

## Cabinet takes major decisions

# JVC formation to execute 13HEPs, restructuring APCS



**KIBITHU May 13:** Chief Minister Pema Khandu inked history on Tuesday by holding his Cabinet meeting here on Tuesday, the last outpost along Indo-China (Tibet) border in Anjaw district that took several key decisions for accelerating development process.

Formation of M/s NEEPCO-Arunachal Hydro Power Corporation Limited, joint venture company (JVC) between the GoAP and NEEPCO for executing five hydro electric projects (HEPs-Tato I, Heo, Tato II, Naying and Hiron in Shi-Yomi district) was approved. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has given approval to Tato I and Heo HEPs, whose works are likely to begin soon.

Formation of the JVC marks a significant step towards commissioning of 13 large HEPs which were rejuvenated by the GoAP by signing MoAs with CPSUs in 2023.

Acknowledging significance of hydropower in economic growth of the state, modifications in the State Hydro Power Policy, 2008 and Local Area Development Fund (LADF) Guidelines, 2022 were also approved for contribution of 1% of free power by power producers, including PSUs, on behalf of the GoAP to Local Area Development Funds for welfare of project affected area people. These modifica-

tions will enable higher and timely contributions to the LADF for greater welfare of project affected families with no additional cost to the state exchequer.

Restoration of 144-MW Gongri HEP to SPV M/s Dirang Energy Private Limited under Arunachal Pradesh Restoration of Terminated Large Hydro-power Policy under Special Circumstances, 2025 was approved to be the first project under this innovative policy.

Restructuring of Hydro Power Development Department, including zonal, circle and division levels by allocating works to chief engineers and their subordinates in basin-wise manner was approved. It would enable seamless co-ordination with PSUs and Independent power producers and help promote timely commissioning of all HEPs.

Eighty-four technical and 12 non-technical posts were also approved in line with earlier announcement of 'Decade of Hydropower' to bolster hydropower sector. Hydropower with this decision is expected to be the largest contributor to the state economy in achieving goal of Vikshit Arunachal Pradesh.

Replacing the Teachers' Transfer and Posting Policy, 2019-20 with revised Teachers' Transfer and Posting Policy, 2025 for all regular teachers and administrative cadres (non-

ministerial) for equitable and rational distribution of teachers and non-ministerial employees in all GoAP schools approved.

The teachers and non-ministerial employees transfer and posting henceforth will be implemented through Teachers Registry Portal - an application through a fully automated, logical and transparent system - for rationalization, transfer and posting of all categories of teachers and administrative cadre (non-ministerial). This was approved to ensure timely, transparent, rationale and accountable deployment of teachers which will directly impact quality of education.

Creation of 32 teaching and non-teaching posts - deputy registrar, librarian, kanungo, mandal and field assistant posts was approved to augment capacity of Land Management Department of under the department. It would cover educational qualification/skill, age and other service positions as per the 7th CPC recommendation and other guidelines issued by the GoAP from time to time.

Framing of marking scheme for direct recruitment to the posts of PGTs and TGTs, Rules, 2025 at par with curriculum and eligibility framework of National Council of Teachers' Education was approved to maintain the requisite teaching-learning standard. This would pave way for immediate recruitment of subject teachers to fill the gap in the school.

In another major development, creation of 200

posts of home guard was approved for strengthening internal security, law enforcement, and disaster response mechanism. This initiative aims at bridging the gap in manpower shortage in police force for enhancing community policing.

Two hundred home guard volunteer posts sanctioned in tune with Arunachal Pradesh Home Guards Rules, 2023. They would be deployed strategically in various districts to support police operations and provide additional security at key locations, like highways, public service centers, and as emergency response units.

Proposal of amendment/framing of recruitment rules to DLRSO, surveyor, kanungo, mandal and field assistant posts was approved to augment capacity of Land Management Department of under the department. It would cover educational qualification/skill, age and other service positions as per the 7th CPC recommendation and other guidelines issued by the GoAP from time to time.

Restructuring the APCS to boost governance was approved by increasing post of secretary from three to eight and additional secretaries from eight to 13. Personnel Department would examine encadrement and other issues of APCS cadre within two months. The EAC has

been re-designated to assistant commissioner.

Signing tripartite agreement with GoI and Capacity Building Commission under Mission Karmayogi was approved to facilitate need based training of all GoAP employees and equip them to face evolving challenges of governance and service delivery.

Empowering the DCs to suspend erring district officials under specific circumstances was approved to streamline district level administration and Mukhya Mantri Viksit Arunachal District Fellowship Program with 35 fellows and 65 assistant fellows to strengthen the institution of DC. They would be deputed in all districts to assist DCs to further Viksit Arunachal goals.

The AP Boilers (Inquiry adjudication and appeal) Rules, 2025 for smooth adjudication of issues related to boilers was approved and status of Niglok Industrial Growth Centre reviewed to boost industrialization.

The Sunrise Festival in Anjaw district was also approved in principle as the Sun rises at Dong first in India. It aims to have a curated festival managed by experienced experts as a self-sustained model. The GoAP shall provide infrastructures, dates to coincide with the New Year and should continue for at least five days. (CMO)

## Arunachal journalists take part in Sikkim Golden Jubilee Conclave



**GANGTOK, May 13:** Arunachal Press Club Secretary Tagu Ningee and Arunachal 365 Digital Media Sandeep Kumar Thakur besides journalists of NE states of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Sikkim joined a day-long conclave here to celebrate 50 years of Sikkim's statehood.

The event, titled Sikkim@50 Golden Jubilee Celebration, was organised by Press Club of Sikkim (PCS) in collaboration with state's Information and Public Relations Department.

Sikkim Governor Om Prakash Mathur, speaking as chief guest, highlighted how Act East Policy facilitated development of NE region besides many other GoI schemes, like Vibrant Village Programme.

Speaking about Sikkim's 50 years' journey and the need for new ideas to ensure future progress, he advocated investments in eco-tourism, organic farming, green energy, and creative industries to boost local economy while protecting nature and culture.

The first session of the conclave focused on how Sikkim has integrated with the national mainstream while keeping its unique identity. Speakers Prof. Mahendra P Lama, Kunal Sengupta and Karma Paljor discussed growth, media development and cultural preservation. It was moderated by senior journalist Pema Wangchuk.

State ministers, advisors, officials, and PCS members attended the conclave, which show a vibrant cultural performance by Flickers Dance Academy.

## Doctor surrenders gun

**PASIGHAT, May 13:** TRIHMS oral and maxillo-facial surgeon Dr Tagat Taggu, a permanent resident of Bilat village under East Siang district, surrendered his one 12 bore SBBL gun with license to DC Tayi Taggu, in presence of EAC Sanjay Taram and labour officer Tore Ete here on Tuesday.

After surrounding his gun, Dr. Taggu said that motivated to protect wild-



life and discourage wild life killing besides inspire oth-

ers to follow suit to protect the nature. (DIPRO)

## HOWS felicitates 6 retired officers



**ITANAGAR, May 10:** Six retired officers of Hija community were felicitated by Hija Officers' Welfare Society (HOWS) during 2nd edition of its annual event here recently to honour their contributions.

