assume are still to come," he added.

"Today, relations between individuals and States are becoming increasingly uncivilized. The value of keeping one's word is dismissed; instead, people boast of lies and deceit," the pope said.

He pointed to Europe's role in breaking such a cycle, highlighting that the continent had demonstrated over the years the possibility of articulating different opinions, claims and interests "through encounter rather than conflict."

"Do not give in to the mentality of violence and oppression," the pope added.



The day after returning to the Vatican following lung surgery, Pope Leo XIV led the Angelus prayer from a window of the Apostolic Palace overlooking St. Peter's Square. Faithful and nuns also joined the prayer held in the square.

Sudanese authorities accuse paramilitary RSF of attacking civilian facilities in El-Obeid

KHARTOUM, (Agencies): Sudanese authorities in North Kordofan on Monday accused the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of carrying out drone strikes on civilian facilities in El-Obeid, the state capital.

"Targeting civilian, educational and sports facilities constitutes a blatant attack on citizens and their resources and a violation of international humanitarian law," the state government said in a statement.

It said the targeted sites included the sports city and the private Shikan University College in the state.

No casualties or material damage were reported.

The state government called on the international community and rights and humanitarian organizations to condemn the RSF attacks on civilian objects, provide protection to civilians, document the alleged violations and hold those responsible accountable.

There was no immediate comment from the paramilitary group on the accusation.

Last month, the UN said that 1,100 civilians were killed in drone attacks in Sudan between January and June.

Sudan's three Kordofan states, North, West and South, have witnessed clashes between the army and the RSF since Oct. 25, 2025. Sudan has been engulfed in a war between the army and the RSF since April 2023 that has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced around 13 million, according to UN and international estimates.

Meaningful reforms requires peaceful, stable environment: Ahsan Iqbal

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal on Monday urged universities to drive Pakistan's economic transformation through technology, innovation and research, stressing that higher education institutions must serve as growth engines of the national economy.

Addressing the NUST Master Convocation 2026 as chief guest at the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) main campus, the minister said Pakistan faced challenges in technological advancement, per capita income and exports, requiring structural reforms and greater adoption of modern technologies. The ceremony conferred doctoral degrees on 66 PhD scholars, while 26 undergraduate students received President's Gold Medals and 28 were awarded Chancellor's Silver Medals in recognition of their academic achievements.

Ahsan Iqbal congratulated the graduating students, doctoral scholars and medal recipients, describing graduation from one of Pakistan's leading universities as an honour.

He recalled that during his tenure as Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission in the 1990s, the NUST model was presented, and he had expressed confidence that the institution would emerge as a leading university in Pakistan and internationally.

Emphasising the importance of practical contributions after graduation, the minister urged students to build projects and leave a legacy through their professional achievements, saying people were remembered for their contributions to society. He paid tribute to parents for their sacrifices in supporting their children's education and called on graduates to work for Pakistan's progress and prosperity in their respective fields.

The minister said increasing exports was a key priority under the Uraan Pakistan programme and emphasised that universities must play a leading role in technological advancement, innovation and economic transformation. Describing the world as entering an era of disruption, he said artificial intelligence was reshaping existing systems, while political and economic dynamics were also undergoing significant changes. He stressed that meaningful reforms required a peaceful and stable environment.

Pakistan had sufficient resources to change its economic trajectory, he said, adding that the country's youth could play a pivotal role in achieving this objective. He also urged universities to contribute practical solutions to national challenges and encouraged graduates to learn from setbacks and use them as opportunities for growth.

Referring to the potential of Pakistan's young population, Ahsan Iqbal said the youth should be viewed as Allama Muhammad Iqbal's Shaheen (eagle), symbolising ambition, courage and the ability to rise above challenges.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding Livestock sector



Deputy Prime Minister/Foreign Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar arriving in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to represent Pakistan at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG) Meeting

President applauds security forces for effective operation against terrorists in Balochistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari, lauded the security forces for successfully eliminating eight India-sponsored terrorists during three separate intelligence-based operations in the Quetta, Noshki and Khuzdar districts of Balochistan. Commending the security forces for their professional capabilities, the president praised them for foiling an attempt to disrupt local traffic in the Panjpai area of Quetta and eliminating the terrorists involved, President Secretariat Media Wing said in a press release.

President Zardari also paid rich tribute to the forces for carrying out an effective operation against a terrorist hideout in Noshki, resulting in the elimination of the terrorists. Furthermore, he appreciated the timely and successful operation in Khuzdar, where security forces targeted a terrorist hideout and recovered 490 kilograms of explosives.

Pakistan asks UN to safeguard Palestinian territorial integrity

UNITED NATIONS (APP): Highlighting the massive Israeli destruction of Gaza, Pakistan has called for the full, good-faith implementation of Security Council Resolution 2803 alongside the New York Declaration to protect Palestinian territorial integrity and ensure a viable pathway to statehood.

"In Gaza, The scale of devastation is staggering, " Pakistani delegate Muhammad Faheem told the UN General Assembly's Second committee, which deals with economic and financial matters.

