

GAZA CRISIS

What leaders said at UN



“No, what we need is a powerful army of countries that do not accept genocide. That is why I invite nations of the world, and their peoples most importantly, as an integral part of humanity, to bring together weapons and armies to defend Palestine... I think we’ve had enough words.”

Gustavo Petro
Colombian president

I want to see Netanyahu and those responsible for the genocide against the Palestinian people brought before an international court of justice.

Gabriel Boric
Chile’s president

We will not commit national suicide [by accepting a Palestinian state] because you don’t have the guts to face down the hostile media and antisemitic mobs demanding Israel’s blood.

Benjamin Netanyahu
Israeli PM

We did not stop the genocide in Rwanda. We did not stop the genocide in Srebrenica. We must stop the genocide in Gaza. There are no excuses any more.

Natasa Pirk Musar
Slovenia’s president



Rescuers evacuate residents from their flooded homes in Palanas, Masbate province, as severe tropical storm Bualoi hit the area yesterday. The Philippines evacuated hundreds of thousands of people and confirmed at least three deaths yesterday as it faced yet another tropical storm, days after it was battered by deadly Super Typhoon Ragasa.

PHOTO: AFP

POST-WAR GAZA

Tony Blair in discussions to run Gaza authority

AGENCIES

Former UK prime minister Tony Blair could take a leading role in a transitional authority for Gaza under US-led peace plans, various British media reported yesterday.

It follows Blair’s involvement in discussions with the administration of US President Donald Trump and others over the post-war transitional body for the Palestinian territory.

The plan could involve Blair leading the authority with the support of the UN and Gulf nations, according to the BBC and The Economist magazine.

The Financial Times reported that the former UK leader, who worked as a Middle East peace mediator formally from 2007 to 2015, had asked to be on its supervisory board.

The Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, a non-profit organisation,

declined to comment to AFP on the stories.

Israeli media reports last week about his involvement in the US-led peace plan prompted sources close to Blair to confirm that he has been working on a scheme to halt the conflict alongside other parties.

However, they noted he would not support any proposal to permanently displace Gazans, and that any transitional governing body for the territory would ultimately hand power back to the Palestinian Authority, based in Ramallah in the West Bank.

In its report, The Economist said that a body to be known as the “Gaza International Transitional Authority” would seek a UN mandate to be the “supreme political and legal authority” for five years, before handing control to Palestinians.

The authority would have a secretariat of up to 25 people and a

seven person board, it added.

It would initially be based in Egypt, near Gaza’s southern border, before transferring to Gaza once it is secure, the BBC said.

Former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen told BBC Radio on Friday that “I love” the idea, calling Blair a “wonderful person”.

“If he is willing to take this responsibility, which is huge, I think... there is a hope” for Gaza, he added.

“I think that he can bear that burden strongly.”

Blair’s involvement would inevitably raise eyebrows given his involvement in the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003.

An official UK inquiry into the conflict found he had acted on flawed intelligence when deciding to join the war.

Blair reportedly joined a White House meeting with Trump in August to discuss plans for post-war Gaza.

Trump has floated plans to make Gaza the “Riviera of the Middle East”, involving the forced displacement of Palestinians in the territory.

Iran sanctions loom after last-ditch UN vote
Tehran, Moscow sign \$25b deal to build nuclear plants in Iran

AFP, United Nations

Sweeping UN sanctions look likely to return on Iran despite a last-ditch effort yesterday by China and Russia for a delay to allow further talks, diplomats say.

European powers were urging Iran to reverse a series of steps it took after Israel and the United States bombed its nuclear sites in June.

Complaining that Iran has not complied with a landmark but moribund deal, the Europeans have triggered a return of sweeping UN sanctions – notably on its banking and oil sectors – that are set to take effect at the end of Saturday.

China and Russia at a Security Council session yesterday put forward a draft resolution, seen by AFP, that would give another half year for talks, or until April 18, 2026.

