

Brazil, India Leaders Vow Not to Bow Down to U.S.



Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (rifgt) and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

BRASILIA (Dispatches) - Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said their countries will not bow down to the United States as Modi pledging commitment to his country's self-reliance in energy independence and the development of its own defense systems.

Lula da Silva on Thursday countered the claim by his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump that Brazil is "a horrible trading partner."

"It is a lie when the U.S. president says that Brazil is a bad trading partner. Brazil is good, it just won't bow down to the U.S. government," Lula said during an event in the northeast state of Pernambuco.

Earlier in the day, Trump said Brazil is a "horrible trading partner," calling the trial against former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro a "political execution."

Lula said that "democracy is judging Bolsonaro."

In New Delhi's Red Fort, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi vowed to defend his country "like a wall" amid U.S. tariff threats, stressing India's push for self-reliance in energy and defense capabilities.

He addressed his nation during the 78th annual Independence Day celebrations on Friday, pledging commitment to his country's self-reliance in energy independence and the development of its own defense systems.

"Self-reliance is the foundation of developed India. We know that we remain dependent on many countries to meet our energy needs... Freedom becomes meaningless if someone becomes too dependent on others," said Modi.

Tensions between the two countries have grown in recent months as the Trump administration warns India to halt imports of Russian crude or face punitive measures. Washington has given New Delhi until August 27 to comply or face a doubling of tariffs on certain Indian exports from 25% to 50%.

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India has been one of the top buyers of Russian oil, arguing the purchases are vital to meet the needs of its 1.4 billion people and to cushion its economy from global price shocks.

Despite Modi's efforts to cultivate ties with Washington since Donald Trump took office in January—and his endorsement of a Trump summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska—the tariff threat is seen as the U.S. president's transactional and unilateral style in foreign policy.

Trump has pursued similar hardline tactics with other allies, from Europe to East Asia, pressing them on trade, defense spending, and energy choices.

Modi stressed India's push to develop its own defense and technology sectors, urging scientists and engineers to focus on building fighter jet engines, semiconductor chips, and advanced military hardware.

"We will have India-made semiconductor chips in the market by the year's end," he said, adding that India was also planning to construct its own space station and a "defense shield" within the next decade.

He also emphasized defending the interests of Indian farmers, a sector employing hundreds of millions and long a sticking point in U.S.-India trade talks.

"When economic selfishness is rising day by day... we must not just sit and worry about the crisis but instead focus on our strengths," he said.

Despite the tensions, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio extended Independence Day greetings to Modi, describing U.S.-India ties as "consequential and far-reaching" and expressing hope to "ensure a brighter future for both."

China Accuses Philippine Vessels of 'Dangerous Manoeuvres'

BEIJING (Reuters) - China's defense ministry accused Philippine Coast Guard vessels on Friday of "dangerous maneuvers" in response to reports of a collision earlier this week between two Chinese vessels near Scarborough Shoal in the disputed South China Sea.

The Philippine vessels' actions "seriously endangered the safety of Chinese vessels and personnel," ministry spokesperson Jiang Bin.

Jiang neither confirmed nor denied that there had been a collision involving two Chinese vessels on Monday.

"We demand that the Philippine side immediately stop its infringing and provocative rhetoric and actions," Jiang said. "China reserves the right to take necessary countermeasures."

The Scarborough Shoal has been a major source of tension in what is a strategic conduit for more than \$3 trillion of annual ship-borne commerce.

Footage from the Philippine Coast Guard showed a Chinese coastguard ship trailing the PCG vessel before a Chinese navy ship suddenly cut across the path of the other Chinese ship, colliding with it and damaging the forecandle of the coastguard vessel.

It was the first known crash between Chinese vessels in the area.

The Philippines on Friday said it bore no responsibility for the collision.

"It was an unfortunate outcome, but not one caused by our actions," Manila's foreign minister Theresa Lazaro said in a statement.

The Philippine Coast Guard deployed three vessels on Monday to deliver supplies for Filipino fishermen in the Scarborough Shoal before the collision took place, Manila said on Tuesday.

The confrontation was the latest in a series of incidents amid a period of heightened tensions between Manila and Beijing over territorial disputes in the South China Sea.

A 2016 ruling of an international arbitral tribunal voided Beijing's sweeping claims in the region, saying they had no basis under international law, a decision China rejects.

Meanwhile on Friday, Australia launched its largest military exercises with Philippine forces, involving more than 3,600 military personnel in live-fire drills, battle maneuvers and a beach assault at a Philippine town.

The exercises are called Alon, meaning wave in the Philippine language, and will showcase Australia's firepower. The drills will involve a guided-missile navy destroyer, F/A-18 supersonic fighter jets, a C-130 troop and cargo aircraft, Javelin anti-tank weapons and special forces sniper weapons.

