

Brent crude tops USD 125 a barrel on Iran war worries, while world stocks retreat

HONG KONG, APR 30: The price of Brent crude oil surged past USD 125 a barrel early Thursday as stalled US-Iran talks raised doubts over the re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz and a permanent end to the Iran war.

Brent crude to be delivered in June jumped 6.2 per cent to USD 125.36 and Brent to be delivered in July rose 3.1 per cent to USD 113.85.

Benchmark US crude climbed 2.3 per cent to USD 109.38 per barrel.

Before the start of the war in late February, Brent crude was trading around USD 70 per barrel.

The Iran war, which is in its ninth week, still sees no clear path to an end. The US has continued its blockade of Iranian ports while the Strait of Hormuz, is closed, pushing oil prices higher. Reports Thursday suggesting an possible escalation by US President Donald Trump doused hopes for a quick end to the conflict.



"The breakdown of talks between the US and Iran, along with President Trump reportedly rejecting Iran's proposal for a re-opening of the Strait of Hormuz, has the market losing hope for any quick resumption in oil flows," ING Bank strategists Warren Patterson and Ewa Manthey wrote in a research note.

US futures and share

prices in Asia retreated following a muted performance on Wall Street on Wednesday.

Tokyo's Nikkei 225 shed 1.6 per cent to 58,967.07 and the Kospi in South Korea fell 1.1 per cent to 6,615.51. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 1.3 per cent to 25,772.50, and the Shanghai Composite index traded 0.1 per cent higher at 4,109.99. China's factory

activity for April slowed slightly but remained in expansion territory for the second month, despite the global energy shock prompted by the Iran war, an official survey showed.

Australia's S&P/ASX 200 was down 0.3 per cent to 8,665.50.

Taiwan's Taiex edged 0.1 per cent lower and while India's Sensex lost 1.2 per cent. (AP)

Roblox appoints former AWS senior executive Sunil Rao as MD for India

NEW DELHI, Apr 30: Gaming company Roblox has appointed former Amazon Web Services senior executive Sunil Rao as Managing Director for its India arm, the company said on Thursday.

Rao will serve as Roblox's senior representative and market lead in the country, overseeing day-to-day execution of Roblox India's strategy working with local teams and partners, the company said in a statement.

"Roblox announces the appointment of Sunil Rao as Managing Director, Roblox India. Rao will join Roblox India this May to help strengthen the com-

pany's local presence in the country, foster partnerships, support the creator ecosystem and align local market needs with global product and business priorities," the statement said.

Rao was previously part of the leadership team at Amazon Web Services (AWS), where he led strategy and corporate business development across the Asia-Pacific and Japan (APJ) region. Prior to AWS, Rao was a partner at Lightspeed Venture Partners, where he worked closely with founders and emerging companies. Earlier in his career, he has also played a pivotal role in

building and scaling developer ecosystems at Symbian, Nokia and Google.

"India is an important market for us globally and one with tremendous potential in terms of creator talent. Sunil brings deep expertise in building operations across diverse markets, and his passion for community-centric platforms makes him the ideal leader to drive our next chapter of growth in the country," Roblox, VP of International, Zhen Fang said.

At Roblox India, a core focus of Rao's role will be to champion India's growing community of Roblox developers and creators,

and to help local studios make use of Roblox's tools to scale and find commercial success, the statement said.

Roblox provides free tools that make coding, design, and entrepreneurship accessible.

"I am excited to build a vibrant and inclusive ecosystem that empowers developers and creators across the country. Ensuring child safety and aligning closely with India's regulatory framework will be among my top priorities, as we focus on building a trusted platform that enables responsible and sustainable growth in the region," Rao said. (PTI)

Blending fashion, creativity, and technology, the campaign invites shoppers across India to participate in a first-of-its-kind interactive contest where style meets travel. Customers who shop for ₹1499 or more at any TRENDS store can enter the contest by scanning an in-store QR code, creating a personalised AI-generated holiday song, and submitting their entry on the dedicated campaign microsite.

The most creative and engaging entries will be rewarded with fully paid holiday experiences, giving shoppers the chance to celebrate their style with a dream

terms, service continuity, and existing relationships remain unchanged, and business continues as usual."

All existing manufacturing, supply, and service commitments, including commitments to partners, continue unchanged. Renault Group India remains fully committed to India as a key market and manufacturing hub and will continue to engage transparently with stakeholders as the process progresses, the statement said.

Renault Group India to separate powertrain manufacturing from vehicle production, sales operations

NEW DELHI, APR 30: French automaker Renault is undertaking a restructuring of the group's operations in India with plans to separate powertrain production from vehicle manufacturing and sales operations, the company said on Thursday.

