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Pakistan

• Reiterating that the United Nations must play its role in resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions, President Dr Arif Alvi said on October 15, “The unresolved Kashmir dispute poses great threat to regional stability.”

• President Alvi also highlighted strategic stability in South Asia was being threatened by the offensive posture and induction of lethal weapons by India. He, however, also said that Pakistan would not join a nuclear arms race. The President said that discriminatory exemptions for the supply of nuclear technology and supply of advanced military hardware to India had further complicated regional security and undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime. He warned that the introduction of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system and provocative war fighting strategies like Cold Start Doctrine were affecting strategic stability in South Asia.

• Meanwhile Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi highlighted the importance of SCO as “a vital platform to achieve the objectives of peace, security and stability across Eurasia.” Qureshi was speaking at the 17th Council of Heads of Government meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe on October 11.

• Following Finance Minister, Asad Umar’s meeting with Christine Lagarde during the World Bank, IMF Group Annual meetings in Bali earlier this month, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on October 11 that the Pakistani government had “requested for financial assistance from the IMF to help address the country’s economic challenges.”

• Earlier On October 8, 2018, Finance Minister Umar announced that the government has decided to approach the IMF for a bailout to address the country’s balance of payment crisis.

• As part of the US design to pressure Pakistan, the Financial Action Task Force continues to put increasing pressure on Pakistan. On October 11 a delegation of the Task Force asked Pakistan to do more in order to strengthen its legal framework if it wants to avoid being blacklisted by the Paris-based anti-money laundering watchdog.
On October 9, US special representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad visited Islamabad and held talks with Pakistani officials including Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi. Khalilzad’s visit to Islamabad was aimed at seeking help from Islamabad in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. In the past Khalilzad has repeatedly accused Pakistan of fomenting violence in Afghanistan by supporting the Taliban. He had also previously demanded the US to declare Pakistan a terrorist state. Foreign Minister Qureshi while speaking at the US Institute of Peace, highlighted the negative reaction in Pakistan due to Khalilzad’s appointment as US envoy on Afghanistan. He urged Khalilzad to be more sensitive to opinions in Pakistan.

During talks with his US counterpart Mike Pompeo on October 2, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi reiterated Pakistan’s position that there was no military solution to the Afghan conflict. Qureshi stated that Pakistan would continue to support efforts for an Afghan-owned and -led peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. In a separate meeting with US National Security Adviser John Bolton Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi discussed the situation in Afghanistan and highlighted India’s aggressive posturing in South Asia.

**International**

In a major setback for Pakistan, on October 5 India signed a deal worth $5 billion to purchase the S-400 air defence system from Russia. According to speculations the State Department will not impose sanctions on India because New Delhi remains a major defence partner for the United States, with a view to countering the rise of China. Senior officials within the US Department of Defence support exemptions to India from the sanctions permissible under specific conditions.

On October 10, US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad met Taliban representatives in Qatar. After the meeting, Taliban officials claimed that Khalilzad has agreed to hold talks on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan’s High Peace Council denied the claims made by the Taliban on the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country.

Earlier on October 9, Khalilzad concluded his visit to Kabul where he met with a number of Afghan officials including Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah. However, a statement from the Taliban demanded a complete withdrawal of foreign forces as the only solution to end the war.
On October 1, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres expressed concern over the situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and said that he encourages “positive dialogue” for a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

---Amina Afzal
Domestic

- According to the *NY Times* on October 15, Democratic candidates are overtaking their Republican rivals in fund-raising for key congressional races.

According to reports however, huge checks from conservatives will guarantee that their side will remain financially competitive in the weeks before the November 2018 midterms. Democrats outraised their Republican opponents in 32 of the closest 45 House races by a total margin of $154 million to $108 million since November 2016, according to an analysis of reports filed with the Federal Election Commission. Even in the 13 targeted races in which Republicans outraised their Democratic rivals, the margin was a less gaping $41 million to $31 million.

- On October 14, Sears, the store that pioneered the strategy of selling everything to everyone, filed for bankruptcy protection and laid out a plan for turning its business around.

*The company lost its position as a retail innovator long ago, falling far behind big-box rivals like Walmart and Home Depot and the e-commerce giant Amazon. Now, Sears is using a Chapter 11 filing in Federal Bankruptcy Court in New York to cut its debts and keep operating at least through the holidays. The company said it would close 142 unprofitable stores. It will need creditors to agree that it should be re-organised rather than liquidated, as other bankrupt retailers have been.*

- According to the *NY Times* on October 13, Jared Kushner paid no federal income tax for years.

*The NY Times report asserts that confidential documents reviewed by the Times indicate that Jared Kushner, President Trump’s son-in-law and adviser, probably paid little or no income tax from 2009 to 2016. The revelation about Kushner’s minimal tax payments come as President Trump’s taxes are under renewed scrutiny. According to another recent NY Times report President Trump participated in outright fraud that shielded his family’s fortune from estate and gift taxes.*

- President Trump responded to falling stock prices on October 11 by continuing to criticise the Federal Reserve, which he described as “crazy,” “loco,” “going wild” and “out of control” for slowly raising interest rates against the backdrop of a booming economy.
No other president has publicly criticised the Fed with such malevolence or frequency. According to observers the only close historical parallel was with President Andrew Jackson, who campaigned successfully in the 1830s to close the Fed’s predecessor, the Second Bank of the United States. Trump’s sharp criticism reflects the high political stakes less than a month before midterm elections that have been cast by his political opponents as a referendum on his presidency.

- On October 10, Hurricane Michael slammed into Florida.

The hurricane is being described as one of the most powerful storms ever to hit the continental United States. It unleashed a trail of destruction across 200 miles splintering houses, peeling off roofs and stirring up a “terrifying surge of seawater that submerged entire neighborhoods”. Florida’s government said nearly 6,700 people were in 54 shelters and that close to 30,000 customers lost electricity before the storm’s landfall. A series of transformer explosions and other mishaps resulted in a power failure affecting 388,000 homes and businesses. The National Guard activated 3,500 troops, and the authorities said 1.5 million meals were ready to be distributed. Some one million gallons of water were also prepared. Meanwhile hospitals were pummelled by the storm as they sought to evacuate patients.

- On October 7, Justice Brett M. Kavanaugh arrived at his new chambers to prepare for the arguments the court is to hear as it enters the second week of its term.

Even as Kavanaugh’s supporters hope he can settle into the court’s work and demonstrate that he is an able judge, his critics assert the court may never fully recover from a confirmation process marked by raw anger and partisan polarisation.

- On October 6, Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court.

The confirmation was based on what is being described as the slimmest margin in US history resulting in a conservative majority on the court. It comes in the backdrop of a midterm election where the control of Congress is at stake. It provided Republicans what they believe is momentum to ensure that they keep their thin Senate majority. Republicans are portraying Democrats and their activist allies as angry mobs. Senator John Cornyn, Republican of Texas, delivered a speech on Saturday assailing what he called “mob rule,” while the majority leader, Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, told reporters that “the virtual mob that has assaulted all of us in this process has turned our base on fire.” Numerous women in the Senate’s public galleries interrupted the proceedings with cries of “Shame!,” Senators voted 50 to 48 along party lines to confirm Judge Kavanaugh. Both Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. and the retired Justice Anthony M. Kennedy later swore him in.
According to reports on October 5 hundreds of protesters against US President Donald Trump’s Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh were arrested in Washington, DC.

Comedian Amy Schumer and model Emily Ratajkowski were among 302 women held for demonstrating against the nominee. Republicans earlier declared an FBI report had exonerated him of sexual assault allegations. However, Democrats said the five-day inquiry was "incomplete" because the White House limited it. The Senate will hold a procedural vote on the nominee on October 5, 2018. The likelihood of Judge Kavanaugh winning a full Senate vote appeared to increase on October 4, 2018 after two Republicans whose backing will be essential gave a positive account of the FBI inquiry. However, the confirmation is not a certainty, with several senators undecided and one at risk of missing a vote because he is attending his daughter’s wedding. If confirmed to the lifetime position on America’s highest court, the 53-year-old is expected to help conservatives dominate the nine-member panel, which has the final say on issues such as abortion, gun control and voting rules.

On October 3, Senior White House officials expressed confidence that information collected by the FBI will ease the path for senators to confirm Judge Brett M. Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.

The comments came after officials reviewed summaries of interviews conducted by the FBI. The material was conveyed to Capitol Hill in the middle of the night, just hours after Senate Republicans set the stage for a pair of votes later in the week to move to approve Judge Kavanaugh’s confirmation. According to the White House statement on Twitter, “The White House has received the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s supplemental background investigation into Judge Kavanaugh, and it is being transmitted to the Senate,” and also, “This is the last addition to the most comprehensive review of a Supreme Court nominee in history, which includes extensive hearings, multiple committee interviews, over 1,200 questions for the record and over a half million pages of documents.” The final tweet said, “With this additional information, the White House is fully confident the Senate will vote to confirm Judge Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court.” In a related development on October 3, more than 2400 Law Professors from across the United States wrote a letter to the US Senate urging Senators to not confirm Kavanaugh to the US Supreme Court.

On October 2, President Trump mocked Christine Blasey Ford.

