



Cambodia's PM Hun Manet smiles as he arrives to attend a joint congress between the Senate and the National Assembly in Phnom Penh



El Salvador's President Nayib Bukele and his wife Gabriela Rodriguez leave the National Theatre after deliver his first-year speech in San Salvador



VP Of The European Commission Kaja Kallas signs a guestbook before meeting with Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos at the Malacanang Palace in Manila



Syrian Minister of Finance Mohammed Barniah poses for a picture ahead of the opening of the stock market in the Ya'fur area near Damascus

Ukraine,Russia agree to exchange 6,000 bodies, but no ceasefire reached

AP, ISTANBUL: Delegations from Russia and Ukraine ended their latest peace talks on Monday in Turkey after just over an hour, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Russian state media said.

Speaking in Vilnius, Lithuania, Zelenskyy said both sides "exchanged documents through the Turkish side, and we are preparing a new release of prisoners of the war".

The two sides also agreed to swap 6,000 bodies of soldiers killed in action.

Expectations were low for any breakthrough on ending the 3-year-old war after a string of stunning attacks over the weekend.

Kyiv officials said a surprise drone attack Sunday damaged or destroyed more than 40 warplanes at air bases deep inside Russia, including the remote Arctic, Siberian and Far East regions more than 7,000 kilometres from Ukraine.

The complex and unprecedented raid, which struck simultaneously in three time zones, took over a year and a half to prepare and was "a major slap in the face for Russia's military



Head of the Russian delegation and Kremlin aide Vladimir Medinsky sits with delegation members as they attend a second meeting of Ukrainian and Russian delegation direct talks, at the Cirağan Palace, in Istanbul

power," said Vasyl Maliuk, the head of the Ukrainian security service who led its planning.

Zelenskyy called it a "brilliant operation" that would go down in history. The operation destroyed or heavily damaged nearly a third of Moscow's strategic bomber fleet, according to Ukrainian officials.

Russia on Sunday fired the

biggest number of drones — 472 — at Ukraine since its full-scale invasion in 2022, Ukraine's air force said, in an apparent effort to overwhelm air defences. That was part of a recently escalating campaign of strikes in civilian areas of Ukraine.

In Lithuania, Zelenskyy said a new release of prisoners of war was being prepared after the Istanbul

meeting. The previous direct talks on May 16 also led to a swap of prisoners, with 1,000 on both sides being exchanged.

Ukraine also handed Russia an official list of children it says were forcibly deported and must be returned, said Andriy Yermak, head of Zelenskyy's office.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had chaired the

peace talks at Istanbul's Cirağan Palace, a residence dating from the Ottoman Empire.

The talks aimed to discuss both sides' ceasefire terms, he said, adding that "the whole world's eyes are focused on the contacts and discussions you will have here".

US-led efforts to push the two sides into accepting a ceasefire have so far failed. Ukraine accepted that step, but the Kremlin effectively rejected it.

The Ukrainian delegation was led by Defence Minister Rustem Umerov, while Vladimir Medinsky, an aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin, headed the Kremlin team.

The Russian and Ukrainian delegations, each numbering more than a dozen people, sat at a U-shaped table across from each other with Turkish officials between them. Many of the Ukrainians wore military fatigues.

Recent comments by senior officials in both countries indicate they remain far apart on the key conditions for stopping the war.

The Institute for the Study of War, a Washington-based think tank, said Sunday that "Russia is at-

tempting to delay negotiations and prolong the war in order to make additional battlefield gains".

The relentless fighting has frustrated US President Donald Trump's goal of bringing about a quick end to the war. A week ago, he expressed impatience with Putin as Moscow pounded Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities with drones and missiles for a third straight night. Trump said on social media that Putin "has gone absolutely CRAZY!"

A round of renewed direct talks, held May 16, also in Istanbul, ended after less than two hours. While both sides agreed on a large prisoner swap, there was no breakthrough.

