Putin-Trump meeting planned after APEC summit plenary – Kremlin

The Russian president has also discussed the Abu Dhabi trilateral meeting with his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, Yury Ushakov has said

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US President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin shake hands alongside Chinese President Xi Jinping before a formal reception in honour of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) economic leaders in Shenzhen, China. © Sputnik / Sergey Bobylyov

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his US counterpart, Donald Trump, are expected to hold bilateral talks on Thursday on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) summit, Kremlin aide Yury Ushakov has announced.

The two are attending the two-day gathering in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen, which brings together leaders from across the Asia-Pacific region.

The meeting is planned for after the summit's plenary session, where the leaders are also scheduled to join Chinese President Xi Jinping for trilateral discussions.

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"We hope it will be useful and substantive," Ushakov told reporters on Wednesday.

Putin and Trump exchanged a brief handshake at a reception hosted by Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday but were unable to speak further because they were seated at separate tables, he said.

Earlier in the day, Putin held separate talks with Xi, during which the two leaders discussed the recent trilateral Russia-US-Ukraine negotiations in Abu Dhabi.

Ushakov also said that Putin and Trump could speak more than once during their stay in Shenzhen, including in a smaller format without large delegations.

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Eileen Dover 11/18/2026 at 5:53 PM 0

Putin should not be meeting don the con separately due to Don's status as co-belligerent in ukraine. Snub him at this meeting. Expecting that donnie do anything normal is expecting the impossible.

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The Indus: A river older than borders

Ancient waters still sustain Pakistan's farms and cities, even as the treaty meant to protect them is now under mounting strain

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© Getty Images

Long before modern borders divided South Asia, the Indus was shaping civilizations, sustaining communities and connecting distant lands through trade. Empires rose and disappeared along its banks, yet the river remained a constant presence in the region's history. Today, as questions over its waters once again occupy the diplomatic agenda, that long history offers a perspective worth remembering.

Pakistan is a relatively young nation, but the land it occupies has a history stretching back thousands of years. It has witnessed the growth of ancient cities, the movement of peoples, the rise and fall of empires and the exchange of ideas, cultures and beliefs. To understand Pakistan is also to understand this remarkable historical inheritance, much of which developed around the Indus and its tributaries.

Where it begins: The Indus Valley Civilization

Long before the emergence of many of the world's great classical civilizations, the cities of Mohenjo-daro and Harappa were flourishing in what is now Pakistan. Their carefully planned streets, sophisticated drainage systems, public wells and standardized brick structures reveal a society with an extraordinary understanding of urban life.

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Unlike many ancient civilizations, the Indus Valley Civilization left behind no unmistakable royal palaces or grand monuments celebrating individual rulers. Among its most remarkable structures is the Great Bath at Mohenjo-daro, which is believed to have served a ceremonial or communal purpose.



Its script remains undeciphered, leaving important questions about its society unanswered. Yet archaeological discoveries reveal a civilization deeply connected with the wider world.

The Indus cities maintained trading links with Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. Seals and other archaeological evidence found across these regions point to an extensive network of commercial and cultural contacts. Mesopotamian references to a land called Meluhha, widely associated with the Indus region, offer further evidence of these early connections.

Thousands of years later, the same geographical position continues to shape Pakistan's economic possibilities. Its ports, transport corridors and connections with Central Asia, the Persian Gulf and South Asia reflect the enduring significance of a region that has long served as a meeting point between different parts of the world.

Layers on the Indus

The decline of the great Indus cities did not mark the end

of the region's historical importance. Changing river courses, climatic shifts and other pressures transformed patterns of settlement, while successive civilizations and empires left their imprint on the land.

The Persian Empire extended its influence into the region, followed by Alexander the Great and the Greek kingdoms that emerged in his wake. Under the Mauryan and Kushan empires, Gandhara developed into a major center of Buddhist learning, art and culture.

Taxila became renowned for its intellectual and religious life, while Gandharan artists developed a distinctive artistic tradition combining influences from the Greek and Roman worlds with Buddhist themes. These traditions subsequently travelled along the Silk Road, reaching Central Asia and China.

The arrival and spread of Islam brought further cultural and political transformations. From the early Arab presence in Sindh to the Ghaznavids, Delhi Sultanate and Mughals, successive dynasties contributed to the region's architecture, languages, literature and social traditions.

British rule introduced another chapter, particularly through the expansion of railways and irrigation networks. Yet the region's importance as a crossroads of trade, culture and communication long predated colonial rule.

That layered history remains visible across Pakistan today: in the ancient ruins of Mohenjo-daro and Taxila, the Buddhist heritage of Gandhara, the Sufi shrines of Multan, the Mughal architecture of Lahore and the historic routes connecting South Asia with Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Through these transformations, the Indus remained a defining feature of the region's geography and its people's lives.

The river that named a region

Everything in this story, from the early cities to the empires and trade routes, rests on one river.

The Indus starts high

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on the Tibetan plateau, water on the flashpoint that could
near Mount Kailash. It split Asia apart
flows northwest through
Ladakh and into
Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan, where it runs through deep valleys around Nanga Parbat. From there it turns south and crosses the country. The Kabul River and the rivers of Punjab join it along the way. After a journey of about 3,000 kilometers, it reaches the Arabian Sea through its delta southeast of Karachi.