HOWS general secretary Pura Baku, in his address, said that felicitation serves as a reminder to the younger generation about values of public service with dedication and integrity.

Those retired were state legislative assembly secretary Kago Habung, textiles and handicrafts department director Hajo Dodung, IAS officer Kime Aya and DIGP-cum-hydro power development CE Pura Tupe, agriculture director Dani Yubbe and DySP Kime Halyang.

According to the biennial report, the NGO initiated several developmental projects and social interventions, including construction of a new water treatment plant at Pakho-Putu, development of a new entry gate along NH-13 leading into Hija village, installation of CCTV cameras across the village during Myoko Festival, instituted Academic Excellence Awards and worked closely with youth and community-based organisations to tackle urgent issues, like clean water supply and public welfare.

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## India thanked for eliminating terrorist Abdul Rauf Azhar

**WASHINGTON DC, May 13:** Operation Sindoor, India's recent counter-terror offensive targeting nine high-value terror sites in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), has also delivered long-awaited justice to the family and friends of American-Jewish journalist Daniel Pearl.

According to reports, Abdul Rauf Azhar, an Islamist terrorist, co-conspirator in 2002 abduction and beheading of Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl, and mastermind of the IC-814 hijacking, was among dozens of terrorists eliminated in the operation.

India destroyed Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) terror headquarters and training camp - Markaz Subhan Al-lah -, in Pakistan's Bahawalpur during the offensive on Wednesday last.

The American-Jewish community, human rights activists, and international voices from across the world have taken to social media to thank India for eliminating Azhar, the brother of UN-designated terrorist and JeM chief Masood Azhar.

"India delivered justice

for the brutal murder of American-Jewish journalist Daniel Pearl by eliminating Abdul Rauf Azhar, the JeM commander and key conspirator behind Pearl's kidnapping, torture, and beheading," American activist Amy Mek posted on X.

"Abdul Rauf Azhar wasn't just a terrorist; he was the brother of JeM's founder Masood Azhar and a mastermind behind some of the most heinous Islamic attacks," she added. "Operation Sindoor struck at the heart of terror, hitting JeM strongholds and sending a clear message: India will not stand by while radicals slaughter non-Muslims. To India, we say thank you—for standing strong against Islamic terror and taking the fight directly to the jihadis."

Former US Special Envoy Ellie Cohanin also expressed her gratitude: "For too long, we did not see justice for the evil beheading of Daniel Pearl. Personally grateful to the GoI. Daniel Pearl is forever memorialized by his last words echoing thousands of years of Jewish history and persecution: 'My father is Jewish, my mother is Jew-



ish, I am Jewish.'"

Prominent voices including American author Pamela Geller, international human rights lawyer Arsen Ostrovsky and Israeli journalist Emily Schrader also thanked India for the strike.

"India kills Muslim terrorist who beheaded Jewish-American Wall Street Journal reporter Daniel Pearl. THANK YOU, INDIA!" Geller wrote.

"Thank you to our Indian friends for eliminating one of the key terrorists behind the 2002 execution of Danny Pearl. The Jewish and Indian people are two very proud nations, both fighting against the forces of Islamic terror," Ostrovsky wrote on X.

"Justice. Thank you India, for eliminating the monsters who beheaded Daniel Pearl," Schrader posted.

The Bahawalpur site,

long believed to be a major base for JeM's terrorist operations, was reduced to rubble in the strike. JeM chief Masood Azhar, one of India's most wanted terrorists, is accused of orchestrating multiple deadly attacks, including the 2019 Pulwama bombing that killed 40 CRPF personnel. (Agency)

PIB adds from New Delhi: Indian Army's Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) Lieutenant General Rajiv Ghai, has said that strikes across nine terror hubs in Pakistan and PoK under Operation Sindoor killed over 100 terrorists.

Briefing media in New Delhi on Sunday evening, he said they include high-value targets, like Yusuf Azhar, Abdul Malik Rauf and Mudasar Ahmed, who were involved in hijack of IC814 and Pulwama blast. Operation Sindoor was conceptualised with a clear military aim to punish the perpetrators and planners of terror and to destroy their terror infrastructure.

Operation Sindoor set into motion a very diligent and meticulous scanning of the terror landscape across the borders and the

identification of terror camps and training sites.

The DGMO said he spoke to his Pak counterpart Saturday afternoon, who proposed cessation of hostilities. He added that this resulted in cessation of cross-border firing and air intrusions by either side. He, however, expressed disappointment that it took only a couple of hours for the Pakistan Army to violate these arrangements by cross-border and across Line of Control firing, followed by drone intrusions. He said another hotline message has been sent to his counterpart, highlighting that if there are violations of the understanding tonight or later, these will be responded to fiercely and punitively.

The DGMO stressed that the Chief of Army Staff, General Upendra Dwivedi, has granted full authority to the army commanders for counter-action in case of any violation by Pakistan. The DGMO also paid tributes to the five martyrs from the Armed Forces and civilians who lost their lives in Operation Sindoor. (Agency)







## Pakistan declares an Indian diplomat 'persona non grata', asks to leave within 24 hours

ISLAMABAD, May 13 (PTI) Pakistan on Tuesday declared a staff member of the Indian High Commission here "persona non grata" for engaging in activities what it called "incompatible" with his privileged status.

A statement issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also said that the concerned official has been directed to leave Pakistan within 24 hours.

"The Government of Pakistan has declared a staff member of the Indian High Commission, Islamabad, as persona non grata for engaging in activities incompatible with his privileged status," it said.

It added that the Indian Charge d' Affaires was called to the Ministry of



Foreign Affairs on Tuesday for a démarche, conveying this decision.

Earlier, India expelled a Pakistani official working at the Pakistan High Commission in New Delhi for allegedly indulging in espionage.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said the official was indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status in India and that he had been given

24 hours to leave the country.

The move comes amid tensions between the two neighbours following a four-day military confrontation.

## Funerals held in Myanmar for pupils, teachers killed in airstrike on school

BANGKOK, May 13 (AP) Funerals have been held in Myanmar for almost two dozen students and teachers alleged to have been killed in an airstrike on a local school by a ruling military jet fighter.

Local resistance groups and independent media said Tuesday that 20 pupils and 2 teachers died in the attack on Ohe Htein Twin village, in Sagaing region's township of Tabayin, also known as Depayin. Their reports said that as many as 100 people were wounded.

The dead students were from grades 2 to 11, with the youngest seven years old, according to the shadow National Unity Government, which serves as an umbrella organization for opponents of military rule. A member of a local resistance group fighting against army rule told The Associated Press that another student, who was severely injured in Monday's bombing, died Tuesday afternoon while undergoing medical treatment.

The resistance fighter, who requested that neither he nor his group be named for fear of arrest by the military, said the incident occurred while more than 100 students were studying in a school in the village, which has about 500 houses. He denied that any resistance fighters were stationed in the village that was attacked.

