

UK imposes travel permit on Europeans from Wednesday

AFP, LONDON: In a shake-up of long-standing travel rules, European nationals heading to the UK will from Wednesday need a mandatory entry permit, which the British government says will strengthen border security.

The Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) can be bought online in the next few days for £10 (12 euros), but the price is rising swiftly from April 9 to £16.

It is similar to the ESTA system in operation in the United States and will be mandatory for all European visitors to Britain from April 2, following its roll-out for US, Canadian and other visa-exempt nationals in January.

"By digitising the immigration system we are paving the way for a contactless UK border," Migration Minister Seema Malhotra said earlier this month when the website was opened for the first applications.

"Expanding ETA worldwide cements our commit-

From Wednesday, nationals of some 30 European countries - including all those in the European Union except Ireland - will need to carry the electronic permit to enter Britain, which left the EU in 2020. The applicant will need to provide a photo of their passport and their face. The process takes around 10 minutes, according to the Home Office. The permit allows visits of up to six months and is valid for two years. It is required for all travellers including minors and babies

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The application, which can be made on a smartphone app or through the government website, has been open to Europeans since the start of March.

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to provide a photo of their passport and their face. The process takes around 10 minutes, according to the Home Office.

In most cases, an application decision is made within minutes. However, the government recommends allowing up to three working days for the application.

If successful, the ETA is digitally linked to the applicant's passport.

Flight passengers transiting airside without crossing the UK border are exempt from the scheme, after pressure from Heathrow which feared a loss of passenger footfall connecting through Europe's busiest airport.

Only Heathrow and Manchester airports have provisions for airside transit in the UK. Almost 84 million passengers passed through Heathrow in 2024 -- a third from the neighbouring EU.

Scheme expanded

The scheme was first launched in 2023 for Qatar, before being extended to five regional Gulf neighbours.

In January, it was expanded to nationals of around another 50 countries and territories, including Argentina, South Korea and New Zealand.

Almost 1.1 million visitors were issued with ETAs before the end of 2024, according to the Home Office. It is not applicable to UK residents or anyone who already has a UK immigration status.

ETA mirrors the ETIAS scheme for visa-exempt nationals travelling to 30 European countries, including France and Germany, which has been delayed until 2026.

Trump says US tariffs to hit all countries

AFP, WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Sunday the tariffs he plans to impose in the coming days would include "all countries", not just those with the largest trade imbalances with the United States.

Trump has promised a "Liberation Day" on April 2, when he is set to unveil reciprocal levies to address trade practices that his government deems unfair.

"You'd start with all countries, so let's see what happens," Trump told reporters onboard Air Force One, dashing hopes he might scale back some of the threatened levies or that they would target a select group with persistent trade imbalances.

"I haven't heard a rumor about 15 countries, 10 or 15," he said when asked which nations would be affected.

"Essentially all of the countries that we're talking about. We've been talking about all countries, not a cutoff," he said, without giving details.

US airstrikes pound Yemen's capital overnight, 3 killed : Houthi rebels

PTI, DUBAI: Suspected US airstrikes struck around Yemen's rebel-held capital overnight into Monday morning, attacks that the Iranian-backed Houthis said killed at least three people.

The full extent of the damage wasn't immediately clear. The attacks followed a night of airstrikes early Friday that appeared particularly intense compared to other days in the campaign that began March 15.

The strikes around Sanaa, Yemen's capital held by the Houthis since 2014, and Hajjah governorate also wounded 12 others, the rebels said.

Their Al-Masirah satellite news channel aired footage of broken glass littering homes in Sanaa after the concussive blast of the bombs, but continued not to show the targets of the attacks suggesting the sites had a military or intelligence function. Strikes there killed one person, the rebels said.

Another strike targeting a pickup truck in Hajjah killed two people and wounded a child, the Houthis said. It marked the first, publicly known time the American



strikes targeted a vehicle in this campaign.

An Associated Press review has found the new American operation against the Houthis under President Donald Trump appears more extensive than those under former President Joe Biden, as the US moves from solely targeting launch sites to firing at ranking personnel as well as dropping bombs in cities.

The new campaign of airstrikes, which the Houthis now say have killed at least 61 people, started after the rebels threatened to begin targeting Israeli ships again over Israel blocking aid entering the Gaza Strip.

The rebels in the past loose-

ly defined what constitutes an Israeli ship, meaning other vessels could be targeted.

The Houthis had targeted over 100 merchant vessels with missiles and drones, sinking two vessels and killing four sailors from November 2023 until January of this year. They also launched attacks targeting American warships, though none has been hit so far.

The attacks greatly raised the Houthis' profile as they faced economic problems and launched a crackdown targeting any dissent and aid workers at home amid Yemen's decadelong stalemated war that has torn apart the Arab world's poorest nation.

