

King Charles III addresses US Congress

NEW YORK, Apr 29 (AP)

KING Charles III and Queen Camilla joined President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump for tea at the White House.

Charles and Trump also had a closed-door meeting in the Oval Office. The King then delivered a rare speech before Congress -- the first by a British monarch since his late mother in 1991 -- followed by a formal state dinner at the White House.

The original bell from a UK-made Second World War submarine named HMS Trump was the centerpiece of a set of gifts presented by King Charles III to US President Donald Trump during the State Visit this week.

The "personal gift" was unveiled at the White House state dinner on Tuesday as the 77-year-old monarch delivered his address, striking a friendly and light-hearted note to his formal speech. Trump looked visibly impressed by the gift and praised "fantastic" Charles at the white-tie event. "Today, our partner-



President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump greet Britain's King Charles III and Queen Camilla at the South Portico of the White House as they arrive for a State Dinner in Washington.

(AP/PTI)

ships in NATO and AUKUS deepen our technological and military cooperation and ensure that, together, we can meet the challenges of an increasingly complex and contested world," the King said in his address.

"And speaking of submarine alliances, there was one particular AUKUS predecessor, launched from a UK shipyard in 1944, that served for the majority of her life attached to the 4th Submarine Squadron in Australia, playing a critical role during the war in the Pacific. Her name? HMS Trump. "So tonight, Mr President, I am delighted to present to you a personal gift the original bell which hung on the Conning Tower of your valiant namesake. May it stand as a testimony to our nations' shared history and shining future. And should you ever need to get hold of us, well, just give us a ring," he said, evoking laughter and applause. Queen Camilla also presented a brooch by a British designer as her royal gift to First Lady Melania Trump.

Trump recalls mom's 'crush' on King Charles

WASHINGTON, Apr 29 (ANI)

EVEN as US President Donald Trump spoke of his mother's 'crush' on King Charles III, and spoke of the UK-like weather, the simmering tension was quite visible between the leaders, comparable to that between the nations.

Trump said he was 'jealous' of the King's excellent speech at the ceremony held to greet the visiting dignitaries.

"My wonderful mother, Mary MacLeod, was born in Stornoway, Scotland."

In a further detour from the topic, Trump revealed that his mother had a 'crush' on the King and was very fond of Queen Elizabeth.

OIL PRICES JUMP MORE THAN 3% after UAE says it will exit OPEC

HONG KONG, Apr 29 (AP)

WORLD shares were mixed on Wednesday following losses on Wall Street, while oil prices gained more than 3 per cent on uncertainties over when the war in Iran will end.

The futures for the S and P 500 and the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged less than 0.1 per cent higher. The Federal Reserve was expected to keep its key interest rate unchanged at 3.6 per cent as it wraps up a policy meeting later Wednesday.

Most policymakers believe at that level, the rate can still cool inflation by slowing borrowing and spending, but not so much that it will drag down hiring or raise unemployment.

In early European trading, Britain's FTSE 100 slipped 0.6 per

cent to 10,269.06. Germany's DAX traded 0.3 per cent lower at 23,958.39, while France's CAC 40 dropped 0.6 per cent to 8,054.38.

Markets in Japan were closed for a holiday.

Elsewhere in Asia, South Korea's Kospi rose 0.8 per cent to 6,690.90 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong gained 1.7 per cent to 26,111.84.

The Shanghai Composite index rose 0.7 per cent to 4,107.51.

Australia's S and P/ASX 200 slipped 0.3 per cent to 8,687.00.

Taiwan's Taiex lost 0.6 per cent, and India's Sensex gained 0.9 per

cent.

The price of a barrel of Brent crude oil to be delivered in June rose 3.1 per cent to USD 114.70 early Wednesday. Brent to be delivered in July was also

up 3 per cent, at USD 107.61.

Brent oil was trading around USD 70 per barrel before the war began in late February.

Benchmark US crude gained 3.4 per cent to USD 103.32 a barrel.

