



Musicians and artists take part in a rally in Athens, Greece yesterday, as they protest against the new Covid-19 health measures banning the music from bars, nightclubs and restaurants.

PHOTO: AFP

Defeated 'coup' Says Kazakhstan leader, vows Russian troops will leave

AFP, Almaty

Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said yesterday that his country had defeated an attempted coup d'etat during violence last week, and insisted that Russian-led troops called in to help quell the unrest would go home "soon".

US-RUSSIA TALKS OVER UKRAINE CRISIS Expectations low

Nato chief warns Moscow of 'severe costs' if Kyiv attacked

AGENCIES

With diplomats publicly pessimistic, the United States and Russia began difficult negotiations in Geneva yesterday that Washington hopes can avert the danger of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine without conceding to the Kremlin's far-reaching security demands.

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov has said the diplomacy could end after a single meeting, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken played down expectations for the high-stakes talks.

"I don't think we're going to see any breakthroughs in the coming week," Blinken said in a CNN interview on Sunday night.

The talks between Ryabkov and Deputy US Secretary of State Wendy Sherman began at the US diplomatic mission in Geneva with US-Russia relations at their most tense since the Cold War ended three decades ago.

Sherman said "the US will listen to Russia's concerns and share our own" in an earlier Tweet from Geneva, adding that no discussions on European security would be held without the presence of other allies.

Nearly 100,000 Russian troops are gathered within reach of the border with Ukraine in preparation for what Washington and Kyiv say could be a new invasion, eight years after Russia seized the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine.

Russia denies invasion plans and said it is responding to what it calls aggressive behavior from the Nato military alliance and Ukraine, which has tilted toward the West and aspires to join Nato, reports Reuters.

Last month, Russia presented sweeping demands including a ban on further Nato expansion and an

end to the alliance's activity in central and eastern European countries that joined it after 1997.

The United States and Nato say large parts of the Russian proposals are non-starters.

Meanwhile, Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday warned Russia of "severe costs" if it launches a further attack on Ukraine, saying he hoped crunch talks could chart a way towards a diplomatic solution, reports AFP.

"We are working hard for a peaceful political path and we are ready to continue to work with Russia to try to find that path towards a peaceful solution," Stoltenberg said before meeting Ukraine's deputy prime minister.

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna, appearing alongside him, said Russia's demands "cannot be considered as a negotiating position".

She told reporters the "aggressor is not in a position to put conditions" while Russian tanks remained near the Ukrainian border.

US President Joe Biden has repeatedly warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that the United States and European allies would impose tough sanctions if Russia chose to invade Ukraine. Putin said new sanctions could lead to a "complete breakdown in ties."

In a preliminary meeting with Ryabkov on Sunday evening, Sherman emphasized Washington's commitments to sovereignty, territorial integrity "and the freedom of sovereign nations to choose their own alliances," the State Department said.

Ryabkov told reporters his meeting with Sherman had been "complex but businesslike," Russian news agency Interfax said.

If diplomacy fails, and Moscow acts against Ukraine, the US has been discussing with allies and partners in Europe and Asia a range of trade restrictions against Moscow, a source familiar with the plan said.

Graphic with quote: 'We are close to a good deal, but to reach this...it must be pursued by the other side.' attributed to Iran's FM Abdollahian.

HINDUTVA SUMMIT Pak PM blasts Modi for 'silence'

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday said the Narendra Modi-led government was "a real and present threat to peace" in the region, adding that all minorities in India were at the target of extremist groups operating under the patronage of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Last month, leaders from several far-right groups in India had issued calls for the ethnic cleansing of minorities in the country, especially targeting its 200 million-strong Muslim population. A report by The Quint had said that the "hate speech conclave" was organised by Hindutva leader Yati Narsinghanand from Dec 17 to 19 in Uttarakhand's pilgrimage city of Haridwar, where multiple calls to kill minorities and attack their religious spaces were made.

PM Imran, in a series of tweets yesterday, blasted Modi for his "continuing silence" and inaction against extremist Hindutva groups calling for genocide of minorities in the country.

Suu Kyi jailed for another 4yrs

AFP, Yangon

A Myanmar junta court yesterday convicted Aung San Suu Kyi of three criminal charges, sentencing her to four years in prison in the latest in a slew of cases against the ousted civilian leader, a source familiar with the proceedings said.

The Nobel laureate has been detained since February 1 when her government was forced out in an early morning coup, ending Myanmar's short-lived experiment with democracy.

The generals' power grab triggered widespread dissent, which security forces sought to quell with mass detentions and bloody crackdowns in which more than 1,400 civilians have been killed, according to a local monitoring group.

A source with knowledge of the case told AFP the 76-year-old was found guilty of two charges related to illegally importing and owning walkie-talkies and one of breaking coronavirus rules.

Junta spokesman Major General Zaw Min Tun confirmed the verdicts and sentences and told AFP Suu Kyi would remain under house arrest while other cases against her proceed.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Port Authority (BPA) regarding a tender for cargo handling services. Includes contact info and terms.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Land Port Authority (BLPA) regarding a corrigendum to a tender for cargo handling services. Includes contact info and terms.

Advertisement for Khulna Shipyard Limited regarding a tender for ship repair and maintenance services. Includes contact info and terms.

Advertisement for Bangladesh University of Engineering & Technology (BUET) regarding a tender for procurement of books. Includes contact info and terms.

Advertisement for Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh regarding an e-Tender for air conditioning and interior design services. Includes contact info and terms.