

DOHA TALKS Pakistan and Afghanistan agree to new truce

Both sides to meet
again on Oct 25 in
Istanbul

REUTERS, Islamabad

Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to an immediate ceasefire during talks in Doha, both sides said yesterday, after a week of fierce border clashes, the worst violence between the South Asian neighbours since the Taliban seized power in Kabul in 2021.

The ceasefire "has been finalised", Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif posted on X yesterday, saying both sides would meet again on October 25 in Istanbul to discuss "detailed matters".

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid said in a statement the parties agreed on a complete and meaningful ceasefire.

Qatar's foreign ministry, which mediated Saturday's talks along with Turkey, said the follow-up



Afghan refugees deported from Pakistan wait at a UNHCR registration centre after arriving at the zero point border crossing in Spin Boldak district, Kandahar province, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Ukrainian drones cause fire at Russian gas plant

Zelensky urges allies against appeasing Russia after US trip

AGENCIES

Ukrainian drones attacked the Orenburg gas processing plant, the world's largest facility of its kind, and damaged part of it but no employees were hurt in the attack, the region's governor said yesterday.

The governor, Yevgeny Solntsev, said on his official Telegram channel that the drone strike had caused a fire to break out at a workshop at the plant which emergency services were working to put out.

It is the first time that the plant, part of the Orenburg gas chemical complex, which includes Gazprom's production and processing facilities in the Orenburg region with an annual capacity of 45 billion cubic metres of gas, has been reported to have been hit.

The plant processes gas condensate from the Orenburg oil and gas condensate field, as well as from Kazakhstan's Karachaganak field, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday urged allies against appeasing Russia, in a statement after he returned from a trip to the United States where he failed to secure long-range Tomahawk missile supplies.

Zelensky came to Washington after weeks of calls for Tomahawks, hoping to capitalise on US President Donald Trump's growing frustration with Russian



Residents stand near their apartment buildings hit by a Russian drone strike in the town of Shakhtarske in Dnipropetrovsk region, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

counterpart Vladimir Putin after a summit in Alaska failed to produce a breakthrough.

But the Ukrainian left empty-handed as Trump eyes a fresh diplomatic breakthrough on the back of last week's Gaza peace deal.

"Ukraine will never grant terrorists any bounty for their crimes, and we count on our partners to uphold this very position," Zelensky wrote on social media on his return from Washington. He called "for decisive steps" from European and American allies.

Trump has appeared far more upbeat about the prospects of a deal since a lengthy call Thursday with Putin, in which they agreed to

meet soon in Budapest.

After meeting with Zelensky at the White House, Trump said on social media that their talks were "very interesting, and cordial, but I told him, as I likewise strongly suggested to President Putin, that it is time to stop the killing, and make a DEAL!"

Russia's Defence Ministry said yesterday that Russian forces had pushed Ukrainian forces out of the settlements of Chunyshyne in the Donetsk region and of Poltavka in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Russian forces had also destroyed a US-made Himars rocket launcher system in Ukraine's Chernihiv region using an "Iskander-M" missile, the ministry said.

Trump calls Colombian president 'a drug leader'

Vows to end US
payments to the
country

REUTERS

US President Donald Trump yesterday called Colombian President Gustavo Petro an "illegal drug leader" and said the United States would cease "large scale payments and subsidies" to the South American nation.

"The purpose of this drug production is the sale of massive amounts of product into the United States, causing death, destruction, and havoc," he said in a Truth Social post. The Colombian embassy in Washington, DC, did not respond to a request for comment.

Relations between Bogota and Washington have frayed since Trump returned to office. Last month the US revoked Petro's visa after he joined a pro-Palestinian demonstration in New York.

In September, Trump designated countries such as Afghanistan, Bolivia, Burma, Colombia and Venezuela among those the United States believes to have "failed demonstrably" in upholding

counternarcotics agreements during the past year.

China accuses US of cyberattacks on nat'l time centre

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday accused the United States of conducting cyberattacks on Beijing's national time centre that could have caused severe damage to critical financial and telecommunications infrastructure.

