



Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer INS Surat test-fired a medium-range surface-to-air missile in the Arabian Sea successfully. (ANI)

## 2 DAYS AFTER PAHALGAM TERROR ATTACK

# Navy test-fires surface-to-air missile in Arabian Sea

NEW DELHI, Apr 24 (PTI)

AMID tensions after the Pahalgam terror attack, to demonstrate India's growing prowess, Indian Navy's guided missile destroyer INS Surat successfully test-fired a medium-range surface-to-air missile in the Arabian Sea.

The missile has a range of

around 70 km, it is learnt.

The test has taken place before the scheduled surface-to-surface missile testing by the Pakistan Navy in the Arabian Sea.

"The Indian Navy's latest indigenous guided missile destroyer INS Surat has successfully carried out a precision cooperative engagement of a sea-skimming target, marking a sig-

nificant milestone in strengthening the Navy's defence capabilities," the Navy said.

"This achievement demonstrates India's growing prowess in indigenous warship design, development, and operations, and underscores the nation's commitment to self-reliance in defence manufacturing," it said.

The Navy said the "milestone"

is a "testament" to the force's "unwavering commitment" to safeguarding the nation's maritime interests and its dedication to Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has issued a notification regarding the scheduled test of a surface-to-surface missile off its Karachi coast within its Exclusive Economic Zone, sources said.



# Pak closes airspace for Indian carriers

## Flights To West Will Get Longer

Saurabh Sinha  
@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** Aircraft operated by Indian carriers, charter operators and private jets registered here will have to take longer routes between North India and the west (Gulf, Middle East, CIS, Europe and North America) with Pakistan having closed its airspace for them starting Thursday 6pm (IST).

Pilots say flying times of Air India's direct flights from Delhi to North America could increase by up to two hours if they remain non-stop and are not required to take a midway fuelling halt, say in Europe. If that happens, the journey could take up to four hours longer.

Delhi-Europe flights could take up to an hour more and those to Gulf 30-45 minutes, say pilots. Some flights will be cancelled and a few rescheduled to beat night curfews at western airports. IndiGo routes flights between Delhi and Tashkent/Almaty will take 80-90 minutes longer. IndiGo cancelled its Almaty and Tashkent flights Thursday. Its Sharjah-Amritsar had to change course on Thursday to avoid Pakistan airspace. International flights between rest of the country and the west won't be impacted as they don't overfly Pakistan.

While Pakistan has not

### ON-OFF, ON-OFF

Since Oct 7, 2023 | Iran-Israel conflict has often impacted Iran, Iraq & Jordan airspace

Since Feb 2022 | Russia no fly zone for western airlines

Since Aug 2021 | Afghanistan airspace closed for civilian flights

Feb 27-July 16, 2019 | Pakistan airspace closed after Balakot airstrike



## NIA searches two hotels in Ferozepur

After Pahalgam terror attack, NIA searched two Ferozepur hotels and the residences of hotel owners Thursday, reportedly in connection with calls made to Pakistan. The searches were conducted at Taj Hotel, a small local establishment, and at City Resorts, as well as residences of Taj Hotel owner Mandeep Singh and City Resorts owner Sardul Singh. NIA teams reportedly seized mobile phones and other electronic gadgets. After the searches, Mandeep said he was questioned about calls made to Pakistan from his mobile, which he claimed were never made. He said his mobile has been confiscated and his laptop checked. NIA team also inspected the hotel rooms. Sardul also confirmed that his resort and residence were searched. He, too, claimed he had never made any calls to Pakistan. TNN

barred foreign carriers, countries do their own risk assessment for overflying any region and if they deem the geopolitical situation on India-Pakistan border risky, some of them may suspend flights. When Pakistan closed its airspace in 2019, some North American airlines had suspended Delhi flights. So there are going to be fewer and more expensive flights options between the west and North India now.

Advising passengers to check if their flight is affected, Air India posted on X, some "flights to or from North America, UK, Europe, and

Middle East will take an alternate extended route." IndiGo said, "Schedules of a few of our international flights are impacted... keeping (impacted customers) informed, offering alternate solutions." SpiceJet said its flights to UAE from "north India will operate via alternate routes (&) carry additional fuel for longer flying time."

Closure of Pak airspace means flights between north India and the west will go close to Mumbai and Ahmedabad; then turn right over the Arabian Sea to head to Muscat and then fly to their destination. Ditto on the way back.



# Trump tells Putin to 'STOP' after Russian air strike kills 12 in Kyiv

## Zelensky: Don't See Signs US Putting Pressure On Russia

Kyiv: Russia pounded Kyiv with missiles and drones overnight, killing at least 12 people in the biggest attack on the Ukrainian capital this year and drawing a rare rebuke from Donald Trump who told Vladimir Putin: "Vladimir, STOP!"

The attack, which the US president said was "not necessary" and "very bad timing" as he pushes for peace, also wounded 90 people, smashed buildings and set off fires, Ukrainian officials said. Rescuers were still recovering bodies from the rubble over 12 hours later.