Ford’s allegation of sexual assault has upended Trump’s effort to install Judge Kavanaugh on the Supreme Court, escalating a battle that has already polarised Washington and the country. Trump directly assailed Christine Blasey Ford. The President pretended to be Dr. Blasey testifying before the Senate Judiciary Committee “Thirty-six years ago this happened. I had one beer, right? I had one beer,” said Trump, channeling his version of Dr. Blasey. His voice
dripping with derision, he then imitated her being questioned at the hearing, followed by her responses about what she could not recall about the alleged attack.

- On October 5 a jury found Jason Van Dyke, a Chicago police officer, guilty of second-degree murder for the shooting of 17-year-old Laquan McDonald in 2014.

Chicago had been waiting for the decision for months. Officer Van Dyke, was also convicted of 16 counts of aggravated battery with a firearm, one for each bullet that struck the teenager, Laquan McDonald. No Chicago police officer has been convicted of murder in an on-duty shooting in nearly 50 years. Residents had braced themselves for the possibility of an acquittal and a furious response that seemed certain to follow. However, when the verdict came, protesters who had gathered outside the courthouse suddenly broke into cheers. Others wept, calling out: “Justice for Laquan!”

- According to the *New York Times* on October 5 unemployment rate in the US fell to a nearly five-decade low in September 2018.

According to observers the US economy is “humming”. Gross domestic product is on pace for its best year since the housing bubble of the mid-2000s. Consumers and businesses are the most confident they have been in years, if not decades. Stock market indexes are near record highs. The latest milestone came in a report from the Labor Department: The unemployment rate fell to 3.7% in September 2018, the lowest since December 1969, when hundreds of thousands of working-age Americans were serving in Vietnam.

- On October 5, Elon Musk mocked the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) merely days after reaching an agreement with it over fraud charges.

The Tesla boss tweeted the “Shortseller Enrichment Commission”, as he dubbed the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC), was doing “incredible work”. On September 30, 2018 Musk had agreed to step down as Tesla Chairman and pay a $20m fine over tweets that he had funding to take Tesla private. The deal followed the SEC’s decision to sue him for alleged securities fraud. The SEC declined to comment on Musk’s latest tweet.

**International**

- On October 14 Saudi Arabia severely criticised President Trump for promising “severe punishment” if the royal court was responsible for Jamal Khashoggi’s murder.

*If Saudi Arabia “receives any action, it will respond with greater action,” the Saudi Foreign Ministry said in a statement, citing the country’s “influential and vital role in the global
economy.” Saudi Arabia “affirms its total rejection of any threats and attempts to undermine it, whether by threatening to impose economic sanctions, using political pressures, or repeating false accusations,” the Foreign Ministry said. Meanwhile Senator Marco Rubio, Republican of Florida, said that curbing arms sales remains a possibility if it is determined that the Saudi government did indeed kill the journalist, Jamal Khashoggi.

- On October 10 the Trump Administration said it would more aggressively monitor foreign investment in the United States.

The Administration outlined a rigorous review system that is aimed primarily at preventing China from gaining access to sensitive American technology. The investment restrictions will allow the United States to block a far wider array of foreign transactions that are deemed a threat to national security, including minority stakes and joint ventures in technology, telecommunications and other cutting-edge companies. Even as the Congress passed the expanded review system into law in the summer of 2018, the Administration has signaled its resolve to apply its new authority very broadly. It plans to review any foreign transaction involving a business that designs or produces technology related to 27 industries, including telecom, semiconductors and computers.

- CNN reported on October 5 that India could soon face the threat of US sanctions if it decides to go ahead with a controversial $5 billion weapons deal with Russia.

According to observers the proposed sanctions pose a greater headache for Washington than Delhi. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin for formal talks in the Indian capital New Delhi on October 5, 2018. India’s potential purchase of Moscow’s high-tech S-400 Triumph surface-to-air missile defence system is high on the agenda. The deal, which analysts expect to be signed during the meeting, could potentially open India up to US sanctions under legislation known as Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). The law, signed by President Donald Trump in August 2017, is designed to punish Moscow for its “malign activities.” In September 2018 the US imposed sanctions against China for its purchases of Russian military equipment, including the S-400, under CAATSA legislation.

- On October 5 US President Donald Trump signed into law HR 302 or the “FAA Reauthorisation Act of 2018”.

The act reauthorises the Federal Aviation Administration and related revenue authorities through September 30, 2023. It modifies the Federal Emergency Management Agency’s disaster assistance authorities; provides $1.68 billion in emergency supplemental appropriations for the Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Community Development Fund for long-term
disaster recovery; further integrates unmanned aircraft systems into the Nation’s airspace systems; and establishes a United States International Development Finance Corporation. According to observers President Trump is now seeking to counter China’s growing geopolitical influence. He is thus embracing a major expansion of foreign aid to increase infrastructure projects in Africa, Asia and the Americas lending support to an initiative he once sought to put an end to. The move was a significant reversal for Trump, who has harshly criticised foreign aid from the opening moments of his presidential campaign in 2015.

- On October 4 Vice President Mike Pence launched a broad attack against Beijing accusing China of “predatory” economic practices, military aggression against the US and of trying to undermine President Donald Trump and harm his chances of winning re-election.

Citing Trump’s move to levy tariffs on $250 billion in Chinese imports and threatening to “levy even more, with the possibility of substantially more than doubling that number,” Pence said that “the American people deserve to know that, in response to the strong stand that President Trump has taken, Beijing is pursuing a comprehensive and coordinated campaign to undermine support for the President.” Pence quoted US intelligence agencies but offered no evidence to back up his claims, which are likely to inflame relations between Washington and Beijing, already at their lowest point in years thanks to the burgeoning trade war, policy differences and US allegations of political interference. Meanwhile the Pentagon is also set to release a report On October 5, 2018 accusing China of seeking to undermine the US military's industrial base, the latest in a series of US jabs at Beijing. The study, mandated by US President Donald Trump in 2017 in an executive order identified nearly 300 “vulnerabilities” that could affect the supply of critical materials and other supplies essential to support the United States military. One of the most pressing concerns is Beijing's control over the supply of critical technologies and materials, which could pose a significant risk to US industries that are vital to national security, the report said.

Latin America

- On October 7 far-right candidate, Jair Bolsonaro, won the first round of Brazil’s Presidential Election.

Bolsonaro will now face the left-wing Workers’ Party candidate, Fernando Haddad, in the second round on October 28, 2018 after he failed to win the 50% of valid votes needed to win outright. With almost all the votes counted, Bolsonaro had 46% and Haddad 29%. Opinion polls conducted before the election predicted that a second round would end in a tie.
• On October 1, Mexico’s President Elect, Andrés Manuel López Obrador hailed the last-minute negotiations that salvaged the NAFTA agreement.

“To us, the agreement looks to be very good for Mexico,” said Jesús Seade, who represented Obrador on the Mexican negotiating team. Both López Obrador, and Enrique Peña Nieto, Mexican President, welcomed news of the agreement. According to observers Mexico glossed over the fact that it had made concessions particularly in the auto industry, a key concern for President Trump. Obrador previously had deep misgivings about the North American Free Trade Agreement. Meanwhile US President Trump said that the revised North American Free Trade Agreement with Mexico and Canada would pour “cash and jobs” into the United States.

---Amina Afzal
On October 15, President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi said that strategic stability in South Asia was being threatened by India owing to the country’s induction of destabilising weapon systems including the Ballistic Missile Defence system (BMD) and adoption of limited war fighting strategies such as the Cold Start Doctrine.

President Alvi made these comments during his keynote address at the inaugural session of a two-day International Conference titled “The Global Non-proliferation Regime: Challenges and Responses,” organised by the Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad. President Alvi said that the introduction of the BMD system and provocative war fighting strategies like Cold Start Doctrine are affecting strategic stability in South Asia. He indicated that Pakistan was committed to the objective of strategic stability in the region. He said, “While Pakistan will continue to demonstrate restraint and responsibility, no one should doubt our resolve to deny any space for war to those seeking such an opportunity despite the existence of nuclear weapons in South Asia.” During the conference Pakistan’s Human Rights Minister Dr. Shireen Mazari also highlighted challenges to the global non-proliferation regime and strategic stability in South Asia. While chairing the first session of the conference, Dr. Mazari said that India’s BMD system, development of sea-launched capabilities, and US support for India’s NSG membership continue to undermine strategic stability in South Asia. She also stressed that Pakistan would not join the Treaty on Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) or the Ban Treaty as long as India does not join it.

On October 11, the US State Department said that India’s purchase of oil from Iran and procurement of Russian S-400 air defence system would not help the country.

On October 5, India signed a deal worth $5.2 billion with Russia to acquire five advanced S-400 air defence systems, despite possibility of US sanctions.

India Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed the deal during the 19th India-Russia bilateral annual summit. However, there was no public signing. On September 28, 2018, the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security, headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the procurement. The Cabinet Committee on Security needs to provide the final approval for any defence procurement before signing a contract. Developed by Russia’s state-owned company Almaz-Antey, the S-400 is an advance surface-to-air missile system. With a strike range of 400 kilometres, the S-400 system is capable of shooting down aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles. India is procuring the system despite the possibility of inviting sanctions from the US under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA). Section 231 of the CAATSA has mandated the Trump Administration to impose sanctions on any nation entering into high-value deals to procure military hardware from Russia. On September 20, 2018, the US imposed sanction on the Chinese arms procurement agency, Equipment
Development Department (EED), and its director Li Shangfu, over the purchase of missiles and fighter jets from Russia. The procurements referred to by the State Department comprise China’s acquisition of 10 Sukhoi Su-35 fighter aircraft and an initial batch of S-400 surface-to-air missiles. However, US President Donald Trump has also signed the John S. McCain National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2019 into law on August 13, 2018, seeking to amend an existing law to provide waivers to US’ strategic partners including India from punitive sanctions for purchasing Russian arms. It is not clear whether the Trump Administration would provide India with the waiver on the S-400. In response to the signing of the deal on October 5, 2018, a White House National Security Council spokesperson said that the waiver on CAATSA sanctions was narrow and it was meant to wean countries off Russian equipment and allow for items including spare-parts of previously purchased military equipment. On October 10, 2018, President Trump said that India “will soon find out” about his decision on the CAATSA sanctions. Hours after President Trump’s statement regarding Washington’s response to India’s purchase of S-400 system, the US State Department said on October 11, 2018, that the procurement of the system would not be helpful for India. US State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert said, “When we hear about things such as purchasing oil or of the S-400 systems, it’s not helpful.”

During the 19th India-Russia bilateral annual summit, Prime Minister Modi and President Putin also signed eight agreements covering space, nuclear energy and railways. On nuclear energy, both India and Russia agreed to set up a nuclear power plant with six light-water reactor units at a new site. Russian state-owned reactor manufacturer Rosatom indicated that Russia would build its third-generation VVER reactor on the new site and would increase the level of participation of Indian companies in the project. However, India has not yet decided about the location of the new site.

- On October 10, Vladimir Yermakov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department, announced that Russia was prepared for the extension of the Treaty on the Measures for the Further Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms, also known as the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START).

- On October 8, Russia challenged the US’ claim that it has fulfilled its obligations under the New START.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said that it could not verify US Statement Department’s data that the country complied with the requirements of the 2010 New START. On February 5, 2018, both the US and Russia had announced that they have met their obligation of reducing their deployed strategic nuclear forces under the Treaty. Under article II of the treaty, both the US and Russia are obligated to limit their deployed strategic nuclear warheads and bombs to 1,550, deployed intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs), submarine launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs), and heavy bombers assigned to nuclear missions to 700. The deployed and non-deployed ICBM
launchers, SLBM launchers, and bombers are limited to 800. Russia argued that the US failed to allow Russia verify the US’s claim, and failed to list four land-based missile silos converted for training purposes.

In a related development on October 10, 2018, Vladimir Yermakov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department, said that Russia was prepared to discuss the extension of the New START. While addressing a meeting of the UNGA first committee, Yermakov said that Russia was ready to explore the option of extending the New START for another five years after resolving the issues concerning the existing agreement. He said first it was necessary to tackle all remaining issues concerning US’ compliance with the treaty. He indicated that the issue at hand was the US’ refusal to take into account a sizeable part of its strategic offensive arms when counting their total number.

- On October 8, Pakistan successfully test-fired Ghauri or Hatf-V, the liquid-fuelled, single-stage medium-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile.

According to Pakistan’s Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), the launch was conducted by Army Strategic Forces Command and was aimed at testing the operational and technical readiness of the latter. With a strike range of 1300 kilometres, the missile can carry both conventional and nuclear warheads. The ISPR said that the launch of the missile consolidates Pakistan’s nuclear capability which is aimed at peace and stability through a credible deterrence regime.

- On October 4, Russia accused the US of running a secret chemical weapons lab at the Richard Lugar Public Health Research Centre, located in the Georgian settlement of Alekseyevka.

Major General Igor Kirillov, Chief of Russia’s Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Protection Troops, said that Russia was expecting a clear-cut answer from the US for maintaining the lab. Kirillov claimed that a list of patents from the Centre showed that the US had developed various types of munitions intended for delivering chemical and biological agents. He also accused the US of testing deadly drugs and highly lethal biological agents on patients at the Lugar Centre under the guise of medical research. Vladimir Yermakov, Director of the Russian Foreign Ministry’s Non-Proliferation and Arms Control Department, said that Russia would take all necessary political and military measures in response to the US’ biological and chemical weapons experiments.

- In its first public statement about North Korean nuclear weapons’ size on October 2, South Korea said that North Korea is estimated to have up to 60 nuclear weapons.

Unification Minister Cho Myoung-gyon indicated that the “estimates on the size of North Korea’s nuclear arsenal range from 20 bombs to as many as 60.” He made these comments during his address to the South Korean parliament on the latest findings of the country’s intelligence agency the National Intelligence Service. Hours later, the Unification Ministry
issued a statement clarifying that Cho has unintentionally revealed that information. The Ministry said that Cho’s comments did not mean that South Korea would accept North Korea as a nuclear state.

- On October 2, the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) Chief, Yukiya Amano, said that the Agency’s independence was paramount and it did not take intelligence presented to it at face value.

Amano said, “The Agency continues to evaluate Iran’s declarations under the Additional Protocol, and has conducted complementary accesses under the Additional Protocol to all the sites and locations in Iran which it needed to visit.” He indicated that the IAEA uses all safeguards relevant information available to it but it does not take any information at face value. His comments came in response to a direct challenge from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asking the IAEA Chief to personally and immediately visit what he called a secret atomic warehouse in Iran. In his September 27, 2018, speech to the UN General Assembly, Netanyahu displayed photographs taken by Israeli intelligence showing a secret site in Tehran for storing massive amounts of equipment and material for a secret nuclear weapons programme. Netanyahu said, “Well, Mr. Amano, do the right thing. Go inspect this atomic warehouse, immediately, before the Iranians finish clearing it out.” Amano clarified that verification activities in Iran were being carried out based on the Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement (CSA) concluded with Iran and the Additional Protocol. He also said that the Agency was also carrying out verification and monitoring of Iran’s nuclear-related commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

--- Moiz Khan
China

- Speaking at the Hudson Institute in Washington D.C on October 5, US Vice President, Mike Pence accused China of meddling in the US elections.

The US Vice President’s remarks followed President Trump’s claims that China was meddling in the US midterm elections. However, neither Trump nor Pence have provided any details of Chinese meddling. China has rejected Pence’s charges as “unwarranted” and “ridiculous.” Tensions between the two economic powers have increased in recent months after the Trump Administration imposed $200 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods. China retaliated with $60 billion in tariffs on products made in the United States.

- On October 8, US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo visited Beijing and held talks with Chinese Foreign Minister and State Councilor, Wang Yi.

During the talks, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi accused the US of escalating trade disputes, interfering on Taiwan and meddling in the country’s domestic affairs. Wang Yi told his US counterpart that such actions have “damaged our mutual trust and cast a shadow over China-US relations.” Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo declared “fundamental disagreement” over these issues. In September 2018, the Trump Administration angered Beijing by approving a $330 million arms shipment to Taiwan in defiance of Chinese demands to cancel the deal.

South Korea

- During his visit to Seoul on October 7, Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo met with South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

During his visit to Seoul, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced that the US and North Korea have agreed to arrange a second US-North Korea summit “as soon as possible.” Before arriving in Seoul, Pompeo visited Pyongyang where he met with North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un. According to the US State Department, Pompeo and Kim “refined options for the location and date of the next summit.” Meanwhile, Moon expressed hope that the proposed meeting between Kim and Trump would make “irreversible, decisive progress in terms of denuclearisation as well as the peace process.” In a related development on October 6, 2018, US Secretary of State Pompeo visited Tokyo and met with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. During the talks both leaders vowed to work together for the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

- On October 12, South Korean President, Moon Jae-in urged the US to come to terms with North Korea’s demand for a formal declaration of an end to the Korean war.
He said that North Korea has stopped all nuclear and missile tests, dismantled its only nuclear test site and is now dismantling its missile engine test facilities. The US has refused to declare an end to the 1950-53 Korean war, when hostilities halted with a ceasefire instead of a peace treaty, insisting that North Korea should first give up its nuclear arsenal.

- On October 15, South Korean Unification Minister, Cho Myoung-gyon held talks with his North Korean counterpart, Ri Son-gwon, during their meeting in Panmunjom.

In September 2018, North Korea and South Korea agreed to halt military exercises, gradually remove landmines and guard posts within the Demilitarised Zone (DMZ), and establish an extensive no-fly zone near their border. As an initial step, the two sides began removing landmines at the Joint Security Area (JSA) and are due to withdraw “unnecessary” surveillance equipment once the landmine work is completed.

Japan

- According to the Associated Press on October 15, Japanese Prime Minister, Shinzo Abe renewed his pledge to push for a revision to the country’s war-renouncing constitution, in which he wants the military explicitly mentioned.

Abe wants to revise Article 9 of the Japanese constitution which bans the use of the Self-Defence Forces in settling international disputes. Abe wants to expand the force’s international role by revising Article 9. In 2015, Abe’s government passed a defence law allowing Japanese troops to defend US and other allies in case of foreign attack.

---Muhammad Abdul Qadeer
EUROPE

- On October 15, at least 10 people were killed following flash floods in the Aude region of southern France.

  Local authorities say several months’ worth of rain fell in just a few hours overnight, leaving roads blocked in some areas. The death toll was revised down from 13, France’s interior ministry explained, because of an error which meant some of the dead had been counted twice.