The UAE's announcement Tuesday that it was leaving OPEC as of Friday was being closely watched by oil markets. OPEC accounts for roughly 40 per cent of global oil output, and the UAE

is one of its largest oil producers. The UAE has resisted OPEC production quotas in recent years, wanting to sell more oil to the rest of the world.

Initially oil prices fell on expectations that supply will rise.

As US-Iran negotiations for a permanent end to the Iran war remain stalled and the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly one fifth of the world's oil passed through before the war, was still largely closed. Short term impacts on oil prices still depend mainly on prospects for reopening the waterway, analysts said.

On Tuesday, Wall Street retreated from its recent record highs.

The benchmark S and P 500 fell 0.5 per cent and the Dow industrials edged 0.1 per cent lower. The technology-heavy Nasdaq composite dropped 0.9 per cent.



India condemns attacks on Hormuz shipping at UNSC

UNITED NATIONS, Apr 29 (IANS)

INDIA has condemned the attacks on commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, which is vital to its energy and economic security, and called for restoring free navigation.

“Commercial shipping must not be the target of military attacks, and such attempts are deplorable”, India’s Deputy Permanent Representative Yojna Patel told the Security Council.

Patel did not mention any country by name but alluded to Iran by recalling that India co-sponsored a Council resolution brought by Bahrain that condemned in the “strongest terms” Tehran’s attacks on its Middle East neighbours.

“It bears mention in this context that India had co-sponsored

Strait must not be used as a bargaining chip: Qatar

DOHA, Apr 29 (ANI)

AMID a diplomatic deadlock between Washington and Tehran, Qatar has issued a firm call for the preservation of maritime stability in the Persian Gulf.

UNSC resolution 2817, which was adopted on 11th March”, she said. Iran has attacked Indian ships and a vessel bound for it, and in assaults on ships of other countries, at least three Indian sailors have died.

The US has also set up a blockade in the Hormuz region.

“We underscore that the tar-

Qatari Foreign Ministry spokesman, Majed al-Ansari, emphasised during a weekly press briefing that the Strait of Hormuz must not be used as a “bargaining chip” while peace negotiations remain at a standstill.

geting of commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members or otherwise impeding the freedom of navigation and commerce in the Strait of Hormuz are unacceptable”, Patel said at the meeting convened by Council President Bahrain on the situation in the Middle East.

Short range naval anti-ship missile clears critical salvo trial

NEW DELHI, Apr 29 (PTI)

IN A boost to India's maritime strike capabilities, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and the Indian Navy on Wednesday successfully conducted the maiden salvo launch of the short-range naval anti-ship missile system.

The salvo launch was carried out from the Navy's helicopter platform off the coast of the Bay of Bengal in Odisha.



An Indian Navy helicopter carries out the maiden salvo launch of the Naval Anti-ship Missile-Short Range (NASM-SR) off the Odisha coast. (@DefenceMinIndia/X via PTI)

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh complimented the DRDO, the Navy, the Indian Air Force and industry partners involved in the project for the successful trial of the Naval Anti-ship Missile-Short Range. "During the trial, two missiles were launched in quick succession from the same helicopter, making it the first salvo launch of an advanced air-launched anti-ship missile system," the Defence Ministry said.

It said all test objectives were

fully met as per the data captured using various range tracking instruments deployed by the Integrated Test Range, Chandipur. "Along with proving the salvo launch capability, the missiles demonstrated the waterline hit capability. The test launches were witnessed by senior scientists from DRDO, users' representatives from the Indian Navy and the Indian Air Force and Development-cum-Production Partners," the Ministry said.

Oil cos selling petrol at Rs 14 a litre loss, diesel at Rs 18/litre

NEW DELHI, Apr 29 (PTI)

OIL marketing companies are selling petrol and diesel at a loss of Rs 14 per litre and Rs 18 per litre, respectively, as elevated crude prices outpace capped retail fuel rates, squeezing marketing margins.