Faheem, a second secretary in the Pakistan Mission to the UN, was commenting on a report before the Committee submitted by Youssef Chaitani, Chief of the Economic Affairs Section in the Governance and Prevention Cluster of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), on "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan."

"Beyond denying the Palestinian people their fundamental rights, Israel's policies and practices have devastated their economy, deprived them of their land and natural resources, and systematically undermined the foundations of their development and future prosperity, " the Pakistani delegate underscored.

Mining control, factional rivalries continue to fuel unrest in Northern Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Unresolved internal disputes over mining control, revenue distribution, and local rights are driving ongoing violence and unrest in northern Afghanistan, according to a comprehensive report published by Pak Asia Youth Forum.

The report, titled "Gold, Power and Grievance: Afghanistan's Mining Sector and Unrest" says that while the country holds globally significant mineral reserves—including nearly 90 confirmed mineral occurrences and over 30 critical minerals such as lithium, rare earths, copper, and cobalt—mining under Taliban rule operates with little legal restraint or transparency. Subsidiary laws have been repealed, no independent body audits financial proceeds, and concessions have allegedly been handed to commanders and officials through informal applications.

It emphasizes that the ongoing unrest is fueled chiefly by an internal power struggle between the Kandahari leadership and the Haqqani Network over control of the mining sector. Local commanders affiliated with the Haqqani faction have fiercely resisted the transfer of mining authority to Kandahari-aligned officials. This friction intensified following a 2024 leadership reshuffle that shifted the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum from Haqqani-aligned Sheikh Shahabuddin Delawar to Kandahar-aligned Haji Gul Agha (Mullah Hidayatullah Badri). Northeastern provinces like Takhar and Badakhshan represent some of the richest regions for natural resources, containing valuable precious stones, semi-precious stones, and gold. However, local residents face forced displacement, seized farmland, severe environmental damage, violent crackdowns, and unequal economic benefits. Many locals report that the industry benefits only powerful individuals rather than the community.

According to the report, in Badakhshan and Takhar, disputes over gold mines have frequently escalated into deadly clashes between rival Taliban factions, mining companies, and local residents. Notable incidents include a January 2026 clash in the Samti area of Chah Ab district, Takhar, which resulted in four deaths and five injuries. The factional infighting also culminated in armed clashes in Badakhshan's Nusay district involving Haqqani-affiliated commander Jumma Khan Fateh. Fateh ultimately surrendered on August 17, and the Taliban later revealed from an intercepted audio clip that he had contacted the Afghanistan Freedom Front (AFF), an Afghan armed resistance group.

The publication notes that the sector continues to face severe challenges regarding transparency and financial oversight. Major concessions have been allocated through informal applications and personal connections rather than open, competitive tenders. Documented corruption includes a USD 200,000 bribe over the Wikador mine and a USD 700,000 talc scheme in Nangarhar, alongside undisclosed financial stakes held by high-ranking officials in mines such as the Awez gold deposit in Shahri Buzurg.



Federal Minister for Energy Sardar Awais Ahmed Khan Leghari media talk after visit to the Sardar Farooq Ahmed Khan Leghari Airport Expansion Project in Dera Ghazi Khan

We must extend compassion, support to women living with breast cancer: President

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Asif Ali Zardari commended the healthcare professionals, volunteers, patient organisations, researchers and community workers who continue to contribute to breast cancer awareness and support.

In a message on the occasion of Breast Cancer Awareness Day (19 October 2026), he said, "The efforts of doctors are important in strengthening public understanding and supporting women and their families."

He said, "I extend my greetings and best wishes to all those affected by breast cancer, particularly women living with the disease, their families and caregivers, as well as the healthcare professionals working to support them."

"Breast cancer affects thousands of families in Pakistan. Its consequences extend beyond the individual, affecting mothers, daughters, sisters and spouses and placing emotional and social pressures on families. This makes greater awareness, timely medical attention and support for those affected essential, " he added.

He said, "This day provides an opportunity to remind women of the importance of paying attention to their health and seeking appropriate medical advice when they notice changes or have concerns. Greater awareness can help women make informed decisions about their health and encourage timely engagement with healthcare professionals."

"Families and communities also have an important role to play. Women should feel able to discuss their health concerns openly and seek care without fear or hesitation. Understanding and support from family members can help reduce the fear, misinformation and silence that may surround cancer, " he remarked. The President said, "We must continue to promote greater understanding of the factors that influence cancer risk and encourage healthy lifestyles.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman NAB Lt. Gen (R) Nazir Ahmed is holding media briefing at NAB Headquarters

Gwadar to become regional trade, maritime hub

GWADAR, (Agencies): Federal Secretary for Maritime Affairs Capt. (Retd.) Muhammad Khurram Agha has begun a two-day visit to Gwadar to review port operations, ongoing development projects and measures aimed at expanding its role in regional trade and Pakistan's maritime economy.

During a meeting at the Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) headquarters, officials reviewed the progress of key development initiatives, including the Gwadar Free Zone, transit trade, transshipment activities and infrastructure projects.