- On October 14, hurricane-force winds struck central and northern Portugal, leaving 300,000 homes without power.

  The remnants of Hurricane Leslie swept in overnight with winds gusting up to 176km/h. Civil defence officials said 27 people suffered minor injuries, with localised flooding, hundreds of trees uprooted and a number of flights cancelled. The storm, one of the most powerful to ever hit the country, is now passing over northern Spain.

- On October 11, search continued for missing people following flash flooding in parts of Spain, Italy and France.

  Twelve people died when torrential rain lashed eastern Majorca in Spain. An eight-year-old local boy is still missing. Three Germans and a Dutch woman were among those who lost their lives. A flash flood on France’s south coast killed two people in Sainte-Maxime while a woman was found dead after a storm in Sardinia, Italy.

- On October 14, thirty-eight years after being gunned down in a hospital church in El Salvador, Archbishop Óscar Romero was named a saint.

  Pope Francis also canonised Pope Paul VI, who is credited with continuing the work begun by Pope John XXIII and bringing the church into the modern era with reforms wrought from the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s. The Pope said Archbishop Romero “left the security of the world, even his own safety, in order to give his life according to the Gospel, close to the poor and to his people.” Of the pope, he said, “Even in the midst of tiredness and misunderstanding, Paul VI bore witness in a passionate way to the beauty and the joy of following Christ totally.” Francis canonised seven people at the ceremony, which was attended by 70,000 people in St. Peter’s Square, according to the Vatican.

- During an October 14 election in Bavaria, voters overwhelmingly abandoned Chancellor Angela Merkel’s conservative allies.
Rather than shifting their allegiance mostly to the anti-immigrant far right, however, they gave the biggest boost to the pro-refugee Greens who have been described as a rising liberal force. The Christian Social Union, a key component of Merkel’s fragile coalition government, remains the strongest party in the region. But it lost the absolute majority it had held in Bavaria almost without interruption since the 1960s.

- On March 13, more than 100,000 people marched in the German capital Berlin to protest against xenophobia and the increasing influence of the far right.

Rights groups organised the rally, as marchers held placards reading “Indivisible” and “United against racism”. Support for the anti-immigration AfD party has increased in recent years. The Alternative for Germany entered parliament for the first time last year, becoming the biggest opposition party, and is expected to make a strong showing in elections in the southern state of Bavaria.

- On October 13 Italy’s Interior Ministry said all migrants in the southern town of Riace must be transferred.

The migrants will be moved to other migrant centers in coming days. The move comes days after the arrest of the town's mayor, Domenico Lucano, over his alleged role organising “marriages of convenience” for immigration purposes. He has been put under house arrest amid a national debate about integration. His arrest follows months of tougher migration enforcement from Italy’s populist government.

- NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg visited the aircraft carrier USS Harry S. Truman in the North Sea on October 12 together with the Supreme Allied Commander Europe, General Curtis Scaparrotti.

The USS Truman is en route to participate in NATO’s biggest exercise in years, Trident Juncture 2018, joining around sixty other ships from across the Alliance. Earlier on October 10 British troops landed at Rotterdam in the Netherlands as German tanks boarded a cargo ship on their way to Norway for Exercise Trident Juncture 2018 NATO’s largest since the Cold War. Around 50,000 troops and 10,000 vehicles from all 29 NATO countries, as well as Sweden and Finland, will come together for the Trident Juncture exercise, which starts in Norway on October 25, 2018.

- On October 10 five members of the Jehovah’s Witness religious group were detained in Russia on weapons and extremism charges.
The denomination has faced scrutiny in Russia in recent years and was forcibly disbanded in 2017. Human rights groups have accused the government of a "sweeping" campaign of persecution against members. In 2017 they were added to a list of extremist organisations, effectively criminalising their religious activity.

- On October 10 British Prime Minister Theresa May urged MPs to “put the national interest first” when deciding whether to approve a Brexit deal later in 2018.

Talking about the issue May said she was working to secure the best possible agreement that respected the 2016 vote. MPs, she said, had a duty to voters to ensure the UK left the EU in March, but in a way, which protected jobs. The EU has said “decisive progress” is needed in the coming days.

- On October 11, the European Commission’s high level multi-stakeholder platform on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) met for the second time.

The Platform brings together a diverse group of high level representatives with different backgrounds and areas of knowledge. Experts from academia, non-governmental organisations, business, civil society, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions advise the Commission on delivering the SDGs at EU level, and exchange best practices at local, regional, national and EU level. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 associated targets are global in nature, universally applicable and interlinked.

- On October 10, WHO released the Environmental Noise Guidelines for the European Region.

The Guidelines provide strong evidence that noise is one of the top environmental hazards to both physical and mental health and well-being in the European Region. Officially launched to countries and stakeholders in Basel, Switzerland, the document identifies levels at which noise has significant health impacts and recommends actions to reduce exposure. For the first time, a comprehensive and rigorous methodological framework was applied to develop the recommendations.

- On October 10, Poland’s President Andrzej Duda appointed 27 new Supreme Court judges, despite internal and European Union pressure not do so.

The European Commission has referred Poland to the European Court of Justice over its judiciary policies. Earlier in 2018 the government lowered the retirement age of judges, forcing many to retire. Opponents say the move aims to appoint favourable replacements, undermining
democracy and judicial independence. The country’s governing Law and Justice party (PiS) said the legal change, which forces judges to step down at 65 instead of 70, was necessary to rid the court of communist-era judges and improve the court's efficiency.

- On October 9 European stocks moved higher despite ongoing tensions between Italy and the European Union (EU) over Rome’s budget spending plans.

The pan-European Stoxx 600 provisionally finished up 0.26 percent during afternoon deals, with most sectors and major bourses in negative territory. The FTSE 100 gained 0.11% while Germany’s DAX and France’s CAC 40 gained 0.31% and 0.47% respectively. Sterling gained sharply towards the end of European trade. The UK pound reached up above the $1.31 handle after traders cited a Dow Jones report that suggested that EU and UL divorce terms could be resolved by October 15, 2018.

- According to CNBC on October 9, market players have lost confidence in the Italian finance minister's pledges to deliver a sound budget.

“The market lost confidence in Tria after he could not deliver on his promise to have a budget deficit below 2 percent in 2019, instead Di Maio and to a lesser extend Salvini (the two deputy prime ministers) forced Tria to accept a higher budget deficit,” Carsten Hesse, European economist at Berenberg said.

- On October 4 several countries including the US, UK and the Netherlands accused Russian spies of involvement in a series of cyber-plots across the globe, leading the US to level charges against seven agents.

The US justice department said targets included the global chemical weapons watchdog, anti-doping agencies and a US nuclear company. The allegations are part of an organised campaign against alleged Russian cyber-attacks around the world. Russia dismissed the allegations as “Western spy mania”. The Netherlands has accused four Russians of plotting to hack the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), which had been probing the chemical attack on a Russian ex-spy in the UK. The UK government accused Russia of being behind four high profile cyber attacks whose targets included firms in Russia and Ukraine; the US Democratic Party; and a small TV network in the UK. The US said its anti-doping agency, football’s governing body Fifa and the US nuclear energy company Westinghouse were targeted by Russian intelligence. Canada said “with high confidence” that breaches at its centre for ethics in sports and at the Montreal-based World Anti-Doping Agency were carried out by Russian intelligence. Meanwhile the Dutch authorities said a laptop seized from the four suspects in April 2018 was found to have been used in Brazil, Switzerland and Malaysia. In Malaysia, the Netherlands said, it was used to target the investigation into the downing of
Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014 over territory held by Russian-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine. All 298 people on board were killed.

- On October 2 the Italian government announced its new financial policy. The European Union and the markets are yet to accept it. The government cut growth forecasts and went ahead with higher spending, despite some backlash from European officials. The populist cabinet made it clear however that the expenses would not only involve social measures but also investments.

- According to French officials on October 2, Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence was behind a plot to bomb a rally of Iranian opposition groups in Paris in June 2018. In a statement, the French government said it had frozen the assets of two senior Iranian officials. Iran insists the alleged plot is a fabrication, but has called for talks. In a possibly linked development police in the French city of Dunkirk raided a Shia Muslim centre that has close ties to Iran. They made several arrests and froze the assets of the group.

- On October 2, Protesters in Barcelona clashed with police as thousands took to the streets there and in cities across Catalonia to mark the first anniversary of the contested referendum on independence from Spain. More than 180,000 demonstrators marched in Barcelona. Police wielding batons broke up a demonstration in front of the Catalan regional parliament. Hundreds of activists occupied high-speed rail tracks for several hours.

---Amina Afzal
GLOBAL TERRORISM

- On October 1, India and Uzbekistan signed 17 pacts to strengthen their bilateral defence and counter terrorism ties.

During bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uzbek President Shaykat Mirziyoyev, the two sides agreed to hold joint military training exercises in counter terrorism and cooperate in the fields of military education and medicine. Noting the importance of a safe and secure regional environment for development and prosperity, the two sides agreed to work closely in addressing threats and challenges to national as well as regional security. They also agreed to institute a regular dialogue on their shared view that countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestations remains important for sustainable peace and security in Afghanistan. The two leaders reiterated their support for efforts of a genuine Afghan-owned, Afghan-led and Afghan-controlled peace and reconciliation process.