Renault Group India has approached the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) for approval of a proposed structural realignment of its India operations, it said in a statement.

"It envisages the powertrain manufacturing activity being organised as a dedicated powertrain entity within Renault Group India, while vehicle manufacturing and sales operations are brought together under an integrated operating structure," it said.

The proposed realignment is aimed at creating clearer and more focused operating structures.

"This alignment reflects the distinct industrial and operating requirements of the businesses and is in-

tended to support Renault's long-term business strategy in India, including strengthening India's role as a manufacturing and export base, with the ambition of supporting exports of up to 2 billion euros annually by 2030," the carmaker said.

The proposed changes do not involve any disruption to business operations.

Renault Group India further said, "There is no impact on employees, customers, dealers, suppliers, or partners. Employment

terms, service continuity, and existing relationships remain unchanged, and business continues as usual."

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Skoda Auto India ties up with CSC Grameen eStore for booking of car models

MUMBAI, APR 30: Czech auto maker Skoda Auto India on Wednesday said it has formed a strategic partnership with government-backed e-commerce platform Common Services Centre Grameen eStore to expand its footprint across non-metropolitan and semi-urban markets in the country.

As part of the collaboration, the company will make available its compact SUV Kylaq, subcompact crossover SUV Kushaq, and compact sedan Slavia through the CSC's digital-first non-metropolitan network.

This will facilitate product enquiries and purchase journeys, supported by Skoda Auto India's dealership network for fulfilment and delivery, it stated.

The collaboration, Skoda Auto India said, makes it among the few premium automotive brands to leverage CSC's extensive digital and physical network to offer its



car models to customers across multiple newer regions in the country.

The company aims to improve accessibility and build relevance across newer markets, said Ashish Gupta, Brand Director, Skoda Auto India.

This initiative will bring the company closer to customers, enabling them to experience our products and services more conveniently, regardless of their location, creating a more inclusive and accessible mobility ecosystem, he stated.

The CSC network, with its widespread presence across non-metropolitan cities in India, will serve as a critical touchpoint for customers who previously had limited access to automotive brand options, the company said. (PTI)

Reliance Retail Acquires Priyanka Chopra, Accelerating Expansion of Beauty Portfolio

MUMBAI, APR 30: Reliance Retail Limited (RRL) today announced the acquisition of Priyanka's global haircare brand Anomaly, including its trademarks, brand assets, and digital properties. The acquisition marks a significant expansion of Reliance Retail's fast-growing beauty portfolio and reinforces its commitment to building and scaling high-growth consumer brands in India and globally.

Founded by the global actor and entrepreneur in 2021, Anomaly is a clean, vegan, high-performance haircare brand offered at an accessible price point. Since its inception, the brand has established a strong international presence with distribution across key global markets.

Through this acquisition, Reliance Retail brings full ownership of the brand's intellectual property and digital ecosystem into its portfolio, enabling it to scale Anomaly through its expansive retail network and omnichannel platforms. The move aligns with Reliance Retail's broader strategy to deepen its presence in the fast-growing beauty and personal care category, leveraging its offline footprint and digital commerce platforms, including Tira, to accelerate brand growth and enhance con-



sumer accessibility.

Ms. Isha Ambani, Executive Director, Reliance Retail Ventures Limited, said, "Bringing Anomaly into our portfolio marks a strategic step in expanding our basket of new-age, high-growth beauty brands. Anomaly's strong global positioning, clean formulation philosophy, and accessible pricing make it a compelling addition to our ecosystem. We see immense potential in collaborating with Priyanka to scale the brand in India by leveraging our omnichannel capabilities and deep consumer insights, while continuing to

grow its international presence."

Reliance Retail will focus on expanding Anomaly's brand equity and market share with India as a priority market. Innovation tailored to Indian hair and scalp needs will be a key driver, alongside strengthening product development and localized solutions. The brand will also continue to scale its international footprint across markets such as North America, United Kingdom, and the Middle East as part of its global growth journey.

Priyanka will continue to play an integral role in the

brand's evolution as Creative Director, driving innovation, brand vision, and product development.

She said, "This is a defining moment for Anomaly. What began as a deeply personal journey has grown into a brand with real purpose and global ambition, and Reliance Retail's acquisition marks an exciting new chapter. Their scale, retail expertise, and commitment to innovation will allow us to bring Anomaly to far more consumers in India and around the world. I'm especially excited to be working alongside the inimitable Isha Ambani, whose leadership I value tremendously. In my new role as Creative Director, I remain deeply involved in guiding Anomaly's evolution, ensuring we continue to grow and innovate while staying true to what we set out to build from the very beginning."

