

INDO-PAK BORDER

Villagers in no hurry to return to their homes

REUTERS, Jammu

After spending days in temporary homes and with relatives, people from both sides of the Indian and Pakistani border are sceptical about this weekend's ceasefire and in no hurry to return to their villages.

Indian cites like Jammu and Amritsar, which were spooked by the sounds of explosions after the truce was agreed, remained quieter than normal yesterday with many shops choosing to close and people preferring to stay indoors.

Indian and Pakistani authorities advised people who had left border areas not to return to frontline villages just yet.

After four days of fighting, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire on Saturday under US pressure, but within hours explosions



A resident inspects his damaged house following cross-border shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) between Pakistan and India in the Jura sector of Neelum Valley, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, yesterday. *Inset*, Vartika, the daughter of an IAF soldier who died in an attack on Udhampur, salutes her father as his body is taken away on the day of his funeral at their home in Mahradas village, Rajasthan, India.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Ready to meet Russia if ceasefire agreed

Says Ukraine's Zelensky after Putin calls for 'direct talks' with Kyiv

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that Kyiv would meet with Moscow for talks in Istanbul on May 15, but said that Russia must first commit to a 30-day ceasefire starting today.

Zelensky -- using rare language since Moscow launched its invasion more than three years ago that has devastated Ukraine -- said he saw a "positive sign" from Russia.

The warring sides have not held direct talks since March 2022,

Putin rejects ceasefire ultimatum proposed by European leaders

Erdogan says efforts to end Ukraine war at 'turning point'

Russia launched over 100 drones at Ukraine: Kyiv

shortly after the Kremlin launched its invasion in February of that year.

Zelensky's comments came after Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed that Kyiv and Moscow meet on May 15.

However, in the nighttime press conference at the Kremlin, Putin did not comment on the 30-day ceasefire proposal put forward by



Kyiv and its European allies.

Putin said Russia was proposing direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul in an attempt to "eliminate the root causes of the conflict" and "to achieve the restoration of a long-term, lasting peace" rather than simply a pause for rearmament.

"We are proposing that Kyiv resume direct negotiations without any preconditions," Putin said from the Kremlin.

On a visit to Kyiv on Saturday the leaders of France, the UK, Germany and Poland pressured Russia -- with US President Donald Trump's support -- to commit to an unconditional ceasefire in Ukraine starting from today.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday told Russian and French leaders that a "historic turning point" has been reached in

efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war and that Ankara was ready to host talks between the two warring parties, his office said.

Russia's invasion has dragged on for more than three years and killed thousands of people.

"There is no point in continuing the killing even for a single day. We expect Russia to confirm a ceasefire -- full, lasting and reliable -- starting tomorrow, May 12, and Ukraine is ready to meet," Zelensky said on social media.

"It is a positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war," Zelensky said, in a break of tone.

Meanwhile, Kyiv yesterday said that Moscow had launched more than 100 drones into Ukraine at night, shortly after a Russian 72-hour ceasefire had ended at midnight.

OMAN MEETING

US, Iran discuss 'tech elements' of nuclear deal

REUTERS

The US government's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff had a fourth round of direct and indirect discussions with Iran in Muscat, Oman, yesterday where they were discussing "technical elements" of a nuclear deal, according to a senior US administration official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The US and Iran have agreed to hold another meeting in the near future, the US official said.

Though Tehran and Washington both have said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the decades-long dispute, they remain deeply divided on several red lines that negotiators will have to circumvent to reach a new nuclear deal and avert future military action.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff held the fourth round of talks in Muscat.

Araqchi, before departing for Muscat, told Iranian state TV that "Iran has well-known positions based on clear principles... We hope to reach a decisive stance in Sunday's meeting". He added that Iran's expert team was in Oman and "will be consulted if necessary".

Eight killed in Israeli strike on Khan Yunis

Say Gaza rescuers; four children among dead

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence yesterday reported eight deaths, including four young children, in an Israeli air strike on tents housing displaced people in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Israeli fighter jets targeted three tents housing dozens of displaced people overnight, killing "eight people, including four children aged two to five and two women", civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike.

