

INDO-PAK BORDER

Villagers in no hurry to return to their homes

REUTERS, Jammu

After spending days in temporary homes and with relatives, people from both sides of the Indian and Pakistani border are sceptical about this weekend's ceasefire and in no hurry to return to their villages.

Indian cites like Jammu and Amritsar, which were spooked by the sounds of explosions after the truce was agreed, remained quieter than normal yesterday with many shops choosing to close and people preferring to stay indoors.

Indian and Pakistani authorities advised people who had left border areas not to return to frontline villages just yet.

After four days of fighting, India and Pakistan agreed to a ceasefire on Saturday under US pressure, but within hours explosions



A resident inspects his damaged house following cross-border shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) between Pakistan and India in the Jura sector of Neelum Valley, Pakistan-administered Kashmir, yesterday. *Inset*, Vartika, the daughter of an IAF soldier who died in an attack on Udhampur, salutes her father as his body is taken away on the day of his funeral at their home in Mahradas village, Rajasthan, India.

PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS



Eight killed in Israeli strike on Khan Yunis

Say Gaza rescuers; four children among dead

AFP, Gaza City

Gaza's civil defence yesterday reported eight deaths, including four young children, in an Israeli air strike on tents housing displaced people in the southern city of Khan Yunis.

Israeli fighter jets targeted three tents housing dozens of displaced people overnight, killing "eight people, including four children aged two to five and two women", civil defence agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal told AFP.

The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the strike.

Video filmed by AFP shows rescuers in the dark evacuating bodies by ambulance, one of them in a white plastic body bag while the other was wrapped in a blanket, as well as a wounded baby.

Bassal said the Israeli military also destroyed five houses with explosives in the east of Gaza City, in the territory's north, and fired artillery at the Abassa area east of Khan Yunis, without reporting any casualties.

The Gaza health ministry said on Saturday that at least 2,701 people have been killed since Israel resumed its campaign in Gaza, bringing the overall death toll since the war broke out to 52,810.

Meanwhile, Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Saar said yesterday that the country has fully endorsed US President Donald Trump's aid plan for Gaza, laid out by the American envoy to Israel.



rang out in border towns and India accused Pakistan of violating the pact.

The arch rivals had been involved in the worst fighting in nearly three decades, firing missiles and drones at each other's military installations and killing almost 70 people.

"URGENT APPEAL: Do not return to frontline villages. Lives are at risk. Unexploded munitions remain after Pakistani shelling," said a police notice in Indian Kashmir.

Hundreds of people were shifted to temporary homes, while others left to stay with relatives far from the border as fighting intensified earlier in the week.

"I want to go back to my village in Bihar. Do not want to go back there (to the border) and die," said Asha Devi, a 22-year-old farm labourer in the Akhnoor region, one of the areas worst affected by shelling in recent days.

Ready to meet Russia if ceasefire agreed

Says Ukraine's Zelensky after Putin calls for 'direct talks' with Kyiv

AFP, Kyiv

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday said that Kyiv would meet with Moscow for talks in Istanbul on May 15, but said that Russia must first commit to a 30-day ceasefire starting today.

Zelensky -- using rare language since Moscow launched its invasion more than three years ago that has devastated Ukraine -- said he saw a "positive sign" from Russia.

The warring sides have not held direct talks since March 2022, shortly after the Kremlin launched its invasion in February of that year.

Zelensky's comments came after Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed that Kyiv and Moscow meet on May 15.

However, in the nighttime press conference at the Kremlin, Putin did not comment on the 30-day ceasefire proposal put forward by Kyiv and its European allies.

Putin said Russia was proposing direct talks with

Ukraine in Istanbul in an attempt to "eliminate the root causes of the conflict" and "to achieve the restoration of a long-term, lasting peace" rather than simply a pause for rearmament.

"We are proposing that Kyiv

Putin rejects ceasefire ultimatum proposed by European leaders

Erdogan says efforts to end Ukraine war at 'turning point'

Russia launched over 100 drones at Ukraine: Kyiv

resume direct negotiations without any preconditions," Putin said from the Kremlin.

On a visit to Kyiv on Saturday the leaders of France, the UK, Germany and Poland pressured Russia -- with US President Donald Trump's support -- to commit

to an unconditional ceasefire in Ukraine starting from today.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday told Russian and French leaders that a "historic turning point" has been reached in efforts to end the Russia-Ukraine war and that Ankara was ready to host talks between the two warring parties, his office said.

Russia's invasion has dragged on for more than three years and killed thousands of people.