Sagaing has been a stronghold of armed resistance to army rule in Myanmar, and the military in recent years has stepped up airstrikes in their fight against resistance forces, which include the armed People's Defense Forces. The resistance has no effective defense against air attacks, which many reports say hit non-military targets.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the army's 2021 takeover ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, which led to nationwide peaceful protests that escalated into a durable armed resistance denying the army control of much of the country.

A report Tuesday in the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper denied the army had carried out the airstrike, saying malicious media outlets were intentionally spreading fake information. The military's tight control over the media and the relative remoteness of many such incidents makes independent confirmation of what occurred difficult.

The bodies of 18 of the victims, most of them under the age of 10 were buried Monday in two village cemeteries after hastily arranged funerals just a few hours after the bombing incident, the unidentified resistance fighter said.

About 100 wounded people, both students and teachers, were being treated in regional hospitals as the village's clinic lacked adequate facilities. At least two victims have had to have limbs amputated, he added.

A member of another resistance group, the White Depeyin People's Defence Force, also speaking on condition of anonymity, told the AP that the funerals concluded on Tuesday.

A report on Tuesday by the Human Rights Ministry of the National Unity Government said the jet fighter took off from an airbase in Meiktila township in the central region of Mandalay on Monday morning and deliberately attacked the school with two cluster bombs while students were preparing to sit for their exams.

"All individuals implicated in the commanding, execution, or collusion of deliberate air strikes against innocent children, students, and educators shall be subject to stringent judicial repercussions," the group said in a separate statement. "No avenue for impunity shall be permitted. Every responsible party will be pursued without respite, unequivocally identified, held accountable and subjected to stringent punitive measures under the full force of the law."

The military has increasingly used airstrikes to counter the widespread armed struggle against its rule. More than 6,600 civilians are estimated to have been killed by security forces since the army's 2021 takeover, according to figures compiled by nongovernmental organizations. Airstrikes in Myanmar garnered increased attention recently when numerous reports deemed credible by the United Nations and human rights groups said that they continued to be carried out in the wake of Myanmar's devastating March 28 earthquake, after which the military and resistance groups declared ceasefires to facilitate relief efforts.

"We are horrified by reports of a Myanmar regime airstrike on a school in an earthquake-affected area at a time when a ceasefire has been announced. Schools are meant to be a place of safety and opportunity, not collateral in a conflict," Britain's Minister for Indo-Pacific Catherine West said in a statement.

"We repeat our call to all parties, particularly the Myanmar military, to refrain from airstrikes, safeguard civilians, and protect civilian infrastructure."

## Global aviation council finds Russia responsible for downing MH17 over Ukraine in 2014

MELBOURNE, May 13 (AP) The Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation on Tuesday found Russia responsible for shooting down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine with the loss of 298 lives more than a decade ago, in a ruling that raises the prospect of victims' families being paid compensation.

Russia has rejected the findings.

A Dutch-led international investigation concluded in 2016 that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur airliner was shot down on July 17, 2014, from Ukrainian territory held by separatist rebels using a Buk missile system delivered from Russia. Moscow denies any involvement in the MH17 tragedy.

The Netherlands and Australian governments brought the case against Moscow before the Montreal-based global aviation agency in 2022, and on Tuesday welcomed the verdict.

Council finds that Russia violated the Chicago Convention

The council found that Russia had violated the Convention on International Civil Aviation, known as the Chicago Convention, which requires that states "refrain from resorting to the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight."

It's the first time that the council, which represents 193 member states, has decided a dispute between governments.



Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said that the council would consider the question of reparations within weeks.

"In that context, the Netherlands and Australia are requesting that the ICAO Council order the Russian Federation to enter into negotiations with the Netherlands and Australia, and that the Council facilitate this process," Veldkamp said in a statement.

"The latter is important in order to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in good faith and according to specific timelines, and that they will yield actual results," he added.

Dutch father Thomas Schansman, who lost his son in the disaster, said the ICAO decision makes it

clear Russia was responsible for the tragedy and could lead to compensation, but that he and other relatives mostly want the country to acknowledge its culpability.

"Money cannot buy anything back," he told The Associated Press.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong urged the council to move swiftly to "determine remedies."

"We call on Russia to finally face up to its responsibility for its horrific act of violence and make reparations for its egregious conduct, as required under international law," Wong said in a statement.

Russia rejects the council's findings

Speaking to journalists Tuesday, the Kremlin rejected the investigation's results as "biased."

"Russia did not take part in the investigation of this incident and therefore we will not accept these biased conclusions," said Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov.

Australian National University international law expert Don Rothwell said that the council had yet to publish the reasons for its decisions.

"One of the consequences for this process will be that the council will probably make some recommendations that Russia pay what are called reparations, which is an international term for damages, as a result of its violation of international law," Rothwell said.

"So we have to wait and see exactly what the council finds on that particular point," Rothwell added.

## Trump in Saudi speech urges Iran toward 'new and better path' as he pushes for nuclear deal

RIYADH, May 13 (AP) President Donald Trump in a speech in Saudi Arabia urged Iran to take a "new and a better path" as he pushes Tehran for a new nuclear deal, but he also warned "massive maximum pressure" if it doesn't come around.

Trump said at the US-Saudi investment conference he wants to avoid conflict with Tehran but warned that time is running out as Iran makes rapid progress with its nuclear programme.

"As I have shown repeatedly, I am willing to end past conflicts and forge new partnerships for a better and more stable world, even if our differences may be profound," Trump said.

But he added, "If Iran's leadership rejects this olive branch ... we will have no choice but to inflict massive maximum pressure, drive Iranian oil exports to zero."

The comments came as Trump kicked off a four-day visit to the Middle East on Tuesday with his visit to Saudi capital. The latest entreaty to Tehran comes days after Trump dispatched his special envoy Steve Witkoff to meet with Iranian officials for a fourth round of talks aimed at persuading Iran to abandon its nuclear programme.

Trump in the speech also said he hopes Saudi Arabia will soon join the Abraham Accords and recognise Israel "in your own time."

Saudi Arabia long has maintained that recognition of Israel is tied to the establishment of a Palestinian state along the lines of Israel's 1967 borders. Under the Biden administration, there was a push for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel as part of a major diplomatic deal. However, the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel upended those plans and sent the region into one of the worst period of faces it has faced.

In a separate development, Trump announced he was lifting US sanctions on Syria. The White House also announced that Trump

will meet Wednesday in Saudi Arabia with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, the onetime insurgent who last year led the overthrow of former leader Bashar Assad.

The US has been weighing how to handle al-Sharaa since he took power in December. Gulf leaders, have rallied behind the new government in Damascus and will want Trump to follow, believing it is a bulwark against Iran's return to influence in Syria, where it had helped prop up Assad's government during a decade-long civil war.

Trump also signed a host of economic and bilateral cooperation agreements with Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to kick off a four-day Middle East trip with a focus on dealmaking with a key Mideast ally.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi de facto ruler, warmly greeted Trump as he stepped off Air Force One at King Khalid International Airport.

The two leaders then retreated to a grand hall at the Riyadh airport, where Trump and his aides were served traditional Arabic coffee by waiting attendants wearing ceremonial gun belts.

"I really believe we like each other a lot," Trump said during a brief appearance with the crown prince at the start of a bilateral meeting.