Military officials said defense forces from the United States, Canada, Japan, South Korea, New Zealand and Indonesia will join as observers.

"This exercise reflects Australia's commitment to working with partners to ensure we maintain a region where state sovereignty is protected, international law is followed and nations can make decisions free from coercion," Vice Admiral Justin Jones of the Royal Australian Navy said in a statement.

China has deplored multinational war drills and alliances in or near the disputed South China Sea, saying the U.S. and its allies are "ganging up" against it and militarizing the region.

Ukrainian Defenses Face a Challenge as Russian Troops Make Gains



Ukrainian servicemen of the 148th artillery brigade load ammunition into a M777 howitzer before firing towards Russian positions at the frontline in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine, on Thursday, Aug. 7, 2025.

DONETSK REGION, Ukraine (AP) — Days before the leaders of Russia and the U.S. hold a summit meeting in Alaska, Moscow's forces breached Ukrainian lines in a series of infiltrations in the country's industrial heartland of Donetsk.

This week's advances amount to only a limited success for Russia, analysts say, since it still needs to consolidate its gains before achieving a true breakthrough. Still, it's a potentially dangerous moment for Ukraine.

Attention has been focused on Pokrovsk — a key highway and rail junction that once was home to about 60,000 and now is partially encircled — but Russian forces have been probing for weaknesses north of the city, according to battlefield analysis site DeepState. The forces found a gap east of the coal-mining town of Dobropillia, and advanced about 10 kilometers (6 miles).

Ukraine's military has been repelling these attempts, he said, although DeepState said the situation has not been stabilized.

Ukrainian forces have tried to plug the gaps by extensive use of first-person-view drones — remotely piloted devices loaded with explosives that allow operators to see targets before striking.

These FPVs have turned areas up to 20 kilometers (about 12 miles) from the front into deadly zones on both sides of the line. But because the Russians attack with small groups, it's hard to counter with drones alone.

"We can't launch 100 FPVs at once," the pilot said, noting the drone operators would interfere with each other. With tactics and technology roughly equal on both sides, the Russians' superior manpower works to their advantage, said Bielieskov, the Kyiv-based analyst.

"They have no regard for human life. Very often, most of those they send are on a one-way mission," he said. Ukraine's military said Thursday additional troops have been moved to affected areas, with battle-hardened forces like the Azov brigade being deployed to the sector. However, the Deepstate map doesn't show any changes in favor of the Ukrainian army.

Michael Kofman, a military analyst for the Carnegie Endowment, said in a post on X that it was too early to assess if the front line was collapsing.

Spain, Portugal, Greece Battle Wildfires as Heat Wave to Last for Days



A fire approaches a farm during a wildfire in Santa Baia De Montes, northwestern Spain, Thursday, Aug. 14, 2025.

MADRID (AP) — Firefighters in Spain, Portugal and Greece battled ongoing wildfires Friday, an important religious holiday in all three countries, as persistent hot, dry conditions challenged efforts to contain the blazes.

Spain was fighting 14 major fires, according to Virginia Barcones, general director of emergency services. Temperatures were expected to climb over the weekend.

"Today will once again be a very tough day, with an extreme risk of new fires," Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez wrote on X.

The national weather agency AEMET warned of extreme fire risk in most of the country, including where the largest blazes were burning in the north and west. A heat wave which brought temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) on several days this month was expected to last through Monday.

Fires in the Galicia region forced the closure of several highways. The high speed rail line connecting it to Spain's capital, Madrid, remained suspended.

The fires in Spain this year have burned 158,000 hectares or 610 square miles, according to the European Union's European Forest Fire Information System. That is an area roughly as big as metropolitan London.

In both Spain and Portugal it was the Feast of the Assumption, a major Catholic holiday usually marked by family gatherings and religious processions.

In Portugal, nearly 4,000 firefighters were battling fires on Friday. Seven major fires were active. Authorities extended the state of alert until Sunday as high temperatures were expected to last through the weekend.

The Portuguese government on Friday requested assistance from the EU's civil protection mechanism, a firefighting force that European countries in need can call upon. A day before, Spain received two Canadair water bomber aircraft after requesting EU help to tackle blazes for the first time ever.

In the past week, Greece, Bulgaria, Montenegro and Albania have requested help from the EU's firefighting force to deal with forest fires. The force has already been activated as many times this year as all of last year's fire season.

On Friday, a wildfire in Greece burned out of control for a fourth day on the island of Chios, prompting several more overnight evacuations.

Two water-dropping planes and two helicopters were operating in the north of the island in the eastern Aegean Sea, where local authorities said a lull in high winds was helping firefighters early Friday.

