

12th May

India-Pakistan Ceasefire Marks the Start of a Long Diplomatic Game

The Ceasefire: A Pause, Not Peace

- **Tenuous Ceasefire, Not Absolute Peace:** A fragile ceasefire is currently in place between India and Pakistan, largely observed in breach by Pakistan through **frequent violations and drone incursions**, casting doubt on its longevity and intent.
- **US-Brokered but Pakistan-Provoked:** Though brokered by the **United States**, the ceasefire came after significant escalation—particularly **Pakistan's use of armed drones and Fatah-1 missiles**—forcing India into intense retaliatory strikes.
- **The Trigger: Pahalgam Terror Attack:** India's military campaign, **Operation Sindoor**, was launched on **May 7, 2025**, in response to a **brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam**, targeting key terror infrastructure in **Pakistani Punjab and PoJK**.

Operation Sindoor: Measured Yet Effective

- **Precision Strikes by India:** India's retaliatory actions were “**focused, measured and non-escalatory**,” carefully avoiding civilian zones while targeting **nine major terrorist installations**, including Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) headquarters.
- **Escalation by Pakistan, Retaliation by India:** Pakistan responded by **attacking civilian and military sites** along the Line of Control and international border, prompting India to strike **Pakistan's air defence systems in Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi**.
- **May 10: Decapitation of Pakistan Air Force:** India executed **devastating missile strikes on 11 Pakistani airbases**, including the Nur Khan base, significantly weakening Pakistan's air capability, as confirmed by the

Global Players: Intervention and Mediation

- **US Shifts From 'Hands-Off' to Peacemaker:** Initially detached, **Vice President JD Vance** and **Secretary of State Marco Rubio** intervened following **alarming intelligence of nuclear escalation**, fearing catastrophic consequences.
- **Nuclear Brinkmanship and the NCA Panic:** Pakistan reportedly convened its **National Command Authority**, mirroring its 2019 move post-Balakot, suggesting potential **nuclear posturing** that heightened global concern.
- **Middle Eastern Diplomacy Steps In:** **Saudi Arabia and UAE** played key backchannel roles, with **Adel Al-Jubeir** and **Prince Faisal bin Farhan** urging de-escalation, reflecting their **strategic interests in South Asia's stability**.
- **China's Tactical Dilemma:** Despite arming Pakistan with **JF-17 jets, PL-15 and HQ-9 systems**, China faced embarrassment due to their **ineffectiveness** during Indian strikes. Beijing reportedly **pressured Pakistan** to accept the ceasefire to avoid further degradation.

Post-Ceasefire Dynamics: Strategic and Diplomatic Moves

- **Ceasefire: Just the End of Kinetic Phase:** India views the ceasefire not as resolution, but as the **start of a 'non-kinetic' punitive campaign**—diplomatic, economic, and strategic—in nature.
- **Indus Water Treaty on Ice:** India has kept the **Indus Water Treaty in abeyance**, hinting at possible long-term leverage through **river flow control**, a critical pressure point on Pakistan.
- **India Takes the Battle to the UN:** India plans to use the **UNSC 1267 Sanctions Committee** to highlight Pakistan's support for terrorist groups, leveraging photos of **funerals of LeT operatives** attended by Pakistani military officials.
- **Information Warfare and Strategic Isolation:** India's narrative of **Pakistani complicity in cross-border terrorism** is being pushed internationally to **delegitimize Pakistan's military and diplomatic standing**.
- **A Long Strategic Game Ahead:** Despite the ceasefire, India is positioning itself for a **long-haul strategic contest**, ensuring that **Pakistan cannot recover militarily or diplomatically** from this crisis.