The leaders signed more than a dozen agreements to increase cooperation between their governments' militaries, justice departments and cultural institutions.

Prince Mohammed has already committed to some USD 600 billion in new Saudi investment in the US, but Trump teased USD 1 trillion would be even better.

Fighter jet escort

The pomp began before Trump even landed. Royal Saudi Air Force F-15s provided an honorary escort for Air Force One as it approached the kingdom's capital — an exceptionally

rare sight.

Trump and Prince Mohammed also took part in a formal greeting and lunch at the Royal Court at Al Yamamah Palace, gathering with guests and aides in an ornate room with blue and gold accents and massive crystal chandeliers.

As he greeted business titans with Trump by his side, Prince Mohammed was animated and smiling.

It was a stark contrast to his awkward fist bump with then-President Joe Biden, who looked to avoid being seen on camera shaking hands with the prince during a 2022 visit to the kingdom.

Biden had decided to pay a visit to Saudi Arabia as he looked to alleviate soaring prices at the pump for motorists at home and around the globe. At the time, Prince Mohammed's reputation had been badly damaged by a US intelligence determination that found he had ordered the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

But that dark moment appeared to be distant memory for the prince as he rubbed elbows with high-profile business executives — including Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink and Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk — in front of the cameras and with Trump by his side.

Later, the crown prince will fete Trump with an intimate state dinner at Ad-Diriyah, a UNESCO heritage site that is the birthplace of the first Saudi state and the site of a major development project championed by the crown prince.

Qatar and UAE next

Trump picked the kingdom for his first stop, because it has pledged to make big investments in the US, but he ended up travelling to Italy last month for Pope Francis' funeral. Riyadh was the first overseas stop of his first term.

The three countries on Trump's itinerary — Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates — are places where the Trump Organization, run by Trump's two oldest sons, is developing major real estate projects. They include a high-rise tower in Jeddah, a luxury hotel in Dubai and a golf course and villa complex in Qatar.

He'll announce deals at all three stops during Mideast swing, initiatives that will touch on artificial intelligence, expanding energy cooperation and perhaps new arms sales to Saudi Arabia. The administration this month announced initial approval to sell USD 3.5 billion worth of air-to-air missiles for Saudi Arabia's fighter jets.

His diplomatic blitz in the Gulf also comes at a time of some strain in the US-Israel relationship.

Before the trip, Trump announced Washington was halting a nearly two-month US airstrike campaign against Yemen's Houthis, saying the Iranian-backed rebels have pledged to stop attacking ships along a vital global trade route.

The administration didn't notify Israel — which the Houthis continue to target — of the agreement before Trump publicly announced it. It was the latest example of Trump leaving the Israelis in the dark about his administration's negotiations with common adversaries.

In March, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wasn't notified by the administration until after talks began with Hamas about the war in Gaza. And Netanyahu found out about the ongoing US nuclear talks with Iran only when Trump announced them during an Oval Office visit by the Israeli leader last month.

"Israel will defend itself by itself," Netanyahu said last week following Trump's Houthi truce announcement. "If others join us — our American friends — all the better."

## In Saudi Arabia, Trump reiterates his administration 'brokered historic ceasefire' between India and Pak

NEW YORK, May 13 (PTI) US President Donald Trump on Tuesday once again claimed that his administration "successfully brokered a historic ceasefire" to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan.

"As I said in my inaugural address, my greatest hope is to be a peacemaker and to be a unifier. I don't like war. We have the greatest military, by the way, in the history of the world," Trump said while speaking at a Saudi-US investment forum in the Saudi capital.

"Just days ago, my administration successfully brokered a historic ceasefire to stop the escalating violence between India and Pakistan," claimed Trump, who is in Saudi on the first leg of his four-day trip to the Gulf region.

"And I used trade to a large extent to do it. And I said, 'Fellows, come on. Let's make a deal. Let's do some

trading," Trump said to applause from the high-level audience, which included billionaire Elon Musk.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman also applauded.

"Let's not trade nuclear missiles. Let's trade the things that you make so beautifully. And they both have very powerful leaders, very strong leaders, good leaders, smart leaders. And it all stopped. Hopefully, it'll remain that way, but it all stopped," Trump said.

Trump added that he was very proud of Secretary of State Marco Rubio and all of the people who worked so hard.

"Marco stand up. What a great job you did on that. Thank you. Vice President JD Vance, Marco, the whole group worked with you, but there's a great, great job, and think they're actually getting along.

"Maybe we can even get

them together a little bit, Marco, where they go out and have a nice dinner together. Wouldn't that be nice? But we've come a long way, and that's could be, you know, millions of people could have died from that conflict, that started off small and was getting bigger and bigger and bigger by the day."

A day earlier, Trump reiterated his claim that his administration stopped a "nuclear conflict" between India and Pakistan, telling the South Asian neighbours that America will do a "lot of trade" with them if they end hostilities.

India and Pakistan reached an understanding on Saturday to end the conflict after four days of intense cross-border drone and missile strikes.

Indian government sources in New Delhi have been maintaining that the Director General of Military Operations

(DGMOs) of India and Pakistan reached an understanding to stop all firings and military actions on land, air and sea, with immediate effect. They said no third party was involved.

On Saturday, Trump announced that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate ceasefire" after a "long night of talks mediated by the United States."

Later, in a post on Truth Social, Trump offered to work with India and Pakistan for a "solution" on Kashmir, while crediting Washington for helping the two nations arrive at the "historic and heroic decision" of stopping the conflict. India has always maintained that the Kashmir issue is a bilateral matter and there is no space for any third party. India asserts that the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and the Union Territory of Ladakh are and always will be integral and inalienable parts of it.







# Operation Sindoor showcased India's national resolve, says Haryana CM Saini

**CHANDIGARH, May 13:** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Tuesday said the success of Operation Sindoor showcased India's national resolve, the bravery of its soldiers, and the firm leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the global stage.

Saini extended his congratulations to the nation on Operation Sindoor, calling it a symbol of the country's dignity, valour and self-respect.

"The historic success of Operation Sindoor showcased India's national resolve, bravery of its soldiers and the firm leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the global stage," he said.

Saini was addressing a gathering before the commencement of a Tiranga Yatra in Panchkula.

Led by the chief minister, the yatra began at Yavanika Town Park in Sector 5, with patriotic slogans such as "Bharat Mata ki Jai" and "Vande Mataram", and concluded at Major Sandeep Shankla Memorial.

Hundreds of people, including children and women, participated in the yatra, paying homage to the country's brave soldiers.

Saini and other ministers paid floral tribute to martyrs at the Major Sandeep Shankla Memorial, sa-



luting the soldiers' valour and courage, according to a statement.

The BJP will spearhead an 11-day Tiranga Yatra across the country, beginning on Tuesday, following the success of Operation Sindoor, as part of its outreach around the Modi government's determined leadership and the valour of the armed forces.

In his address, Saini said India's soldiers had taught a tough lesson to those who threaten the nation.

He explained that the yatra was not just a celebration of Mother India's pride but a tribute to the nation's self-respect and valour.