Beijing has stepped up espionage warnings in recent years as relations with the United States and other Western nations have worsened.

Chinese authorities found "irrefutable evidence" of efforts by the US National Security Agency (NSA) to hack the National Time Service Center, between 2022 and 2024, according to a statement published on the official Ministry of State Security WeChat account.

The facility is responsible for coordinating clocks around the country used by everything from computer servers to train stations and power grids.

The ministry accused the NSA of exploiting weaknesses in the messaging service of an unspecified foreign mobile phone brand in order to steal login credentials from employees at the time centre.

The attacks could have jeopardised power grids, transport, and even space launches, the ministry said. Chinese authorities have since "severed attack chains, upgraded protective measures, and eliminated potential threats."

"In recent years, the United States has aggressively pursued cyber hegemony, repeatedly trampling on international cyberspace rules," the ministry said in its statement.

Surveillance worries emerge for No Kings protesters

REUTERS

People who take part in Saturday's mass "No Kings" protest against President Donald Trump's administration may be targeted for federal government surveillance with a range of technology that could include facial recognition and phone hacking, civil libertarians said.

"No Kings" organizers expect 2,600 rallies across all 50 US states. But the level of surveillance at protests and the type of technology in use is likely to be both location-specific and dependent on the police forces present, said Thorin Klosowski, a security and privacy activist with the Electronic Frontier Foundation, said Friday.

For instance, crowds in Washington, DC, where anti-scale fencing has been erected around the White House complex, are likely to be surveilled differently than those in a small rural town.

"Under previous administrations, law enforcement surveillance of peaceful demonstrations was already commonplace and corrosive of free expression," Ryan Shapiro, executive director of government transparency group Property of the People, said in an email Friday.

"Given Trump's open hostility to even minor dissent, such surveillance now poses an existential threat to what remains of American democracy and only underscores the need for mass protest."

The Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs Enforcement has been implementing Trump's immigration crackdown and has amassed a digital surveillance arsenal, according to various news outlets.

Houthi rebels detain 20 UN staff in Yemen

AFP, Sanaa

The UN's office in Yemen said yesterday that 20 of its staff were still being detained by Houthi rebels following a raid on their building in Sanaa the day before.

On Saturday, the UN office had said Houthi security forces had made an "unauthorised entry" into their compound, adding the staff there were "safe and accounted for".

"Five national staff and fifteen international staff remain detained within the compound," Jean Alam, spokesman for the UN resident coordinator, said yesterday.

"The United Nations is in contact with the authorities in Sanaa and with relevant Member States and the Government of Yemen to resolve this serious situation as swiftly as possible, end the detention of all personnel, and restore full control over its facilities in Sanaa."

The rebels had already stormed UN offices in Sanaa on August 31, detaining more than 11 employees, according to the UN. Those employees were suspected of spying for the United States and Israel, a senior Houthi official told AFP at the time on condition of anonymity.

In a statement on Saturday, UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric's spokesperson said: "We will continue to call for an end to the arbitrary detention of 53 of our colleagues."

He was responding to a televised address on Thursday by rebel leader Abdelmalek al-Houthi, during which he claimed his forces had dismantled "one of the most dangerous spy cells," which he said was "linked to humanitarian organisations such as the World Food Program and Unicef".



A Palestinian walks past a damaged vehicle following an Israeli raid in Tubas, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Iran executes man over espionage

AFP, Tehran

Iran executed a man convicted of spying for Israel's intelligence agency, the judiciary said yesterday, the latest in a series of executions following a 12-day war in June between the two countries.

"The execution of this spy... was carried out after confirmation by the Supreme Court and the rejection of his pardon request at Qom Prison," Kazem Mousavi, chief justice of Qom province, was quoted as saying by the judiciary's Mizan Online website.

The identity of the man - who was hanged on Saturday in the holy city of Qom, south of Tehran - was not immediately revealed.

According to the Iranian authorities, the suspect began contacting Israeli intelligence in October 2023 and was arrested between January and February 2024.