

Trump: Crimea will stay with Russia

Kyiv: Donald Trump said in an interview published on Friday that "Crimea will stay with Russia," the latest example of the US president putting pressure on Ukraine to make concessions to end the war while it remains under siege. "Zelensky understands that," Trump said, referring to the Ukrainian president, "and everybody understands that it's been with them for a long time."

Trump made the comments in a Time magazine interview conducted on Tuesday. Trump has been accusing Zelensky of prolonging the war by resisting negotiations with Russian President Putin. The war could be approaching a pivotal moment as the Trump administration weighs its options.

Crimea is a strategic peninsula along the Black Sea in southern Ukraine. It was seized by Russia in 2014, while President Barack Obama was in office. "They've had their submarines there for long before any period that we're talking about, for many years.



Ukrainian rescuers evacuate people from a building on fire following a drone attack in Pavlograd on Friday

The people speak largely Russian in Crimea," Trump said. "But this was given by Obama. This wasn't given by Trump."

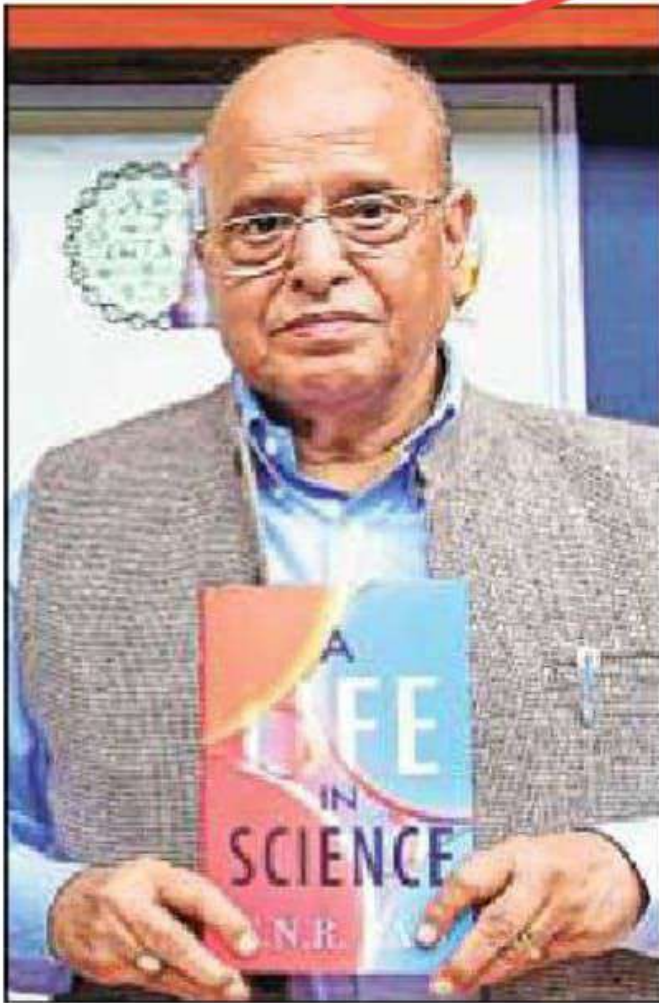
Zelensky has repeated many times during the war that recognising occupied Ukrainian territory as Russian is a red line for his country.

Speaking to reporters Friday as he left the White House to attend the funeral of Pope Francis in Rome, Trump said there is no deadline for the conclusion of peace talks. "I just want to do it as fast as possible," Trump said. Negotiators are "pretty close" to a deal, he said. He promised to meet with foreign leaders while in Rome, and said it was "possible" he could meet with Zelensky. AP

Russian gen killed by a car bomb just outside Moscow

A Russian general was killed by a car bomb Friday, Russia's top criminal investigation agency said, in the second such attack on a top Russian military officer in four months that Moscow blamed on Ukraine. The committee said Lt Gen Yaroslav Moskalik, a deputy head of the main operational department in the general staff of the Russian armed forces, was killed by an explosive device placed in his car in Balashikha, just outside Moscow. The committee's spokesperson said the explosive device was rigged with shrapnel. Russian media ran videos of a vehicle burning in the courtyard of an apartment building. The committee did not immediately mention possible suspects, but Russian a foreign ministry spokesperson said without offering evidence that "there are reasons to believe Ukrainian special services were involved in the killing." AP

FORMER ISRO CHIEF Kasturirangan no more



NEW DELHI/BENGALURU, Apr 25 (PTI)

FORMER ISRO chief K Kasturirangan, who was at the helm of the space agency for nearly a decade, passed away in Bengaluru on Friday, officials said.

He was 84 and is survived by two sons, family sources said, and added that he was suffering from age-related ailments for the past few months. "He left for

Chairperson of drafting committee on NEP, Kasturirangan had also served as Chancellor of JNU and chairman of Karnataka Knowledge Commission

heavenly abode this morning at his residence in Bengaluru. His body will be kept at Raman Research Institute (RRI) for paying last respects on April 27," the officials said.

Condoling his death, Droupadi Murmu said on X: "Saddened to learn that Dr Krishnaswamy Kasturirangan is no more. As head of ISRO, he played a stellar role in the evolution of India's space programme." She also noted that Kasturirangan helped draft the National Education Policy (NEP), which is already making a profound impact on the shaping of the next generation.