Upon arrival, the federal secretary was received by GPA Chairman Noor-ul-Haq Baloch and senior officials. He later chaired a meeting to examine administrative matters, port operations and the status of ongoing development schemes. The GPA chairman briefed the secretary on the port's operational position, infrastructure requirements, development activities and future expansion plans. Officials also provided a detailed briefing on the Gwadar desalination plant, which has a stated capacity of producing 1.2 million gallons of water per day.

The facility was discussed in the context of meeting the water requirements associated with the port and surrounding development activities.

Defence Minister questions loyalty of bureaucrats planning to settle abroad

ISLAMABAD (INP): Defence Minister Khawaja Asif questioned the commitment of senior bureaucrats to Pakistan, alleging that a significant number of government officers had planned to settle abroad while still serving the country.

In a statement on X, Asif said that while Pakistan's bureaucracy had capable and honest officers, many officials had made Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom and other European countries their permanent homes over the past several years.

He alleged that some officers had prepared for their relocation under a deliberate plan while employed by the Government of Pakistan, raising questions about their commitment to the country and their official responsibilities during their tenure.

Asif said Portugal had emerged as a destination for what he described as a bureaucratic exodus in recent years. He added that he had raised the issue on social media a few months ago.

The defence minister said the officers whose names had surfaced in connection with the matter had held important positions and had remained close to successive governments.

He further alleged that an individual who facilitated permanent residency (PR) arrangements had fled after collecting substantial sums of money from several influential bureaucrats. Asif said several troubling accounts were circulating in connection with the matter, although he did not provide details or identify the individuals allegedly involved. Questioning the commitment of senior officials who had occupied high offices and enjoyed the privileges and respect associated with public service, Asif asked whether their loyalty to Pakistan remained beyond suspicion throughout their careers.

He also questioned the conduct of officials who, he said, had enjoyed opportunities to accumulate wealth through both legitimate and illegitimate means while remaining favoured by politicians. "Does it rise above all doubt and suspicion, or are they merely in transit?" Asif asked.

Law Minister for equal official passport rules for Senators, MNAs

ISLAMABAD, (APP): Minister for Law and Justice Azam Nazeer Tarar on Monday called for ending the six-year service requirement for Senate members to obtain official passports, saying the rules should be the same for members of the Senate and the National Assembly.

Speaking in the Senate on a bill moved by Senator Abdul Qadir regarding blue passports, he said National Assembly members became eligible for official passports after taking oath, while senators had to complete their six-year term.

He said a senator who resigned a few months before completing the term could lose eligibility, calling the difference unnecessary. Former parliamentarians also took part in political and diplomatic activities and attended international events, including Inter-Parliamentary Union meetings, he added.

Tarar said there could be consensus among political parties on extending the official passport facility to dependent children of current and former parliamentarians up to the age of 28, but the number of eligible people should be properly regulated.

He said an official passport was issued to facilitate official duties, not as a personal privilege. The government would also review and address gaps in rules allowing children of retired grade 21 and 22 officers to obtain official passports up to the age of 28.



In the 8th week of the Trendyol Super Lig, Trabzonspor and Besiktas faced off at Papara Park. Trabzonspor fans supported their team.



Rima Hassan, a French member of European Parliament and a member of the LFI party, and her lawyer Vincent Brengarth, arrived at the courthouse in Paris to attend a hearing in their trial on charges of "praising terrorism."

First Lady urges youth to raise voices against violence, injustice

ISLAMABAD (APP): First Lady of Pakistan Asifa Bhutto Zardari appealed to young Pakistanis to never allow anyone to exploit their faith, frustration or aspirations to spread hatred and violence. She said, "

'Nineteen years ago, on this day, hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis gathered in Karachi to welcome my mother, Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, home after years of exile. "They came with dreams of democracy, peace and a better future. That night, terrorists turned their celebration of hope into a scene of death and destruction, taking the lives of more than 180 innocent people and leaving hundreds injured."

She said, " Today, I remember those brave men and women with profound grief, gratitude and pride. They were not merely political workers. They were fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, ordinary Pakistanis who believed that their country deserved a future free from fear and violence. Their families carry the pain of that terrible night even today." "My mother knew the dangers she faced, yet she refused to surrender to the forces of extremism. She believed that terrorism could not be allowed to dictate Pakistan's destiny or silence the democratic aspirations of its people.

She survived Karsaz, but just seventy days later, terrorism took her life too, " she added. Asifa Bhutto said, "Today, I wish to speak particularly to the young women and men of Pakistan, who represent the overwhelming majority of our population. Most of you were children or had not even been born when the Karsaz tragedy occurred. Yet its lessons belong to your generation, because the future for which so many people sacrificed their lives is now in your hands."

Chief Editor: Syed Abdul Wadood Shah printed at Shah Printing Press, Quetta and Published from Al-Syed Building M.A. Jinnah Road Quetta Ph. 2843190 E.mail: dailyvomqta@gmail.com.