It is an expression of national unity, consciousness and pride. The yatra is dedicated to the warriors who responded to the enemy in their own language and continues to inspire to embrace patriotism in every moment, he said.

He said the courage, loyalty and discipline with which the brave soldiers carried out Operation Sindoor under the leadership of Modi had become a symbol of India's national dignity.

The clear message from the prime minister that India would go to any extent to protect its citizens resonated across the globe. This reflects the self-confidence of a 'new India' and the identity of a developed nation, he said.

Saini said Operation Sindoor stood as a unique example of India's military strategy, showcasing the skilled leadership of the prime minister and the bravery of the country's soldiers.

"The operation led to the destruction of numerous terrorist bases and sent a clear message to Pakistan: the price of attacking India's sovereignty is extremely high. When it

comes to the nation's security, India does not compromise," he said.

He added that India also took strong non-military measures following the terror attack in Pahalgam.

The Indus Waters Treaty was suspended and all exchanges were halted. Pakistani citizens were sent back, the border was sealed, terrorist networks were exposed and Pakistan was isolated from the global community, he said.

This was not just a military strike -- it was a statement of the new India's resolve and strength, Saini said. "Our forces did not merely launch missiles; they delivered a message so powerful that it resonated even in the US and China. This is the new India, the strong India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi."

Referring to last month's Pahalgam attack, he said, "The 'sindoor' (vermilion) of sisters and daughters was destroyed and that is why the operation was named 'Sindoor'."

Saini said the terrorists, after killing their husbands, told the women survivors of the attack to "go and tell Modi".

Prime Minister Modi responded and the terrorists hiding in Pakistan were eliminated, he said.

The prime minister has also made it clear to the

world that India stood firmly against terrorism. This stance proves that India is not in favour of war but India will not remain silent as long as peace is seen as a weakness. This combination of bravery and restraint is what makes India a truly great nation, he added.

Modi guided the vision and determination of this new India. Under his leadership, decisive actions are being taken against terrorism, the military has been strengthened, and India's global standing has risen, Saini said.

The chief minister expressed gratitude to Modi on behalf of the people of Haryana for making the country self-reliant and instilling a sense of national pride.

"The self-confidence of our nation is embodied in our armed forces. While we sleep peacefully, our soldiers sacrifice their rest on the borders... As we take part in the Tiranga Yatra, they give their lives, holding the Tricolour close to their hearts. Their bravery and valour are India's true assets," he said.

Saini also saluted the families who dedicated their sons, brothers and husbands in the service of the nation and extended his thanks to the citizens whose unity and discipline kept the nation united during this time of crisis. (PTI)

## PM Modi lauds military's valour, sends message of 'Lakshman Rekha' to Pak from border IAF base

**NEW DELHI, May 13:** With an S-400 missile defence system in the backdrop, Prime Minister Narendra Modi sent a firm message Tuesday from Adampur Air Base to Pakistan: Not only have you failed to harm any of India's military installations but you will be annihilated if terrorism continues from your soil.

In his first speech to the armed forces since Operation Sindoor, Modi lauded the military for humbling Pakistan in the four-day engagement that resulted in the destruction of nine terror sites, killing of over 100 terrorists and damage to its eight military installations.

"Aatank ke viruddh Bharat ki Lakshman Rekha ekdam spast hai. Ab phir koi terror attack hua to Bharat jawab dega, pakka jawab dega. (India's Lakshman Rekha against terrorism is now crystal clear. India will respond and definitely respond if hit by a terror attack)," he said, in an over 27-minute speech which echoed the message of his address to the nation on Monday night.

But the significance of the speech was immense. It was delivered from the Adampur base, merely 100 km from the Pakistan border, which Pakistan claimed to have destroyed along with the S-400 missile defence system. India had rubbished the claims and TV cameras following Modi corroborated that.

Reiterating that Operation Sindoor is India's new normal, he praised the soldiers, saying what they have achieved is unprecedented, unimaginable and amazing, making every Indian proud and indebted.



Modi toured the base and greeted uniformed personnel who shouted 'Bharat Mata ki jai' after he arrived there unannounced early Tuesday morning.

After interacting with the soldiers, he delivered the speech with an S-400 system in the backdrop, wearing a Western Air Command cap with its trademark trishul embroidered on it.

He asked them to remain on guard and asserted, "This is the new India, this India seeks peace. But if humanity is attacked, it also knows how to crush the enemy on the battlefield."

He said Operation Sindoor is no ordinary campaign but a trinity of India's policy, intent and decisive capability, affirming that the country is the land of Buddha, the messenger of peace, as well as Guru Gobind Singh, who had galvanised the Sikh army against enemies.

His speech interspersed with enthusiastic soldiers raising the slogan of 'Bharat Mata ki jai', Modi said it is an Indian tradition to take up arms to establish 'dharma' (righteousness). "When the sindoor of our sisters and daughters was wiped away, we crushed terrorists in their hideouts."

He said, "Patrons of ter-

rorism have realised that casting an evil eye on India will have only one consequence: destruction. There will be only one consequence of killing innocents: destruction, total annihilation."

He said terrorists thought they had the protection of the Pakistani armed forces. The Indian Air Force, Army and Navy humbled the Pakistani forces and conveyed to them that there is no place in Pakistan where terrorists can feel safe.

Modi said, "We will kill them in their hideouts and give no opportunity to escape."

The prime minister also praised the central armed police forces like the BSF, which is deployed at the International Border with Pakistan, and said they have made every Indian proud.

"I have come to you in the early morning for your 'darshan'," Modi said, praising the air warriors. He said they and their colleagues will be the most important chapter in any discussion on India's valour even after several decades. "You all have become an inspiration for not only the present but the future generations," he said, saluting them. (PTI)

## Bomb scare at Kolkata airport, flight leaves for Mumbai four hours late

**KOLKATA, May 13:** An IndiGo airlines flight, which was sent to the isolation bay at the Kolkata airport following a bomb scare, left for Mumbai after a delay of four hours, officials said.

The bomb scare was prompted by a remark of a passenger during the step ladder point check, a secondary-level security procedure under which airline staff frisk passengers and their hand luggage just before boarding, an official said.

The 26-year-old passenger from Manipur, who had told an airline security personnel that he was carrying a bomb, was detained, initially by the CISF which later handed him over to the police.

The IndiGo plane was taken to the isolation bay on Tuesday afternoon for

a thorough security check following the passenger's claim, an Airports Authority of India (AAI) official said.

Nothing, however, was found after thorough checking, and the plane was allowed to leave for Mumbai without the passenger concerned.

The passenger was travelling to the western city from Imphal with a stopover in Kolkata.

"His claim was declared specific, security was beefed up, and standard operating procedure (SOP) implemented," the AAI official said.

The passenger was on his way to Mumbai to look for a job.

The passenger's mother, who is a retired school teacher, was shaken after hearing that her son was detained for claiming he was

carrying a bomb.

"I am very worried about what will happen to him," she told PTI over phone from Imphal.

She also said that she was clueless about what to do or who to approach for help.

The woman said her son was going to Mumbai to appear for an examination. She, however, could not provide details.

