

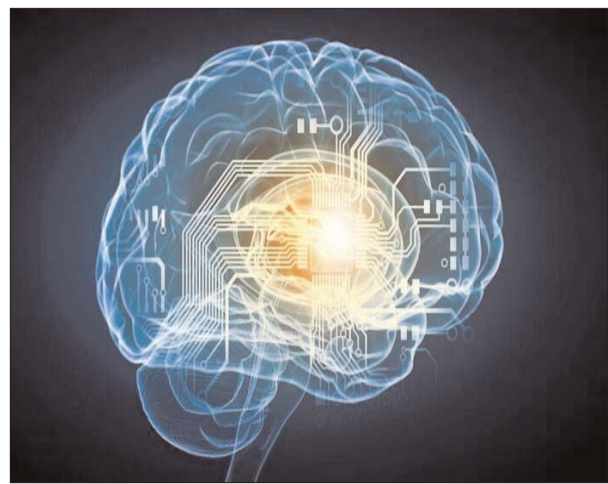
## Duration of depression may impact severity of brain changes, study finds

**NEW DELHI, MAY 26:** The duration for which one remains depressed may impact how severely the mental disorder makes changes in the brain, according to a study.

Researchers from the University of São Paulo in Brazil and University of Oxford in the UK analysed brain images from 46 patients with major depression.

Results, published in the journal *Scientific Reports*, suggest that the duration of depressive episodes is associated with differences in functional brain connectivity. The findings could help with developing personalised treatments. "Major depression can alter brain function compared to people without the disorder," first author Tamires Zanão, a São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) fellowship recipient, University of São Paulo, said.

However, the study identified that chronic patients, or those with depression for more than 24 months, and non-chronic ones displayed distinct connectivity patterns between two networks — the central executive network (CEN), focused on executive control, and the default mode network (DMN), associated with introspective thoughts and self-reflection, Zanão said.



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"The key finding was that chronicity moderated the impact of severity on functional connectivity between the Central Executive Network (CEN) and the precuneus (part of the Default Mode Network, DMN)," the authors wrote.

While typically, both the networks exhibit dynamics in coordination with the salience network — involved in switching focus between the external environment and internal processes — in depression, the dynamics may be altered, associated with symptoms such as rumination and difficulty concen-

trating, the researchers said. "That misalignment between those networks may favour the predominance of introspective and self-referential thoughts, often with a negative bias. That helps explain why people with depression tend to get stuck in negative thoughts and have difficulty directing their attention to the environment when necessary," Zanão explained. Brain regions that help with executive control required for goal-oriented tasks include the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex, while those involved with internal processes such as self-reflection and spontaneous thoughts are the medial prefrontal cortex, precuneus, and hippocampus.

The default mode network divided into subnetworks, such as those involving the precuneus which serves as a central hub for brain connectivity. The researchers found that the duration of depression appears to be associated with the dynamics of the central executive network and default mode network.

Among those with more recent episodes, the functional link between the CEN and precuneal regions in the DMN decreases as symptoms worsen. However, patients with long-term depression exhibited an opposite pattern — the greater the severity, the stronger the connectivity between the two networks.

"The results are consistent with the hypothesis that changes in brain connectivity in depression may evolve over time. Previous research indicates that, in initial episodes, there may be a reduction in connectivity between certain networks, while in recurrent or more prolonged cases, changes in functional connectivity emerge," Zanão said. The researcher said the findings could aid in developing more personalised depression treatments in the future. (PTI)

## 'Mere speculation, no reality': Congress on talk of leadership change in Karnataka

**NEW DELHI, MAY 26:** The Congress on Tuesday termed as "mere speculation" the talk about any leadership change in Karnataka and asserted that the day-long discussions between the central and state top brass were solely focused on the upcoming elections to the Rajya Sabha and the state legislative council.

Though Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge had convened a meeting to decide party candidates for the two elections, the point of interest remained the protracted leadership tussle between Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy D K Shivakumar, who were summoned to Delhi.

