

Putin Proposes Direct Talks With Ukraine ‘Without Preconditions’



Ukrainian servicemen of the 24th Separate Assault Battalion “Aidar” smoke during a rest moment between rotations at an undisclosed location in Dnipropetrovsk Region, May 9, 2025.

MOSCOW (AP) – Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed restarting direct talks with Ukraine in Istanbul on May 15, “without preconditions,” an offer that came in response to Ukraine and its allies urging Moscow to commit to an unconditional 30-day ceasefire or face additional sanctions.

Putin referenced the unsuccessful 2022 peace talks that took place in Istanbul in March, shortly after Moscow’s war, and proposed “restarting” them without preconditions in remarks to reporters in the early hours of Sunday.

“We are committed to serious negotiations with Ukraine,” Putin

said, adding that he doesn’t rule out agreeing to a ceasefire later, in the course of direct talks with Ukraine.

Putin’s proposal came after leaders from four major European countries threatened to ratchet up pressure on Moscow if it does not accept an unconditional 30-day ceasefire in Ukraine that they offered on Saturday in a strong show of unity with Kyiv.

The leaders of France, the United Kingdom, Germany and Poland said their proposal for a ceasefire to start on Monday was supported by US President Donald Trump, whom they had briefed over the phone earlier in the day.

Trump has called for Ukraine and Russia to meet for “very high level talks,” saying they are “very close to a deal” on ending the bloody three-year war.

Ukraine’s President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has previously said he was ready for peace talks, but only after a ceasefire is in place.

Putin said that Russia proposed several ceasefires in recent months — a halt on strikes on energy infrastructure, which Ukraine had agreed to, a unilateral 30-hour Easter truce and another unilateral ceasefire on May 8-10 that has since expired.

Ukrainian officials said Russia repeatedly violated all of those.

Putin on Sunday accused Ukraine of sabotaging “these initiatives time and time again” and launching multiple attacks on Russia.

In March, the United States proposed an immediate, limited 30-day truce, which Ukraine accepted, but the Kremlin has held out for terms more to its liking.

Putin on Sunday once again said the Kremlin needs a truce that would lead to a “lasting peace” instead of one that would allow Ukraine to rearm and mobilize more men into its armed forces.

He said he would speak to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and ask him to facilitate the peace talks on May 15.

Employers Express Concern Over Workforce Shortage UK Plans to End ‘Failed Free Market Experiment’ in Immigration

LONDON (Reuters) – The British government outlined plans on Sunday to end what it called the “failed free market experiment” in mass immigration by restricting skilled worker visas to graduate-level jobs and forcing businesses to increase training for local workers.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer is under pressure to cut net migration after the success of Nigel Farage’s right-wing, anti-immigration Reform UK party in local elections this month.

Under the government’s new plans, skilled visas will only be granted to people in graduate jobs, while visas for lower-skilled roles will only be issued in areas critical to the nation’s industrial strategy, and in return businesses must increase training of British workers.

Companies in the care sector will no longer be able to seek visas for workers recruited abroad.

The Labour government said the changes will be part of a policy document, known as a white paper, to be published on Monday setting out how ministers plan to reduce immigration.

High levels of legal migration were one of the major drivers behind the vote to leave the European Union in 2016 with voters unhappy about the free movement of workers across the bloc.

After Britain eventually left the EU in 2020, the then Conservative government reduced the threshold to allow workers in categories such as yoga teachers, dog walkers and DJs to be eligible for skilled worker visas.

“We inherited a failed immigration system where the previous government replaced free movement with



A man wearing a “Stop the boats” T-shirt attends a protest, organized by Kent Motor Heads Events, gathering bikers and others protesting against illegal migration, in Dover, Britain, April 27, 2025.

a free market experiment,” Yvette Cooper, the British interior minister, said in a statement. “We are taking decisive action to restore control and order to the immigration system.”

While post-Brexit changes to visas saw a sharp drop in the number of European Union migrants to Britain, new work visa rules and people arriving from Ukraine and Hong Kong under special visa schemes led to a surge in immigration.

Net migration, or the number of people coming to Britain minus the number leaving, rose to a record 906,000 people in the year to June 2023, up from the 184,000 people who arrived in the same period during 2019, when Britain was still in the EU.

Cooper said the combination of the changes to the rules for low-skilled visas and the closure of visas for care workers recruited overseas would

probably reduce the number of low-skilled worker visas by up to 50,000 this year.

British employers have expressed concern about the government’s plans to tighten the rules on foreign workers, saying they are needed to fill shortages in the jobs market.

Asked about the government’s latest announcement, a spokesperson for the Confederation of British Industry pointed to comments by CBI Director General Rain Newton-Smith to The Times published on Friday in which she backed the push for more training of British workers.