Rumours on Modi's retirement not true, says Fadnavis

PTI, NAGPUR/MUMBAI: Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Monday dismissed speculation about Prime Minister Narendra Modi's successor, asserting the PM would continue to lead the country beyond 2029, when the next Lok Sabha polls are due.

Responding to Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's claim that Modi went to the RSS headquarters on Sunday to convey the message that he is "retiring", Fadnavis told reporters in Nagpur, "In 2029, we will see Modi as the prime minister again."

Speaking to reporters separately in Nagpur, which houses the headquarters of the BJP's ideological mentor, senior RSS leader Suresh Bhaiyyaji Joshi said

he was not aware of any talk of (PM's) replacement.

"There is no need to search for his successor. He (Modi) is our leader and will continue (to lead)," Fadnavis insisted.

Discussing succession while the leader is active is inappropriate in Indian culture, the CM added.

"In our culture, when the father is alive, it is inappropriate to talk about succession. That is Mughal culture. The time has not come to discuss it," he said, referring to Raut's claim that Modi's successor would come from Maharashtra.

Talking to reporters on Monday, Raut claimed the RSS wants a change in the political leadership in the country.

"He (Modi) probably

went to the RSS headquarters to write his retirement application in September," the Rajya Sabha MP claimed, alluding to some leaders in the ruling dispensation retiring at 75.

Modi, who is in his third term as PM, turns 75 in September this year.

He claimed the RSS reminded Modi of the "75-year norm".

"It appears that Modi's heir will be decided by the RSS which is why Modi was called (to the RSS headquarters) and discussions took place. Sangh's discussions are held behind closed doors. The indications are very clear. The Sangh will decide the next leader and that leader could be from Maharashtra," the Rajya Sabha MP claimed.

US imposes sanctions on Hong Kong top cop, justice secretary

AFP, WASHINGTON: The United States on Monday imposed sanctions on Hong Kong's police chief and five other officials over human rights concerns after China clamped down in the financial hub.

The sanctions on Police Commissioner Raymond Siu Chak-ye and the others will block any interests they hold in the United States and generally criminalize financial transactions with them under US law.

The sanctions mark a rare action invoking human rights by the administration of President Donald Trump, who has described China as an adversary but has shown no reluctance to ally with autocrats.

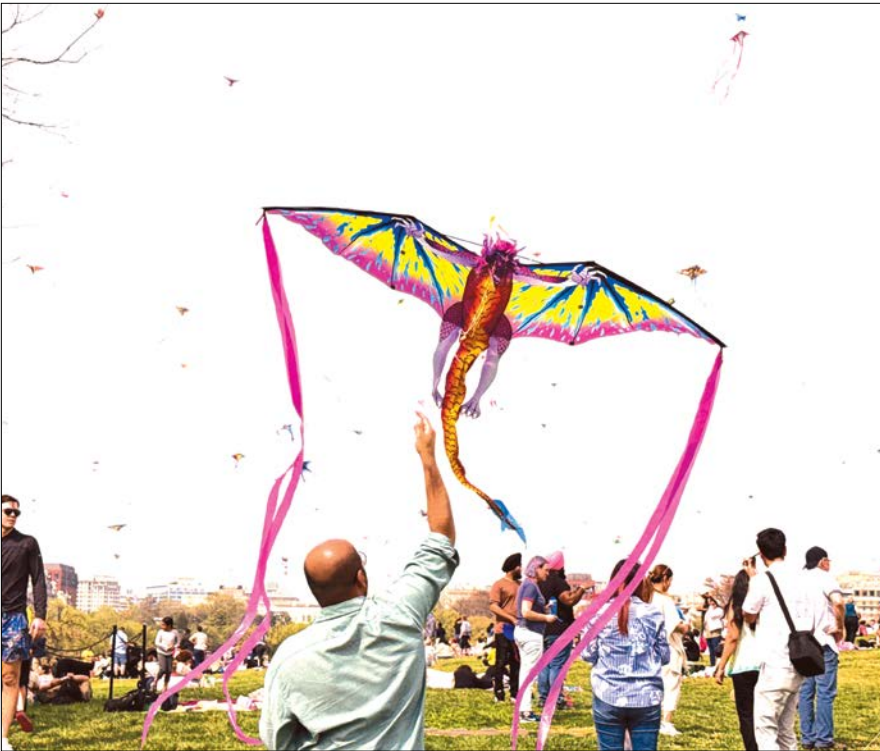
The sanctions "demonstrate the Trump administration's commitment to hold to account those responsible for depriving people in Hong Kong of protected rights and freedoms or who commit acts of transnational repression on US soil or against US persons," Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a statement.

Other officials targeted in the latest sanctions include Paul Lam, the city's secretary of justice.