Meanwhile, after the Bomb Threat Assessment Committee (BTAC) completed all formalities, emergency was withdrawn at 4.11 pm and the IndiGo aircraft at isolation bay was towed to the parking bay number.

The plane departed from Kolkata for Mumbai at 5.43 pm, after a delay of more than 4 hours.

The passenger was lat-

er handed over to the airport police station for further action.

The Deputy Commissioner of Police, Airport, Aishwarya Sagar, said that the passenger is being interrogated.

A CISF official said that during interrogation, the passenger claimed that he had jokingly said that he was carrying a bomb in his hand baggage. The man did not have any registered baggage.

The official said he repented for making such a loose comment at a high-security zone.

Security has been strengthened at all airports in the country following the India-Pakistan military conflict.

"We treated the young man very well, provided him food and water," the official said.

Earlier in the day, the passenger arrived in Kolkata by an Indigo flight and was supposed to take another flight of the same airline to Mumbai.

Out of the total of 186 passengers who were supposed to take the flight to Mumbai from Kolkata, 179 had already boarded, the official said.

The flight was scheduled to depart for Mumbai at 1.30 pm.

In a statement, the airline said, "IndiGo flight 6E 5227 operating from Kolkata to Mumbai received a bomb threat prior to departure. In accordance with security protocols, the aircraft was moved to an isolation bay at Kolkata airport. All necessary checks were conducted, and the standard operating procedures were followed." (PTI)

## SC stays demolition of homes, commercial property in Chandni Chowk

**NEW DELHI, May 13:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday stayed the demolition of residential and commercial properties at Fatehpuri area of Chandi Chowk in the capital as it pulled up the MCD for ineptness.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and N Kotiswar Singh examined the photographs of the area filed by an intervenor and reprimanded the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) for being unable to stop the construction of commercial complexes.

The MCD was directed to file a status report with all details failing which the court warned it of contempt action or drawing an infer-

ence that they were in cahoots with the builders.

"Meanwhile, demolition of residential buildings and construction and conversion of commercial complexes are stayed," the bench ordered.

The MCD counsel said that in compliance with a court order, a team visited the area and inspected the entire premises and nearby areas and submitted a report.

He said the report was not placed on record due to holidays and assured that all illegal constructions were removed.

The top court was hearing a plea of a petitioner-in-person who claimed illegal

construction was ongoing in the area allegedly in collusion with the civic authorities.

The bench asked her to suggest some names of independent architects and civil engineers who could visit the site for inspection and submit a report to the court.

"We want independent inspection of the site as we are not able to rely upon the report of the MCD officials," the bench said and posted the matter on May 23.

On February 17, the top court mulled ordering a CBI probe into alleged illegal constructions in the busy Chandni Chowk area of



Delhi and failure of the MCD to check it.

It expressed its concern and blamed the inaction of officials of MCD to check the unauthorised constructions in the commercial hub of the city.

The MCD claimed the alleged unauthorised construction was removed pursuant to the orders of the

Delhi High Court, where matter is still pending.

The petitioner challenged two orders of the Delhi High Court including one over the removal of unauthorised construction at Bagh Dewar, Fatehpuri in Chandni Chowk which was dismissed on assurances of the MCD. (PTI)

## Haryana intensifies crackdown on illegal abortions; 17 FIRs filed, 13 centres sealed in a week

**CHANDIGARH, May 13:** The State Task Force's weekly meeting for improving sex ratio in Haryana was held here on Tuesday which focused on intensifying efforts to curb illegal abortions, said an official statement.

The meeting, held under the chairmanship of Additional Chief Secretary, Health and Family Welfare, Sudhir Rajpal, focused on intensifying efforts to curb illegal abortions and further improve the state's sex ratio under the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign, it said.

The officials informed during the meeting that 19 raids had been conducted across the state in the past week (May 6 to 12) over the illegal sale of MTP (medical termination of pregnancy) kits and 17 FIRs were registered.

In addition, 13 shops had been sealed for illegal practices and 145 MTP kits were seized. Legal action under the Drugs and Cos-

metics Act, 1940 shall be launched against the offenders, the statement said.

After the formation of the State Task Force (STF), 43 FIRs have been registered, 21 shops have been sealed and 6200 MTP kits have been seized in Haryana.

The additional chief secretary during the meeting emphasized a zero-tolerance approach towards illegal abortion practices and directed officials to enhance monitoring and supervision at all levels.

Rajpal warned that strict action would be taken against any official found negligent in enforcing the law.

He said that doctors found involved in illegal abortion practices will have their cases referred to the Medical Council of India for cancellation of their licences.

The departments were directed to follow up vigorously on all registered cases and coordinate closely

with the police authorities to track and trace the persons involved in illegal practice and take these cases to their logical conclusion.

The additional chief secretary also stressed on intensified inspections at the MTP centers to prevent unlawful terminations.

To regulate MTP kit sales, the officials were directed to ensure that no MTP kit is sold without Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) identification number.

To ensure better accuracy in birth registration figures, the officials were told to visit slum areas every week and organise birth registration camps to ensure that no newborn is left unregistered in the state.

The meeting was informed by officials that the number of abortions at 12 weeks or more dropped from 425 to 226 within a week, marking a major step forward in the fight against female foeticide. (PTI)

## India expels Pakistani official at Pak mission

**NEW DELHI, May 13:** India on Tuesday expelled a Pakistani official working at the Pakistan high commission for indulging in activities not in keeping with his official status.

The external affairs ministry said the official has been given 24 hours to leave India.

The action came amid heightened tension between the two countries

following their four-day military confrontation.

India also issued a demarche to Pakistani Charge d' Affaires in New Delhi on the activities of the official. (PTI)



# Global aviation council finds Russia responsible for downing MH17 over Ukraine in 2014

**MELBOURNE, May 13:** The Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation on Tuesday found Russia responsible for shooting down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine with the loss of 298 lives more than a decade ago, in a ruling that raises the prospect of victims' families being paid compensation.

Russia has rejected the findings.

A Dutch-led international investigation concluded in 2016 that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur airliner was shot down on July 17, 2014, from Ukrainian territory held by separatist rebels using a Buk missile system delivered from Russia. Moscow denies any involvement in the MH17 tragedy.

The Netherlands and Australian governments brought the case against Moscow before the Montreal-based global aviation agency in 2022, and on Tuesday welcomed the verdict.

Council finds that Russia violated the Chicago Convention

The council found that Russia had violated the Convention on International Civil Aviation, known as the Chicago Convention, which requires that states “refrain from resorting to the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight.”

It's the first time that the council, which represents 193 member states, has decided a dispute between governments.

Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said that

the council would consider the question of reparations within weeks.

“In that context, the Netherlands and Australia are requesting that the ICAO Council order the Russian Federation to enter into negotiations with the Netherlands and Australia, and that the Council facilitate this process,” Veldkamp said in a statement.

“The latter is important in order to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in good faith and according to specific timelines, and that they will yield actual results,” he added.

