

Russia ready to negotiate directly with Ukraine for peace

Says Kremlin; Putin declares 3-day May ceasefire to mark WWII victory

AGENCIES

Russia yesterday said it was ready to negotiate directly with Ukraine, but that recognition of its claims over five Ukrainian regions, including Crimea, was "imperative" to resolving the conflict.

Since launching its Ukraine offensive in February 2022, Russia has seized large parts of four Ukrainian regions and claimed them as its own, in addition to Crimea, which it annexed in 2014.

Ukraine has denounced the annexations as an illegal land grab and says it will never recognise them, while European officials have warned that accepting Moscow's demands sets a dangerous precedent that could lead to future Russian aggression.

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday declared a three-day ceasefire in May in the war with Ukraine to mark the 80th anniversary of the victory of the Soviet Union and its allies in World War Two.

The Kremlin said the 72-hour ceasefire would run for three days



Relatives and friends mourn during the funeral ceremony of a 17-year-old and his parents -- Oleg and Viktoriia -- killed in a Russian missile strike on Thursday in Kyiv yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Lavrov says accepting its claims over annexed regions key to peace

Trump thinks Zelensky ready to give up Crimea

either side of May 9, when Putin will be hosting international leaders including Chinese President Xi Jinping for lavish celebrations to commemorate victory over Nazi Germany.

On Sunday, US President Donald Trump said he believed Volodymyr Zelensky might concede Crimea as part of a settlement -- a suggestion the Ukrainian leader has previously balked at.

"The Russian side has repeatedly confirmed its readiness, as confirmed by the president, to begin negotiations with Ukraine without any preconditions," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told state media yesterday.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in an interview with Brazilian newspaper O Globo published yesterday that "We remain open to negotiations."

"But the ball is not in our court. So

far, Kyiv has not demonstrated its ability to negotiate," he said, adding Moscow's position on the conflict was "well-known".

"International recognition of Russia's ownership of Crimea, Sevastopol, the Donetsk People's Republic, the Lugansk People's Republic, the Kholodivs'ka and Zaporizhzhia regions is imperative," he said, using the Kremlin's names for the Ukrainian regions.

Russia has repeatedly set out its demands for a Ukraine settlement, including that it be allowed to keep the five Ukrainian regions it claims as its own, that Ukraine be barred from the NATO military alliance and that the country "demilitarise".

Zelensky said last Friday that Ukraine would "not legally recognise any temporarily occupied territories", and has previously called the demilitarisation

demand "incomprehensible".

Trump, who boasted before his inauguration he could halt Russia's assault on Ukraine within "24 hours", launched a diplomatic offensive to stop the fighting after taking office in January.

But he has so far failed to extract any major concessions from Russia.

After meeting Zelensky on the sidelines of Pope Francis's funeral, Trump upped his pressure on Vladimir Putin, telling his Russian counterpart to "stop shooting" and sign an agreement.

The White House has said that without rapid progress, it could walk away from its role as a broker. Trump indicated that he would give the process "two weeks."

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio earlier Sunday stressed the importance of the week ahead.

"We're close, but we're not close enough" to a deal to halt the fighting, Rubio told broadcaster NBC. "I think this is going to be a very critical week."

US envoy Steve Witkoff held a three-hour meeting with Putin in the Kremlin last week, where they discussed the possibility of direct talks between Kyiv and Moscow.

Russia and Ukraine have not held direct talks on the fighting since the start of Moscow's offensive in 2022.

Meanwhile, Russia over the weekend announced it had taken full control of its Kursk region with the help of North Korean troops, more than eight months after Kyiv launched a cross border ground assault.

Putin thanked North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday for help with the operation, which has denied Kyiv a key bargaining chip in future talks with Moscow.

The Russian army yesterday said it had taken control of the village of Kamianka in the northeastern Kharkiv region, in its latest battlefield advance.

People did not make sacrifices for a 'superhuman'

Khasru protests CA's polls remark

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Standing Committee member Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury yesterday said people's 16-year-long fight and sacrifices were to restore democracy, not to hand over the country to any "superhuman."



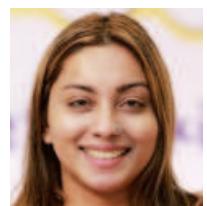
"The struggle was for democracy, restoring the democratic order, reclaiming voting rights, and ensuring people's ownership of the country," he said after holding meetings with leaders of allied parties -- NAP (Bhasani), Amjanatar Dal, and Bangladesh People's Party.