But diplomats said they did not expect it to receive the nine votes on the 15-member Security Council for passage.



Meanwhile, Iran and Russia signed a \$25 billion deal to build nuclear power plants in Iran, state media reported yesterday.

“A deal for the construction of four nuclear power plants with a value of \$25 billion in Sirik, Hormozgan was signed between the Iran Hormoz company and Rosatom,” state television said.

Iran has just one operational nuclear power plant in Bushehr in the south, with a capacity of 1,000 megawatts – just a fraction of the country’s energy needs.

According to state news agency IRNA, each plant will have a capacity of 1,255 megawatts, though no details were provided on the timeline.

Faridpur, Cumilla divisions in works

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The recommendations made by the Public Administration Reform Commission were followed while making the proposals, Rashid told The Daily Star.

The committee will place its preliminary decisions before the next meeting of the National Implementation Committee for Administrative Reforms/Reorganisation (NICAR), chaired by Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus, for final approval.

The NICAR meeting is likely to take place in the first week of October after Yunus returns from the UN General Assembly in New York.

Several current and former senior officials of the public administration ministry and the cabinet division criticised the move to form two new divisions.

“There is no logical reason to create two new divisions,” said a former secretary who had served as deputy commissioner and divisional

commissioner.

Divisional administration mainly monitors activities at district and upazila levels, and such monitoring is being done properly from the existing divisions.

“It will only increase costs for the people,” he said, asking not to be named.

Another former secretary said the move will only lead to the formation of some bureaucratic posts and an increase in public expenditure.

“At the same time, local politicians will get opportunities to initiate new projects in the name of city development. None of this serves public interest.”

The cabinet division can now convene online meetings or video conferences with all 64 DCs at just an hour’s notice.

“In this context, further expansion of the divisional administration is entirely irrational,” he added.

There is scope to shrink and not expand the divisional administrative

structure in today’s context, said a joint secretary of the cabinet division.

There was a time when communication with officers over the telephone was difficult and travelling from Dhaka to a remote district or upazila could take time, he said.

“Remote areas are now accessible by road and rail, and a WhatsApp message reaches the whole country instantly. With minute-to-minute media updates, what’s the point of creating new divisions?” he said.

The bid to form two new divisions goes back to November 2022, when a proposal to create two new divisions with greater Faridpur and Cumilla districts, to be named after the Padma and Meghna rivers, was placed at a NICAR meeting chaired by then prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

However, no final approval came.

At present, there are eight administrative divisions: Dhaka, Chattogram, Rajshahi, Khulna, Barishal, Sylhet, Rangpur and Mymensingh.

Won’t allow Israel

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Criminal Court arrest warrant over war crime allegations, including using starvation as a weapon, the Israeli prime minister took an unusual route to New York that included flying over the narrow Strait of Gibraltar.

As he walked up to the General Assembly rostrum, dozens of delegations immediately walked out – meaning they had come just to leave, as Netanyahu was the day’s first speaker.

Protesters marched nearby in Times Square calling for the arrest of Netanyahu.

“War criminals don’t deserve any peace of mind. They don’t deserve any sleep,” said Andrea Mirez, a young woman who kept up an overnight noisy protest outside Netanyahu’s hotel.

In his opening remarks, Netanyahu displayed a map labelled “The Curse” that he said showed Iranian proxy groups across the Middle East. He then highlighted Israeli military

operations across the past year against Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, Hamas in Gaza, and Iran.

He thanked US President Donald Trump for American involvement in bombing Iran’s Fordo nuclear site in June.

Netanyahu aggressively challenged allegations that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza, noting that Israel has repeatedly sent leaflets warning the civilian population to leave.

He went on to refute the conclusion of a UN commission of inquiry that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza, claiming the charge was “baseless”.

He also rejected statements by multiple UN agencies that Israel is deliberately restricting the amount of aid entering Gaza. In August, a UN-backed body confirmed that famine was taking place in Gaza City.