The attack comes at a critical moment in Russia's war in Ukraine, which began with Moscow's full-scale invasion in 2022. Both Kyiv and Moscow are trying to show Trump they are making progress towards his goal of a rapid peace deal.

"I am not happy with the Russian strikes on KYIV. Not necessary, and very bad timing. Vladimir, STOP! 5000 soldiers a week are dying. Lets get the Peace Deal DONE!" Trump said on Truth Social.

The White House has threatened to abandon its efforts if no progress is made soon. Trump upbraided Zelensky on Wednesday over a comment in which the Ukrainian repeated that Kyiv would not recognise Russia's occupation of Crimea. Trump has used a markedly more gentle tone in his statements about Putin than with Zelensky, whom he at one point referred to as a "dictator". Trump's special envoy is expected to meet Putin on Friday for more talks, a US official has said.

Zelensky said on Thursday he believed that a document with proposals that emerged from Wednesday's talks between Ukrainian and Western officials in London was now on Trump's table. "Anything that



The strikes also injured 90 people, smashed buildings and set off fires

contradicts our values or our constitution cannot be included in any agreement," he said.

Zelensky, who cut short his trip to South Africa after the Russian strike, said he did not see signs Washington was putting strong pressure on Russia. Asked by a reporter if he thought Putin would listen to his appeal to stop missile strikes, Trump said "I do." He also said that he had his "own deadline" for reaching a peace settlement between Russia and Ukraine, without saying what it was.

The Russian defence ministry said it carried out what it described as a massive overnight strike against Ukraine's military-industrial complex using air, land and sea-based long-range high-precision weapons and drones.

### Phones ring beneath rubble

Rescue teams were operating at 13 sites in Kyiv with climbing specialists and sniff-

fer dogs, the emergency services said. Forty fires had broken out. "Mobile telephones are heard ringing beneath rubble. The search will continue until it become clear that they have got everyone," it said.

Updating the toll, Tymur Tkachenko, the head of the Kyiv city military administration, said: "Rescuers have retrieved two more bodies from under the rubble in the Sviatoshynskiy district. We now have 12 dead." The missile that struck a residential building in the Sviatoshynskiy district west of Kyiv's centre was a North Korean KN-23 ballistic missile, a Ukrainian military source said. Ukrainian foreign minister Andrii Sybiha said on X that the "brutal strikes" showed that Russia, not Ukraine, was the obstacle to peace.

Russia launched 145 drones and 70 missiles in the overnight attack, Ukraine's air force said on Telegram. REUTERS

sanctuary cities



# India will likely be first to strike trade deal with US: Treasury secy

**Washington:** US treasury secretary Scott Bessent has said he expects India to strike the first trade deal with Washington because the issues are simpler. Trade talks were "very close" to reaching a deal, he added.

India has "fewer non-tariff trade barriers, obviously, no currency manipulation, very, very little govt subsidies, so reaching a deal with the Indians is much easier," he told a group of journalists on Wednesday at a restricted meeting in Washington on the sidelines of spring meetings of IMF and World Bank.

Trade issues with India were mostly about high tariffs, he said, according to participants in the meeting.

US VP J D Vance, who

## India may allow some duty-free auto imports

Govt is open to offering duty-free access to certain automobiles imported from the US, such as bikes with over 1,600cc engine capacity, if it can get a good deal in areas of interest. Some of the concessions, which are still being discussed internally, may come with quotas. **P 27**

held talks with PM Modi this week, had earlier indicated substantial progress on the trade issue. In Jaipur on Tuesday, Vance said, "We're especially excited to announce that America and India have finalised the terms of reference for the trade negotiations." **IAN S**



# IAF carries out 'Aakraman' exercise, Navy conducts drill

## Army Chief To Visit Northern Command Today

Rajat.Pandit@timesofindia.com

**New Delhi:** The Indian armed forces are maintaining a high-state of operational readiness amid heightened tensions with Pakistan, even as Army chief General Upendra Dwivedi will visit J&K on Friday and the rival navies conducted firing drills in their own waters in the Arabian Sea.

General Dwivedi will review the operational situation along the 778-km Line of Control and the counter-terror operations in the hinterland during his visit to the Udhampur-based Northern Command, as well as, Srinagar, and Anantnag, a senior officer told **TOI**.

The validity of the LoC itself came under sharp focus on Thursday after Pakistan announced suspension of the 1972 Simla Agreement, which had transformed the then ceasefire line into the LoC with both sides agreeing not to alter it unilaterally.

The ceasefire had first



IAF has increased the number of operational readiness platforms at its bases

come into effect in Nov 2003 with an understanding between the rival director generals of military operations but was subsequently blown to smithereens by intense firing duels between the two armies. After a couple of unsuccessful attempts, the understanding between the DGsMO was renewed in Feb 2021 — after an especially bloody year with as many as 5,133 ceasefire violations — and has largely held till now.

As the situation along the land boundaries with Pakistan remains tense, the maritime domain is also witnessing some shadow boxing. Pakistan first issued a 'NavAreea' warning for ships to stay away from specified coordi-

nates in its EEZ in the Arabian Sea due to a live fire exercise by its warships and submarines on April 24-25.

