

# Amid US push, Ukraine & Russia signal openness to direct talks

Both Kremlin and President Volodymyr Zelensky of Ukraine suggested this week that they would be open to direct negotiations, making new but tentative diplomatic overtures as President Trump pushes for a peace deal.

Zelensky said on social media late Monday that Ukraine was "ready for any conversation" about a ceasefire that would halt strikes on civilian infrastructure. Dmitri Peskov, the Kremlin's spokesman, said on Tuesday that there were "nuances" in the Ukrainian proposal "that it makes sense to discuss" with Kyiv.

While Peskov said there were no concrete plans yet for direct talks between Moscow and Kyiv, the unusual public back-and-forth showed how both sides in the three-year war now seem eager to at least appear interested in negotiations — not least because of Trump's eagerness for a deal to end the war. Last week, in a sign of his impatience, the president had warned that if either Moscow or Kyiv "makes it very difficult" to reach a deal to end war, the US could decide that "we're just going to take a pass". Trump said Sunday he hoped Russia and Ukraine "will make a deal this week".

The warring sides haven't held public peace talks since the early weeks of Russia's



**ATTACKS ON:** Police paramedics help an injured resident at the site of a building hit by a Russian air strike in Zaporizhzhia on Tuesday

## Putin offers to halt invasion along current frontline: Report

Russian President Putin has offered to halt his invasion of Ukraine across the current front line as part of efforts to reach a peace deal with US President Trump, the Financial Times reported on Tuesday citing people familiar with the matter. Putin told Steve Witkoff, Trump's special envoy, during a meeting in St Petersburg earlier this month that Moscow could relinquish its claims to areas of four partly occupied Ukrainian regions that remain under Kyiv's control, the report said citing three people familiar with the talks. REUTERS

full-scale invasion in 2022, though they have engaged behind the scenes, often through intermediaries. The new suggestion of bilateral talks came after Putin unexpectedly decla-

red a 30-hour ceasefire over the Easter weekend. Both sides accused each other of violating the temporary truce, but also confirmed that the intensity of the fighting did decline.

On Sunday, Zelensky proposed a monthlong ceasefire in which both sides would "cease any strikes using long-range drones and missiles on civilian infrastructure." "There were no air raid alerts on Easter, and some sectors of the front line remained quiet," he wrote in a post on Monday that reiterated the proposal. "This proves it is possible — it's possible when Russia chooses to reduce the killing". Later, he told journalists: "After the ceasefire, we are ready to sit down in any format."

Putin responded on Monday in remarks to reporters, saying that further discussion was needed about how to define a civilian target, "possibly in a bilateral format". Peskov followed up to clarify that "the president specifically meant negotiations and discussions with the Ukrainian side."

But Russia's continued bombardment of Ukraine told a different story. A flurry of exploding drones or missiles hit Ukrainian cities Tuesday, the authorities said, setting buildings and cars on fire. Ukraine does not report successful strikes on military sites. NYT

# US imposes tariffs up to 3,521% on solar imports from 4 SE countries

The US set new duties as high as 3,521% on solar imports from four Southeast Asian countries, delivering a win for domestic manufacturers while intensifying headwinds already threatening the country's renewable power development.

The duties announced on Monday are the culmination of a yearlong trade probe that found solar manufacturers in Cambodia, Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand were unfairly benefiting from govt subsidies and selling exports to the US at rates lower than the cost of production. The investigation was sought by domestic solar manufacturers and initiated under former President Biden.

While the duties are set to benefit domestic manufacturers, they also will pinch US renewable developers that have long relied on inexpensive foreign supplies.

Countrywide duties were set as high as 3,521% for Cambodia, reflecting the country's decision to stop participating in the investigation, according to the commerce department. The US imported \$12.9 billion in solar equipment last year from the four countries that would be subject to the new duties, according to BloombergNEF. That represents about 77% of total module imports.

Companies not named in Vietnam face duties of as much as 395.9% with Thailand set at 375.2%. Countrywide rates for Malaysia were posted at 34.4%. BLOOMBERG

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## South Sudan Army recaptures town from White Army militia



JUBA, Apr 22 (IANS)

THE South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) has regained control of Nasir town in Upper Nile State, which it lost following intense fighting with the White Army militia since March. SSPDF Spokesperson Lul Ruai Koang confirmed on Sunday in a statement that the recapturing of the key town of Nasir is the greatest gift for servicemen who paid the ultimate price during its defence and recapture, Xinhua news agency reported.

In March, intense fighting broke out in the strategic town of Nasir between the South Sudan army and the White Army, a militia the government claims to be linked to the Opposition Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition.

SSPDF's latest announcement came days after the military claimed control of the headquarters of neighbouring Ulang County following a week-long battle with the White Army.

Earlier in April the United Nations relief agency called for a rapid de-escalation to ensure the protection of civilians and unimpeded humanitarian access after fighting in South Sudan's Upper Nile State killed more than 180 people since March.

UN Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan Anita Kiki Gbeho said in a statement issued in Juba, the capital of South Sudan, that armed clashes and aerial bombardments have injured over 250 people and displaced an estimated 125,000.

# PM cuts short Saudi visit after MbS meet; both condemn J&K strike

**New Delhi:** PM Narendra Modi cut short his two-day visit to Saudi Arabia and returned to India late in the night after finishing his official engagements with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS), following the Pahalgam terror attack. Modi was originally scheduled to return on Wednesday night but was back in India early morning. He also skipped the official dinner hosted by the de facto ruler of the country.