In his condolence message, Prime Minister Narendra Modi described him as a "towering figure in India's scientific and educational journey." The space scientist's visionary leadership and selfless contribution to the nation will always be remembered, Modi said

(Contd on page 5)

Trump says Xi called him, trade talks on

Declines To Give Details; China Rejects Prez Claims



TALL CLAIMS?

President Donald Trump, whose trade war with China has rattled financial markets and threatened to disrupt huge swaths of trade, suggested Friday that he had been in touch with Xi Jinping, China's president, even as Chinese officials insisted that no negotiations were occurring.

In an interview with Time on Tuesday, Trump said Xi had called him, though he declined to say when, and asserted that his team was in active talks with China on a trade deal. Asked about the interview outside the White House on Friday, the president reiterated that he had spoken with Xi "numerous times," but he refused to answer when pressed on whether any call had happened after he imposed tariffs this month. Trump's comments appeared aimed at creating the impression of progress with China to soothe jittery financial markets.

China exempts some goods from US tariffs

China has exempted some US imports from its 125% tariffs and is asking firms to identify critical goods they need levy-free, according to businesses that have been notified, in the clearest sign yet of Beijing's concerns about the trade war's fallout. Beijing's exemptions, which business groups hope would extend to dozens of industries, pushed the US dollar up slightly and lifted equity markets in Hong Kong and Japan. China has not yet communicated publicly on any exemptions.

But the president's claims of talks have been rejected by Chinese officials. "China and the US have not held consultations or negotiations on the issue of tariffs," Guo Jiakun, the spokesperson for China's foreign ministry, said in a news conference Friday. "The US should not confuse the public."

Asked in the Time interview if he would call Xi if the Chinese leader did not call first, Trump said no. "We're meeting with China," he said. "We're doing fine with everybody." Trump also said, without evidence, that he had "made 200 deals." He claimed that he would finish and announce them in the next three to four weeks.

Trump announced higher "reciprocal" tariffs on nearly 60 countries at the beginning of April. The White House has since said it received requests from dozens of countries to negotiate trade terms. White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said this week that the US had received 18 proposals on paper and that the trade team was "meeting with 34 countries this week alone." NYT

Prez warns of military action if N-talks with Iran collapse

If an agreement with Iran to limit its nuclear programme proves elusive, the US could spearhead military action against it, President Donald Trump said in an interview published on Friday.

Trump's comments, in an interview with Time magazine marking his first three months in office, came as US and Iranian officials were set to meet for the third consecutive Saturday in an effort to reach an agreement that would prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. After being asked if he was worried that Israel PM Benjamin Netanyahu might drag him into a war with Iran, Trump said: "I may go in very willingly if we can't get a deal. If we don't make a deal, I'll be leading the pack."

Trump has said he thought the talks between the US and Iran were going well, but offici-

als on both sides have not achieved a breakthrough.

Netanyahu has expressed openness to diplomacy if it leads to the full dismantling of Iran's nuclear programme — a demand that Iranian officials have rejected. Some Israeli officials have expressed concerns that the US could agree to a deal that leaves some of Iran's nuclear programme in place.



Pezeshkian

Last week, NYT reported Israel had planned an attack on Iranian nuclear sites, but was held back by Trump, who expressed support for attempting to negotiate an agreement with Iran first. Trump said he did not stop Israel from attacking Iran, but "didn't make it comfortable for them." Trump also said he was open to meeting with Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, or its president, Masoud Pezeshkian. NYT

Pak defence min admits support for terror outfits

Naomi Canton

London: Pakistan defence minister Khawaja Asif has admitted on Sky News that Pakistan harbours and funds terror organisations, saying that it has been “doing the West’s dirty work for decades”. He also said Pakistan-based terror groups are

► **EDIT PAGE: Why Pak Army Must Feel The Heat**

“not multiple organisations” but “one single organisation religiously organised with different faces”.

Asif said that his country would respond “in kind” to any attack by New Delhi in retaliation for Pahalgam and called on US President Donald Trump to “bring sa-

“ We have been doing this dirty work for the USA for about three decades and for the West, including Britain. That was a mistake and we suffered for that. If we had not joined the war against the Soviet Union and the war after 9/11, Pakistan’s track record was unimpeachable



— Khawaja Asif

nity to the situation”. “We have already prepared for it — any eventuality that takes place. We will measure our response to whatever is initiated by India. **If there is an all-out attack obviously there will be all-out war.**”

► **Continued on P 8**

Houses of 3 Pahalgam terrorists demolished

Kin Left Homes With Belongings Before Action

Bharti.Jain@timesofindia.com

In a stern message to local terrorists and their families, J&K administration on Friday demolished the houses of three terrorists involved in the Pahalgam attack.

The houses of Adil Hussa-

**FULL COVERAGE: P 6-8, 12;
OTHER BOOK, P 3**

► EDIT: Post-Pahalgam

in Thoker alias Adil Guree in Bijbehara of Anantnag; Asif Sheikh in Awantipora; and Ahsan Sheikh in Pulwama were quietly razed on Thursday and Friday night.

The administration ensured that none of their family members were inside when the houses were destroyed. In



Debris of the house of Adil Hussain Thoker in Anantnag's Bijbehara

fact, a source indicated they were aware of the impending demolition as they had vacated the houses beforehand with their important belongings.

The detonation was controlled to ensure adjacent dwellings were not damaged; the precision meant to convey the message that the authorities

had no malice towards the general public. There may be more demolitions, according to the source. "The action is clearly aimed at disincentivising local terrorism or any kind of support to terror," a J&K govt functionary told TOI.

► Continued on P 8