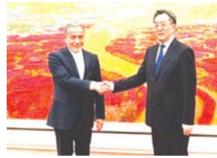




White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt speaks during a press briefing at the White House in Washington



Chinese Prez Xi Jinping (R), & Azerbaijani Prez Ilham Aliyev greets during a signing ceremony at The Great Hall of The People, in Beijing, China



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (L), with China's Vice Prime Minister Ding Xuexiang during their meeting in Beijing, China



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer leaves 10 Downing Street to attend the weekly Prime Ministers' Questions session in parliament in London

Catholic faithful pay final respects to Pope Francis in St Peter's Basilica

AP, VATICAN CITY: Thousands of people filed through the central aisle of St Peter's Basilica to pay their final respects to Pope Francis on Wednesday, the start of three days of public viewing ahead of the pontiff's funeral.

Thousands of ordinary faithful made their way slowly to the 16th-century basilica's main altar, where Francis' simple open wooden casket was perched on a slight ramp, as four Swiss Guards stood at attention. Over the coming days, tens of thousands of people are expected to pass through the basilica, which is staying open until midnight to accommodate them.

Many people paying their respects had come to Rome to celebrate Easter, on a spring vacation or other personal business, only to be met with the news of Francis' death on Easter Monday. Out of devotion to the Argentine pope and his message of inclusion,



People queue in St Peter's Square to pay their respect to the late Pope Francis, who will lie in state at St. Peter's Basilica for three days, at the Vatican

they joined the procession of mourners that wended through the Holy Door and down the central aisle of the basilica.

Francis was laid out in red robes, clasping a rosary and wearing a bishop's miter, the traditional pointed headdress. Mourners waited hours to reach the casket - which sat behind a cordon - some holding their cell phones aloft as they neared him to snap photos in what has become a modern ritual.

"It gave me chills," said Ivenes Bianco, as she left the basilica. She was in Rome from the southern city of Brindisi for medical care, and had come to pay her respects.

"He was important to me because he encouraged co-existence. He brought many people together."

Cardinals, meanwhile, met in private to finalise preparations for Saturday's funeral and plan the conclave to elect Francis' successor.



Francis died on Monday at age 88, capping a 12-year pontificate characterised by his concern for the poor and message of inclusion, but also some criticism from conservatives who sometimes felt alienated by his progressive bent.

Wednesday opened with the bells of St Peter's tolling as pallbearers carried Francis' body from the Vatican hotel where he lived into the basilica in a procession through the

same piazza where he had delivered what became his final goodbye. Francis made a surprise popemobile tour through the faithful on Easter Sunday, after being assured by his nurse he could despite his continued frail health from a bout of pneumonia.

Heads of state are expected for Francis' funeral, but the three days of public viewing in the basilica allow ordinary Catholics to grieve the Argentine pope.

China to launch 3 new astronauts to its space station today

PTI, BEIJING: China will launch three astronauts to its space station on Thursday - coinciding with its 10th Space Day -- to replace their colleagues manning the station for the past six months, it was announced on Wednesday. The Shenzhou-20 crewed spaceship is scheduled to be launched at 5:17 pm Thursday (Beijing Time) from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre in northwest China, the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) spokesman Lin Xiqiang told the media at the centre, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The spaceship will carry three astronauts -- Chen Dong, Chen Zhongrui and Wang Jie with Chen Dong serving as the commander. The crew will conduct new life science experiments involving zebrafish, planarians and streptomycetes, Lin said.

These experiments will mark China's first space-based investigation into the regeneration of planarians, a new organism

introduced to China's space station and known for their

extraordinary ability to regenerate organs, Lin said.

MORE OBITS ON PAGE 9



DEATH MARIA MAGDALENA CARDOZO

Chimbel Goa DOB- 08/01/1962 Death- 23/04/2025 Wife of Alberto Borges, Mother of late Anthony Borges, Mario Borges / Hazel, Benny Borges / Carisa, Daughter- Sharon Borges / Albert Fernandes, Grandmother of Anthony Jordan Borges & Alicia Borges, Aeron Fernandes, Showin Fernandes. Funeral cortage will leave at her residence at 10:00 am on 25th April 2025 to Santa Barbara Chapel Chimbel.



MONTH'S MIND

In loving memory of JOHN A. COUTINHO (KHAWTA-CHIPLEM)

JESUS said: "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live even though they die."

Our Father left us the most beautiful memories, his love is still our guide.

Although we cannot see him, he is always at our side.

There will be a Eucharist Celebration for the Soul of our beloved Father on Friday 25th April 2025 at 9.30 am. at Our Lady Help of Christians Chapel, Chiplem Goa. Followed by prayers at the grave. Offered by his sorrowful wife MILAGRINA FERNANDES & FAMILY. RELATIVES AND FRIENDS KINDLY ACCEPT THIS AS THE ONLY INTIMATION.

Trump blames Zelenskyy for prolonging war in Ukraine over Crimea stance

AP, KYIV: President Donald Trump on Wednesday lashed out at Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, saying the Ukrainian leader is prolonging the "killing field" after he pushed back on ceding Crimea to Russia as part of a potential peace plan.

Zelenskyy on Tuesday ruled out the idea of Ukraine ceding territory to Russia in any deal before talks set for Wednesday in London among US, European and Ukrainian officials. "There is nothing to talk about - it is our land, the land of the Ukrainian peo-

ple," Zelenskyy said.

During similar talks last week in Paris, US officials presented a proposal that included allowing Russia to keep control of occupied Ukrainian territory as part of a deal, according to a European official familiar with the matter who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoken on the condition of anonymity.