- On October 2, French police officers raided the headquarters of Centre Zahra France, a Muslim Association for allegedly supporting Hezbollah.

Some 200 police officers raided not only the headquarters of the Association but also the homes of its members. The raid took place in the town of Grande-Synthe, near the port city of Dunkirk on the northern coast. According to the authorities, Yahia Gouasmi the head of the association has spoken in support of Lebanese Islamist group Hezbollah and the Iranian leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Consequently, Gouasmi’s financial assets have been frozen. The authorities questioned 11 other suspects out of which 3 were arrested during the operation.

- On October 2, at least 13 people were killed in a suicide bombing on an Afghan election campaign in Nangarhar.

The terrorist attack was the first suicide assault since the commencement of the parliamentary election campaign. More than 55 people were injured. Afghanistan’s parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 20, 2018 and according to the Independent Election Commission, five candidates have already been murdered in target killings. There have been a number of attacks on voter registration centres including the suicide blast in Kabul. The international community is hoping for the vote to happen before the November 2018 ministerial meeting in Geneva as that would demonstrate the Afghan government’s progress. However, bureaucratic inefficiency, allegations of industrial-scale fraud and a last-minute pledge for biometric verification of voters threaten to derail the election and any hope of a credible result.

- On October 4, Under Secretary General of the United Nation’s Counter Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov, gave a statement at the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) permanent council meeting in Vienna.

The United Nations and the OSCE share many priorities, including their commitment to counter and prevent terrorism with policies and methods that promote multilateralism and do not
compromise their respect for the rule of law and human rights. According to Voronkov, there is a need to build new partnerships at global, regional and national levels. He said, “We need to strengthen the resilience and cohesion of our societies, joining families, communities and the state together with a common purpose - to withstand terrorist ideologies and challenge those who espouse them.” Voronkov and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger signed a Memorandum of Understanding to improve cooperation between the UNOCT and the OSCE Secretariat to work together on projects on a co-funding basis where their priorities overlap, such as border security and management, preventing violent extremism conducive to terrorism, preventing terrorist use of the Internet, and ensuring the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

• On October 8, Iran passed an anti-terror financing bill.

The bill was passed with a margin of 143 votes in favour and 120 against it. It is part of an effort to placate the inter-government Financial Action Task Force, which has given Iran a deadline of October 2018 to tighten regulations against money laundering and terror financing and to accede to the UN Terrorism Financing Convention. Tehran hopes that this step will ease US pressure on European governments as well as Russia and China, all of whom are seeking to salvage the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, known as the Iran nuclear deal. The government of Iranian President Hassan Rohani is intent on removing Washington’s diplomatic ammunition and giving the European Union the guarantee, it needs to help Iran get around US sanctions. President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from the accord in May and his administration is in the process of reinstating crippling sanctions against Iran, with the next round set to go into effect on November 5, 2018.

• On October 9, The Republic of Belarus and OSCE held a conference on “Preventing and Countering Terrorism in the Digital Age”.

Under Secretary General of the United Nation’s Counter Terrorism Office, Vladimir Voronkov addressed the conference by highlighting the positive outcomes of technological advancement. He emphasised the growing dangers and threats of these developments. Terrorist have exploited these innovations for their own objectives using social media, encrypted communications and the dark web to spread propaganda, radicalise new followers and coordinate attacks. Although they have not yet acquired the expertise and tools to launch large-scale cyber-attacks on critical national infrastructure, they may develop this capability in the future, with potentially devastating consequences. There needs to be a strategic coalition involving governments, civil society, the private sector, multilateral organisations and all those who can make a difference. It is essential to have coordination and collaboration between countries to counter cyberspace terrorism.
On October 12, Hungary increased its scientific cooperation with NATO.

Scientists and other experts from NATO and Hungary discussed future projects of cooperation at the NATO Science for Peace and Security (SPS) Programme Information Day held in Budapest. They exchanged ideas for potential future research and capacity-building cooperation on security-related topics, such as cyber defence, counter-terrorism, border security, as well as on environmental issues.

---Rimsha Zulfiqar
Bahrain

- On October 4, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait agreed to provide 10 billion dollars in financial aid to Bahrain.

The trio accepted the funding requirements of the Manama regime’s Fiscal Balance Programme, which aims to secure the country’s long-term fiscal stability and eliminate its budget deficit by 2022. The programme would include reforms, which would seek to lower public and inefficient expenditures, but on the other hand would simplify government processes and boost non-oil revenues. The agreement came as Bahrain’s economy struggles with a current account gap and a large state budget deficit, which have brought down prices of its international bonds and pushed its national currency to a 17-year low against the US dollar.

Iran

- On October 14, Iran’s President Hassan Rouhani said that the US is seeking “regime change” in Iran, and the current US Administration is the most hostile that the country has faced.

President Rouhani said, “In the past 40 years there has not been a more spiteful team than the current US government team toward Iran, Iranians and the Islamic Republic. There was a time when there was one person who had enmity. The rest were moderate. Now, the worst have gathered around each other.” He also accused the Americans of using psychological and economic warfare and questioning the legitimacy of the Islamic Republic. Rouhani said the US had lost against Iran’s “righteousness and wisdom” by walking out of the nuclear deal.

- On October 7, Iran’s Parliament approved a bill to counter terrorist financing.

Its conservative members had strongly opposed the bill. The bill is an important element in saving the nuclear deal with European and Asian partners. It is aimed at bringing Iran’s laws in line with international standards and would allow it to join the UN Terrorism Financing Convention. It is one of four bills being put forward by the government in an attempt to meet demands by the International Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which has given Iran until the end of October 2018 to tighten its laws against money laundering and terror financing. Iranian Foreign Minister, Javad Zarif said, “Neither I nor the President can guarantee that all problems will go away if we join the UN convention. But I guarantee that not joining will provide the US with more excuses to increase our problems.” The other parties to the deal; Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia have sought to restore the agreement and maintain trade with Iran. They have demanded that Iran accede to the FATF. Joining the UN convention...
has remained controversial in Iran as conservative policy makers warn it would limit Iran’s ability to support armed groups in the region such as its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah.

- In an October 4 tweet, Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohammed Javad Zarif said that Iran is willing to cooperate with Saudi Arabia in order to build a strong region and put an end to the US humiliation of regional countries.

The tweet stated, “President Trump repeatedly humiliates the Saudis by saying they can’t last 2 weeks without his support. This is the recompense for the delusion that one’s security can be outsourced. We again extend our hand to our neighbours: let’s build a ‘strong region’, and stop this conceit.” Zarif reacted to October 2, 2018 remarks by US President Donald Trump, who said he had warned Saudi Arabia’s King Salman he would not last in power “for two weeks” without US military support. The remarks came after Trump called on Riyadh to increase its military spending. According to analysts, the US President is using wealthy Persian Gulf Arab countries and exploiting conflicts in the Middle East to boost American arms sales to the oil-rich states.

- On October 1, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard said it had targeted militants in Syria with ballistic missiles in retaliation for the September 2018 deadly attack on an Iranian military parade.

Daesh had claimed responsibility for the September 22, 2018 attack in Ahvaz which killed 24 people. The Iranian missiles targeted the area of Albu Kamal in eastern Syria near the border with Iraq. A statement from the Revolutionary Guards said, “The headquarters of those responsible for the terrorist crime in Ahvaz was attacked east of the Euphrates by several ballistic missiles fired by the aerospace branch of the Revolutionary Guards.” Six medium-range ballistic missiles were fired from western Iran and hit their targets at a distance of 570 kilometres. According to the Guards, “seven military drones” also carried out bombing against the “mercenary terrorists”.

**Iraq**

- On October 7, in his first remarks about Iran, Iraqi President Barham Saleh called for enhancement of relations with Iran.

President Saleh met with Iran’s Ambassador to Baghdad, Iraj Masjedi at the Presidency, the al-Salam Palace. During their meeting, Saleh pointed to the commonalities and the long-running relationship between the two nations and called for a deepening of bilateral ties. He said the betterment of relations among the countries in the region would serve both Iraq and other regional states. Ambassador Masjedi congratulated President Saleh on his election and affirmed his stance on the betterment of ties between Tehran and Baghdad.
• On October 2, Iraqi lawmakers elected veteran Kurdish politician, Barham Saleh as the President of the country.

Saleh was representing the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) Party and was elected following 2 rounds of voting. He was declared as the next President after he defeated Fuad Hussein from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP). Saleh won a large majority during the elections. The vote went to a second round where Hussein withdrew his candidacy. The new President must be elected with two-thirds of the vote in parliament, which is 220 votes. If no candidate meets this threshold, a runoff vote is held. The presidency has been reserved for the Kurds since Iraq’s first multi-party elections in 2005. Under an unofficial 2002 agreement, a Kurd holds Iraq’s Presidency, while the Prime Minister is Shia Muslim and the Parliament Speaker a Sunni.

Israel

• On October 12, Israeli Forces killed 6 Palestinian protesters and wounded another 140 during protests along Gaza’s border.