13th May

Poland-Russia Diplomatic Rift Deepens Over Arson Allegations

Background: The Warsaw Shopping Centre Blaze

- **Devastating Fire in May 2023:** A massive blaze destroyed a shopping centre on Marywilska Street in Warsaw, damaging around **1,400 shops and service outlets**, triggering a national outcry and widespread investigation.
- **Extraordinary Scale of Investigation:** The probe into the arson involved **55 prosecutors and 100 police officers over four months**, indicating the scale and sensitivity of the case.
- **Arson Confirmed as Cause:** A recent joint statement by Poland's **Justice Minister Adam Bodnar** and **Minister for Secret Services Tomasz Siemoniak** confirmed that the fire was a **deliberate act of arson** orchestrated by **Russian secret services**.



Intelligence Findings and Modus Operandi

- **Russian Intelligence Implicated:** The operation was reportedly **directed by a specific individual residing in the Russian Federation**, although the name has not been disclosed.
- **Use of Freelance Agents:** Russian intelligence is said to use **freelancers and disposable recruits** — often **Ukrainian or Belarusian refugees** — some of whom may not be aware they are working for Moscow.
- **Strategic Objective: Psychological Warfare:** According to **Piotr Krawczyk**, former head of Poland's foreign intelligence, the goal is to **sow insecurity and discord** by targeting **soft civilian infrastructure** rather than critical systems — a classic example of **psychological operations (psyops)**.

Legal and Judicial Actions

- **Arrests and Sentencing:** Several suspects have been arrested, and investigations are ongoing. Notably, a **Ukrainian national, Serhiy S**, was sentenced to **8 years in prison** for planning a similar attack in Wrocław, although he didn't execute it.
- **Russian Telegram Link Uncovered:** Authorities traced the Telegram account that instructed Serhiy S to **Russian intelligence services**, reinforcing the digital recruitment strategy employed by Moscow.

- **Judicial Interpretation:** The judge in Serhiy S's case emphasized the **broader intent**: to **undermine Polish morale, state capability, and support for Ukraine**.

Diplomatic Fallout

- **Closure of Kraków Consulate:** Foreign Minister **Radosław Sikorski** announced the **revocation of operating consent** for Russia's consulate in **Kraków**, citing the "reprehensible act of sabotage."
- **Deadline for Departure:** The Russian diplomats stationed in Kraków have been given **30 days to vacate**.
- **Pattern of Diplomatic Expulsions:** Russia now maintains only a **skeletal diplomatic presence in Poland**, following years of escalating expulsions. Earlier, in **October 2024**, Poland shut the **Russian consulate in Poznań**, prompting Russia to close Poland's consulate in **St. Petersburg** in retaliation.



Regional and Geopolitical Context

- **European Sabotage Campaign:** Intelligence services across Europe believe Russia is orchestrating a **wider sabotage campaign**, with attacks in **Lithuania, the UK, and Poland**, linked partly to the **Ukraine war**, but also designed to provoke **general instability**.
- **Selective Targeting Strategy:** Some sites are strategically relevant, while others are chosen **randomly to generate fear**, highlighting the **unpredictable and chaotic nature** of the threat.
- **Russia Responds with Threats:** In response to the Kraków consulate closure, **Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova** accused Warsaw of "**destroying bilateral relations**" and promised an "**adequate response**."

U.S. and China Agree to Temporary Tariff Reductions to De-Escalate Trade War

Background of the Trade Conflict

- The U.S.-China trade war reignited in early 2025 after President Donald Trump imposed steep tariffs, raising them up to 145% on Chinese imports.

- China retaliated with its own levies, peaking at 125% on U.S. goods, including agricultural products, natural gas, and industrial machinery.
- The escalation marked a sharp return to Trump's first-term trade policy, undoing the de-escalation seen under the Biden administration, which had maintained average tariffs at around 19%.

Temporary Truce Agreement (May 12, 2025)

- Both countries agreed to suspend additional tariffs for 90 days to resume talks.
- U.S. tariffs on Chinese goods were reduced to 30% from 145%.
- Chinese tariffs on U.S. imports were slashed to 10% from 125%.
- The deal signals a pause, not a full resolution, and includes no concrete concessions beyond continued negotiations.

