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WEST ASIA DIGEST

Monthly Compilation of News Items from West Asia

- **R4+E3 Foreign Ministers meeting in Istanbul with Italy's participation**
- **Parliamentary elections in Israel**
- **UAE Deputy Prime Minister visits India**
- **India and Oman hold 15th Consultative Group Meeting**
- **Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan seek de-escalation in talks with Iran**
- **Saudi Arabia-Houthi Conflict**
- **Terrorist attack in Jordan**

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R4+E3 Foreign Ministers meeting in Istanbul with Italy's participation

Foreign ministers of Turkiye, Egypt, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia (R4), alongside the UK, Germany and France (E3), held a meeting in Istanbul on 23 October 2026, with Italy also participating. Hosted by Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, the meeting discussed the situation in Palestine, tensions in the Strait of Hormuz, developments in Yemen, and efforts to end the Russia–Ukraine war. Discussions also focused on strengthening regional cooperation and coordination. Fidan emphasised regional ownership in addressing security challenges, called for diplomatic solutions to US–Iran tensions and stressed the importance of protecting freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz and Bab el-Mandeb. He also highlighted the need to address Israel's actions in Palestine and Syria, safeguard Saudi Arabia against Houthi attacks and prevent the Russia–Ukraine war from spreading into the Black Sea.

Parliamentary elections in Israel

Israel's national election, held on 27 October 2026, had a record-high voter turnout of 77.7 per cent. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing bloc has secured 53 seats in the 120-member Knesset, while the opposition bloc led by Gadi Eisenkot got 48 seats, both falling short of the 61 seats mark required to form the government. Arab-led parties have secured 19 seats, potentially giving them significant influence over government formation. However, ideological divisions and opposition to cooperation with Arab parties complicate Eisenkot's path to power. The outstanding special ballots and final verification could still affect seat allocations. A unity government could emerge if rival parties agree to share power and compromise on contentious issues, while a minority administration may depend on external parliamentary support from parties outside the governing coalition. If negotiations fail to produce a stable 61-seat majority, Israel could face another election, prolonging political uncertainty and delaying key decisions on domestic governance, national security, and regional diplomacy.

UAE Deputy Prime Minister visits India

UAE Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan visited India on 19–20 October 2026 and held delegation-level talks with External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar. The two ministers reviewed progress in the India–UAE Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and expressed satisfaction with cooperation in trade, investment, energy, defence, technology and people-to-people ties. They also noted Dr. Jaishankar's recent visit to Abu Dhabi and Ras Al Khaimah and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Both sides agreed to maintain close and regular consultations. The visit reaffirmed the momentum of bilateral relations and the shared commitment to broadening and deepening cooperation across key sectors.

India and Oman hold 15th Consultative Group Meeting

The 15th India–Oman Strategic Consultative Group meeting was held in New Delhi on 7 October 2026, co-chaired by Sripriya Ranganathan, Secretary (CPV & OIA), Ministry of External Affairs, and Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Harthy, Oman's Undersecretary for Political Affairs. The discussions covered political and strategic cooperation, trade and investment,

implementation of the India–Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement, energy, defence, maritime security, digital collaboration, education, culture and people-to-people ties. Both sides also exchanged views on regional and international developments, particularly on maritime security and the situation in the Strait of Hormuz. The meeting reaffirmed the growing strategic partnership and both countries' commitment to strengthening bilateral cooperation across sectors of mutual interest.

Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan seek de-escalation in talks with Iran

Senior officials from the Mecca Pact countries - Saudi Arabia, Turkiye and Pakistan - met Iranian leaders in Tehran on 26 October 2026 to de-escalate the regional conflict and explore diplomatic solutions. The meeting marked the first high-level engagement between Iran and the three countries since the signing of the Mecca joint defence agreement in August. Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman, Pakistan's Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir and Turkish intelligence chief Ibrahim Kalın represented their respective countries. All the four countries agreed to continue consultations to strengthen regional peace and security, while discussions reportedly covered US–Iran tensions, Houthi attacks on Saudi Arabia and maritime security in the Strait of Hormuz. The diplomatic initiative coincided with renewed Houthi attacks on Saudi energy and transport infrastructure.

Saudi Arabia-Houthi Conflict

The Saudi Arabia–Houthi conflict intensified in October 2026 amid renewed fighting and diplomatic maneuvers. On 4–5 October, Houthi advances near Taiz prompted a Saudi-backed Yemeni government counteroffensive named Operation Dawn of Yemen, supported by intensive airstrikes. Between 6 and 7 October, missiles and drones launched by Houthis targeted Saudi airports and critical infrastructure. In late October, the Houthis claimed strikes against Saudi oil facilities, including the Ras Tanura refinery. Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Türkiye have activated the Mecca Defence Alliance on 5 October, focusing on Saudi territorial defence. On 26 October, Egypt's parliament officially authorised the government to provide defensive military support to Saudi Arabia.

Terrorist attack in Jordan

On 23 October 2026, gunmen opened fire during a funeral procession at a Greek Orthodox Church in Jordan's southern Karak governorate, killing nine people and injuring 34 others. In response, the Jordanian military executed airstrikes targeting Islamic State (ISIS) hideouts in Syria's Daraa and Sweida provinces on 26 October, killing around 20 terrorists and seven civilians. Jordanian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi discussed the incident with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan Al Shaibani, expressing regret over the civilian casualties and reaffirming respect for Syria's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Both states agreed to form a joint security and intelligence committee to investigate the aftermath of the strikes, address coordination gaps, and handle shared cross-border threats like ISIS and smuggling.