“But there’s no doubt that at times businesses will face acute skill shortages,” Newton-Smith said. “And of course, they’ll look for domestic routes to fill those, but there will be times when immigration is an important way.”

Over 100 Dead After Flooding in Eastern Congo

KINSHASA (Reuters) – More than 100 people have died after flooding in a village near the shores of Lake Tanganyika in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a local official said.

The flooding, which affected the village of Kasaba, comes at a vulnerable moment for the Central African nation. Rwanda-backed M23 rebels have intensified an offensive in the eastern region since the start of the

year, with thousands killed in fighting in the first two months of the year.

Samy Kalodji, administrator of Fizi territory in South Kivu province where the village is located, said late on Saturday that reports from the area “indicated more than 100 deaths.”

The affected area is still under the administration of Kinshasa and is not among the zones taken by M23.

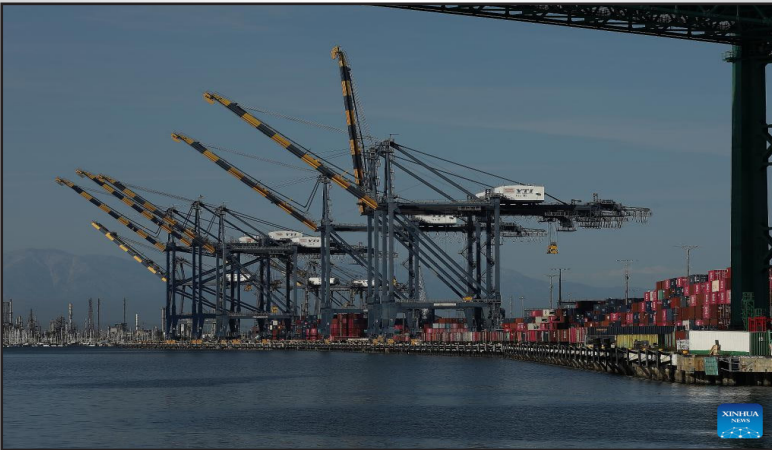
Didier Luganywa, spokesperson for the South Kivu government, said

in a statement the flooding incident occurred between Thursday night and Friday when torrential rains and strong winds caused the Kasaba River to overflow its banks.

The statement gave a toll of 62 confirmed deaths with 30 injured.

Local officials said the Kasaba area was only accessible via Lake Tanganyika and was not covered by the mobile phone network, which could delay humanitarian relief efforts.

California Governor Warns of ‘Code Red’ U.S.-China Talks to Defuse Trade Row Continue in Geneva



A view of the Port of Los Angeles in California, the United States.

GENEVA (Reuters/Xinhua) – Senior U.S. and Chinese officials met again on Sunday in Geneva, two sources familiar with the situation told Reuters, to resume weekend talks aimed at cooling the trade war that threatens to seriously damage the global economy.

Chinese Vice Premier He Lifeng met for about eight hours on Saturday with U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer in their first face-to-face meeting since the world’s two largest economies imposed tariffs well above 100% on each other’s goods.

Neither side commented on Saturday about the substance of the discussions nor signaled any specific progress towards reducing steep trade barriers as meetings at the residence of Switzerland’s ambassador to the UN concluded.

But later, U.S. President Donald Trump gave a positive reading of the talks, saying the two sides had negotiated “a total reset ... in a friendly, but constructive, manner.”

“A very good meeting today with China, in Switzerland. Many things discussed, much agreed to,” Trump posted on his Truth Social platform.

Trump added: “We want to see, for the good of both China and the U.S., an opening up of China to American business. GREAT PROGRESS MADE!!!!” He did not elaborate on the progress.

The negotiating teams are meet-

ing at the gated UN ambassador’s villa, which has its own private park overlooking Lake Geneva in the leafy suburb of Cologny.

Switzerland was chosen as the location following approaches by Swiss politicians on recent visits to China and the United States.

In a recent advertisement, California Governor Gavin Newsom warned the American public of the “real” and “serious” consequences of recent high tariffs, describing the situation as a “code red” economic emergency.

“California is now the fourth-largest economy in the world. Innovation, manufacturing, agriculture. And we’ve done it by reducing trade barriers and delivering for American consumers,” Newsom said in the ad posted online Friday.

“But the Trump administration is putting all of that at risk, halting delivery of essential goods through our ports. Today, it’s school backpacks. In a few months, it’ll be Christmas toys,” he said.

In an interview released on Saturday, Newsom explained that he aired the advertisement on the conservative Fox News channel this weekend, hoping the U.S. administration “understand and absorb the impacts.”

Furthermore, Newsom depicted a more dangerous situation in his interview, saying a “code red” economic emergency had been triggered by the reckless tariff policies, which had already severely impacted California’s major ports.

China Says Xi’s Moscow Visit ‘Complete Success’

BEIJING (RT) – Chinese President Xi Jinping’s visit to Moscow was a complete success, proving that China-Russia relations are rock solid, Foreign Minister Wang Yi has said.