"There is no point in continuing the killing even for a single day. We expect Russia to confirm a ceasefire -- full, lasting and reliable -- starting tomorrow, May 12, and Ukraine is ready to meet," Zelensky said on social media.

"It is a positive sign that the Russians have finally begun to consider ending the war," Zelensky said, in a break of tone.

Meanwhile, Kyiv yesterday said that Moscow had launched more than 100 drones into Ukraine at night, shortly after a Russian 72-hour ceasefire had ended at midnight.

OMAN MEETING

US, Iran discuss 'tech elements' of nuclear deal

REUTERS

The US government's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff had a fourth round of direct and indirect discussions with Iran in Muscat, Oman, yesterday where they were discussing "technical elements" of a nuclear deal, according to a senior US administration official speaking on condition of anonymity.

The US and Iran have agreed to hold another meeting in the near future, the US official said.

Though Tehran and Washington both have said they prefer diplomacy to resolve the decades-long dispute, they remain deeply divided on several red lines that negotiators will have to circumvent to reach a new nuclear deal and avert future military action.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi and Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff held the fourth round of talks in Muscat.

FIRST SUNDAY MESSAGE

Pope Leo XIV appeals for 'no more war'

REUTERS, Vatican City

Pope Leo XIV appealed to the world's major powers for "no more war" in his first Sunday message to crowds in St Peter's Square since his election as pontiff.

The new pope, elected on May 8, called for an "authentic and lasting peace" in Ukraine and a ceasefire in Gaza and release of all Israeli hostages.

Leo also welcomed the recent ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and said he was praying to God to grant the world the "miracle of peace."

"No more war!" the pope said, repeating a frequent call of the late Pope Francis and noting the recent 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, which killed some 60 million people.

Leo said today's world was living through "the dramatic scenario of a Third World War being fought piecemeal," again repeating a phrase coined by Francis.

The new pope said he carries in his heart the "suffering of the beloved people of Ukraine." He appealed for negotiations to reach an "authentic, just and lasting peace."

He also said he was "profoundly saddened" by the war in Gaza, calling for an immediate ceasefire, humanitarian aid and release of the remaining hostages held by the militant group Hamas.



Pilots faked flying records

FROM PAGE 1

a third required for such a sophisticated licence, according to the documents he submitted to CAAB as part of the regulator's internal inquiry.

The Daily Star has seen the documents.

Talking to this newspaper, Akand said his flying hours are in accordance with the law and claimed that pilots from the Air Force are entitled to certain exemptions.

When The Daily Star shared the flight records, he said that this was a partial picture, but refused to furnish any records to prove his claim.

To compare, The Daily Star also obtained the flight logs of one of his batchmates who had flown the same aircrafts as him, and later became a civil pilot. There is nothing in his batchmate's flight log called "pilot-in-command under supervision".

Before Akand was certified as an Airline Transport Pilot, he left the Air Force in 2009 under Section 20 of the Air Force Act, his records show.

Under section 20, titled "Dismissal, removal or reduction by Commander of Air Staff or other officers," the Chief of Air Staff, or any officer empowered on his behalf can dismiss, or remove a person from the service, or demote him.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Manjur Kabir Bhuiyan, who took office in August 2024, declined to comment on whether a pilot could get an ATPL with 26.5 hours of flying as pilot-in-command.

Instead, he commented on his Commercial Pilot Licence (CPL), saying, "Captain Rahman had requisite PI [main pilot] hours for CPL." According to the rules, even a CPL needs at least 70 hours as pilot-in-command, whereas Akand had less than half that.

NO EXPERIENCE!

Captain Kabir-ul-Alam was allowed to

perform an exam flight to be certified as a "Designated Check Pilot" for an aircraft called Fokker-50, a CAAB letter from November 5, 2023, shows.

A Designated Check Pilot (DCP) is a flight examiner approved by CAAB to perform regulatory duties, acting as a CAAB delegate.

However, Kabir never flew on a Fokker-50; he was a type-rated pilot of an earlier version of the aircraft called F-27, the letter reads.

Under both ICAO and CAAB rules, for nomination as a check pilot, the candidate must have 750 hours of flying experience as pilot-in-command of the particular plane.

His records show he had only completed 14 sessions of flight simulator training of a Fokker-50.

A flight simulator is a device that replicates an aircraft's cockpit, featuring computer-generated visuals that simulate the pilot's perspective and the aircraft's movements. This is not a real flying experience.

Before taking on this assignment as a "check pilot" he was a check instructor in DC10 aircraft. DC10 is a completely different aircraft, and is not even from the same maker. DC10 is by American maker McDonnell Douglas, while F27 is by Dutch maker Fokker.