## ► Why Riyadh is the new hub of global diplomacy, P14

Modi's meet with MbS began with a mention of the Pahalgam attack. Both of them strongly condemned the attack and expressed solidarity



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (L) and PM Narendra Modi during signing of agreements in Jeddah on Tuesday

with victims. The Jeddah meet also saw them discussing ways to enhance energy, trade, investment and defence cooperation. India has been looking to

strengthen cooperation with Riyadh in combating terrorism and terror-financing. TNN

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■ 2 Foreigners Among Those Reported Killed ■ Attack Took Place At Famed Meadow ■ Lashkar Proxy Group TRF Claims Responsibility

# Terrorists Massacre 28 Tourists In Pahalgam

## Deadliest Strike In Valley Since Art 370 Abrogation

Haseer Gani@timesofindia.com

Srinagar: At least 28 tourists were killed and many wounded Tuesday when terrorists opened fire in a picturesque meadow near the resort town of Pahalgam in J&K, marking the deadliest attack since the abrogation of Article 370 in 2019.

### Mehbooba, Mirwaiz call bandh in protest

JDP head Mehbooba Mufti and Hurriyat chief Mirwaiz Umar Farooq separately called a "Kashmir bandh" Wednesday to protest the attack. This is the first time either has given a call for a bandh after a terror attack.

The Resistance Front, a proxy of ISI-backed LeT, claimed responsibility.

The attack coincided with US Vice-President J D Vance's four-day visit to India and PM Narendra Modi's ar-

rival in Saudi Arabia for strengthening bilateral engagement with the influential Islamic country. Equally significantly, it followed a bellicose speech of Asim Munir, chief of the Pakistan army, the mainstay of terrorists.

This was the deadliest attack on tourists since militancy began in Kashmir in the 1990s. It brought back memories of the March 2000 massacre in Chittisinghpore in Anantnag, where 36 members of the Sikh community were killed.

**FULL COVERAGE: P 12**  
**EDIT: After Pahalgam**

days before US President Bill Clinton's visit to India.

The synchronicity fitted in well with Pakistan's attempt to secure international intervention in J&K by casting it as the trigger for a potential nuclear conflagration between the hostile neighbours.

The targeting of tourists from different parts showed

## GUNMAN TOLD VICTIM'S WIFE: 'WON'T KILL YOU. GO TELL MODI'



> Terrorist who shot K'taka businessman Manjunath Rao told his wife as she pleaded with him to shoot her, 'I won't kill you. Go tell this to Modi'

> Navy confirms officer Lt Vinay Narwal among the victims. Posted at Southern Naval Command in Kochi, the 26-year-old was in Pahalgam on his honeymoon

> Pune businessman told to recite Islamic verse. When he failed, he was shot thrice, says his daughter.

**BLOODBATH IN 'MINI SWITZERLAND':** This photo, widely shared online, shows a newlywed beside her husband in Baicaran, Pahalgam



Then her uncle was shot. Says she's not sure if the two men died or survived. Families said they had nowhere to run in the pine meadows

> Accountant Prasant Kumar Satpathy, 41, of Odisha shot in head. He was vacationing with wife and 9-yr-old son. Surat resident Shallesh Kalathiya killed a day ahead of 44th birthday

> IB officer Manish Ranjan of Bihar, posted in Hyderabad, killed in front of his wife and children during summer vacation

the diabolical intent and, perhaps, an attempt to cause communal unrest across the country. Jihadis have lately refrained from attacking tourists who bring valuable money to the Union territory.

Survivors said the terrorists, believed to be foreigners numbering around six and dressed in Army fatigues,

identified their victims by faith, asking them to tell their names and recite Islamic verses before spraying bullets on them from close range.

The gunmen struck around 1.30pm in Baicaran meadow — about 7km from Pahalgam and reachable either by foot and/or by horses — as scores of tourists were enjoying a

regular afternoon, surrounded by snow-capped peaks and pine forests. The meadow draws hundreds of visitors daily. Heavy security, including checkpoints and armed patrols, provided a sense of security.

Victims included honeymooner Navy officer Vinay Narwal. Posted in Kochi, he was married on April 16. Two

foreign nationals — one from Nepal and the other from UAE — were also killed.

Security forces quickly evacuated the wounded to nearby hospitals and launched a search operation to track down the attackers. The area was cordoned off.

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### Shah rushes to Srinagar; Trump, Putin slam attack

PM Modi said the attackers would be brought to justice. "They (terrorists) will not be spared! Their evil agenda will never succeed. Our resolve to fight terrorism is unshakable and will get even stronger," he posted on X.

Union home minister Amit Shah flew to Srinagar and drove straight to Raj Bhawan from the airport. He's likely to visit Pahalgam today.

Russian President Vladimir Putin extended his condolences and reiterated Russia's commitment to increasing cooperation with India in "fighting terrorism in all its forms and manifestations".

US President Donald Trump posted on Truth Social, "Deeply disturbing news out of Kashmir. The US stands strong with India against terrorism. We pray for the souls of those lost and for the recovery of the injured. Our hearts are with you all." P 12

### Many stranded, 'overbooked' J&K empties out

After exulting over an overbooked summer, travel operators are gearing up for a wave of cancellations following the attack in Pahalgam, expected to hit one of the region's biggest economic lifelines. Multiple industry insiders said they could not recall a major terrorist strike so openly targeting tourists from a specific community. "We are getting a lot of calls for cancellations," said Nasir Shah of Indian Association of Tour Operators.

Tourists from Maharashtra and Rajasthan, stranded after the attack, were keen to leave the UT soon. "The roads are deserted, and the Army is everywhere. We're safe, but others don't want to stay another day. I'm not sure how everyone will manage return flights," said Pune-based lawyer Vijayshin Thombare, currently in Srinagar with his wife NCP functionary Rupali Patil/Thombare P 12