

Deadlock Over Hormuz Dispute



A vessel navigates the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most strategic and closely monitored shipping routes.

● **Third round of negotiations expected as diplomacy intensifies**

● **Macron urges Iran to seize the opportunity for de-escalation**

● **Netanyahu signals conditional openness to Lebanon peace talks**

Agencies

The world watched the Islamabad negotiations, which occurred on the brink of an energy crisis and economic battle in the Middle East and Asia. Iran's semi-official Fars News Agency last night reported that Washington had made "excessive demands regarding the Strait," along with what it called "unacceptable demands on several other issues." The Tasnim news agency also reported that disputes over the strategic waterway were among the main obstacles in the negotiations.

Iranian state television reported that a third round of talks between Iranian and US officials is expected today, though uncertainty remained over whether it would occur.



Arrival of the US delegation in Islamabad to participate in the Islamabad Talks



Pakistan's Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met Iranian delegation led by Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly.



Abdolnasser Hemmati meets Mohammad Ishaq Dar on the sidelines of Islamabad talks.

US delegation

A high-level US delegation, led by Vice President J.D. Vance along with Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner, arrived in Islamabad earlier on Saturday to take part in the discussions.

The delegation was received by Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, along with senior military officials. Pakistan reiterated its role as a facilitator and expressed hope that the parties would engage constructively toward a lasting and durable solution to the conflict.

Diplomatic Move

On the sidelines of the talks, Iran's Central Bank Governor Dr. Abdolnasser Hemmati met with Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Mo-

hammad Ishaq Dar. Both sides emphasized the importance of sustained dialogue and regional stability to support economic cooperation.

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron said he had spoken with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, urging him to use the Islamabad talks to achieve lasting de-escalation. He also called for the restoration of freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

What's happening in Lebanon?

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said any future peace agreement with Lebanon would need to be "lasting for generations," adding that Beirut had recently expressed interest in direct talks under conditions that included the disarmament of Hezbollah.

Easter truce between Russia and Ukraine begins

AFP | Kyiv

A temporary truce between Russia and Ukraine entered into force on Saturday, with Kyiv warning it would respond "immediately" if Russia violated it.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the ceasefire on Thursday to coincide with Orthodox Easter, more than a week after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky first made the proposal.

Both sides have agreed to observe it.

The ceasefire is due to last for 32 hours, from 4:00 pm (1300 GMT) on Saturday until the end

32 hours is the duration of the temporary Easter ceasefire agreed by both sides

of the day on Sunday, according to the Kremlin.

"Ukraine will adhere to the ceasefire and respond strictly in kind. The absence of Russian strikes in the air, on land, and at sea will mean no response from

our side," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said in a post on X.

The Ukrainian army said it was ready to "immediately" respond if Russia violated it.

Hours before the truce was due to start, Russia launched at least 160 drones at Ukraine, killing four people in the country's east and south and wounding dozens of others, Ukrainian authorities said.

The southern Odesa region was among the hardest hit, with authorities reporting two dead and damage to civilian infrastructure.

UK puts Chagos handover deal in 'deep freeze' after Trump criticism

AFP | London

Britain indicated Saturday it is shelving plans to return the Chagos Islands -- which hosts the strategic Diego Garcia US-UK military base -- to Mauritius, after US President Donald Trump strongly criticised the deal.

Britain struck a deal with Mauritius last year to hand back the Indian Ocean islands to its former colony and pay to lease Diego Garcia, the largest island, home to the military base, for a century.

Trump condemned the return agreement as "an act of great stupidity" and on Satur-



A satellite photo shows an overview of the Diego Garcia military base on the Chagos Archipelago

day British media reported that Prime Minister Keir Starmer's government would drop legislation needed to put the deal into effect.

A former top government official said London had been effectively forced to abandon the plan as a result of Trump's opposition.