Key Negotiators and Meeting Highlights

- Talks took place in Geneva, led by U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent, U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and China's Vice Premier He Lifeng.
- Both sides emphasized a shared goal: avoid full economic decoupling.

Economic Fallout Prompting the Truce

- Businesses and consumers in both countries began showing clear signs of economic strain.
- The tariffs had led to halted orders, supply chain disruptions, and a drop in Chinese export activity.
- The agreement brought relief to global stock markets: the S&P 500 and Hong Kong index surged by 3%.

Impact on Trade and Supply Chains

- The trade war had effectively embargoed key products.
- U.S. companies suspended shipments in anticipation of lower tariffs.
- China explored diversifying exports to Southeast Asia to reduce dependence on the U.S. market.

Statements from Leadership

- President Trump clarified, “We’re not looking to hurt China,” despite his long-standing rhetoric about Chinese trade practices.
- China declared the agreement a diplomatic success, achieving tariff reductions without making significant concessions.



Tariff Timeline and Escalation Path

- February–April 2025 saw rapid tariff escalations:
 - U.S. tariffs jumped from 10% → 145%.
 - Chinese retaliation followed: 10% → 125%.
- Trump's administration called April 2 “Liberation Day”, marking the peak of tariff hikes.

Future Negotiation Goals

- Discussions will focus on:
 - Opening Chinese markets to American businesses.
 - Potential increased Chinese purchases of U.S. goods.
 - Curbing fentanyl trafficking, a major U.S. demand.

Fentanyl Concerns and National Security

- Trump's administration linked trade policy to China's role in fentanyl production.
- The 20% punitive tariff imposed in 2024 remains in place as a fentanyl deterrent.
- Talks included meaningful discussion on chemical trafficking enforcement.

Manufacturing & Economic Balancing

- U.S. officials claim the deal supports restoring its manufacturing sector.
- China is expected to scale back overproduction, stabilizing trade flows.

Political Overtones and Partisan Blame

- Bessent blamed the Biden administration for failing to enforce prior deals with China.
- Trump's team positioned the truce as part of a larger plan for a "fulsome" trade agreement.

Expert Economic Analysis

- **Mark Williams (Capital Economics):** The truce is a "retreat from Trump's aggressive stance" and lacks reforms on currency or subsidies.
- **Zhiwei Zhang (Pinpoint Asset Management):** China successfully lowered tariffs without yielding to U.S. demands.

Historical Significance of Trade Wars

- This trade standoff mirrors the 2018-2020 U.S.-China trade war, but with broader tariff coverage.
- Over 90% of Chinese goods were impacted this time, compared to ~66% during Trump's first term.

Global Trade Implications

- Countries like Mexico, Vietnam, and Taiwan were also hit with U.S. tariffs during the same period.
- The U.S. strategy of isolating China economically risks redefining global trade alliances.

What Lies Ahead?

- The 90-day window is critical for determining if a lasting trade framework can be achieved.
- Both nations seek to avoid decoupling, but tensions remain over structural trade imbalances, intellectual property, and geopolitical competition.

Conclusion

This agreement may mark a short-term thaw in U.S.-China trade relations, but the underlying issues—economic dominance, security concerns, and political narratives—remain unresolved. The world will watch closely over the next three months to see if this pause becomes peace or yet another precursor to escalation.

14th May

Shaping Minds Since 2007

Diplomatic Crossroads: Zelensky Pushes for Direct Talks with Putin in Turkey

A potential turning point in the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict may unfold in Istanbul, as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signals readiness for direct negotiations with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Historical Context: Previous Encounters & War Timeline

- **Last Direct Meeting (2019):** The only face-to-face meeting between **Putin and Zelensky** took place in **December 2019 in Paris**, during the Normandy Format peace talks. No in-person talks have occurred since then.
- **Istanbul Talks (March 2022):** The **last round of direct negotiations** between delegations from both sides occurred in **Istanbul**, shortly after the full-scale **Russian invasion of Ukraine began in February 2022**.