Sources said the Shivakumar camp has been pressing Siddaramaiah to quit the top post and a formula to accommodate him in the central role has been offered to him, which he has not accepted. The formula includes giving Siddaramaiah a Rajya Sabha seat, they said.

The party, however, did not say anything on this. Some media reports, however, claimed that Siddaramaiah may be replaced by Shivakumar in a few days. Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar had arrived in the national capital accompanied by the MLAs supporting them.

After the party meeting, Siddaramaiah once again held deliberations later in the evening with some ministers considered close to him.



At the core of the leadership tangle in the southern state is Shivakumar's demand that he be elevated to the chief minister's post in accordance with a "promise" which his supporters claim was made to him during state assembly elections in 2023.

The Congress central leadership held deliberations for several hours with its Karnataka state leaders, including Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar, who is also the state party chief, at the Indira Bhawan headquarters.

The party leaders, however, insisted that the issue of any leadership change was not discussed at the meeting attended by Congress president Kharge, Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, AICC general secretary, Organisation, K C Venugopal and AICC General Secretary in-charge of Karnataka Randeep Surjewala, among others.

"Today, the entire discus-

sion was only concentrated on the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections and (Legislative) Council elections of Karnataka.

"Whatever speculation you people are doing, that is only speculation, no reality at all. Today we discussed about the Rajya Sabha seats and the Council seats of Karnataka," Venugopal told the media after the meeting. He was flanked by Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar.

He said the candidates of the Rajya Sabha and Council seats of Karnataka will be announced along with the other seats like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

"This is what we have decided today, and nothing else was discussed," he asserted.

Asked about any leadership change, Siddaramaiah also said, "It is only a speculation".

Asked if there was any discussion on leadership change, he replied emphat-

ically with "No".

On a possible cabinet reshuffle, the chief minister said, "It did not come up for discussion."

Of the four Rajya Sabha seats getting vacant in Karnataka, the Congress can win three seats and the BJP one.

Kharge's Rajya Sabha seat is getting vacant in June and he is likely to be re-elected from Karnataka. The party may also field Shivakumar's brother D K Suresh as one of the Rajya Sabha candidates, as well as a woman or an OBC nominee. Suresh has been a former Rajya Sabha member from the state.

Besides, the Congress leaders are also learnt to have discussed the party candidates for the legislative council seats. The Congress is likely to get four seats in the legislative council out of the seven vacancies, going by its present strength in the state assembly. (Agencies)

## Govt's Finances Not As Rosy As Made Out To Be; RBI Did It A Favour By Giving Big Bonus: Cong

**NEW DELHI, May 26:** With the Reserve Bank announcing a record dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the government, the Congress on Tuesday claimed that the Centre's finances are not as rosy as is being made out to be. It is proved by the fact that the RBI has "done it a favour" and given it a big bonus.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday announced a record dividend of Rs 2.87 lakh crore to the government for the year ended March 2026, providing a financial boost for the exchequer amid rising import bills and supply chain disruptions due to the West Asia conflict. The dividend is 6.7 per cent higher than Rs 2.69 lakh crore for the 2024-25 fiscal year.

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam



Ramesh said, "That the Union government's finances are not as rosy as is being made out to be is proved by the fact that the RBI has done it a favour and given it a big bonus."

The Centre has got a bonanza of an additional Rs 92,000 crore over and above what it would have got had the 2024/25 Contingency Reserve Buffer

not been reduced, Ramesh said.

In a statement, the RBI has said its net income, before risk provision and transfer to statutory funds, aggregated Rs 3.96 lakh crore in FY26 as against Rs 3.13 lakh crore in FY25.

"The balance sheet of the Bank expanded by 20.61 per cent to Rs 91,97,121.08 crore as on March 31,

2026," the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said.

The RBI's Central Board of Directors, at its meeting, reviewed the global and domestic economic scenario, including risks to the outlook, and also approved the dividend. According to the statement, the revised Economic Capital Framework (ECF) provides flexibility to maintain the Contingent Risk Buffer (CRB) between the range of 4.5 per cent and 7.5 per cent of the size of the balance sheet.

