

India suspends Indus pact, scraps Pak visas over Valley terror attack

Shuts Attari border, downgrades diplomatic ties; all-party meet today

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India on Wednesday evening suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and downgraded diplomatic ties with Pakistan, a day after 26 people — mostly tourists — were killed in a terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir's Pahalgam.

The government said the attack had “cross-border linkages” and announced it was putting the 1960 treaty in abeyance with immediate effect, pending Pakistan’s “credible and irrevocable” renunciation of support for cross-border terrorism.

New Delhi also halted trade through the Attari border, expelled defence officials, who were declared persona non grata, from Pakistan’s High Commission, and reduced diplomatic strength from 55 to 30, with just a week to leave the country. It also cancelled all visas granted to Pakistani nationals under the Saarc Visa Exemption Scheme, ordering their departure within 48 hours.

India’s response, its severest in recent decades, came after Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had



A tourist on the banks of Dal Lake as she waits for transport to leave for Srinagar airport, following a terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir PHOTO: REUTERS

landed in Delhi in the morning after cutting short his visit to Saudi Arabia, chaired a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), which lasted for over two hours. Addressing a press briefing after the CCS concluded, India’s foreign secretary, Vikram Misri, read out a statement that said that the cross-border linkages

of the terrorist attack were brought out during the CCS meeting.

The CCS resolved that the perpetrators of the attacks would be brought to justice and their sponsors held to account, citing the example of 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attack accused Tahawwur Rana, who was recently extradited.

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India looking at all strategic and security options

“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,” Misri said. The Resistance Front, a shadow group of the banned Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) terror outfit, has allegedly claimed responsibility for the attack.

Official sources said India was looking at all strategic and security options in response to the terror attack in the Baisaran meadow near Pahalgam in Anantnag district of J&K. The Indus Water Treaty wasn’t suspended during the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan wars, as well as the Kargil conflict of 1998 between the two neighbours.

The CCS also noted that the “attack came in the wake of the successful holding of elections in the Union Territory of J&K and its steady progress towards economic growth and development,” Misri said. The CCS directed all forces to maintain high vigil. Officials in the security establishment said that a realignment of the security forces was also required ahead of the annual Amarnath pilgrimage, which

begins on July 3.

The government has also convened an all-party meeting on Thursday evening, which Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will chair. Bodies of slain tourists reached several cities across the country, including Ahmedabad, Mumbai, Delhi, and Visakhapatnam where Andhra Pradesh CM N Chandrababu Naidu received it. The PM’s first statement on the terror attack could come on Thursday in Bihar’s Madhubani, where he will address Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and gram sabhas.

On Wednesday, a day after the attack, much of the Kashmir Valley observed a shutdown to protest the terror attack. Ruling National Conference leader Farooq Abdullah said it was evidence of the “unprecedented anger in the Kashmir Valley” over the terror attacks, which has not been seen in recent decades and showed the complete shift in the public mood towards India. J&K Chief Minister Omar Abdullah said it was “heartbreaking” to see tourists leave J&K in what was turning out to be one of the most promising

tourist seasons, but said the state government was doing all it could to facilitate tourists wishing to go back. Omar turned up to offer ‘fatiha’ for the ‘pony-wallah, Syed Adil Hussain Shah, who was shot dead while trying to snatch a weapon from one of the terrorists in an attempt to protect the tourists he had ferried on horseback from the parking area to Baisaran meadow.

Meanwhile, Pakistan’s Defence Minister denied any involvement of his country in the terror attack. However, officials said the Pakistan imprint was evident given military grade weapons of the terrorists, their helmet mounted cameras and that they were in touch with their handlers across the border. Sources said India’s response time for the Uri surgical strike was 10 days in 2016, and it was 12 days between the Pulwama attack and the Balakot air strikes of February 2019. Security agencies released sketches of three terrorists, and announced a reward of ₹20 lakh each for information. Security forces conducted combing operations in the Valley and at least two encounters with terrorists were reported.

In the morning, Union Home Minister Amit Shah visited the site of the attack, as did National Investigation Agency (NIA) officers. Sources said most tourists were shot in the head and or chest, and the terrorists, numbering at least half a dozen, had emerged from the nearby jungle.

In the afternoon, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said people involved in the cowardly terror attack in Kashmir’s Pahalgam will get a “strong response” in the “near future”. Addressing the annual Arjan Singh Memorial lecture, he said India will not only hunt down those who perpetrated the attack but will also trace the people who conspired to carry out the nefarious act on Indian soil while “sitting behind the scenes”. Singh held a meeting with the defence brass earlier in the day and directed the armed forces to enhance their combat readiness and increase intensity of anti-terror operations.

Sources pointed out that a week back, Pakistan Army chief General Asim Munir said that Kashmir is Islamabad’s “jugular vein”, which was met with a sharp response from the MEA.