Current Development: Zelensky's Visit to Turkey

- **Zelensky's Announcement:** In a **briefing in Kyiv**, President Zelensky confirmed he would travel to **Ankara** to meet Turkish President **Recep Tayyip Erdoğan**, and be available for **direct talks with Putin** in **Istanbul on Thursday**.
- **Purpose of the Visit:** Zelensky's top priority is securing a **30-day ceasefire**, which he claims has **support from all major Western allies**, including the **United States**.
- **Turkish Mediation Role:** Turkey continues to serve as a **key diplomatic intermediary**, leveraging its unique geopolitical position and ties with both Russia and Ukraine.

Russia's Position and Strategy

- **Kremlin's Caution:** The **Kremlin has not confirmed** if President Putin will attend in person, stating only that details will be revealed "**as soon as [Putin] deems it necessary**."
- **Focus on Preconditions:** Moscow insists on a "**long-term settlement**" based on **pre-invasion demands** – such as Ukraine's neutrality and recognition of Russia's hold on occupied regions – which **Kyiv continues to reject**.
- **Veiled Messaging:** Deputy Foreign Minister **Sergei Ryabkov** emphasized talks must respect "**realities on the ground**," referencing **territories seized by Russia** since 2022.

Shaping Minds Since 2007

International Response & Stakes

- **US Involvement:** While **Donald Trump** hinted he could fly to Istanbul, it's more likely that **US envoys Steve Witkoff and Keith Kellogg** will represent Washington at the meeting.
- **EU's Reaction:** EU foreign policy chief **Kaja Kallas** welcomed the potential talks but cast doubt on Putin's willingness: "**I don't think he dares**."
- **Allies in Support:** Over the weekend, leaders of the **UK, Germany, Poland, and France** visited Kyiv, warning of **immediate sanctions** if Russia fails to agree to a ceasefire.
- **Upcoming EU Sanctions:** The **European Union is preparing its 17th package of sanctions**, reinforcing pressure on Moscow.

Statements & Political Messaging

- **Zelensky's Accusation:** The Ukrainian president claimed Putin is "**scared**" to meet face-to-face, suggesting a refusal would show Russia is **unwilling to end the war**.
- **Kyiv's Strategic Communication:** Chief of Staff **Andriy Yermak** said if Putin does not attend, it would be the "**final signal**" confirming Russia's lack of intention for peace.
- **Putin's Tactical Offer:** Zelensky believes Putin's **last-minute proposal** for talks was designed to **provoke a negative or delayed reaction** from Kyiv, thus framing Ukraine as unwilling to negotiate.

Conclusion

Zelensky's planned visit to Turkey marks a **critical moment** in the diplomatic narrative of the Russia-Ukraine war. Whether this will lead to tangible de-escalation or fall into familiar deadlock hinges on **Putin's next move**—and how the **international community responds**.

15th May

India's Cheetah Conservation Model Draws Interest from Iran

India–Iran Collaboration on Cheetah Conservation

- **Iran Seeks Insights from India's Cheetah Revival Programme:** Through an RTI disclosure, it has been revealed that Iranian officials expressed interest in learning from India's cheetah management strategies during a Cheetah Project Steering Committee meeting in February 2025.
- **No Formal Proposal Yet from Iran:** While informal interest has been noted, the National Tiger Conservation Authority confirmed that Iran has not yet made an official proposal to collaborate on cheetah conservation.
- **Role of International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA):** Rajesh Gopal, Chairman of India's Cheetah Project Steering Committee, suggested that IBCA – an India-led initiative – could facilitate knowledge exchange with cheetah range countries like Iran.