"Taking into consideration the current macroeconomic factors, financial performance of the Bank and maintenance of appropriate risk buffers, the Central Board decided to transfer Rs 1,09,379.64 crore towards the CRB for FY 2025-26 as against Rs 44,861.70 crore in the previous year," it said.

## US military says it carried out 'self-defence' strikes in Iran, including on missile launch sites

**WASHINGTON, MAY 26:** The US military said Monday that it carried out "self-defence" strikes in southern Iran, including on missile launch sites and boats placing mines, even as President Donald Trump said on social media that negotiations with Tehran were "proceeding nicely."

The strikes were done "to protect our troops from threats posed by Iranian forces," but the military was "using restraint during the ongoing ceasefire," Capt Tim Hawkins, the spokesman for the US military's Central Command, said in a statement.

Further details were not immediately available, including more specifics on the threats from Iran and what this means for negotiations. There was no official response from Iran, which had sent its parliament speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf to Qatar for negotiations over the possible deal with the US.

Qatar, which faced intense attacks from Iran during the war, holds billions of dollars in frozen Iranian funds.

In Iran, the news website Tabnak, believed to be close to former Revolutionary Guard chief Mohsen Rezaei, identified four dead

Guard troops it said had been killed in American strikes on boats. Iranian state television separately reported blasts around Bandar Abbas, a city on the Strait of Hormuz home to a military port and a dual-use airport. News Bulletins

The strikes were the latest attacks to shake the weeklong ceasefire in the war. The Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of all crude oil and natural gas traded once passed, remains effectively in Iran's chokehold, disrupting global energy markets.

Earlier, Trump said any agreement to end the Iran war should include a requirement for several additional countries, including Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, to join the Abraham Accords, the US-brokered agreements from Trump's first term aimed at normalizing relations with Israel.

The proposal came as the emerging Iran deal faced criticism from fellow Republicans who favour a harder line on Iran, and it could add new diplomatic complications to the negotiations.

Trump pointed to Saudi Arabia and Qatar as countries that should "immediately" sign on. Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates became the first countries

to join in 2020, diplomatically recognizing Israel.

He wrote that "after all the work done by the United States to try and pull this very complex puzzle together, it should be mandatory that all of these Countries, at a minimum, simultaneously, sign onto the Abraham Accords."

Trump has long hoped Saudi Arabia would join. Saudi Arabia in particular has for decades called on Israel to return to its 1967 borders and allow the formation of a Palestinian nation with east Jerusalem as its capital. Israel's conduct in the war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip also has alienated Gulf Arab states and the wider Muslim world as well.

Recognition of a Palestinian state also remains key for Pakistan, which is among the countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

Islamabad-based analyst Syed Mohammad Ali said Pakistan's position on Israel remains unchanged despite Trump's latest proposal.

The president said he brought up the Abraham Accords plan with leaders during negotiations on Saturday. He said he would accept "one or two" countries declining to sign, but said

most should be willing. Egypt and Jordan already formally recognise Israel and have long-standing peace treaties. Turkey first recognized Israel in 1949.

Masood Khan, Pakistan's former ambassador to the United States, said it remains to be seen how workable the proposal might be for the countries on Trump's list.

"The invocation of the Abraham Accords at this stage gives an altogether new dimension to the diplomatic and mediatory processes because this issue was not on the agenda," he said, pointing to the domestic pressure Trump is facing to strike a favourable deal.

Still, Khan said, "the diplomatic track is still working, and I believe Pakistan is very much at the centre of it, supported by regional countries."

It remains unclear when or how any deal with Iran might be completed. Trump suggested even Iran could eventually sign on to the accords, if an agreement is reached.

The accords are a series of diplomatic, economic and security agreements created with US influence during Trump's first term, which also saw Sudan, Morocco.

## West Bengal: 14 more arrested by NIA in gherao of judicial officers in Mothabari, total rises to 68

**KOLKATA, MAY 26:** The NIA arrested 14 more people in connection with the gherao of judicial officers ahead of the assembly elections in West Bengal's Malda district, officials said on Tuesday.

The arrests were made on Monday night following searches at multiple locations in Kaliachak and Mothabari areas of the district, they said.