Hong Kong's top official, Chief Executive John Lee, is already under US sanctions.

The officials were targeted in line with a US law that champions Hong Kong democracy.

FESTIVE FLIGHT



People fly kites during the Cherry Blossom Festival in Washington, DC

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SCIENCE AS SHIELD TO STOP LAND SHARKS

They are using it as a constitutional basis for granting or refusing permissions. Carmona villagers had famously blocked the Raheja mega project from being set up in the village on the grounds of how it would detrimentally affect the village including its identity.

In Colva, where environmental groups regularly clash with developers over projects allegedly coming in the CRZ zone, the Colva Civic and Consumer Forum (CCCCF) has highlighted that government instructions already mandate carrying capacity studies for each village to determine appropriate development levels.

Local residents suggest there are two perspectives on the matter: either panchayats decline to conduct these studies because they support development projects, or they embrace the studies to reinforce gram sabha concerns and contribute to better village planning for the future.

NOIDA LAMBO CRASH: DRIVER GETS BAIL

Both hail from Chhattisgarh. They were admitted to a private hospital and have been operated upon, police said.

The accused's advocate, Mayank Pachori, told reporters, "The court has granted bail as the offence was bailable. The bail was granted without conditions."

He said the accident happened when Kumar was out on a test drive of the vehicle. Mridul reportedly wanted to sell the car and had spoken to luxury car dealer Deepak. Deepak had taken the car for a test-drive and lost control, hitting two labourers sitting on the roadside.

Kumar, a car dealer in Noida, was booked under section 281 (rash or negligent driving) and 125(B) (endangering life) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bhupendra Singh, in-charge of the Sector 126 Police Station, said.

A purported video surfaced online on Sunday, showing that after the accident, a man was heard asking the accused if he knew how many people died there. To this, the accused asked the locals "koi mar gaya idhar? (did anyone die here?)" and came out of the car.

The injured labourers said the car came towards them at a very high speed giving them no time to escape.

"I have injuries on my legs and hands... my whole body is paining," said one of the injured labourers.

During questioning on Sunday, Kumar told police that the accident happened due to a fault in the vehicle. The car is registered in Pudukcherry.

The police arrested Deepak on the spot and seized the car. During interrogation, he claimed the accident occurred due to a fault in the car.

BOMBAY HC NOD TO TERMINATE PREGNANCY WITH FOETAL ANOMALIES

The petitioner, a resident of Mumbai, said she wants to terminate the pregnancy at a hospital of her choice. Her lawyer Meenaz Kakalia said the procedure could be carried out if the requisite facilities under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amended) Rules were available at the private hospital.

She had discovered a foetal anomaly during a Foetal Echo Cardiography at around 24 weeks of pregnancy, which revealed skeletal dysplasia—a condition likely to lead to severe morbidity. A medical board at J J Hospital had given the green light for termination based on the foetal condition.

Kakalia cited a guidance note issued by the Union of India under the MTP Act, which provides for the cessation of the foetal heartbeat to prevent a live birth. She said Maharashtra has adopted these guidelines.

The high court bench stated that as per the Rules, the procedure to stop the foetal heart, whenever contemplated, needs to be clearly mentioned in the recommendation or report of the medical board.

However, the court observed that the medical board's report did not recommend a specific method for the termination, particularly regarding foetal heartbeat reduction. In light of this, the court requested the J J Hospital medical board to provide its opinion within two days.

"Considering that the pregnancy is at an advanced stage, we deem it appropriate to request the medical board (of the state-run J J hospital) to give its opinion to the medical practitioner concerned within two days," the court said.

WOMAN CAN'T BE FORCED TO DO VIRGINITY TEST: HC

He alleged she was in an illicit relationship with another man, challenging a family court's order dated October 15, 2024 which rejected the interim application.

The wife had alleged her husband was impotent and refused to cohabit.

The HC said if the petitioner wants to prove the allegations of impotency are baseless, he can undergo the medical test concerned or produce any other evidence.

"He cannot possibly be permitted to subject the wife to undergo her virginity test and fill up the lacuna in his evidence," said the HC order passed on January 9 which was made available recently.

The high court noted the petitioner's contention demanding a virginity test of his wife is unconstitutional as it violates Article 21 of the Constitution, which includes the right to dignity of women.

"Article 21 of the Constitution of India not only guarantees the right to life and personal liberty but also the right to live with dignity, which is crucial for women," it said.

"No woman can be forced to conduct her virginity test. It is a violation of fundamental rights guaranteed under Article 21. It has to be borne in mind that Article 21 is the 'heart of fundamental rights'," the high court stated.

Justice Verma further said the virginity test is a violation of the basic right of women to be treated with decency and proper dignity.

