

Sergio Gor visits J&K and Ladakh, first US envoy to visit Kashmir in 6 years

US Ambassador to India, Sergio Gor visited Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh (August 19-21, 2026). In doing so, he became the first US Ambassador to visit Kashmir in over six years – the US Ambassador to India, Ken Juster had visited Kashmir in January 2020. Gor also became the first US Ambassador to visit Ladakh.



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While commenting on Kashmir he said, “This is an important part of India and so I'm here visiting for the first time. It's an incredibly beautiful place, and so I'm thrilled to be here, thrilled to see this place”.

In response to Gor's remarks -- regarding Kashmir being an important part of India -- Pakistan summoned US Charge d’Affaires Natalie Baker in Islamabad and lodged a strong protest.

During his visit, Gor met with Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah who dubbed the meeting as “very good”. While Omar Abdullah's remarks regarding improvement of linkages between Jammu and Kashmir and the USA drew objection, Abdullah – before his meeting with

Sergio Gor made an important point alluding to New Delhi having the final say on foreign policy issues. Said Abdullah, “The solution to our problems will not come from Washington. Our problems have to be resolved by our central government,”.

Bangladesh PM's visit to India put on hold

Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman was to visit India on August 23 and 24, but the visit fell through for several reasons. Both sides have been trying to put their relations back on track and several meetings have taken place between senior officials from both sides, but significant impediments persist.

Dhaka has been linking improvement in ties to the extradition of former PM Sheikh Hasina – who has been living in exile in Delhi since 2024. Bangladesh also reacted strongly to Hasina's virtual address at an event organised by the Foreign Correspondent's Club (FCC) in Delhi on August 5.

The new Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) dispensation has sought to prioritise ties with China and during Tarique Rehman's visit to China -- in June 2026 -- an MoU was signed between both sides via which a Chinese company would develop the strategically important Mongla Port SEZ project to China. Mongla is Bangladesh's second largest and the second-busiest seaport after Chittagong. It is less than 200 kilometres from Kolkata. In 2015, Dhaka had handed over land to India for development of the port. During the Bangladesh PM's China visit it was also decided to advance the Teesta River Project – which is near the strategically sensitive Chicken's neck - Siliguri corridor.

Apart from this, New Delhi would be closely observing the BNP's approach vis-à-vis Pakistan. There is a worry that Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI) has been expanding its footprint in Dhaka – ever since the ouster of Sheikh Hasina

Sajeeb Wazed Joy, the son of ousted Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and a senior Awami League leader while virtually addressing the event organised by FCC said that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), “operates freely”. He also said that Bangladesh has become “another Pakistan” on India's eastern side.

Trump's warning to Iran and other important developments in West Asia

The Trump administration has upped the ante vis-à-vis Iran. On August 18, 2026 – one day after the ceasefire with Iran ended, US President Donald Trump in a post on social truth said, “There are no talks or conversations going on, or scheduled, with the Islamic Republic of Iran,”.

He also said that the Naval Blockade remains “in full force and effect. The Hormuz Strait is open and operating..”

On August 19, Trump hinted at the imposition of tough economic measures. The US President said that US will impose “Economic Warfare and Isolation” vis-à-vis Iran. Scott Bessent also clearly pointed to the fact that the US would take steps to “economically isolate” Iran. He did say that in such a situation military-operations against Iran would not be needed.

The Iranian Foreign Minister, Abbas Araghchi dismissed Trump’s claims saying that the economic threats were a distraction from the domestic challenges the US was facing and said that US economic policies were posing a threat to the “global economy” as well as “sovereignty of countries”.

The Chief of staff of Iran’s armed forces, Major General Ali Abdollahi reacted more strongly to US threats of economic sanctions vis-à-vis Iran. He said:

“With preparedness across land, sea, air, air defence and cyberspace, Iran's armed forces will respond to the enemy's new threats with crushing, punishing and devastating responses,”.

On August 21, the Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said it was time to end the conflict, since Iran was in a position of strength. Army spokesman Brig. Gen. Mohammad Akraminia took a more aggressive posture and said that Iran would move from a “defensive” to an “offensive” position.

On August 19, the UAE suspended all trade activities, exchanges and financial transactions with Iran until further notice, after it noticed that Iranian missiles were targeting maritime assessments.

While the US had asked China to back the US economic campaign against Iran, Beijing said that the US approach of economic sanctions vis-à-vis Iran will not be successful. Chinese Foreign Ministry pushed for dialogue and engagement.

Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf in a post on X, on August 22, said that the US had put all it’s allies in West Asia at risk for the “sake of Israel”. He also said that

Iran had been receiving several communications from neighbouring countries in the region for exploring new security arrangements as well as economic cooperation.

Japan Defence Minister's India visit

Japan's Defence Minister Shinjiro Koizumi visited India (August 19-21, 2026). Koizumi landed in Mumbai and held meetings with PM Narendra Modi and Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh. During the talks between Koizumi and Rajnath Singh a Memorandum of Arrangement (MOA) on Maritime Security Cooperation.

The MOA seeks to strengthen cooperation between the Indian Navy and Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force in several areas including; maritime domain awareness, information sharing, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

The Defence Minister's India visit, and agreements signed during his visit highlight the importance of the Japan-India strategic relationship – especially in the context of the Indo-Pacific. In a post on X, Rajnath Singh said, “An important step towards stability in the Indo-Pacific region! We exchanged views centring on strengthening maritime security cooperation, promoting defence technology cooperation under the Make in India initiative, and expanding strategic trust,”

Both sides sought to “explore the possibility of joint development in naval shipbuilding” by leveraging the strengths of both countries.

Bangladesh's interest in joining the Mecca Agreement

In a media interview, Bangladesh PM Tarique Rahman's foreign affairs advisor, Humayun Kabir, said that the BNP dispensation was following a “Bangladesh first” approach which would give precedence to its national interests. In this context, he said that Bangladesh was open towards joining the Mecca agreement – a joint defence agreement signed by Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan earlier this month.

According to a joint statement issued by all three countries, The “Mecca Joint Defence Agreement” seeks to strengthen collective deterrence “against any act of aggression” and clearly states that an armed attack against any of the three countries would be viewed as an attack on all.

While commenting on the statement by Humayun Kabir, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that it was closely observing developments in the West Asia region including Bangladesh's interest in the Mecca Agreement.

South Asia's geopolitical landscape is witnessing significant churning, and attempts are being made by New Delhi and Dhaka to put ties back on track. Dhaka joining the Mecca agreement could have a serious impact on the India-Bangladesh relationship.

In conclusion, the US Ambassador Sergio Gor's visit to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh is important, New Delhi would be welcoming Sergio Gor's remarks regarding Kashmir being an important part of India with cautious optimism. While India needs to adopt a pragmatic stance vis-à-vis Bangladesh, it would be concerned about the growing influence of ISI. New Delhi cannot view Dhaka-China ties from a zero-sum perspective, but some of the projects mentioned are strategically sensitive. India would also be paying close attention to whether

Bangladesh ultimately joins the Mecca agreement. The Japan Defence Minister's India visit was important in the context of the bilateral relationship as well as the changing landscape of the Indo-Pacific.

(Disclaimer: The views expressed above are the author's own and do not reflect those of DNA)

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