"This statement is very harmful to the Peace Negotiations with Russia in that Crimea was lost years ago under the auspices of President Barack Hussein Obama, and is not even a point of

discussion," Trump wrote on Truth Social on Wednesday. "Nobody is asking Zelenskyy to recognise Crimea as Russian Territory but, if he wants Crimea, why didn't they fight for it eleven years ago when it was handed over to Russia without a shot being fired?"

When those "ideas" surfaced in media reports several days later, Ukrainian officials were surprised to find that Washington portrayed them as final, according to the official, who was not authorised to comment publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Israeli strike on Gaza school-shelter kills 23 amid truce talks

AP, DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP): An overnight Israeli strike on a school-turned-shelter in Gaza City killed 23 people, as Arab mediators worked on a proposal to end the war with Hamas that would include a five to seven year truce and the release of all remaining hostages, officials said Wednesday.

There was no immediate Israeli comment on the strike, which set several tents ablaze, burning people alive. The military says it only



Palestinians inspect the damage after an Israeli strike on the Yafa school building, a school-turned-shelter, in Gaza City

targets militants and blames civilian deaths on Hamas because its fighters are embedded in densely populated areas.

France, Germany and Britain meanwhile said Israel's seven-week-old blockade on all imports to Gaza, including food, was "intolerable," in unusually strong criticism from three of the country's closest allies.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas to release the hostages in order to "block Israel's pretexts" for continuing the war. He reiterated his demands that Hamas give up their arms, referring to them as "sons of dogs" in unusually strong language during a speech in the West Bank.

FROM PAGE 1

AFTER PAHALGAM MASSACRE, INDIA FREEZES TIES WITH PAK

On closing of the Integrated Check Post at Attari, Misri said those who have crossed over with valid endorsements may return through that route before May 1.

Misri said, "The defence, military, naval and air Advisors in the Pakistani High Commission in New Delhi are declared Persona Non Grata."

They have a week to leave India, he said.

India will be withdrawing its own defence, navy and air advisors from the Indian High Commission in Islamabad.

"These posts in the respective High Commissions are deemed annulled. Five support staff of the Service Advisors will also be withdrawn from both High Commissions," he said.

"The overall strength of the High Commissions will be brought down to 30 from the present 55 through further reductions, to be effected by May 1," he said.

The CCS was briefed in detail on the terrorist attack on Tuesday in Pahalgam that left 25 Indians and one Nepali citizen dead.

"A number of others sustained injuries. The CCS condemned the attack in the strongest terms and expressed its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and hoped for the early recovery of the injured," Misri said.

"Strong expressions of support and solidarity have been received from many Governments around the world, which have unequivocally condemned this terror attack," he said.

The foreign secretary said the CCS recorded its appreciation for such sentiments, which reflect zero tolerance for terrorism.

In the briefing to the CCS, the cross-border linkages of the terrorist attack were brought out, he said.

"It was noted that this attack came in the wake of the successful holding of elections in the Union Territory (Jammu and Kashmir and its steady progress towards economic growth and development," he said.

Misri said the CCS reviewed the overall security situation and directed all forces to maintain high vigil.

"It resolved that the perpetrators of the attack will be brought to justice and their sponsors held to account," he said.

"As with the recent extradition of Tahawwur Rana, India will be unrelenting in the pursuit of those who have committed acts of terror, or conspired to make them possible," he said.

GOVT IS DEDICATED TO BRINGING ALL GOANS BACK HOME SAFE: CM

A group that arrived in Pahalgam on April 17 was scheduled to return on April 24. Efforts are underway to facilitate their immediate return.

Daxal Naik, owner of Travel Bug Tours and Travels near Panjim, reported that a group of 26 people, whose visit to Jammu and Kashmir was arranged by his company, are

still stranded.

Naik said, "All members have reached hotels in Srinagar and efforts are being made to bring them back as soon as possible. A group of tourists from Goa was having lunch at Pahalgam market when the attack took place, and they were scheduled to visit Baisaran point afterward."

The group had departed from Goa on April 21 and was expected to return on April 26.

The unavailability of flight seats from Jammu and Kashmir has forced tour operators to accommodate tourists in hotels, while they work to secure the earliest possible flights for their return.

SANVORDEM'S GREEN COVER IN DANGER

Bhandari questioned how authorities permitted the cutting of so many trees, suggesting that someone in a higher position is influencing the panchayat's decisions.

Bhandari said, "The issue was raised in the last gram sabha, we had requested the panchayat not to permit any projects in the area due to existing high levels of pollution from two industrial units. These units have not controlled their pollution."

He cited a High Court order that prohibits permissions for projects within a 15-metre radius of the road, while the activities in question are occurring directly adjacent to the road."

Calling for immediate cancellation of the project's permission, Bhandari demanded swift action from the Panchayat and other authorities concerned.

POPE FRANCIS' FUNERAL ON APRIL 26

Pope Francis has asked to be buried in St Mary Major, a Roman basilica he was particularly attached to, rather than St Peter's like many of his predecessors, with a simple inscription of his name in Latin, Francis. In his will, Pope Francis called for his tomb to be "in the ground; simple, without particular decoration, and with the sole inscription: Franciscus," or Latin for Francis.

Pope Francis is currently lying in state in the Santa Marta Domus in a private viewing for Vatican residents and the papal household.

Francis's body was taken on Wednesday morning to lie in state in St Peter's Basilica, where mourners were able to pay their respects to the late pontiff.

'SAW A MAN RUNNING DOWN WITH BLOOD OZZING FROM HIS HAND'

Mahesh Mhambre, another tour operator, said, "I had made arrangement for eight couples who were on a tour to Jammu and Kashmir. They were supposed to visit Pahalgam but when I came to know about the terror strike, I requested them to stay put in Srinagar. They did not go to Pahalgam and returned to Goa on Wednesday as the authorities had arranged additional flights and tickets for safe departure of the tourists."