Dutch father Thomas Schansman, who lost his son in the disaster, said the ICAO decision makes it clear Russia was responsible for the tragedy and

could lead to compensation, but that he and other relatives mostly want the country to acknowledge its culpability.

“Money cannot buy anything back,” he told The Associated Press.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong urged the council to move swiftly to “determine remedies.”

“We call on Russia to finally face up to its responsibility for its horrific act of violence and make reparations for its egregious conduct, as required under international law,” Wong said in a statement.

Russia rejects the council's findings

Speaking to journalists Tuesday, the Kremlin rejected the investigation's results as “biased.”

“Russia did not take

part in the investigation of this incident and therefore we will not accept these biased conclusions,” said Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov.

Australian National University international law expert Don Rothwell said that the council had yet to publish the reasons for its decisions.

“One of the consequences for this process will be that the council will probably make some recommendations that Russia pay what are called reparations, which is an international term for damages, as a result of its violation of international law,” Rothwell said.

“So we have to wait and see exactly what the council finds on that particular point,” Rothwell added. *(AP)*

# Trump in Saudi speech urges Iran toward 'new and better path' as he pushes for nuclear deal

**RIYADH, May 13:** President Donald Trump in a speech in Saudi Arabia urged Iran to take a “new and a better path” as he pushes Tehran for a new nuclear deal, but he also warned “massive maximum pressure” if it doesn't come around.

Trump said at the US-Saudi investment conference he wants to avoid conflict with Tehran but warned that time is running out as Iran makes rapid progress with its nuclear programme.

“As I have shown repeatedly, I am willing to end past conflicts and forge new partnerships for a better and more stable world, even if our differences may be profound,” Trump said.

But he added, “If Iran's leadership rejects this olive branch ... we will have no choice but to inflict massive maximum pressure, drive Iranian oil exports to zero.”

The comments came as Trump kicked off a four-day visit to the Middle East on Tuesday with his visit to Saudi capital. The latest entreaty to Tehran comes days after Trump dispatched his special envoy Steve Witkoff to meet with Iranian officials for a fourth round of talks aimed at persuading Iran to abandon its nuclear programme.

Trump in the speech also said he hopes Saudi Arabia will soon join the Abraham Accords and recognise Israel “in your own time.”

Saudi Arabia long has maintained that recognition of Israel is tied to the establishment of a Palestinian state along the lines of Israel's 1967 borders. Under the Biden administration, there was a push for Saudi Arabia to recognise Israel as part of a major diplomatic deal. However, the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack on Israel upended those plans and sent the region into one of the worst period of faces it has faced.

In a separate development, Trump announced he was lifting US sanctions on Syria. The White House also announced that Trump will meet Wednesday in Saudi Arabia with Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa, the onetime insurgent who last year led the overthrow of former leader Bashar Assad.

The US has been weighing how to handle al-Sharaa since he took power in December. Gulf leaders, have rallied behind the new government in Damascus and will want Trump to follow, believing it is a bulwark against Iran's return to influence in Syria, where it had helped prop up Assad's government during a decade-long civil war.

Trump also signed a host of economic and bilateral cooperation agreements with Saudi Arabia on Tuesday to kick off a four-day Middle East trip with a focus on dealmaking with a key Mideast ally.

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the Saudi de facto ruler, warmly greeted Trump as he stepped off Air Force One at King Khalid International Airport.

The two leaders then retreated to a grand hall at the Riyadh airport, where Trump and his aides were served traditional Arabic coffee by waiting attendants wearing ceremonial gun belts.

“I really believe we like each other a lot,” Trump said during a brief appearance with the crown prince at the start of a bilateral meeting.

The leaders signed more than a dozen agreements to increase cooperation between their governments' militaries, justice departments and cultural institutions.

Prince Mohammed has already committed to some USD 600 billion in new Saudi investment in the US, but Trump teased USD 1 trillion would be even better.

Fighter jet escort

The pomp began before Trump even landed. Royal Saudi Air Force F-15s provided an honorary escort for Air Force One as it approached the kingdom's capital — an exceptionally rare sight.

Trump and Prince Mohammed also took part in formal greeting and lunch at the Royal Court at Al Yamamah Palace, gathering with guests and aides in an ornate room with blue and gold accents and massive crystal chandeliers.

As he greeted business titans with Trump by his side, Prince Mohammed was animated and smiling.

It was a stark contrast to his awkward fist bump with then-President Joe Biden, who looked to avoid being seen on camera shaking hands with the prince during a 2022 visit to the kingdom.

Biden had decided to pay a visit to Saudi Arabia as he looked to alleviate soaring prices at the pump for motorists at home and around the globe. At the time, Prince Mohammed's reputation had been badly damaged by a US intelligence determination that found he had ordered the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

But that dark moment appeared to be distant memory for the prince as he rubbed elbows with high-profile business executives — including Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink and Tesla and SpaceX CEO Elon Musk — in front of the cameras and with Trump by his side.

Later, the crown prince will fete Trump with an intimate state dinner at Ad-Diriyah, a UNESCO heritage site that is the birthplace of the first Saudi state and the site of a major development project championed by the crown prince.*(AP)*

# Netanyahu says there is 'no way' Israel halts war in Gaza until Hamas is defeated

**TELAVIV, May 13:** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says there is “no way” Israel will halt its war in Gaza, even if a deal is reached to release more hostages.

His comments are likely to complicate talks on a new ceasefire that had seemed to gain momentum after Hamas released the last living American hostage on Monday in a gesture to US President Donald Trump, who is visiting the region but skipping Israel.

They pointed to a potentially widening rift between Netanyahu and Trump, who had expressed hope that Monday's release of Israeli-American soldier Edan Alexander would be a step toward ending the 19-month war.

In comments released by his office Tuesday from a visit to wounded soldiers the previous day, Netanyahu said Israeli forces were just days away from a promised escalation of force and would enter Gaza “with great strength to complete the mission. ... It means destroying Hamas.”

Any ceasefire deal reached would be temporary, the prime minister said. If Hamas were to say they would release more hostages, “we'll take them, and then we'll go in. But there will be no way we will stop

the war,” Netanyahu said. “We can make a ceasefire for a certain period of time, but we're going to the end.”

Hamas has said it will only release the remaining hostages in return for more Palestinian prisoners, a lasting ceasefire and an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. The dispute over whether to end the conflict has been the main obstacle in negotiations going back more than a year.

Israel says 58 hostages remain in captivity, with as many as 23 of them said to be alive, although authorities have expressed concern about the condition of three of them.

Many of the 250 hostages taken by Hamas-led militants in the Oct. 7, 2023 attack that started the war were freed in ceasefire deals.

Comments come after hostage release

Monday's release of 21-year-old Alexander resulted from negotiations between Hamas and the Trump administration that appeared to have largely bypassed Israel, which made no concessions for his release.

Alexander, who was 19 years old when he was taken from an Israeli army base during the 2023 attack, was the first hostage released since Israel shattered an eight-week ceasefire with Hamas in March and un-

leashed fierce strikes on Gaza that have killed hundreds of Palestinians.

“This was a step taken in good faith towards the United States and the efforts of the mediators — Qatar and Egypt — to put an end to this very brutal war and return ALL living hostages and remains to their loved ones,” Trump said on his social media platform Truth Social on Sunday evening.