Then, the Navy Thursday said its latest guided-missile destroyer INS Surat had successfully conducted test-firing of its medium-range surface-to-air missile which has an interception range of 70 km, against a sea-skimming target on the western seaboard.

Indian Air Force is also honing its combat skills with the annual 'Aakraman' (attack) exercise, with different fighter jets led by omni-role Rafales as well as other aircraft, over central India. The number of ORPs (operational readiness platforms) at IAF air bases has also been increased.



# Airlines operate 59 flights from Srinagar

## Airfares kept at reasonable levels: Govt



NEW DELHI, Apr 24 (PTI)

AIRLINES on Wednesday operated 59 flights from Srinagar, including seven additional services, to ferry tourists and bodies of 25 Pahalgam terror attack victims to their destinations along with 123 accompanying family members.

The Civil Aviation Ministry said air ticket prices on the route were

being kept at reasonable levels amid a large number of tourists looking to return from Jammu and Kashmir in the aftermath of the terror attack, the deadliest in the Valley since the 2019 Pulwama incident. At least 26 people, mostly tourists, died in the Pahalgam bloodbath on Tuesday. A Senior Ministry official said 52 scheduled and seven additional flights were oper-

ated from the Srinagar airport on Wednesday to clear the rush of stranded passengers. Twenty-five bodies were sent to their destinations by flights along with 123 accompanying family members, the official said.

As many as 3,337 passengers flew out of Srinagar in 20 flights between 6 am and 12 pm on Wednesday. IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet operated seven flights in addition to their scheduled services. Civil Aviation Minister K Ram Mohan Naidu said on Wednesday that airline companies have been strictly instructed to avoid any fare surge. They have been told that charges were being monitored to keep those reasonable, he said.

His comments came against the backdrop of some websites apparently showing ticket prices of over Rs 50,000 for flights to

Srinagar. The country's largest airline IndiGo said that in view of the emergent situation, it has taken steps to keep the fares moderate. Air India said fares for its flights from Srinagar to Mumbai and Delhi have been capped to ensure affordability.

"Any high fares shown on booking sites may be due to multi-stop routes or higher cabin classes, offering a mix of direct and indirect options," the airline said in a post on X.

The Minister also emphasised that efforts were being made to ensure safe travel of tourists from Srinagar. Naidu said that all airlines operating from Srinagar have waived cancellation and rescheduling charges to support passengers. At the Srinagar airport, a control room has been set up to help passengers with their journey.

# Pak says diverting Indus water 'act of war', suspends Simla pact

Omer Farooq Khan  
& Sachin Parashar | TNN

Islamabad/New Delhi: Pakistan unleashed a barrage of counter-retaliatory measures against India Thursday, declaring any move to disrupt water flows under the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) an act of war, suspending the 1972 Simla Agreement, and severing all trade, travel and diplomatic ties—including closure of airspace for Indian flights.

**► EDIT PG: LoC Isn't Key/ Indus Versus Them/US Needs Pak To Track Jihadis**

Pakistan said it will respond to any attempt to divert water with "full force across the complete spectrum of national power".

This is serious escalation coming from a country that has long maintained red lines about use of its nuclear arsenal, one of which has been the

## WHAT PAK'S ALL-BETS-OFF MEANS

► Main point of Simla Agreement is sanctity of LoC. In effect, Pakistan is saying LoC doesn't exist any more

► Blocking of airspace will deprive Pak of revenue generated through overflight rights. It could put Indian airlines at a disadvantage as this would mean longer duration and more fuel burn

► Uncertainty over cooperation on several issues—including pre-notification of ballistic missile tests to prevent nuclear misunderstandings

► Practical cooperation against drug trafficking, maritime disasters, and telecom links also in limbo

► Situation on pilgrims' visits to Pak unclear, despite exemptions

economic strangling of Pakistan. The chief of the strategic plans division of Pakistan army had in 2002 told a European agency that economic strangling included a naval blockade and "the stopping of the waters of the Indus river". While there was no official response from Indian authorities to Pakistan's threat, government sources said Pakistan should first unleash "full force" against cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan maintains the IWT co-signed by the World Bank doesn't allow either country to unilaterally suspend the agreement. As the lower riparian state, Pakistan has concerns about the flow of water from the river system in India but its threat to use full force is likely to exacerbate the already tense situation between the nuclear-armed neighbours.

► Continued on P 28

## 370, waqf: Pak lists triggers for 'cycle of violence'

New Delhi: Categorically denying any involvement in the Pahalgam attack, Pakistan pointed fingers at what it called "state oppression, abrogation of statehood, and political and demographic gerrymandering" in J&K as well as alleged "systematic persecution of Muslims in India" through measures like the "forced passage of waqf bill", reports Manash Gohain.

Persisting with its script of disowning terror attacks by jihadi groups operating from its soil and calling it "homegrown" terrorism, Pakistan claimed abrogation of Art 370 and other steps had triggered a "perpetual cycle of violence".

► Continued on P 22