Humanitarian law also considers

forced displacement to be a war crime. Nearly the entire population of the Gaza Strip has been displaced during the war.

A Palestinian foreign ministry official slammed Israeli Netanyahu’s speech, saying it was “saturated with lies and falsifications”.

Meanwhile, The UN yesterday released a long-awaited update of its database of companies with activities in Israeli settlements in Palestinian territories, listing 158 firms from 11 countries.

UN rights chief Volker Turk has condemned as a war crime Israel’s policy of settlements on Palestinian territory in the occupied West Bank.

While several companies, including Alstom and Opodo, had been removed from the non-exhaustive database, major firms such as Airbnb, Booking.com, Motorola Solutions and TripAdvisor remained on the list.

Babar summits 8,000m Manaslu peak

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“On the same day, our red and green flag flew twice on the summit of Manaslu,” Zaman said. “Babar fulfilled his long-cherished dream of climbing without supplemental oxygen, while Tanvir proved that success is possible even without formal mountaineering courses abroad.”

The climbers began their journey from Bangladesh on September 5, trekking five days from Tilche village to reach base camp. After acclimatisation rotations up to camps 1-3, they launched their final push. On September 24, both reached camp 4 at 7,400 metres, and in the early hours of September 26, guided by Bire Tamang and Phurba Angdi Sherpa, they stood atop Manaslu.

While summit photos are expected to take time due to poor network coverage, the climbers are working to descend safely.

Babar, general secretary of Vertical Dreamers and a graduate of Chattogram Medical College, has already established himself as one of the country’s leading mountaineers.

Tanvir, the club’s mountaineering secretary and an assistant manager at VF Asia Bangladesh, is from



Kishoreganj and previously climbed Ama Dablam in 2022.

Forhan Zaman said both climbers are determined to continue their journeys. “Babar dreams of climbing all 14 of the world’s 8,000-metre peaks. Tanvir, too, is eager to take on more peaks. With proper sponsorship, the red-and-green will continue to fly

higher.”

The expedition was supported by several Bangladeshi sponsors, including Samuda, Visual Knitwears, Gigabyte Bangladesh, Chandrabindu Prokashon, Sinovest, Sierra-Romeo, Adiba Footwear, 4S Advance Technologies, Genovers, Source Associates, Ilet Bankers, Kazi Agro and Friesia.

Yunus vows labour reforms ahead of polls

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reform agenda and a desire to build on these reforms if elected.

Tasnim Jara, senior joint member secretary of the NCP, offered a personal reflection, recalling the Rana Plaza tragedy as a defining moment in her political journey. Then a medical student, she volunteered to treat the injured.

“That incident shaped my politics,” she said, drawing attention to the human cost of unsafe labour practices and the pressing need for reform.

In closing remarks, Yunus reiterated the government’s resolve to implement meaningful and lasting

reforms.

Meanwhile, Albanian President Bajram Begaj, in a meeting with Yunus on the sidelines of the 80th United Nations General Assembly in New York on Thursday, expressed strong interest in recruiting skilled and semi-skilled workers from Bangladesh to meet his country’s expanding labour market needs.

“We need workers for our country, and several Albanian companies have already submitted applications to hire from Bangladesh,” President Begaj said.

He emphasised that bilateral cooperation could be broadened further, particularly in sectors such

as tourism, highlighting Albania’s southern coastline as a promising destination for Bangladeshi travellers.

Yunus welcomed the initiative, noting that Bangladesh, with its dynamic and youthful workforce, is well positioned to support Albania’s economic growth. He also urged the Albanian government to ease visa procedures, pointing out that Bangladeshi citizens currently have to travel to New Delhi to apply for visas.

In response, President Begaj said Albania is considering the introduction of e-visas for Bangladeshi nationals.

The chief adviser is also expected to deliver a speech at the UNGA.