"The right to personal liberty enshrined under Article 21 is non-derogable and cannot be tinkered with in any manner. The petitioner cannot possibly be permitted to subject the wife to undergo her virginity test and fill up the lacuna in his evidence in this regard," the HC said.

"Be that as it may, but in any case, granting the permission for virginity test of the respondent would be against

her fundamental rights, the cardinal principles of natural justice and secret modesty of a female," the high court noted.

Non-derogable human rights refer to rights that are absolute and may not be subject to any derogation, even in times of war or emergency.

The HC bench further observed that the allegations made by both parties against each other are the subject matter of evidence and a conclusion can be drawn only after the evidence.

"The High Court is of the considered opinion that the order impugned is neither illegal nor perverse and there is no judicial error committed by the trial court," it said.

ASSAGAO'S LONE CRUSADER FIGHTING TO PROTECT NATURAL SPRING IN VILLAGE

Patrick Rodrigues, a resident of Assagao, first approached the village panchayat in January 2024, regarding the deteriorating condition of an irrigation canal located behind his house.

Originating from a spring, the canal flows from Assagao to Anjuna and Arpora before culminating at Baga in Calangute.

Initially developed systematically by then-MLA and Minister Chandrakant Chodankar in 1996, years of neglect have left it in disrepair. In some areas, the situation has deteriorated to the extent that a builder attempted to construct a culvert over it in Ward 2.

According to Rodrigues, who has been actively pushing for government intervention, garbage continues to be dumped into the water, leading to contamination. He fears that the mixing of garbage slurry with water could pose a serious threat to the fields downstream.

"I initiated this process in January last year after obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NOC) from the St Anne Chapel property, to which this land belongs. I wrote to the panchayat, which promptly forwarded the matter to the Water Resources Department (WRD). However, despite over a year having passed, the file remains stuck with the government. This just shows how serious the authorities are about such critical issues," Rodrigues stated.

Inquiries with the WRD revealed that the necessary paperwork has been completed, and plans are in place to repair a 60-metre section of the canal at an estimated cost of Rs 15 lakh. However, the file has been pending government approval since October 2024.

"From our side, all formalities have been completed. Once we receive administrative approval, the project will be tendered and work will commence," informed Assistant Engineer (WRD) Vinoo Nayak.

Reliable sources suggest that the delay is due to a shortage of government funds, leading to the project being on hold for the past six months. Nayak expressed hope that, following the upcoming budget presentation, funds would be allocated, allowing work to proceed.

Meanwhile, Assagao Sarpanch Hanumant Naik has also voiced his frustration over the delay in vital flood control projects worth Rs 45 lakh. "The government talks about flood control and disaster management, yet they have no funds to prevent disasters and floods. What kind of disaster management is this?" he questioned. Naik acknowl-

edged that while some officials were proactive, administrative bottlenecks had resulted in numerous projects either being delayed or indefinitely shelved.

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— Hanumant Naik, Assagao Sarpanch

FRANCE: MARINE LE PEN BANNED FROM PUBLIC OFFICE

Jordan Bardella, her 29-year-old protégé who could replace her on the ballot in 2027 if she can't stand, said on X that Le Pen "is being unjustly condemned" and that French democracy "is being executed."

Hungary's populist Prime Minister Viktor Orbán quickly took to social media to express his support, posting "Je suis Marine!" — I am Marine — on X.

Among political opponents of Le Pen who expressed unease was conservative lawmaker Laurent Wauquiez, who said the court ruling put "a very heavy weight on our democracy".

A political death scenario

The sentence could prevent her from running for president in 2027, a scenario she has previously described as a "political death".

Only an appeal ruling that overturns the ban on public office could restore her hopes of standing. But with the election just two years away, time is running out and there's no guarantee that an appeals court would rule more favourably.

The verdict was a resounding defeat for Le Pen's party. The judge also handed down guilty verdicts for embezzling public funds to eight other current or former members of her party who, like her, previously served as European Parliament lawmakers.

Also convicted were 12 other people who served as parliamentary aides for Le Pen and what is now the National Rally party, formerly the National Front.

The judge said Le Pen had been at the heart of 'a system' that her party used to siphon off EU parliament money. The judge said Le Pen and other co-defendants didn't enrich themselves personally. But the ruling described the embezzlement as "a democratic bypass" that deceived the parliament and voters.

From the front row of the court, Le Pen had initially shown no immediate reaction when the judge first declared her guilty. But she grew more agitated as the verdict was then delivered in greater detail.

She nodded her head in disagreement as the judge said Le Pen's party had illegally used European Parliament money for its own benefit.

"Incredible," Le Pen she whispered at one point. She then abruptly left without warning, picking up her bag and striding out, her heels click-click-clicking on the hardwood floor, leaving disbelief in her wake.