Israel said its troops had shot and killed a group of Gazans who broke through the fence with a bomb and attacked an army post. According to the Palestinian Health Ministry, with the latest deaths, the number of Gazans killed since the border protests began on March 30, 2018 has reached 200. Israeli security personnel have been deployed in large numbers around the Palestinian village of Khan al-Ahmar. The Bedouin village is said to be slated for demolition and Palestinian villagers have been protesting against the imminent move. According to the Israeli Military, the demonstrators, numbering around 14,000, had been “hurling rocks, explosive devices, firebombs and grenades” at Israeli troops and at the fence.

• On October 3, Avigdor Lieberman Israel’s Minister for Military Affairs, expressed Tel Aviv’s discontent over Russia’s delivery of S-300 surface-to-air missile system to Syria.

Lieberman said the move would not deter the Israeli regime from carrying out military operations in Syria. He said, “I cannot say that we are pleased with the deployment of the S-300. However, this is the very topic where we have no way out. There is no way not to make decisions.” Lieberman also said that it was important for Moscow and Tel Aviv to restore normal ties despite their disagreements over the recent downing of a Russian Il-20 reconnaissance aircraft off the coast of Syria’s western province of Latakia.

Saudi Arabia

• According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) on October 14, Saudi Arabia warned against threats to punish it over the disappearance of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, amid growing pressure from its European and US allies.
US President Donald Trump has threatened “severe punishment” if it turns out that Khashoggi was killed in the consulate, though he said Washington would be “punishing” itself if it halted military sales to Riyadh. An unnamed Saudi official said, “The Kingdom affirms its total rejection of any threats and attempts to undermine it, whether by threatening to impose economic sanctions, using political pressures, or repeating false accusations. The Kingdom also affirms that if it receives any action, it will respond with greater action, and that the Kingdom’s economy has an influential and vital role in the global economy.”

• During an interview with Bloomberg on October, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman said that he loves working with President Donald Trump.

This gesture followed US President Donald Trump’s warning that the Kingdom’s leadership might not last “two weeks” without American support. Prince Mohammad also said, “You know, you have to accept that any friend will say good things and bad things. He also said that Riyadh “will pay nothing” to the US for the Kingdom’s “security”. He said, “Actually we will pay nothing for our security. We believe that all the armaments we have from the United States of America are paid for, it’s not free armament. Ever since the relationship started between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America, we’ve bought everything with money. Since Trump came to power, the Kingdom decided to purchase over 60 % of its needed armament from the US for the next 10 years.” The Crown Prince also said that Saudi Arabia had agreed to buy $110 billion worth of US weapons and signed investment deals worth billions more, some “$400 billion” in total, since Trump took office in early 2017, and described the deals as “a good achievement” for Trump. Trump has increased verbal attacks on OPEC as global benchmark and crude oil has risen to a four-year high. According to Bloomberg, “Trump has pressured Saudi Arabia, the world’s top exporter of crude oil, to do more to ease prices, by linking the American military presence in the Persian Gulf to the Kingdom’s oil-production policy.

Syria

• According to the Anadolu News Agency on October 8, Syrian rebels have completed the withdrawal of all their heavy weapons from the front lines in the northwestern province of Idlib.

The Agency did not provide further details on the move, which came as part of a deal reached between Russia and Turkey to demilitarise the front lines between Syrian government Forces and the opposition in and around the province. According to Naji al-Mustafa, spokesman for the National Front for Liberation, a Turkish-backed umbrella group, the alliance had unanimously agreed to implement the deal and expected to demilitarise 15-20 kilometres along the front lines by October 15, 2018. He said opposition forces would keep forward bases and light and medium weapons in place. According to Rami Abdurrahman, Head of the Syrian Observatory for Human
Rights, even Al Qaeda-linked militants are withdrawing their heavy weapons, hoping to avoid a confrontation with Turkish troops and allied Syrian fighters.

Turkey

- During a joint press conference with Hungarian Prime Minister, Victor Orban in Budapest on October 8, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on the EU to demonstrate sincerity towards Turkey’s accession to the bloc.

Erdogan said, “It needs to be clear whether or not the EU will accept Turkey. Turkey has been stalled since 1963. No EU member state has been treated in such a way.” On October 4, 2018, Erdogan had suggested that he could take Turkey to a referendum over its efforts to get the EU’s membership. He said, “If the European Union continues wasting Turkey’s time in its accession to the union, then the country could hold a referendum over its membership bid. It is better to see this process faster so that Turkey can determine its way.”

- On October 8, Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan asked Saudi officials to prove their claim that missing journalist and critic of Riyadh Jamal Khashoggi left the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

Erdogan’s comments followed media reports saying the Turkish government had sought permission from Saudi authorities to search the consulate premises in Istanbul. On October 2, 2018, Khashoggi, a Washington Post contributor, disappeared after entering the consulate to receive official documents ahead of his marriage with a Turkish woman. During a press conference in Budapest, Erdogan said, “Consulate officials cannot save themselves by saying that he left the building. If he left, you have to prove it with footage. Those who ask Turkish authorities where he is should ask what happened.” According to the Police, 15 Saudis, including officials, had arrived in Istanbul on two flights and were at the consulate at the same time as Khashoggi. According to Turkish sources, the police believe the journalist “was killed by a team especially sent to Istanbul and who left the same day.” Riyadh vehemently denies the claim and says Khashoggi had left the consulate. Khashoggi is a former newspaper editor in Saudi Arabia and adviser to its former head of intelligence. In 2017, he left the country saying he feared retribution for his criticism of Saudi policy in the Yemen war and its crackdown on dissent.

- On October 8, Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani arrived in Antalya to attend the third annual meeting of parliament speakers of the Eurasian countries.

Upon his arrival, Larijani told reporters that the summit was a great opportunity for development of economic and parliamentary ties among the Eurasian states. Larijani also held talks with Vyacheslav Volodin, the Chairman of the State Duma of the Russian Federation. During the meeting, Larijani called on all countries, especially those in the Eurasia region, to
join hands against the US’ hostile approach towards other states in the world. He criticised Washington for its “aggressive and brutal” policies, and underlined the need for multilateral action to counter such kind of behaviour. Twenty parliament speakers and parliamentary delegations from 17 Asian and European nations attended the inter-parliamentary summit. The first and second editions of the meeting were held in Russia and South Korea, respectively.

- On October 4, at least 7 Turkish soldiers were killed in a road-side bomb explosion near the town of Gercus in the Kurdish province of Batman.

According to Numan Kurtulmus, Deputy Chairman of Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP), Kurdish rebels carried out the attack when soldiers inside an armoured military vehicle were on their way to protect a construction site in the region. Earlier, the state-run Anadolu agency had said they were travelling to carry out operations against the rebel group. Turkish President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan condemned the attack and said Turkey would not be deterred from its fight against the rebels. The Kurdistan Workers’ Party (PKK) has waged a more than three-decade old insurgency in Kurdish southeast region.

Yemen

- During a televised speech on October 4, Leader of Yemen’s Houthi movement, Abdul-Malik al-Houthi said the Yemeni nation would not give in to the invaders’ demands and also that it is ready for a lasting peace in Yemen.

According to Abdul-Malik, the Yemenis would never surrender as their faith, dignity, and identity would not allow them to. He said, “Remaining silent and giving in to the enemies’ demands amounts to shirking our responsibility at a time when they are trying to occupy our country.” He ruled out any compromise with the Saudi-led coalition. He also said that the Yemeni nation would welcome a peace arrangement that ends the ongoing aggression and the occupation of Yemen. He blamed the Saudi side for a stalemate in peace talks and a political resolution of the crisis.

---Muhammad Shoaib
SOUTH ASIA: I

Pakistan

External

- On October 15, President of Pakistan, Dr Arif Alvi said, “The unresolved Kashmir dispute poses great threat to regional stability.” He reiterated that the United Nations must play its role in resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions.

He was speaking at the inaugural session of a two-day International Conference titled ‘The Global Non-proliferation Regime: Challenges and Responses’ organised by the Strategic Studies Institute Islamabad (SSII). President Alvi also noted that strategic stability in South Asia was being threatened by the offensive posture and induction of lethal weapons by India. He, however, said that Pakistan would not join a nuclear arms race. The President pointed out that discriminatory exemptions by certain countries for the supply of nuclear technology and supply of advanced military hardware to our eastern neighbour has further complicated regional security and undermined the credibility of the non-proliferation regime. He warned that the introduction of the Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system and provocative war fighting strategies like Cold Start Doctrine are affecting strategic stability in South Asia.

- Speaking at the 17th Council of Heads of Government meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in Dushanbe on October 11, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi highlighted the importance of SCO as “a vital platform to achieve the objectives of peace, security and stability across Eurasia.”

Talking about economic development through regional connectivity, Foreign Minister highlighted the importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Qureshi also met Tajik Prime Minister Qohir Rasulzoda on the sidelines of the 17th SCO meeting. The two sides discussed bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual concern. Both sides agreed to strengthen and enhance cooperation in the area of trade and investments. They also noted the progress on the CASA-1000 project and agreed to fast track its implementation.

- On October 11, Christine Lagarde, Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF) said the Pakistani government had “requested for financial assistance from the IMF to help address the country’s economic challenges.”