Historical Context: India's Tryst with Cheetahs

- **Extinction of Cheetahs in India:** The cheetah is the only large carnivore to become extinct in India. The last confirmed sighting was in 1948 in the Sal forests of Koriya district, Chhattisgarh.
- **Initial Dialogue with Iran in the 1970s:** India had earlier approached the Shah of Iran to exchange **Asiatic lions** for **Asiatic cheetahs**, but the plan was shelved due to Iran's dwindling cheetah numbers and global concerns.
- **Switch to African Cheetahs for Reintroduction:** Due to the genetic similarities between African and Iranian cheetahs, and the critically endangered status of the Asiatic cheetah, India opted to reintroduce African cheetahs instead.

India's Cheetah Reintroduction Milestones

- **African Cheetahs Translocated Since 2022:** Since September 2022, India has brought **20 African cheetahs**—8 from Namibia and 12 from South Africa—as part of its ambitious rewilding programme.
- **Expansion of Programme to More States:** The reintroduction plan is set to expand to **Gujarat** and **Madhya Pradesh's Gandhi Sagar Sanctuary**, as announced by the Prime Minister.
- **Upcoming Arrival from Botswana:** India is expected to receive **eight more cheetahs from Botswana** in two phases, with four likely to arrive by May 2025.

Iran's Crisis with the Asiatic Cheetah

- **Critically Endangered Status of Asiatic Cheetah:** Once spread across Central and Southwest Asia, the Asiatic cheetah now survives **only in Iran**, with **fewer than 30 individuals** remaining in the wild.
- **Sharp Population Decline:** In 2010, Iran had nearly 100 cheetahs. By January 2022, the number reportedly plummeted to just **12**, according to Iranian officials.
- **Historical Numbers and Protection:** An estimated **400 cheetahs** roamed Iran in the 1970s. Although legally protected since the 1960s, threats have continued to escalate.

Conservation Challenges in Iran

- **Major Threats:** Ongoing issues include **habitat fragmentation**, **human-wildlife conflict**, and a **decline in primary prey species**, worsened post-1979 revolution

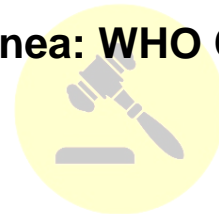
and the Iran-Iraq war.

- **Economic Pressure and Illegal Hunting:** International sanctions have led to economic strain, indirectly promoting **illegal hunting** of prey species essential for cheetah survival.

Cheetah Habitats Overlap with Mining Zones: Many cheetah habitats in Iran are mineral-rich, and development pressures further threaten conservation efforts, say experts from the **Iranian Cheetah Society (ICS)**.

16th May

Polio Outbreak Declared in Papua New Guinea: WHO Calls for Urgent Vaccination Response



Background & Disease Overview

- **Polio is a highly infectious viral disease** that primarily affects children under five years old. It spreads through contact with an infected person's **faeces or respiratory droplets**.
- There is **no cure for polio**—only preventive vaccines. In severe cases, polio can lead to **permanent paralysis** and can become **life-threatening**, particularly when breathing muscles are affected.
- **Papua New Guinea was declared polio-free in 2000**, but experienced an outbreak in **2018**, which was successfully contained the same year.

Current Outbreak Details

- On Thursday, the **World Health Organization (WHO)** declared a **polio outbreak** in **Papua New Guinea**, after the **virus was detected in two healthy children** during routine screenings in **Lae**, a city in the northeast.
- The **detected strain is genetically linked** to a virus currently **circulating in Indonesia**, with which Papua New Guinea shares a border.
- Less than **50% of the population is currently immunised**, and **some districts have coverage as low as 8%**, increasing the risk of national and cross-border spread.

Response Measures & International Support

- **WHO Representative Dr. Sevil Huseynova** stressed the need for **immediate and complete vaccination coverage**, warning: *"Polio knows no borders."*
- **Health Minister Elias Kapavore** has committed to achieving **100% polio immunisation** by the **end of 2025**, targeting children aged **10 years and below**.
- The immunisation drive aims to cover **approximately 3.5 million children**, focusing on rural and high-risk areas.
- The campaign is being **jointly supported** by the **WHO, UNICEF**, and the **Australian Government** to ensure equitable access to vaccines and healthcare.