With this, 68 people have been arrested in the case so far, they added.

According to investigators, those arrested had direct involvement in the alleged harassment and confinement of judicial officers in Mothabari last month.

Seven judicial officers were held hostage inside the BDO office in Mothabari, and an eighth was confined inside a vehicle for about nine hours on April 1 after a large crowd, protesting the deletion of names from voters' lists, turned violent by blocking

roads, vandalising vehicles and attacking police personnel, officials said.

These judicial officers were deputed for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls. They were rescued by security forces late in the night, triggering a political furor in the state ahead of the assembly polls.

"The NIA is trying to identify others linked to the incident. Several crucial leads have emerged

during questioning of those earlier arrested and scrutiny of CCTV footage, leading to a series of arrests over the past few weeks," a senior official said.

The NIA took over the investigation into the case following the direction of the Supreme Court.

Among those earlier arrested were ISF's Mothabari candidate Maulana Shahjahan Ali Qadri and ISF leader Golam Rabbani. (Agencies)

## When Crude Oil Prices Fell, Why Did Petrol, Diesel Become More Expensive, Asks Kharge

**New Delhi, May 26:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge attacked the Modi government on Tuesday over the rising fuel prices and asked why relief was not provided to people when crude oil prices fell during the last 12 years.

Kharge cited an official statement by the PIB to state that exactly 12 years ago today — on May 26, 2014 — when Prime Minister Narendra Modi assumed office, the price of crude oil in the Indian basket stood at USD 108.05 per barrel, and the Dollar-

rupee exchange rate was Rs 58.59.

At that time, petrol was available at Rs 71.51 per litre, and diesel at Rs 56.71 per litre, he said in his post in Hindi on X.

Today, the price of crude oil is below USD 99 per barrel; yet, the prices of petrol and diesel have surged to Rs 102.12 and Rs 95.20 per litre, respectively, Kharge said.

In other words, while crude oil has become cheaper, petrol has become approximately 42.8% more expensive, and diesel about 67.9% more expensive, he

said. "Every economist knows that the rising cost of petrol and diesel impacts every sector. From transportation to food commodities, the burden of inflation on the common man continues to intensify. Despite this, the government's profiteering continues unabated," Kharge said.

Why is there no relief for the public, Kharge asked.

The Congress on Monday launched a scathing attack on Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the latest fuel hike, with Rahul Gandhi alleging that the

"mehangai manav" has struck again and he has just one job of making promises during elections and attacking people's pockets at other times.

Kharge also lashed out at the Modi government over the issue and asked who is benefiting from this "daily robbery".

Petrol and diesel prices were raised by Rs 2.61-2.71 per litre on Monday, marking the fourth increase in less than two weeks as state-owned fuel retailers continued to pass on rising international oil prices to consumers. (Agencies)

## EAM Jaishankar holds talks with Japanese counterpart Motegi

**NEW DELHI, MAY 25:** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and his Japanese counterpart Motegi Toshimitsu on Monday held wide-ranging talks focusing on economic fallout of the West Asia crisis in view of disruptions in energy supply chains.

Motegi is in New Delhi to attend a meeting of foreign ministers of the Quad nations.

"India and Japan have a special strategic and global

partnership and that signals that our ties have a larger implication, larger importance and larger impact," Jaishankar said in his opening remarks at the meeting.

The external affairs minister also made a mention of Tuesday's Quad meeting and said it will discuss how to advance a free and open Indo-Pacific.

In the talks, the two sides deliberated on bilateral cooperation, global and regional issues, espe-

cially the West Asia crisis and its impact on energy supply chains.

Jaishankar suggested that both India and Japan are impacted by the conflict as both are energy importing and trading nations and have maritime interests.

The two sides also deliberated on issues relating to economic security with Jaishankar describing them as "very important".

The Quad meeting in New Delhi will be attended

by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong, and Motegi, with Jaishankar presiding over it.

The Quad, comprising India, the US, Australia and Japan, has emerged as a key grouping largely focusing on peace, security and stability in the Indo-Pacific region.

India is hosting the meeting in its capacity as the current chair of the coalition. (PTI)