Video filmed by AFP shows rescuers in the dark evacuating bodies by ambulance, one of them in a white plastic body bag while the other was wrapped in a blanket, as well as a wounded baby.

Bassal said the Israeli military also destroyed five houses with explosives in the east of Gaza City, in the territory's north, and fired artillery at the Abassa area east of Khan Yunis, without reporting any casualties.

The Gaza health ministry said on Saturday that at least 2,701 people have been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza, bringing the overall death toll since the war broke out to 52,810.

Meanwhile, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said yesterday that the country has fully endorsed US President Donald Trump's aid plan for Gaza, laid out by the American envoy to Israel.

FIRST SUNDAY MESSAGE

Pope Leo XIV appeals for 'no more war'

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope Leo XIV appealed to the world's major powers for "no more war" in his first Sunday message to crowds in St Peter's Square since his election as pontiff.

The new pope, elected on May 8, called for an "authentic and lasting peace" in Ukraine and a ceasefire in Gaza and release of all Israeli hostages.

Leo also welcomed the recent ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and said he was praying to God to grant the world the "miracle of peace."

"No more war!" the pope said, repeating a frequent call of the late Pope Francis and noting the recent 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which killed some 60 million people.



Leo said today's world was living through "the dramatic scenario of a Third World War being fought piecemeal," again repeating a phrase coined by Francis.

The new pope said he carries in his heart the "suffering of the beloved people of Ukraine." He appealed for negotiations to reach an "authentic, just and lasting peace."

He also said he was "profoundly saddened" by the war in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid and release of the remaining hostages held by the militant group Hamas.

Leo said he was glad to hear of the recent India-Pakistan ceasefire and hoped negotiations would lead to a lasting accord between the nuclear armed neighbors.

He added: "But there are so many other conflicts in the world!"

S Korea's former PM Han drops presidential bid

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea's former prime minister and acting president Han Duck-soo ended a short, ill-fated attempt to win the conservative party's presidential nomination yesterday after days of internecine disputes just days out from the election.

Rival Kim Moon-soo was chosen as nominee for the People Power Party after party members voted on Saturday to retain him over Han, whose late entry into the race derailed the consensus over its candidate for the June 3 presidential vote.

Han yesterday said he "humbly accepts everything" and hopes Kim wins the snap election, which was triggered by the impeachment of the country's former president.

Kim formally registered as a PPP candidate yesterday morning, and is now South Korea's conservative hopeful against frontrunner Lee Jae-myung of the opposition Democratic Party.

Han and Kim struggled for unity in the past week and had held a series of failed talks to discuss how to unite their conservative campaigns to avoid splitting the vote.

Lee has been a clear frontrunner to replace conservative former President Yoon Suk Yeol, who was removed from office in April for violating his duties when he declared a short-lived martial law in December.

Kim, who was selected as the conservatives' candidate in a party convention a week ago, resisted pressure from the party to step aside in favour of the more popular Han, who had declined to participate in the nomination process while he was still serving as prime minister.



Mothers and relatives of missing persons in different states of Mexico hold signs during a march to demand the government to clarify their disappearances, within the framework of the celebration of Mother's Day in Mexico City, on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Bus carrying pilgrims crashes killing 21 in Lanka

AFP, Colombo

An overcrowded bus carrying dozens of Buddhist pilgrims plummeted into a precipice in Sri Lanka yesterday, killing at least 21 and injuring 24, a senior transport official said.

The nation's winding roads are among the most dangerous in the world, and the crash off a cliffside road yesterday was among the deadliest recorded in Sri Lanka in decades.

The roof and side panels of the bus were sheared off, and more than half the seats were ripped from the floor of the vehicle, which landed wheels up into a tea plantation, photos of the wreckage showed.

The state-owned bus was carrying around 70 passengers -- about 20 more than its capacity -- through the central hilly region of Kotmale when the driver lost control and it veered off the road before dawn, police said.