The Chinese leader paid an official state visit to Moscow this week, attending the 80th anniversary Victory Day celebrations in the Russian capital. Xi held extensive talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, after which both sides signed a sweeping range of documents around furthering bilateral cooperation, as well as a joint declaration on global strategic stability.

“The visit looked back on history, looked to the future, inherited friendship, defended justice, and was a complete success,” Wang said in a press briefing.

The visit underscored that “China-Russia relations are as solid as a rock, that the results of the victory of the Second World War cannot be challenged, and that the world needs justice instead of hegemony,” the top diplomat said.

Xi and Putin held talks lasting nearly ten hours, and “signed more than 20 cooperation documents, inject-

ing new strong momentum into the development of China-Russia relations,” he added.

The two powers are in their “best period in history,” Wang said. “Trying to drive a wedge between China and Russia can only be a pipe dream.”

The superpowers agreed to further economic, trade, and energy cooperation, as well as to boost collaboration in high-tech fields, including nuclear energy, aerospace industries and AI.

During the talks, Moscow and Beijing underscored that they complement each other’s economic strong points and have significant room for development, Wang said.

Bilateral annual trade between Russia and China hit \$245 billion last year, according to Chinese customs data.

Nearly all trade between Russia and China is now carried out in rubles and yuan, and is protected from influence by other countries, Putin noted during the talks.

In the face of global and historical changes, “it is important to remain trusted eternal friends in the spirit of seasoned friendship,” the Russian leader said in a press statement alongside Xi earlier this week.

News in Brief

SEOUL (Reuters) – 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 on Sunday 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 on Sunday 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 on Sunday 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.

DHAKA (AP) – The interim government in Bangladesh banned all activities of the former ruling Awami League party headed by former influential Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who was ousted last year in a mass uprising. Asif Nazrul, the country’s law affairs adviser, said late Saturday the interim Cabinet headed by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus decided to ban the party’s activities online and elsewhere under the country’s Anti-Terrorism Act. The ban would stay in place until a special tribunal completes a trial of the party and its leaders over the deaths of hundreds of students and other protesters during an anti-government uprising in July and August last year. “This decision is aimed at ensuring national security and sovereignty, protection of activists of the July movement, and plaintiffs and witnesses involved in the tribunal proceedings,” Nazrul told reporters after a special Cabinet meeting.

TIRANA (AFP) – Albanians cast ballots in the general election on Sunday, with Prime Minister Edi Rama seeking an unprecedented fourth term after a campaign dominated by promises of European Union membership and corruption allegations. Polling stations opened at 7am local time (05:00 GMT) on Sunday and closed at 7pm (17:00 GMT), with results expected on Monday. Nearly 3.7 million Albanians, including hundreds of thousands living abroad, are eligible to vote. For the first time, members of the diaspora can cast their ballots by mail. Rama, leader of the governing Socialist Party since 2013, has positioned himself as the architect of Albania’s EU future. He has pledged that the country will join the bloc by 2030, repeating the promise at his final rally: “We will get our fourth mandate, and we will not lose a single day for Albania 2030 in the EU.” Rama’s main rival, 80-year-old Sali Berisha, a former president and prime minister, leads the conservative Democratic Party.

COLOMBO (AFP) – At least 21 people have been killed and many others injured when a bus carrying dozens of Buddhist pilgrims in central Sri Lanka careened off a cliff, according to authorities. The crash took place early on Sunday in a mountainous area near the town of Kotmale, about 140km (86 miles) east of the capital, Colombo. “Twenty one have died and we are trying to identify the victims,” Deputy Minister of Transport and Highways Prasanna Gunasena told local media. The toll could have been higher, the minister added, if not for local residents helping pull people from the mangled wreckage and rushing them to hospital. Television footage showed the bus overturned at the bottom of a precipice while volunteers helped rescue injured people from the rubble. 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. Police said 24 people were being treated in two hospitals.

LONDON (RT) – The British military is supplying Ukraine with flat-pack decoys designed to mimic real military hardware, The Times reported, citing sources. The effort is aimed at deceiving Russian forces and exaggerating the amount of modern equipment on the front line. At the heart of the effort are so-called “Ikea-style” kits resembling British-supplied tanks, artillery, and air defense systems that are designed to stretch Russia’s surveillance and strike capacity. “We haven’t gifted a huge amount of these, so anything we can do to make the quantities look greater on the front line is advantageous to us,” RAF Squadron Leader Lowri Simmer told the paper. The deception campaign is being managed by Taskforce Kindred, a 20-person team within the British Defense Ministry that works with industry specialists. They rely on digital images of equipment to create realistic replicas, which are then printed on flat materials, shipped to Kiev, and quickly assembled close to the combat zones.