



LIVE UPDATES

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GULF NEWS

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TRUCE TEETERS OVER HORMUZ, LEBANON

UAE urges firm stance to safeguard stability and free navigation

DUBAI

BY STEPHEN N. R.

Senior Associate Editor

A fragile ceasefire in the Iran war is already under strain, with tensions over the Strait of Hormuz and escalating Israeli strikes in Lebanon exposing deep cracks in the truce.

Disagreement over the scope of the deal has intensified after Israel's bombardment of Beirut and Iran's continued grip over Hormuz — a critical global energy chokepoint.

At sea, uncertainty has deepened. Iranian authorities have warned ships they must coordinate passage, effectively directing traffic under their oversight, while concerns persist over sea mines placed in key transit routes during the war.

Ships are now navigating under conditions set by Tehran, reinforcing its leverage over one of the world's most important shipping lanes even as the ceasefire holds. Traffic through the strait has dropped sharply, with only a handful of vessels transiting daily compared with more than 100 before the war — underscoring the scale of disruption to global energy flows.

While Washington and Tehran both declared victory, US President Donald Trump warned Iran it would face harsher strikes if it failed to honour the agreement, highlighting how fragile the pause remains.

UAE's firm message

UAE officials delivered a clear and firm message as the crisis unfolded.

Dr Anwar Gargash, Diplomatic



UAE Presidential Court

President His Highness Sheikh Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan yesterday met Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of UK, in Abu Dhabi. Starmer reiterated the UK's condemnation of Iran's attacks and affirmed its solidarity with the UAE regarding the measures being taken to defend itself, safeguard its security and sovereignty, and ensure the safety of its territory and people.

Advisor to the UAE President, said the region had entered a critical phase requiring clarity and decisive positions. He stressed that "the time for compliments has passed" and that honesty is now essential in the face of Iranian aggression, calling for a unified and firm stance to reinforce regional stability.

The UAE Ministry of Defence

said its air defence systems detected no incoming ballistic missiles, cruise missiles or drones yesterday, a pause after weeks of sustained attacks.

Dr Sultan Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology, warned that the Strait of Hormuz remains effectively restricted despite the ceasefire, calling for it to be reopened with-

out conditions. "Let's be clear: the Strait of Hormuz is not open. Access is being restricted, conditioned and controlled," he said, adding that passage subject to political leverage cannot be considered free navigation.

The European Union also stressed that freedom of navigation in Hormuz must be guaranteed without conditions or tolls,

reinforcing concerns that the strait must not become a bargaining tool.

UAE slams Lebanon attacks

The UAE has condemned in the strongest terms the Israeli attacks across Lebanon, and expressed concern over continued escalation and its repercussions on regional security and stability.

Lebanon has emerged as a key flashpoint threatening to unravel the ceasefire. Israeli airstrikes on Beirut marked the deadliest day since the war began, with more than 200 killed, according to Lebanese authorities.

Iran's parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf warned that continued Israeli attacks on Hezbollah would bring "explicit costs and strong responses," while Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that he has authorised direct negotiations "as soon as possible" with Lebanon aimed at disarming Hezbollah and establishing relations between the neighbors.

Global pressure mounts

European leaders have also voiced concern, urging that the ceasefire extend beyond Iran to include Lebanon.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas warned Israeli strikes risk undermining the truce, while Britain and Russia echoed calls for a broader, region-wide ceasefire.

With Iran maintaining control over shipping lanes and Lebanon tensions escalating, the ceasefire now appears less a breakthrough than a pause under pressure — one that risks unravelling before any lasting settlement can take hold.

SEE ALSO P4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12-13

NATIONAL UNITY

Mohammed calls for UAE flags to be raised nationwide

DUBAI

BY KHITAM AL AMIR

Chief News Editor

His Highness Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, has called on citizens and residents to raise the UAE flag across homes, institutions and buildings, underscoring national unity following the recent crisis.

In a post on his X account, Sheikh Mohammed said the UAE had entered the recent period united and emerged even more united, cohesive and loyal, with citizens and residents alike standing together under the nation's flag.

'Symbol of strength'

"The UAE flag is a symbol of strength and pride," he said, urging everyone across the country to hoist it as an expression of belonging and solidarity.