Ukraine was triumphant after targeting the distant Russian air bases. The official Russian response was muted, with the attack getting little coverage on state-controlled television.

Russia-1 TV channel on Sunday evening spent a little over a minute on it with a brief Defence Ministry statement read out before images shifted to Russian drone strikes on Ukrainian positions.

Indian-origin student banned from MIT graduation

PTI, NEW YORK: An Indian-American student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) was barred from attending her graduation ceremony after delivering a speech denouncing the war in Gaza, according to media reports.

PRO-PALESTINIAN SPEECH

Megha Vemuri, the 2025 class president of MIT, is the latest in the list of students to face discipline after protesting the war in Gaza.

Vemuri told CNN that after her speech, the university's senior leadership informed her she was not allowed to attend Friday's commencement ceremony and was barred from campus until the event concluded.

School officials confirmed that they told Vemuri that she was prohibited from attending the undergraduate ceremony.

MIT leadership said that they stand by the punishment they issued to Vemuri.

"MIT supports free expression but stands by its decision, which was in response to the individual deliberately and re-

peatedly misleading commencement organisers and leading a protest from the stage," a school spokesperson said in a statement.

The school said that she would receive her degree.

Vemuri, who grew up in Georgia, was a scheduled speaker at Thursday's OneMIT Commencement ceremony in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she took to the podium, with a keffiyeh — a symbol of pro-Palestinian solidarity — draped over her graduation robe.

She praised her peers for protesting the war in Gaza and criticised the university's ties to Israel.

An MIT spokesperson told CNN Vemuri's speech on Thursday "was not the one that was provided by the speaker in advance."

Vemuri's father Sarat said that she was a double major, in computation and cognition and linguistics, and was told that she would receive her diploma by mail.

Vemuri said she was grateful for her family, who have been present this week, supporting her. She says she's not disappointed about not getting to walk the stage.

Britain getting defence boost aimed at sending message to Moscow and Trump

AP, LONDON: The United Kingdom will build new nuclear-powered attack submarines and create an army ready to fight a war in Europe as part of a boost to military spending designed to send a message to Moscow — and Washington.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer said Britain "cannot ignore the threat that Russia poses" as he pledged to undertake the most sweeping changes to Britain's defences since the end of the Cold War more than three decades ago.

"We have to recognise the world has changed," Starmer told the BBC.

"With greater instability than there has been for many, many years, and greater threats."

The government is to respond to a strategic defence review commissioned by Starmer and led by George Robertson, a former UK defence secretary and NATO secretary general.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer speaks to a member of staff during a visit to the BAE Systems Govan facility, in Glasgow

It's the first such review since 2021, and lands in a world transformed by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

, and by the re-election of President Donald Trump last year.

The government says it will accept all 62 recommendations made in the review, aiming to help the UK confront growing threats

on land, air sea and in cyberspace.

Defence Secretary John Healey said the changes would send "a message to Moscow, and transform the country's military following decades of retrenchment, though he said he does not expect the number of soldiers — currently at a historic low — to rise until the early 2030s.

Healey said plans for defence spending to hit 2.5% of national income by 2027 a year are "on track" and that there's "no doubt" it will hit 3% before 2034.

Starmer said the 3% goal is an "ambition," rather than a firm promise, and it's unclear where the cash-strapped Treasury will find the money. The government has already, contentiously, cut international aid spending to reach the 2.5% target.

Starmer said he wouldn't make a firm pledge until he knew "precisely where the money is coming from."

Even 3% falls short of what some leaders in NATO think is needed to deter Russia from future attacks on its neighbors. NATO chief Mark Rutte says leaders of the 32 member countries will debate a commitment to spend at least 3.5% of GDP on defence when they meet in the Netherlands this month.