The CAAB inquiry shows that Kabir was granted the waiver after his employer, Sky Capital Airlines, sent a letter to CAAB in August 2023, stating they urgently needed an in-house check pilot. The airline explained that they were reliant on a flight examiner who was a foreign national and only available once a year, creating the urgency. They further noted that approving the pilot as an examiner for Fokker-50 aircraft "would rescue us from this dire situation".

The Daily Star called Kabir over two phone numbers and sent him messages on WhatsApp, which were

delivered. He did not respond.

CAAB Chairman Air Vice Marshal Md Manjur Kabir Bhuiyan said there have been no violations here.

"This type of aircraft [Fokker-50] is comparatively rare. Very few simulator facilities are there in the world. The number of instructors is also limited. The Bangladeshi company [Sky Capital Airlines] needed to expend more foreign currency to hire a foreign instructor. Capt Kabir had huge experience in other large aircraft as a captain and instructor. He has more than 2,000 hrs in this aircraft.



Abdur Rahman Akand



Md Zia Ul Kabir



Kazi Kabir-ul-Alam



Nuruddin Al Masood

Pilots' logbooks contain detailed records of their flight experience, including the dates, durations, types of flights, aircraft flown, and the specific roles the pilot performed (e.g., pilot-in-command, co-pilot). It tracks the total flying hours, including solo flights, cross-country flights, and night flying hours.

Masood claimed that the mistake was inadvertent, so CAAB gave him seven days to submit his corrected logbook, documents show.

He did not do so till June 10, 2023, using different excuses, including

claiming that he was unable to locate them.

When CAAB finally reviewed his logbooks, they concluded that he had falsified his flight hours, with the recorded flying hours several hundred more than the actual hours flown.

One of the instances of falsification shows that he logged 762 hours as a pilot in the right-hand seat of a DHC-2 aircraft by de Havilland Canada. For large planes, the pilot in command sits on the left, while the one on the right assists.

However, DHC-2 is a small aircraft operated by only one pilot -- the one on the left.

"DHC-2 is a single-pilot operation

aircraft," the CAAB investigation report reads.

In another instance, CAAB's investigation found that Masood had logged 346 hours in a flight school in the Philippines, between March 27, 2001 and October 18, 2001. However, he was not even allowed to fly in the Philippines after April 30, 2001, and yet he recorded flying hours until October that year, documents show.

"Masood did not fly 346 hours in the Philippines. The certificate sent is fake," concluded CAAB.

In 2024, the Civil Aviation

Authorities of Philippines (CAAP) also wrote to CAAB, confirming that he faked his records. In response to a CAAB letter, the CAAP said it did not find certain flying hours in his records. "Considering the records the CAAP has in its database, it can be concluded that there were several inconsistencies in the records of Capt. Masood and the total flight time."

Masood still retains his licence.

Speaking to The Daily Star, he said he has filed a writ petition with the High Court challenging the CAAB findings and hence he would not speak about a sub judice matter.

Despite the court challenge, Capt Masood cannot use the privileges

of his licence at the moment, CAAB chairman told The Daily Star.

Conflict of interest

The Daily Star previously reported in 2018 on how Chowdhury Md Zia Ul Kabir, then a director of flight safety and regulations at CAAB, had received financial assistance from US-Bangla Airlines Ltd to take part in a "type rating" training on Boeing 737 in Indonesia the previous year. The report noted that such training costs between \$26,000-\$30,000. CAAB itself proposed that US-Bangla sponsor Zia's type-rating training, a specialised certification process for pilots.

Now, a closer look at Zia's licence shows that he signed his own Airline Transport Pilot's Licence.

The licence, seen by The Daily Star, was issued on February 4, 2018, and was stamped and approved with his own seal that reads "Wg Cdr Chy M Ziaul Kabir Director (FS&R)".

When Zia signed his own licence, he was the flight safety regulator charged with ensuring that pilot licences were compliant, exposing a blatant conflict of interest.

The Daily Star called Zia on his phone and sent him messages on WhatsApp which were delivered, but he did not respond.

Contacted, Air Vice Marshal Md Manjur Kabir Bhuiyan said that the then CAAB chairman had approved Zia's licence.

"The approving authority of the licence is the Chairman of CAAB. But the director of flight standards and regulations has to sign the licence after approval," said Manjur Kabir, the current CAAB chairman.

Commenting on the overall aviation safety, he said, "There has not been any violation that would constitute 'unsafe flying'. CAAB is taking all-out measures for compliance with ICAO standards as always."