The development follows Finance Minister, Asad Umar’s meeting with Christine Lagarde during the World Bank, IMF Group Annual meetings in Bali. According to Lagarde an IMF team would soon visit Islamabad to discuss an IMF-supported economic programme. On October 8, 2018, Finance Minister Umar announced that the government has decided to approach the IMF for a bailout to address the country’s balance of payment crisis. He said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had approved the proposal to hold talks with the IMF after consulting with experts. In a related development on October 10, 2018, Finance Minister, Asad Umar held talks with World
Bank’s President, Jim Yong Kim on the sidelines of the World Bank, IMF Group Annual meetings in Indonesia. During the meeting, the cooperation between Pakistan and World Bank was reviewed.

- On October 9, US special representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad visited Islamabad and held talks with Pakistani officials including Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi.

The two sides discussed the Afghan situation and the Afghan reconciliation process. Qureshi informed Khalilzad that Pakistan would play its part in finding a political solution to the Afghan conflict. Both leaders agreed to continue cooperation on the Afghan reconciliation process. Khalilzad’s visit to Islamabad was aimed at seeking help from Islamabad in bringing the Taliban to the negotiating table. However, Zalmay Khalilzad does not have strong working relationship with Pakistan due to his anti-Pak stance. He has repeatedly accused Pakistan of fomenting violence in Afghanistan by supporting the Taliban. He has also previously demanded the US to declare Pakistan a terrorist state. On October 3, 2018 Foreign Minister Qureshi while speaking at the US Institute of Peace, pointed out that there had been a negative reaction in Pakistan due to Khalilzad’s appointment as US envoy on Afghanistan. He urged Khalilzad to be more sensitive to opinions in Pakistan. Khalilzad’s visit follows an Afghan Taliban statement in which they condemned the upcoming parliamentary elections in Afghanistan and threatened more attacks on Afghan Security Forces.

- On October 8, a delegation of the Asia Pacific Group (APG) held talks with Pakistani officials and urged them to take more measures in order to be removed from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) grey list.

Technical experts of the APG started the 3rd Mutual Evaluation process of Pakistan that would be completed on October 19, 2018. The experts would assess the steps taken by the government to meet the FATF recommendations. They would also review the effectiveness of Pakistan’s Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Counter Terrorism Financing (CTF) regime under the FATF effectiveness methodology.

- On October 2, Pakistan’s Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi met his US counterpart, Michael Pompeo in Washington to discuss bilateral ties and the regional situation.

During the talks, both countries agreed to stay engaged and rebuild ties. Pakistan maintains that it wants to work with the US to bring peace in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister also reiterated Pakistan’s position that there was no military solution to the Afghan conflict. Qureshi stated that Pakistan would continue to support efforts for an Afghan-owned and -led peace and reconciliation process in Afghanistan. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi also held a separate meeting with US National Security Adviser John Bolton on the same day. In his meeting
with Bolton, the Foreign Minister discussed the situation in Afghanistan and briefed him about India’s aggressive posturing in South Asia.

- On October 1, UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres expressed concern over the situation in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK) and said that he encourages “positive dialogue” for a peaceful settlement of the dispute.

The UN Chief’s remarks came hours before he travelled to India. The situation in IOK remains tense after Indian Security Forces killed at least 18 Kashmiris in September 2018. Pakistan has urged the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) to establish a commission of inquiry and appoint a special rapporteur to investigate human rights violations by Indian Security Forces in IOK. Pakistan says that the unresolved Kashmir dispute “poses a great threat to regional peace and stability” and has called upon the UN to play a positive role towards helping settle the dispute in accordance with Security Council resolutions. However, India maintains that there is no room for third party mediation or UN involvement particularly in the Kashmir dispute insisting that Kashmir is a bilateral issue between India and Pakistan and must be resolved through direct negotiations.

**Pakistan**

**Internal**

- According to the Associated Press on October 11, Indian Security Forces killed a Kashmiri scholar-turned fighter, Manan Wani and his colleague sparking violent anti-India protests by residents in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK).

  Wani was doing his PhD from Aligarh University. However, he quit the degree in January 2018 and joined Hizbul Mujahideen, the most prominent Kashmiri indigenous armed group fighting Indian rule in IOK. The group calls for the merger of Jammu and Kashmir with Pakistan and has conducted a number of operations against Indian military targets in Jammu and Kashmir.

**India**

- On October 12, External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj visited Dushanbe to participate in the 17th Council of Heads of Government meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

  Speaking at the meeting of the SCO, the External Affairs Minister urged SCO member countries to join hands to address global challenges and highlighted the need to fight terrorism, address climate change and promote connectivity and regional peace. Sushma Swaraj also held a bilateral meeting with her Tajik counterpart, Sirojiddin Muhriddin on the sidelines of the SCO meetings. During the talks, the two sides discussed stepping up bilateral ties in areas of science and technology, information technology, agriculture, defence and security, health and tourism.
She also met the Chief Executive of Afghanistan, Abdullah Abdullah on the sidelines of the SCO meeting.

- During an Annual Russia-India Summit held in New Delhi on October 5, India signed a deal worth $5 billion to purchase the S-400 Triumf air defence system from Russia. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Narendra Modi also reaffirmed their commitment to “the special and privileged strategic partnership between India and Russia” during the summit.

According to media reports, the system would be delivered to India by 2020. India and Russia also signed an agreement to build six Russian-designed nuclear reactors in India. The induction of the S-400 would not only bolster India’s deterrence against Pakistan and China but also affect strategic stability in South Asia. Pakistan says that it opposes an arms race in the region and that any country providing weapons to India should assure that their assistance does not disturb strategic stability in the region. The development has also upset the US, India’s strategic partner which has imposed a ban on the purchase of arms from Russia under the Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) passed by the US Congress in July 2017. In response to the deal, President Donald Trump might take punitive action against India. On October 10, 2018 he suggested that India would “soon find out” about Washington’s response. However, Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and Defence Secretary James Mattis have favoured giving India a waiver for purchasing the S-400 from Russia.

---Muhammad Abdul Qadeer
SOUTH ASIA: II

Afghanistan

- On October 15, Samangan’s Police Chief, General Khawani Tahari along with six other Security Forces was killed in a clash with the Taliban in Darah Sof Payan district of the province.

- On October 7, at least 14 Afghan Security personnel were killed including the Police Chief of Sayed Abad district in a Taliban offensive on the central Wardak province.

- On October 2, at least 12 Taliban insurgents were killed in an ambush by the Afghan Security Forces in western Farah province.

The Taliban claimed that they captured the center of Sayed Abad district. However, the Afghan Ministry of Interior dismissed the claims. The insurgent group blocked the Kabul-Kandahar highway for two days. The highway is the only road link between the capital Kabul and the south of the country. Sayed Abad is a strategic district located on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. In a related development on October 8, 2018 at least 15 Afghan Security Forces were killed in a Taliban attack on northern Jawzjan province. Two security check posts also fell to the Taliban. Afghan Security Forces claimed killing at least 23 Taliban insurgents in retaliation. In another incident an airstrike conducted by the Afghan Air Force at least 19 Taliban were killed in Faryab province. Heavy clashes between the Taliban and Afghan Security Forces resumed after a brief halt during the last fortnight of September 2018. The increase in fighting is a worrisome development especially with the Afghan parliamentary elections just around the corner.

- On October 13, at least 22 people were killed and another 36 wounded in an attack on an election rally in Rustaq district of northeastern Takhar province.

- On October 7, at least 8 people were killed in a bomb blast inside an election campaign camp in Lashkargah city of southwestern Helmand province.

- On October 2, a suicide bomb blast at an election campaign rally left 14 people dead in the Kama district of eastern Nangarhar province.

No group claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Taliban have out rightly boycotted the Afghan parliamentary elections and warned all Afghans against taking part. There have also been wide spread attacks on voter registration centers across the country. The Afghan parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 20, 2018.
On October 12, Afghanistan’s Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah addressed the 17th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in Tajikistan and stressed the need for joint efforts against terrorism.

Abdullah said that Afghanistan was working with all nations including Pakistan to eliminate the infrastructure and breeding grounds, which help fund, recruit, train and deploy the manpower, and logistics being used to destabilise Afghanistan and the region as a whole. On the Afghan peace process, he added that Kabul would continue its efforts to move the process forward. Meanwhile, Abdullah also met with Indian Foreign Minister, Sushma Swaraj on the sidelines of the summit where the two leaders agreed to further increase cooperation between the two countries. Afghanistan is an observer state in the 8-member SCO headed by China and Russia.

On October 9, the US Special Representative for Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad concluded his visit to Kabul where he met with a number of Afghan officials including Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah.

Khalilzad was on a 10-day visit to Afghanistan, Pakistan, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia and Qatar to consult various stakeholders to find a way forward to resolve the Afghan conflict. During his Afghanistan visit, Khalilzad held meetings with various political groups, key civil society organisations including High Peace Council and the Afghan media. He also discussed security issues with Afghan National Security Advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, the Ministers of Defence and Interior and the head of the National Directorate of Security. In his meetings, Khalilzad asked all sides to bring an end to the conflict and called on all parties, including the Taliban, to facilitate dialogue by forming inclusive negotiating teams. Meanwhile, Abdullah welcomed the US’ efforts for peace and asked the Taliban to use this opportunity to join the peace process. However, a statement from the Taliban demanded a complete withdrawal of foreign forces as the only solution to end the war. On October 10, 2018, Khalilzad met Taliban representatives in Qatar. After the meeting, Taliban officials claimed that Khalilzad has agreed to hold talks on the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan’s High Peace Council denied the claims made by the Taliban on the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country.