News in Brief

PESHAWAR, Pakistan (AP) — Flash floods triggered by torrential rains have killed over 280 people and left scores of others missing in India and Pakistan over the past 24 hours, officials said Friday, as rescuers brought to safety some 1,600 people from two mountainous districts in the neighboring countries. In Pakistan, a helicopter carrying relief supplies to the flood-hit northwestern Bajaur region crashed on Friday due to bad weather, killing all five people on board, including two pilots, a government statement said. Sudden, intense downpours over small areas known as cloudbursts are increasingly common in India's Himalayan regions and Pakistan's northern areas, which are prone to flash floods and landslides. Cloudbursts have the potential to wreak havoc by causing intense flooding and landslides, impacting thousands of people in the mountainous regions.

BAMAKO (Reuters) - Mali's military-led government has arrested two generals and a French national, accusing them of participating in an alleged plot to destabilize the West African nation, according to a government statement and state-owned media. Mali has endured over a decade of turmoil marked by terrorists in its arid north along with political instability that culminated in a series of coups in 2020 and 2021 that brought current president General Assimi Goita to power. Sources told Reuters earlier this week that more than 30 soldiers and military officials had been taken into custody on suspicion of attempting to destabilize Goita's government.

LAMPEDUSA, Italy (AFP) - Italian authorities on Friday were trying to identify the bodies of 27 people who died when two crowded boats sank off the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa. One wooden coffin, marked with an "X," could be seen at the local cemetery, where the bodies of some of the victims were being held, an AFP journalist said. Broadcaster Rai reported that some of the coffins would be transported to Sicily for burial in several cemeteries there. Lampedusa, just 90 miles (145 kilometers) off the coast of Tunisia, is often the first point of arrival for people trying to reach Europe in fragile or overcrowded boats.

MONTREAL (Reuters) - Air Canada and its unionized flight attendants remained at odds on Friday, despite government pleas for both sides to return to bargaining to avert a strike that would upend travel for tens of thousands of passengers. Canada's largest carrier has said it expects to cancel 500 flights by the end of the day, ahead of the planned Saturday strike, leaving some 100,000 passengers scrambling for alternatives. Flightradar data showed Air Canada had cancelled 30 flights as of 5:30 AM EDT on Friday (0930 GMT). The carrier's 10,000 flight attendants are gearing up to strike just before 1 a.m. EDT on Saturday over stalled contract talks on union demands for higher wages and compensation for unpaid work. A strike would hit Canada's tourism sector during the height of the summer travel season and test the ruling Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney, which has been asked by the carrier to intervene and impose arbitration.

BELGRADE (Reuters) - Anti-government protesters demolished the offices of the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) in the northern city of Novi Sad and clashed with police and SNS supporters in the capital Belgrade on Thursday, a day after violent unrest left dozens injured. In Novi Sad, Serbia's second-largest city, police and SNS supporters loyal to populist President Aleksandar Vucic were absent as dozens of anti-government protesters smashed the windows of the party's offices, threw out furniture and SNS paraphernalia, and splashed paint across the entrance. Daily protests across Serbia, sparked by the deaths of 16 people when the roof of a renovated railway station in Novi Sad collapsed last November, have rattled the popularity of Vucic and the SNS.

Global Plastic Talks Collapse as Countries Remain Deeply Divided

GENEVA (AFP) - Global talks to develop a landmark treaty to tackle plastic pollution have once again failed to reach an agreement, despite efforts late into the night to strike a deal.

Delegates at a closing meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) in Geneva on Friday spoke of their dismay at the failure to break a deadlock at the sixth round of talks in under three years, as countries remained deeply divided over the scope of any treaty.

"South Africa is disappointed that it was not possible for this session to agree a legally binding treaty and positions remain far apart," its delegate told a closing meeting.

Cuba's delegate said that negotiators had "missed a historic opportunity but we have to keep going and act urgently", the AFP news agency reported.

"The planet, and present and future generations need this treaty."

More than 1,000 delegates from at least 180 countries had gathered in the Swiss city for the latest meeting of the INC, a group established by the United Nations Environment Assembly in 2022 with the mandate to develop the world's first legally binding global treaty to tackle plastic pollution.



The negotiations in Geneva were intended to be the last round of talks that would produce a deal – although the same was said of the previous round of talks held in Busan, South Korea, late last year.

Delegates had been working to a deadline of Thursday to reach a deal, and held frantic last-minute negotiations into the early hours of Friday to try to strike common ground before talks collapsed.

Countries remain divided between those seeking significant action, such as imposing caps on producing new plastic, and those, mostly oil-producing states, who want the deal to concentrate on waste management.

The so-called High Ambition Coalition, a large informal bloc which includes the European Union, the United Kingdom and Canada, as well as many Latin American and African countries, has pushed for the treaty to introduce curbs on plastic production and the phasing out of toxic chemicals.