AERIAL ELEGANCE



The Italian Air Force acrobatic unit Freccia Tricolori performs over the Basilica di Santa Maria in Montesanto and the church di Santa Maria dei Miracoli at Piazza del Popolo in Rome

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SITUATIONS VACANT

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Nigerian floods: Death toll reaches 200

AP, ABUJA: The death toll from devastating flooding in a market town in Nigeria's north-central state of Niger rose to at least 200 on Sunday, a local official said.

Torrents of predawn rainfall early Thursday unleashed the devastating flood on Mokwa, nearly 380 km (236 miles) west of Abuja and a major trading and transportation hub where northern Nigerian farmers sell beans, onions and other food to

traders from the south.

The deputy chairman of Mokwa Local Government, Musa Kimboku, confirmed the updated fatality count to The Associated Press on Sunday. He said rescue operations have been called off, as authorities no longer believe there are any survivors.

To prevent the outbreak of disease, officials are currently exhuming bodies buried beneath the rubble, Kimboku added.

Ageless pageant: South African grannies strut the catwalk

TOKOZA, SOUTH AFRICA: At 17, Joyce Malindi won her first beauty contest under the suffocating limits of apartheid South Africa. Fifty-five years later, she was back on the catwalk, silver curls gleaming and brown clogs clicking, in a pageant for grandmothers only.

The event in the Tokoza township outside of Johannesburg featured prayers, speeches and a performance against domestic violence, a national scourge.

But the main attraction was on the red carpet stretching down the community hall where grandmothers paraded with pride in a competition that is rare among the host of others for younger women.

"This takes me way back, brings my youth back," Malindi, a great-grandmother of five, told AFP, breaking into a joyful jig to "Happy Mama" by legendary jazz

China hits backs at US, says Washington seriously undermined tariff truce

PTI, BEIJING: China on Monday hit back at the US, accusing it of seriously violating their recent Geneva trade truce by introducing multiple restrictive measures like AI chip export control guidelines, stopping the sale of chip design software to China and revoking visas for Chinese students.

The US has seriously undermined the consensus reached during the China-US economic and trade talks in Geneva by suc-

cessively introducing multiple discriminatory restrictive measures against China, a spokesperson for the Commerce Ministry said in a statement, refuting President Donald Trump's allegation that China had "totally violated agreement with us".

The US measures included issuing guidance on AI chip export controls, halting sales of chip design software to China, and announcing the revocation of visas for Chinese students,

the spokesperson said.

It is significant that China has clubbed the student visas with that of trade and tariff-related issues.

About 2.7 lakh Chinese students, the second largest after India, studying in the US scrambled to work out their plans after US Secretary of State Marco Rubio announced on May 29 that America would begin revoking the visas of some Chinese students, including those studying in "critical fields" and "those with

connections to the Chinese Communist Party."

These actions severely violated the consensus reached during a phone call between the two heads of state on Jan. 17 and gravely harmed China's legitimate rights and interests, the statement said.

The US has unilaterally and repeatedly provoked new economic and trade frictions, exacerbating uncertainty and instability in bilateral economic and trade relations, the spokesperson said.



Sukuma Mbokodo Support Group's Elderly Beauty Contest winners after the prize giving ceremony in Thokoza

musician Hugh Masekela. In this version of a beauty contest there were no swimsuit or evening wear

categories. Instead, women paraded in their Sunday best, from sleeveless summer frocks to bold orange headwraps, strings of pearls to traditional wear.

Floral fabrics and well-loved kitten heels hinted at celebrations past.

Supporters — mostly women from the Sukuma Mbokodo Support Group that organised the show — clapped, ululated and fiddled with their phones to record the spectacle.

At the makeup corner, the top request was for deep red and berry toned lipsticks but most contenders chose to let their bare faces and bright smiles shine. Nearby, a teapot served cups of chai beside trays of scones.

"They don't focus. When you are doing their makeup they want to multitask, talk, bark instructions," said 19-year-old volunteer hairdresser Ntokoza Ntshinga.