On October 4, Afghanistan’s Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah arrived in Indonesia and met with Indonesian President, Joko Widodo.

Widodo said that Indonesia supports the Afghan peace process. He also asked the Taliban and other armed groups to renounce violence and resolve their differences. Indonesia has been playing an active role in helping solve the Afghan conflict. The country has previously hosted a grand meeting of Muslim Ulema (scholars). In August 2018, a Taliban delegation visited Indonesia to discuss the possibility of resolving the Afghan conflict with Indonesian authorities.
• **Times of India reported** on October 2 that Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi and Uzbek President, Shavkat Mirziyoyev have agreed to work together to stabilise Afghanistan during the latter’s visit to India.

A joint statement issued after the meeting reiterated support for efforts of both the governments and the people for a genuine peace and reconciliation process. Uzbekistan remains India’s closest Central Asian partner. During Mirziyoyev’s recent visit both countries signed 17 MoUs including close cooperation in the realm of security.

• On October 1, in reaction to the possibilities of privatising the Afghan war, President Ashraf Ghani said he would not allow foreign mercenaries to operate in Afghanistan.

Ghani said the Afghan Security Forces have enough potential and have managed to save the country from collapse. He added that the work which is being done by Afghans cannot be done by any foreign mercenary and also that they would never be allowed on Afghan soil. In September, 2018 Erik Prince, the founder of Black Water Security Company, said the Afghan war would end in a few months using his plan to send in a few thousand contracted mentors to the country. According to Prince, 3600 contracted veteran mentors from Black Water would be deployed in Afghanistan, 36 for each Afghan unit and for either two or four years at a time. Afghanistan’s Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah’s office also said that the plan would not be applicable in the country. The Afghan parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, also reacted to the plan to privatise the Afghan war, saying it is not in Afghanistan’s favour. On October 4, 2018, the Commander of the US Central Command, Gen. Joseph Votel also said that it would not be a good strategy to turn over US national interest to contractors.

**Bangladesh**

• On October 10, a Dhaka court awarded death penalty to 19 people and life imprisonment to 19 others over a 2004 attack on the current Prime Minister, Shiekh Hasina.

Most of the indicted are members of the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) whose chairperson, Khalida Zia is already serving a 10-year imprisonment term over a corruption case. Among those awarded death penalties are two former state ministers. Zia’s son Tariq Rehman, who is leader of the opposition and current head of the BNP, has also been sentenced to life imprisonment. The August 21, 2004 grenade attack on a rally organised by Awami League left 20 people dead. Then opposition leader, Sheikh Hasina had narrowly escaped the attack. The BNP alleges that Hasina is crushing dissent and putting rivals behind bars to strengthen her re-election bid. Bangladesh’s general election is scheduled for December, 2018.

---Kashif Hussain
On October 15, Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, called on Saudi Arabia and Turkey to “reveal everything they know” about the disappearance of Saudi Journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

Bachelet said that Khashoggi has not been seen since he visited his country’s consulate in Istanbul on the afternoon of October 2, 2018. Rupert Colville, spokesman for the UN Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said, “Two weeks is a very long time for the probable scene of a crime not to be subject to a forensic investigation.” Colville also noted that Michelle Bachelet had also called for diplomatic immunity to be “waived immediately” to allow for a “prompt, thorough, effective, impartial and transparent” investigation. Protection from national jurisdictions is bestowed on consular premises and officials by treaties such as the 1963 Vienna Convention on Consular Relations. Colville indicated, “The one thing we really know as a solid fact is that Khashoggi went into the consulate and was never seen coming out again.”

Earlier on October 9, 2018, Bernard Duhaime, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, said that he was concerned that the disappearance of Khashoggi was directly linked to his criticism of Saudi policies in recent years.

On October 10, a group of UN independent human rights experts called for the immediate release of 24 people, belonging to Baha’i minority group, being detained by authorities in the Yemeni capital.

According to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), criminal proceedings were initiated against the 24 individuals among whom at least 22 are Baha’i on September 15, 2018. The detainees face charges including apostasy, the teaching of the Baha’i faith, and espionage. UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed said the recent detentions of people from Baha’i community in Yemen appears to be an intimidation tactic intended to pressure Baha’is into recanting their faith. He stressed that “it is unacceptable for anyone, including persons belonging to religious minorities, to be targeted or discriminated based on religion or belief.” The five UN experts said, “We are very concerned at the criminal prosecution of these persons based on charges connected to their religion or belief.” They urged Yemen that the charges “must be dropped and discriminatory practices based on religion, outlawed.”

In its October 8 Quarterly Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said that the Afghan conflict continues to exact a terrible toll on civilians, with the highest number of fatalities recorded for the first nine months of 2018.

The report, covering time period from January 1 to September 30, 2018, said that nearly 8,050 civilians died or were wounded with use of suicide bombings and other improvised explosive
devices (IEDs) by anti-government elements. The report also found that Nangarhar, Kabul, Helmand, Ghazni and Faryab provinces recorded the highest number civilian casualties, and that Nangarhar surpassed the capital Kabul in terms of highest number of deaths and injuries for the first time. The report indicated that the leading cause for civilian casualties included targeted and deliberate killings, aerial operations and explosive remnants of war, followed by ground engagements and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in civilian areas. Head of the UNAMA, Danielle Bell, said, “Every civilian death leaves a family devastated, grieving and struggling to come to terms with the loss, and each civilian injured or maimed causes untold suffering.”

- On October 8, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)’s special report on climate change an “ear-splitting wake-up call,” and warned that climate change was running faster and the world was short on time.

Guterres said that working on the findings and recommendations of the report would require “urgent and far more ambitious action to cut emissions by half by 2030, and reach net zero emissions by 2050.” The IPCC issued its new special report on October 8, 2018, assessing the implications of the fast-paced climate change on earth and its population. The report is titled “Global Warming of 1.5°C, an IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels and related global greenhouse gas emission pathways, in the context of strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development, and efforts to eradicate poverty.” Hoesung Lee, Chair of the IPCC, said, “With more than 6,000 scientific references cited and the dedicated contribution of thousands of expert and government reviewers worldwide, this important report testifies to the breadth and policy relevance of the IPCC.” He said that the report would be a key scientific input into the Katowice Climate Change Conference in Poland in December, 2018, when countries around the world would review the Paris Agreement to tackle climate change. The report argues that a number of climate change impacts could be avoided by limiting global warming to 1.5°C compared to 2°C, or more. The report also said that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would require “rapid and far-reaching” transitions in land, energy, industry, buildings, transport, and cities. The report was prepared under the scientific leadership of all three IPCC working groups. Working Group I assesses the physical science basis of climate change; Working Group II addresses impacts, adaptation and vulnerability; and Working Group III deals with the mitigation of climate change. The report was prepared in response to an invitation from the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in December 2015, when they reached the Paris Agreement. The IPCC is the UN body for assessing the science related to climate change. It was established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UN Environment) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) in 1988 to provide policymakers with regular scientific assessments concerning climate change.
On October 5, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees expressed concern for the safety and security of seven Rohingya men who have been sent home by Indian authorities after reportedly being denied access to lawyers.

Andrej Mahecic, a spokesperson for UNHCR, said, “We continue to seek clarification from the authorities on the circumstances under which these individuals were returned to Myanmar.” Prior to their return, the seven men had been in detention in Silchar prison in Assam province since 2012. Mahecic said that the UNHCR had requested the Indian authorities to grant access to the group after learning about their detention and the planned return to Myanmar.

On October 3, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an interim order asking the US to lift sanctions linked to humanitarian goods and civil aviation imposed against Iran.

The ICJ said, “On humanitarian grounds, the US must remove by means of choosing any impediment to the free exportation to Iran of goods involving humanitarian concerns.” The ruling noted, “Exports of humanitarian goods such as medicines and medical devices, food, and agricultural commodities should be allowed, as well as aviation safety equipment.” While announcing the decision, ICJ’s President, Judge Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, said US sanctions on goods required for humanitarian needs would have a detrimental effect on the health and lives of individuals in Iran. The ICJ had begun hearing Iran’s case against the US’ re-imposition of sanctions on August 27, 2018. The Iranian lawsuit filed with the ICJ said the US sanctions, which are damaging the already weak Iranian economy, violate terms of a 1955 Treaty of Amity signed between the two countries. Iranian lawyers asked the ICJ to order the US to lift sanctions imposed by US President Donald Trump’s Administration against the country. The treaty emphasises friendly relations between the two countries while encouraging mutual trade and investments and regulating consular relations. The ICJ has ruled that the 1955 treaty was still valid. Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif termed the ICJ’s decision a ‘victory of the rule of law’ and ‘another failure for sanctions-addicted US government.’ However, Peter Hoekstra, US Ambassador to the Netherlands, called the decision “a meritless case over which the court has no jurisdiction.” Hoekstra said that the ruling did not go as far as Iran had requested, saying the court “issued a narrow decision on a very limited range of sectors.” In response to the ICJ’s ruling, the US announced on October 4, 2018, that the country was cancelling its decades old friendship treaty with Iran. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, “I am announcing that the US is terminating the 1955 Treaty of Amity with Iran. This is a decision, frankly, that is 39 years overdue.”

--- Moiz Khan