Community Engagement & Public Communication

- **UNICEF Representative Veera Mendonca** highlighted the **alarming disparities in vaccination coverage**, calling the 8% district-level coverage **"unacceptable"**.
- UNICEF is working with **churches and local community leaders** to promote awareness, encourage immunisation, and **combat misinformation** around vaccines.
- A strong **social media campaign** has been launched, with Papua New Guinea's Health Department stating: *"The battle on polio starts today."*

Regional & Global Implications

- **Polio has made a resurgence in parts of Asia**, with **Pakistan reporting 74 cases** and **Afghanistan 24 cases** in the previous year, making global vigilance imperative.
- The WHO has also issued warnings about potential outbreaks in **conflict regions like Gaza**, where the virus has been detected in **wastewater samples**, signaling renewed global threats.

Conclusion

This outbreak underlines the **critical importance of sustained immunisation** and robust healthcare systems. With international collaboration and strong community engagement, **Papua New Guinea aims to halt the spread** and restore its polio-free status once again.

National Dengue Day 2025: India Strengthens Surveillance Amid Early Monsoon Risk

About National Dengue Day

- **Observed on May 16**, National Dengue Day is an annual initiative by the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, first launched in **2010**, to raise public awareness and coordinate nationwide efforts to combat **dengue and other mosquito-borne illnesses**.
- The observance strategically falls in **May**, a pre-monsoon month, to **alert citizens before the peak outbreak period** (June–September), and help reduce disease burden through early prevention.

Understanding Dengue Fever

- **Dengue is transmitted by the bite of an infected *Aedes mosquito***, which thrives in **clean, stagnant water** commonly found in household containers like **flower pots, coolers, and water tanks**.
- Common symptoms include **high fever, headache, rash, joint pain**, and in severe cases, it can cause **internal bleeding and death**, especially in the form of **Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever**.
- There is **no specific treatment or antiviral drug** for dengue. Medical care focuses on **symptom management** and **early diagnosis** to prevent complications.
- The **most vulnerable groups** include **children, elderly individuals**, and those with **weakened immune systems**.

National Dengue Day 2025: Key Highlights

- The **early arrival of the monsoon** this year has prompted a **nationwide advisory** for pre-emptive surveillance and mosquito control from the **Union Health Ministry**.
- The 2025 campaign is expected to focus on **"People-Led Prevention"** (theme to be officially confirmed), underlining **community participation** in eradicating mosquito-breeding grounds.
- Awareness drives emphasize the motto: **"Prevention is better than cure"** and encourage citizens to seek **immediate medical attention** on experiencing

symptoms.

Government Response & Guidelines

- The Ministry issued a **May 7 advisory** mandating **intensive surveillance and control measures** across all **air, sea, and land ports**—critical points for disease importation and transmission.
- **Pre-monsoon larval surveys, micro-mapping of breeding sites, and monitoring within 400 metres of ports of entry** have been advised to **classify and target high-risk zones** effectively.
- Construction sites have been identified as **high-priority zones**, requiring strict vector control protocols and daily monitoring.

Expert Insights & WHO Perspective

- **Dr Sujeet Singh**, former Director of the **National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)**, emphasized the importance of **vector-free ports**, warning that mosquitoes can be **imported through ships and aircraft**, posing cross-border transmission risks.
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)** notes that dengue outbreaks typically **peak during rainy seasons**, with conditions like **high humidity, rainfall, and temperature** accelerating mosquito reproduction and virus incubation.

Impact and Community Involvement

Over the years, National Dengue Day has played a **pivotal role in reducing infection rates**, driven by **collaborative efforts between health workers, schools, community groups, and local governments**.