He was responding to a journalist's query about the chief adviser's recent interview with Al Jazeera, where he claimed that the interim government was not facing public pressure to hand over power quickly.

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Meghna Alam granted bail in extortion case

COURT CORRESPONDENT



A Dhaka court yesterday granted bail to model and Miss Bangladesh Foundation Chairperson Meghna Alam in an extortion case filed with Dhanmondi Police Station.

Dhaka Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Md Sanullah passed the order after her lawyer Mohima Badhan submitted an application seeking bail.

There is no legal bar for her release from jail, said her lawyer Badhan.

In the petition, lawyer Badhan sought bail on the grounds that no specific allegation was brought against Meghna.

She was implicated in the case filed for "harassment", argued her lawyer, adding that as a

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Many cases being filed for personal gains

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"Nowadays, people write their complaints themselves and bring them in. The police must register these as cases. It does not matter if they are true or false, there is no scope for verification," the IGP said during a press conference at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday, marking the first day of the four day Police Week.

"Later, investigations determine how much of the allegation is true and how much is false. We extract the truth through investigation and submit it to the court," he added.

The IGP further said, "Often, we are faced with unreasonable demands. Requests come in to detain someone, to release someone, to award someone."

He requested that "as far as possible, fewer unreasonable demands" be made to him.

137 journalists sued so far

FROM PAGE 1

the journalists, who encouraged Sheikh Hasina with their speeches and questions in TV talk shows, were being accused in criminal cases.

"Many of the journalists benefited from Sheikh Hasina and became owners of television channels. They aided and abetted her during the uprising," he said.

He added that investigators have been instructed not to harass anyone innocent.

HIGHEST CASES IN DHAKA

In Dhaka, 19 criminal cases have been lodged against 77 journalists in connection with murder, attempted murder, unlawful assembly, rioting, and other charges.

Two of the cases were filed with the International Crimes Tribunal.

Law enforcers have already arrested several journalists, including Rupa, Shakil, Mozammel Babu, Shyamal Dutta, Sheikh Muhammad Jamal Hossain, and Arif Hasan, in connection with the cases.

So far, Jamal has secured bail.

Most recently, on April 20, a case was registered with Mirpur Model Police Station against Sheikh Hasina and 407 others, including 24 journalists, over the killing of BNP activist Mahfuz Alam Shrabani during the July uprising in the capital's Mirpur area.

In Chattogram, two cases were lodged against 33 journalists, accusing them of attempted murder and abduction.

In Bogura, 22 journalists, including four working in Dhaka, were accused in eight cases. Four of the cases involve murder charges.

In Rajshahi, three cases were lodged against 14 journalists for their alleged involvement in vandalism, extortion, and assault.

In August last year, a case was also filed against 28 journalists with

objectivity.

Speaking about the recent case filed against over 400 accused, including actor Iresh Zaker, the adviser said, "There is no restriction under Bangladeshi law on filing cases. People are filing cases as they wish. Many of these cases are harassing and malicious. Cases are being filed to grab land, property, and businesses. This is extremely unfortunate and regrettable."

"Once a case is filed, we try to provide redress through the police and court administration. When too many people are implicated, it becomes difficult for us to manage. However, we cannot prevent people from filing cases," he added.

"You [reporters] have seen; the home ministry has repeatedly said that if a complaint lacks objectivity, no one should be arrested," he said.

the International Crimes Tribunal accusing them of crimes against humanity and genocide.

Referring to a press conference, the complaint said the accused journalists "through different questions, made instigating remarks and provoked Sheikh Hasina to eliminate the protesting students and ordinary people".

It also claimed that these journalists, described as "sycophants" of the then government, published "false news to instigate the genocide and crimes against humanity".

Naeemul Islam Khan, former press secretary to Hasina; Iqbal Sobhan Chowdhury, former media adviser to Hasina; Farida Yasmin, former president of the Jatiya Press Club; Shyamal Dutta, editor of Bhoror Kagoj; Mozammel Babu of Ekattor TV; Nabania Chowdhury; Subhash Singh Roy of abnews24.com; Ahmed Jobair of Somoy TV; Tushar Abdullah of Ekhon TV; Saiful Alam, editor of Jugantor; Naeem Nizam, editor of Bangladesh Pratidin; and Abed Khan, former editor of Samakal, were among the accused.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Union of Journalists yesterday condemned and protested the filing of a murder case against 24 journalists.

In a statement, DUJ President Sajjad Alam Khan Topu and General Secretary Akhter Hossain said bringing unspecified and sweeping allegations against journalists poses a serious threat to freedom of expression.

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