Besides losses on petrol and diesel, the elevated energy prices post West Asia crisis are likely to leave companies with an under recovery of Rs 80,000 crore on cooking gas LPG in the current fiscal, while fertiliser subsidy is projected to rise



to Rs 2.05 to 2.25 lakh crore.

Rating agency Icria said, supply disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz - handling around 20 per cent of global oil and LNG trade - have tightened availability of fuels, fertilisers and chemicals, pushing up prices and increasing cost pressures across downstream industries.

Iran gives 3-stage plan to reopen Hormuz

WASHINGTON, Apr 29 (ANI)

IN A significant diplomatic manoeuvre aimed at de-escalating tensions in the Middle East, Iran has submitted a fresh proposal to regional intermediaries offering to cease its military operations in the Strait of Hormuz.

According to a report by 'The Wall Street Journal', the deal is contingent upon a complete cessation of hostilities and the removal of the US blockade currently stifling Iranian maritime hubs.

The strategic overture, delivered by Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, seeks to dismantle the current geopolitical stalemate and revitalise stalled negotiations. Sources familiar with the matter indicated that the framework would essentially see "discussions about Iran's nuclear programme shelved."

No more Mr Nice Guy: Trump issues stern warning to Iran

WASHINGTON, Apr 29 (ANI)

PRESIDENT Donald Trump has issued a stern warning to Tehran, stating that the United States will take a tougher stance if a diplomatic resolution regarding its nuclear programme is not reached soon.



Photo posted by President Trump on Truth Social

Iranian leadership's inability to finalise an agreement, noting, "They don't know how to sign a non-nuclear deal."

In Washington, 'The Wall Street Journal' reports that the administration is actively weighing the offer, with White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt confirming that President Trump reviewed the Iranian framework with his National Security Advisors. According to 'The Wall Street Journal', Iran's new roadmap involves a three-stage de-escalation process. The initial phase would demand that the US and Israel terminate the war and offer formal "guarantees not to start it again."

Under this proposed timeline, neutral mediators would subsequently facilitate the reopening of the strait and oversee a long-term management agreement for the waterway. However, Iranian reportedly informed mediators that Tehran still intends to maintain sovereignty over the strait.

92.47% voting in WB phase-II polls

- At the centre of the fight is Bhabanipur, where BJP's Suvendu Adhikari has been fielded against the TMC supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee
- However, the deeper political contest remained over Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls

KOLKATA, Apr 29 (PTI)

THE West Bengal Assembly polls ended on Wednesday with what the election watchdog said was the State's highest-ever voter turnout of 92.47 per cent, leading to mouth-watering anticipation ahead of the announcement of results on Monday as both contenders sounded sanguine about their victory prospects.

Violence and disruption surfaced across districts



Voters wait in a queue outside a polling station to cast their votes for second phase of West Bengal Assembly elections 2026 in Kolkata on Wednesday. (ANI)

Wednesday's second phase saw a 91.66 per cent turnout by closing time, with thousands of voters still waiting in queues to cast their ballots. The concluding phase covering 142 constituencies in south Bengal appears poised to match the first phase's record voter participation of 93.19 per cent by the time final numbers are collated.

The Election Commission said a 91.66 per cent turnout was recorded in the second phase till 7.45 pm, putting the combined poll percentage over the two-phases at 92.47 per cent. The first phase of polling was held on April 23.

"This is the highest-ever recorded poll participation since Independence in West Bengal," it said.

The capital Kolkata recorded a turnout of around 87 per cent at that time, with Purba Bardhaman district topping the charts at 92.46 per cent.

The scale of participation sent (Contd on page 5)

Repolling likely in booths if EVMs found tampered: W Bengal CEO

KOLKATA, Apr 29 (PTI)

WEST Bengal Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Manoj Agarwal on Wednesday said, repolling is likely to be announced in booths where EVMs would be found tampered with.

The CEO said that a repoll will be ordered only after the authorities get reports from the district election officer or election observers on allegations of tampering with EVMs using tapes or blot of ink.

Agarwal's comment came following allegations by the BJP that the party's symbols on EVMs were covered with tapes or ink in some booths.