“Hopefully this is the first of those final steps necessary to end this brutal conflict. I look very much forward to that day of celebration!”

Israel has promised to intensify its offensive, including by seizing Gaza and displacing much of the territory's population again. Days before the ceasefire ended in March, Israel blocked all imports from entering the Palestinian enclave, deepening a humanitarian crisis and sparking warnings about the risk of famine if the blockade isn't lifted. Israel says the steps are meant to pressure Hamas to accept a ceasefire agreement on Israel's terms.

The World Health Organisation said Tuesday that according to Gaza's Health Ministry, 57 children had died from the effects of malnutrition since the blockade began on March

2.

Netanyahu faces criticism

Alexander's release created a backlash against Netanyahu, who critics accuse of putting the lives of the hostages in danger by continuing the war. Netanyahu says he is committed to returning all the hostages, destroying Hamas and resettling much of Gaza's population through what he refers to as “voluntary emigration.”

During a nearly two-hour meeting in Tel Aviv with the families of hostages on Tuesday, the United States' special envoy for the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, and Adam Bohler, the Trump administration's envoy for hostage affairs, said they would do what was needed to bring the remaining hostages home.

Witkoff said everyone would prefer a diplomatic solution and that most hostages had been released through diplomacy. The officials were heading to Doha, Qatar, after their meeting to join President Donald Trump who's visiting the region. Qatar has been a key mediator between Israel and Hamas.

Witkoff said they wouldn't be traveling to Qatar if they didn't think there was a genuine chance for progress in negotiations.

Israel seeking to move Palestinians out of Gaza

Netanyahu has voiced support for a plan proposed by Trump for Palestinians to be moved out of the Gaza Strip after the war - a proposal that has infuriated Palestinians and Arab nations.

“We have put together an administration that will allow them to leave, but the problem with us is one thing — we need receptive countries,” Netanyahu said during his visit to the wounded soldiers Monday. “That's what we're working on right now. If you give them the go-ahead, I tell you that more than 50 per cent will leave, and I think much more.”

Israel and the US have been seeking countries willing to take Palestinians who would potentially move out of the territory.

Hamas-led militants killed 1,200 people in the 2023 attack. Israel's retaliatory offensive has killed over 52,800 Palestinians, many of them women and children, according to Gaza's Health Ministry, which does not say how many of the dead were combatants or civilians.

Israel's offensive has obliterated vast swaths of Gaza's urban landscape and displaced 90 per cent of the population, often multiple times. *(AP)*

# Russia responsible for downing MH17 over Ukraine in 2014, global aviation agency's council finds

**MELBOURNE, May 13:** The Council of the International Civil Aviation Organisation on Tuesday found Russia responsible for shooting down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 over Ukraine with the loss of 298 lives more than a decade ago, in a ruling that raises the prospect of victims' families being paid compensation.

A Dutch-led international investigation concluded in 2016 that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur airliner was shot down on July 17, 2014 from Ukrainian territory held by separatist rebels using a Buk missile system delivered from Russia.

Moscow denies any involvement in the MH17 tragedy.

The Netherlands and Australian governments brought the case against Moscow before the Montreal-based global aviation agency in 2022, and on Tuesday welcomed the verdict.

The International Court of Justice wasn't an option, because Russia doesn't recognise The Hague, Netherlands-based court's

jurisdiction.

Council finds that Russia violated the Chicago Convention

The council found that Russia had violated the Convention on International Civil Aviation, known as the Chicago Convention, which requires that states “refrain from resorting to the use of weapons against civil aircraft in flight.”

It's the first time that the council, which represents 193 member states, has decided a dispute between governments.

Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp said that the council would consider the question of reparations within weeks.

“In that context, the Netherlands and Australia are requesting that the ICAO Council order the Russian Federation to enter into negotiations with the Netherlands and Australia, and that the Council facilitate this process,” Veldkamp said in a statement.

“The latter is important in order to ensure that the negotiations are conducted in good faith and according

to specific timelines, and that they will yield actual results,” he added.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong urged the council to move swiftly to “determine remedies.”

“We call on Russia to finally face up to its responsibility for its horrific act of violence and make reparations for its egregious conduct, as required under international law,” Wong said in a statement.

Russian Embassy doesn't respond

The Russian Embassy in Australia didn't immediately respond to a request for comment on Tuesday.

Australian National University international law expert Don Rothwell said that the council had yet to publish the reasons for its decisions.

“One of the consequences for this process will be that the council will probably make some recommendations that Russia pay what are called reparations, which is an international term for damages, as a result of its violation of international law,” Rothwell said.*(AP)*

# Pakistan's Balochistan appoints first Hindu woman Assistant Commissioner

**KARACHI, May 13:** Kashish Chaudhary, a 25-year-old Pakistani Hindu woman, has made history by becoming the first female from the minority community in Balochistan to be appointed as Assistant Commissioner in the restive province.

Kashish, who hails from the remote town of Noshki in district Chagai in the province, qualified Balochistan Public Service Commission (BPSC) examination.

On Monday, Kashish, accompanied by her father Girdhari Lal, met Balochistan Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti in Quetta and told him that she would work for the empowerment of women and minorities, and the overall develop-

ment of the province.

“It is a matter of great pride for me that my daughter has become an assistant commissioner due to her hard work and commitment,” Lal told the media.

Lal, a mid-level trader, said his daughter had always dreamed of studying and doing something for her women.

Chief Minister Bugti said it was a matter of pride for the nation when members of the minority communities got to key positions

due to their hard work and effort.

“Kashish is a symbol of pride for the nation and Balochistan,” he said.

In recent years, women from the Hindu community have achieved notable success in generally male-dominated fields in Pakistan, overcoming many cultural, religious and social hurdles to get to important positions.

In July 2022, Manesh Ropeta became the first Hindu woman to be appointed as Superintendent of Police in Karachi, where she is still fulfilling her duties.

Pushpa Kumari Kohli, a 35-year-old police sub-inspector in Karachi, said Hindu women have the tenacity and intelligence to reach

the top.

“I also passed the Sindh police Public Services Examination. There are many more Hindu girls out there waiting to educate themselves and become something,” said Kohli, who belongs to a scheduled caste.

Suman Pawan Bodani is still serving as a civil judge in Hyderabad after first being appointed as a civil judge in her hometown of Shahdadkot in Sindh province in 2019.

Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, a politician in Sindh province, believes that young Hindu girls, who are supported by their families, have shown more inclination and initiative to gain education and pursue higher studies.

“Our young women are

doing us proud. We have doctors, civil servants, police officers, etc in Sindh,” he said.

He said that despite being notorious for its problem of underage and young Hindu girls being abducted and converted by Muslim men, Sindh required more educational facilities for the Hindu community to counter such menaces.

Hindus form the biggest minority community in Pakistan. According to official estimates, 75 lakh Hindus live in Pakistan. However, according to the community, over 90 lakh Hindus are living in the country.

The majority of Pakistan's Hindu population is settled in Sindh province. *(PTI)*









