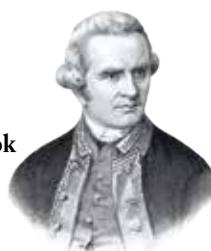


1773



Captain James Cook becomes the first to cross Antarctic Circle (66° 33' S)

1912

Captain Robert Scott's expedition arrives at the South Pole, one month after Roald Amundsen

1946

United Nations Security Council holds its 1st meeting, at Westminster Central Hall in Westminster, England

1991

Operation Desert Storm begins, with US-led coalition forces bombing Iraq, during the Gulf War

# Zelensky hopes for security guarantees plan in new US talks

## ● Zelensky targets Davos for peace signature

AFP | Washington

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday that he hopes Ukraine will sign agreements with the United States next week on a plan to end Russia's invasion but lashed out at slow ammunition deliveries from abroad.

US President Donald Trump has been pushing for a halt to the war and has pressured Ukraine to accept peace terms that Kyiv has likened to capitulation to Russia.

Key sticking points remain between Kyiv and Washington, and Ukraine has been seeking clarity from allies about what security guarantees it will receive as part of the plan, which it believes are vital to deter Russia from invading again.

Zelensky told reporters -- including from AFP -- that Ukrainian negotiators were on their way to the United States for more talks.

"We hope there will be more clarity both regarding the documents we have already effectively prepared with the American side and regarding Russia's response to all the diplomatic work that is underway," he added.

"If everything is finalised and if there is agreement from the American side -- because on our side, in principle, I believe we're done -- then signing during



Ukrainian servicemen firing Bm-21 Grad MRLS towards Russian positions near Chasiv Yar in the Donetsk region

Davos will be possible," he added, referring to The World Economic Forum next week.

### Air defence depleted

Zelensky also conceded problems with Ukrainian air defence systems at a critical moment in the war.

Some air defence systems supplied to Ukraine by Western allies had run out of ammunition amid a wave of Russian attacks that have devastated his country's energy infrastructure, he said.

Kyiv says more than 15,000 energy workers are racing in sub-zero temperatures to re-

store power plants and substations battered over recent days by hundreds of Russian drones and missiles.

Zelensky has repeatedly called on allies to beef up Ukraine's air defence systems to shield vital civilian infrastructure facilities from daily Russian bombardments.

"Until this morning we had several systems without missiles. Today I can say this openly because today I have those missiles," Zelensky told a press conference in Kyiv.

The attacks have spurred urgent humanitarian concerns, with millions of Ukrainians suf-

fering long periods without electricity and heating during a cold snap where temperatures have dropped to -20C in some parts of the country.

The Kremlin claims its forces only target military facilities.

When it has bombed Ukrainian power plants in previous years, it has blamed civilians' hardships on Kyiv and its refusal to accept Russian peace demands.

AFP journalists in Kyiv -- one of the worst hit cities -- have seen chaos at intersections where traffic lights are off, shops and restaurants closed, and residents warming up and charging phones in emergency tents set up by the



Zelensky said some Western-supplied air defence systems were completely out of missiles until fresh deliveries arrived the same morning, underscoring how close Ukraine came to leaving cities undefended

state.

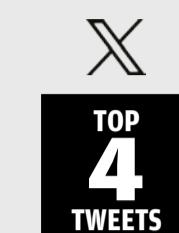
Ukraine relies on its Western partners for several vital advanced air defence systems -- including US-made Patriot batteries.

But Zelensky said during a press conference with Czech President Petr Pavel that all of those units "require constant supplies of missiles".

He urged both European allies and the United States to up deliveries.

"We received a substantial package in the morning. It's in Ukraine now and we can talk about it.

"But it comes at such cost -- through effort, blood, people's lives," the Ukrainian leader added.



The world is changing -- often in ways that are unsettling, but also in ways that are inspiring. Even in the rough seas of today, we can anchor our action in peace, dignity & hope. That takes the best efforts of everyone. Let's never give up.

@antonio\_guterres



What happens in Ukraine matters to our security and to our future. Our 100 Year Partnership with Ukraine demonstrates our steadfast support. We will continue to work together for both of our interests: freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

@Keir\_Starmer



I can boost productivity -- but it will also reshape ~60% of jobs in advanced economies. Thank you @JustinWorland for the thoughtful @TIME interview. Let's invest in skills, safety nets, and smart rules, so innovation can lift everyone.

@KGeorgieva



7.9 million people in #Venezuela need urgent support: more than a quarter of the population. Humanitarian organizations continue to support the most vulnerable people with humanitarian action: food, health and protection.

@UNReliefChief

## Syrians flee Kurdish-held area ahead of deadline



People along with their belongings walk across a damaged bridge as they flee from a Kurdish-controlled area, in Rasm al-Harmal, east of Aleppo city

AFP | Aleppo

Civilians fled a Kurdish-held region of northern Syria yesterday before a deadline set by the army, which seeks to expand its control over the area after driving Kurdish forces from Aleppo.

The government is seeking to extend its authority nationwide following the ousting of long-time leader Bashar al-Assad in December 2024.

The US envoy for Syria, Tom Barrack, posted on X that he was working "around the clock" to prevent any escalation between

Kurdish fighters and government forces, both of which have us backing.

The army has massed significant reinforcements in Deir Ezzor, some 50 kilometres (30 miles) east of Aleppo, and ordered the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to evacuate an area between this region and the River Euphrates to the east.

Civilians have been fleeing the area since Thursday on back roads. AFP correspondents saw some using a rickety bridge to cross a branch of the Euphrates.

## South Korean ex-leader jailed for 5 years in first martial law verdict

AFP | Seoul

A South Korean judge sentenced former President Yoon Suk Yeol yesterday to five years in prison for obstructing justice and other crimes linked to his disastrous martial law declaration and its chaotic aftermath.

It is the first in a series of verdicts for the disgraced ex-leader, whose brief suspension of civilian rule in South Korea on December 3, 2024 prompted massive protests and a showdown in parliament.

Now ousted from power, he faces multiple trials for actions taken during that debacle and in the turmoil that followed.

Yesterday, Judge Baek Daehyun at Seoul's Central District Court said he found Yoon guilty of obstruction of justice by blocking investigators from detaining him.

Baek said that Yoon abused his power by turning officials of the Presidential Security Service against the state and used them as his "personal guards" serving his "own safety and private interests".



A blue bus believed to be transporting South Korea's impeached former president Yoon Suk Yeol arrives at the Seoul Central District Court in Seoul

Yoon was also found guilty of excluding cabinet members from a martial law planning meeting.

"Despite having a duty, above all others, to uphold the Constitution and observe the rule of law as president, the defendant instead displayed an attitude that disregarded the... Constitution," Baek said.

"The defendant's culpability is extremely grave," he said. But Yoon was not guilty of

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stances)