This strategic alignment underscores Reliance Retail's continued focus on curating and scaling future-forward consumer brands within its beauty portfolio, while combining global brand equity with its market expertise, retail scale, and omnichannel capabilities to unlock the next phase of growth for Anomaly across India and international markets.

Shop at TRENDS, Win a Vacation!

JAMMU, APRIL 30: TRENDS, one of India's largest and most loved fashion retail chains, has unveiled an exciting new consumer campaign, "This Holiday, Trend It", offering customers a unique opportunity to turn their shopping experience into an unforgettable vacation.

Blending fashion, creativity, and technology, the campaign invites shoppers across India to participate in a first-of-its-kind interactive contest where style meets travel. Customers who shop for ₹1499 or more at any TRENDS store can enter the contest by scanning an in-store QR code, creating a personalised AI-generated holiday song, and submitting their entry on the dedicated campaign microsite.

The most creative and engaging entries will be rewarded with fully paid holiday experiences, giving shoppers the chance to celebrate their style with a dream



getaway. With 100+ winners set to be selected, the campaign promises to create excitement and delight for customers nationwide.

Running from 20th April to 17th May 2026, "This Holiday, Trend It" has been designed to celebrate self-expression, fashion-forward thinking, and storytelling in a fun and immersive way. By combining innovative AI-led experiences with rewarding travel prizes, TRENDS continue to redefine the retail shopping journey for modern Indian consumers.

The campaign aims to strengthen customer engagement during the holiday season while reinforcing TRENDS's position as a destination for trend-led, affordable fashion for the entire family. With this campaign, TRENDS once again bring together value, style, and innovation-creating experiences that go beyond shopping and into memories that last a lifetime.

Activists say Israel has intercepted their Gaza aid flotilla near Crete, detaining crews

ATHENS, APR 30: Activists sailing on dozens of boats attempting to break Israel's maritime blockade of the Gaza Strip to deliver humanitarian aid say Israeli forces intercepted them overnight Wednesday into Thursday, detaining the crews while the flotilla was sailing near the southern Greek island of Crete.

The Global Sumud Flotilla set sail earlier this month from Barcelona. Organisers have said more than 70 boats and 1,000 people from around the world would be participating, with more vessels joining the original boats as the flotilla sailed east across the Mediterranean.

Their attempt comes less than a year after Israeli authorities foiled another effort by the activist group to reach Gaza.

"Israel's actions mark a dangerous and unprecedented escalation, the abduction of civilians in the middle of the Mediterranean, over 600 miles from Gaza, in full view of the world," the group said in a press release.

Israel's Foreign Ministry said in a post on X that it was taking about 175 activists from more than 20 boats



participating in the flotilla to Israel.

Israel and Egypt have imposed varying degrees of a blockade on Gaza since Hamas seized power from rival Palestinian forces in 2007. Israel says the blockade is needed to prevent Hamas from importing arms, while critics say it amounts to collective punishment of Gaza's Palestinian population.

Turkey's foreign ministry condemned the seizure of the flotilla Thursday as "an act of piracy."

"By targeting the Global Sumud Flotilla, whose mission is to draw attention to the humanitarian catastrophe faced by the innocent people of Gaza, Israel has also violated humanitarian principles and international law," the ministry said in a

statement.

Turkish foreign ministry spokesman Onu Keceli wrote on X that Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan had discussed the raid over the phone with his Spanish counterpart Jose Manuel Albares Bueno.

Activists in Greece said they planned a protest rally Thursday afternoon outside the Greek foreign ministry in Athens, saying Israel's interception of the boats occurred within the maritime zone that falls under Greece's responsibility for search and rescue operations and that the country's coast guard had not reacted.

A fragile six month-old ceasefire in Gaza has halted the most intense fighting between Israeli forces and Hamas-led militants in the Palestinian enclave. But de-

spite the ceasefire, Israeli attacks have killed more than 790 people, according to Gaza's Health Ministry. The ministry, part of the Hamas-led government, maintains detailed casualty records that are seen as generally reliable by U.N. agencies and independent experts. It does not give a breakdown of civilians and militants.

Overall, the health ministry says 72,300 Palestinians had been killed since the war in Gaza began with the Oct 7, 2023, Hamas-led attack on Israel.

The war began when Hamas-led militants stormed into southern Israel and killed around 1,200 people, mostly civilians, on Oct 7, 2023.

Around 2 million Gaza residents are still living in ruins with shortages of food and medicine, and only limited aid entering through a single, Israeli-controlled border post.

Flotilla organizers have said they hope their latest attempt to reach Gaza will highlight the living conditions endured by Palestinians in the territory, particularly as global attention has shifted its focus to the U.S. and Israel's war against Iran.