



Modi says ceasefire is 'pause' by India and it is prepared for any Pakistan attacks

Hannah Ellis-Petersen
Delhi

Prime minister Narendra Modi said India has only “paused” its military action against Pakistan and would “retaliate on its own terms” to any attacks, after a ceasefire brought hostilities between the two countries to a standstill at the weekend.

In his first address since attacks began between India and Pakistan - culminating in both sides launching missiles at each other's key military bases and airfields on Saturday - Modi said he was “monitoring every step of Pakistan”.

The ceasefire between the two countries was announced on Saturday by Donald Trump, the US president, halting fears that the two nuclear-armed countries were hurling towards all-out war for the first time in decades.

India had launched its attack on Pakistan first on Wednesday in retaliation for a deadly militant attack in April in Indian-administered Kashmir, which it blamed on Pakistan-backed terror groups. It escalated into drone and missile

strikes by both sides, and deadly shelling along the disputed border dividing Kashmir.

Both Trump and Pakistani officials credited the US secretary of state, Marco Rubio, and the vice president, JD Vance, with brokering peace between the two countries, after hours of intense negotiations with India and Pakistan. The latter's prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif, publicly thanked Trump for his involvement.

But Modi made no reference to the US's role in the ceasefire. Instead he maintained India's line that it was Pakistan who had first reached out to India's head of military operations on Saturday for a ceasefire, and that it was Pakistan who had called on the global community for help.

In comments at the White House yesterday, Trump claimed the US had “stopped a nuclear conflict” in its interventions with India and Pakistan. He said: “I think it could have been a bad nuclear war, millions of people could have been killed. So I'm very proud of that.”

Modi's speech also alluded to the nuclear threat that had hung over last week's escalating tensions, adding that in any future conflict with

Pakistan, they would not tolerate “nuclear blackmailing”.

Yesterday, Pakistan security officials told the Guardian that one of the terms of the ceasefire was an agreement to future talks to be held in a third country, with the UAE floated as a possible venue. In his speech, Modi made reference to possible future negotiations but said that “if we talk to Pakistan, it will be about terrorism only ... it will be about Pakistan-occupied Kashmir”.

By yesterday, it appeared as if the fragile ceasefire would continue to hold. Along the Line of Control, the disputed border dividing Kashmir between India and Pakistan, all the cross-border shelling and aggressions of last week showed no sign of resuming. India also reopened 32 airports across north India that had been shut down as hostilities escalated.

Both sides also agreed to reduce troop presence at the border. “The night remained largely peaceful across Jammu and Kashmir, and



▲ Children in Karachi hold Pakistan flags in solidarity with the military

▲ Indian police stand guard in Srinagar, Kashmir, yesterday after a ‘largely peaceful’ night on the border

PHOTOGRAPH: SAJJAD HUSSAIN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

other areas along the international border,” the Indian army said in a statement on Sunday night.

In Indian-administered Kashmir, expert teams were dispatched to the border areas to defuse unexploded bombs as the tens of thousands who had been evacuated from their villages in border areas returned home.

Anwaar ul-Haq Kakar, the former prime minister of Pakistan who has been privy to high-level discussions, said future talks would focus on securing the ceasefire and discussions on India's ongoing suspension of the Indus river treaty, which governs critical water flow into Pakistan.

He said: “Immediately [the] Kashmir issue might not be discussed - but after some confidence-building measures, [it] will be on the table.”

Indian officials did not respond to requests by the Guardian to discuss the ceasefire negotiations. Analysts said India's refusal to talk about any US role in a ceasefire was indicative of the Modi government's non-alignment foreign policy and its bullish rejection of outside interference.

On Sunday, Trump - who seemed to have discovered a newfound interest in the subcontinent - tweeted that he was willing to work with India “to see if, after a ‘thousand years,’ a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir”.

The dispute over Kashmir dates back not thousands of years, but instead to 1947, after the partition of India and the formation of Pakistan. The two countries have since fought three wars over the region, which remains divided between both.