The river also gave the region its name. *"Sindhu"* is the Sanskrit name for the Indus, from which Sindh derives its name. The Persians adapted Sindhu into *"Hindu,"* while the Greeks rendered it as *"Indos."* These names originally referred to the river and the lands associated with it, much of which lies in present-day Pakistan. Over time, the geographical meaning expanded, eventually giving rise to the name India.

Pakistan is predominantly arid, making its agriculture heavily dependent on irrigation rather than rainfall. The Indus Basin Irrigation System, described by the World Bank as the world's largest connected surface-water irrigation system, extends across approximately 59,000 kilometers of canals supplied by barrages on the Indus and its tributaries.

More than 90 percent of the country's agricultural production depends on this irrigation network. Agriculture contributes approximately one-fifth of Pakistan's GDP and provides employment to a substantial proportion of its workforce. Punjab remains the country's principal agricultural region.

Much of the water originates from snow and glacier melt in the Himalaya, Karakoram and Hindu Kush mountain ranges. The same river system also supplies drinking water to major urban centres, including Karachi, through an extensive network of canals, reservoirs and distribution systems.

For a country of more than 240 million people, the Indus is far more than a geographical feature. It supports agriculture, sustains livelihoods and remains central to the country's economic and social stability.

A treaty put to the test

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Few questions weigh as heavily on Pakistan's foreign policy as the sharing of the Indus and its tributaries with India, through whose territory several of the river system's headwaters flow. The framework governing these waters has been in place since 1960.

The Indus Waters Treaty was signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960, following nine years of negotiations facilitated by the World Bank. Rather than dividing the flow of individual rivers, the agreement allocated the three eastern rivers – Ravi, Beas and Sutlej – to India, while the three western rivers – Indus, Jhelum and Chenab – were assigned to Pakistan, subject to specified rights and permitted uses.

India retained limited rights over the western rivers, including certain agricultural uses and the development of run-of-river hydropower projects within the treaty's prescribed design requirements.

The treaty survived several armed conflicts between the two countries and decades of political mistrust. Its endurance made it one of the most frequently cited examples of cooperation between neighboring states with deeply troubled relations.

That record came under serious strain last year.

On April 22, 2025, gunmen killed 26 people at Pahalgam in Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. India blamed Pakistan and subsequently announced that it would hold the Indus Waters Treaty *"in abeyance"* until Islamabad ended what New Delhi described as support for cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan rejected the allegations as baseless and unsupported by evidence, denied any involvement in the attack and offered to participate in a neutral, transparent and credible investigation.

The treaty itself contains no provision allowing either party to place it in abeyance unilaterally. It provides that its

provisions may be modified or terminated only through a duly ratified agreement between the two governments.

For Pakistan, whose agriculture and wider economy depend so heavily on the Indus river system, the implications extend far beyond diplomatic disagreement.

Legal proceedings concerning the treaty were already under way. Pakistan had initiated arbitration in 2016 over the design of India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydropower projects on the western rivers.

Following India's announcement in April 2025, Pakistan sought a determination from the Court of Arbitration regarding the treaty's continued validity.

On August 31, 2026, the court unanimously ruled that the Indus Waters Treaty remained in force and that India continued to be bound by its obligations.

The court examined the grounds advanced by India, including sovereignty, alleged breaches by Pakistan, changed circumstances and armed conflict. It concluded that none provided a legal basis for unilaterally suspending or terminating the treaty.

While acknowledging the seriousness of allegations relating to terrorism, the court found that even if such allegations were established, they would not constitute a material breach of an agreement specifically governing the use and allocation of shared waters.

The court also ordered interim measures concerning construction at the Ratle hydropower project. These included restrictions on certain construction activities pending the Neutral Expert's determination, along with reporting requirements regarding changes to the construction schedule. The court did not order a complete halt to the project and declined other interim measures sought by Pakistan.

India rejected the court's findings, maintaining that the tribunal was improperly constituted and that New Delhi did not recognize its jurisdiction. India also reiterated that its decision to hold the treaty in abeyance remained in effect.

The court's legal determination has therefore not resolved the underlying disagreement. The question of whether its findings will be accepted and implemented remains open.

The river keeps running

The Indus Waters Treaty is 66 years old; the river is far older. Geological studies suggest that some 45 million years ago, the precursor to today's Indus river system was already carrying sediment toward the Arabian Sea.

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Empires have come and gone along its banks. The Persians ruled parts of its valley. Alexander crossed the Indus but turned back farther east when his soldiers refused to march on. The British built vast canal networks across its plains. Their rule ended, but the river kept running.

History offers examples of countries continuing to cooperate over shared waters even during periods of conflict. During the Vietnam War, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and South Vietnam maintained cooperation through the Mekong Committee, established in 1957, although its work faced difficulties.

India and Pakistan also kept the Indus Waters Treaty in place through the wars of 1965 and 1971, the Kargil conflict of 1999 and decades of political mistrust. It demonstrated that even when governments disagreed on almost everything else, they could still find common ground over water.

A farmer in Sindh does not plant his crop thinking about treaties or political disputes. He plants it expecting the water to arrive. For Pakistan, a country of more than 240 million people, the Indus is not merely a river. It sustains much of its agriculture, supports livelihoods and remains central to its economy.

The Indus has witnessed the rise and fall of empires, the drawing of borders and generations of political change. It will continue its journey to the Arabian Sea. The question is whether those who depend on its waters can continue to count on the agreements made to share them.