The Vice-President added: "We are proud of our country, proud of our President, proud of our Armed Forces, proud of our strong economy, proud of our teams, and proud of all citizens and residents on our land."

Sheikh Mohammed called for the flag to be raised high above every home and building as a sign of loyalty and unity, concluding with a prayer for the continued strength and prosperity of the UAE.

BUSINESS

UAE economy set to grow 5.6% in 2026: Central Bank report | P9

FRIDAY

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Pakistan ramps up security ahead of US-Iran talks in Islamabad

Interior Ministry ensures foolproof safety for talks amid temporary truce

DUBAI

BY ASHFAQ AHMED

Managing Editor

Islamabad is gearing up to host critical peace talks between the United States and Iran today, with Pakistan taking centre stage as a mediator in the Middle East conflict.

Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi yesterday assured US Ambassador Natalie Baker of "foolproof security" for all foreign delegations, highlighting the country's meticulous preparations ahead of the high-stakes negotiations.

The talks, scheduled to begin tomorrow, follow a two-week ceasefire announced between Tehran and Washington after weeks of escalating hostilities sparked by the February 28 assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The temporary truce, brokered through Pakistan's diplomatic channels, has created a fragile window for dialogue aimed at de-escalation.

Authorities in Islamabad announced two local holidays, deployed heightened security around the Red Zone, and reserved the famous Serena Hotel for the delegations.

During a meeting with Ambassador Baker, Naqvi confirmed that comprehensive security measures have been implemented to protect visiting dignitaries, including US Vice-President JD Vance, Middle East Envoy Steve Witkoff, and Jared Kushner. "A comprehensive plan has been prepared to provide foolproof security to all foreign guests in every respect," he said.

He added that Pakistan is committed to a safe and successful diplomatic engagement.

Authorities in Islamabad announced two local holidays for yesterday and today, deployed heightened security around the Red Zone, and reserved the famous Serena Hotel for the delegations. Traffic diversions and road closures have been implemented across the city to ensure

smooth movement of the visiting teams, while all emergency services and hospitals remain on high alert.

Advance team

A 30-member US advance team has already arrived in Islamabad to review security arrangements. Pakistani officials have also held multiple strategy meetings with law enforcement agencies to secure the capital and ensure adherence to VVIP protocols during the talks.

Pakistan's role as mediator extends beyond security. Since the onset of the conflict, Islamabad has maintained back-channel communication between Tehran and Washington, coordinated with key regional players, and worked with Beijing on a framework for de-escalation, including ceasefire enforcement and protection of critical infrastructure.

With the world watching, Pakistan is positioning itself as a central hub for diplomacy, aiming to shepherd a peaceful resolution in a conflict that has already claimed lives and destabilised the region. Both Tehran and Washington have expressed commitment to the negotiations, signalling a cautious but significant step toward lasting peace.

Dubai launches new relief measures across free zones

DIEZ offers rent relief, fee waivers and flexible payments for companies

DUBAI

BY DHANUSHA GOKULAN

Chief Reporter

The Government of Dubai has rolled out a fresh set of economic support measures to strengthen business resilience and ease operational costs for companies operating in key free zones.

Announced by the Dubai Media Office, the initiative is overseen by the Dubai Integrated Economic Zones Authority (DIEZ) and applies to firms in the Dubai Airport Freezone (DAFZ), Dubai Silicon Oasis (DSO), and Dubai CommerCity. Mohammed Al Zarooni, Executive Chairman of DIEZ, said the measures reflect Dubai's continued commitment to supporting the business community with flexible, responsive solutions.

The measures include stabilising rental rates at renewal and allowing companies to pay rent in monthly instalments without additional

fees, easing cash flow pressures. Authorities have also waived late licence renewal penalties and selected administrative fees, while deferring certain service charges to give businesses more flexibility in managing costs.

Broader efforts

The move comes as part of broader efforts to support companies amid ongoing regional uncertainty and ensure business continuity. Officials said the steps are aimed at creating a more stable and adaptable business environment.

Additional relief includes a three-month deferral of fees related to shareholder amendments and licence activity changes, along with waivers on company restructuring and authorised capital amendment fees. These measures are expected to help firms restructure operations and respond more quickly to shifting market conditions.

The announcement follows a Dh1 billion economic support package approved last month, set to run for three to six months, aimed at boosting flexibility and strengthening the emirate's preparedness.