

1386

Treaty of Windsor between Portugal and England is ratified at Windsor, cementing and strengthening ties between the two kingdoms.

1865

President Andrew Johnson issues a proclamation declaring that armed resistance in the South is virtually at an end, the commonly accepted end date of the American Civil War



1901 1945

First Australian Parliament opens in Melbourne, though the first working session is not until May 21

Soviet Union celebrates Victory Day in World War II

French aircraft carrier pre-positions for possible Hormuz mission

AFP | Paris, France

France's aircraft carrier the Charles de Gaulle was yesterday heading towards the southern Red Sea to pre-position for a possible mission to restore navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, the presidency and defence ministry said.

President Emmanuel Macron's office said the move was intended to send "a signal that not only are we ready to secure the Strait of Hormuz but that we are also capable of doing so".

The flagship of the French Navy and its escorts was transiting the Suez Canal en route to the southern Red Sea, the defence ministry said.

The decision was intended "to reduce the time needed to implement this initiative as soon as circumstances allow", the



The flight deck of the French Navy's flagship aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle transiting the Suez Canal en route to the southern Red Sea to pre-position for a possible mission to restore navigation in the Strait of Hormuz.

ministry said. Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer are leading a multinational mission to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, while emphasising the force would be entirely defensive and only deployed once lasting peace in the region was agreed.

More than 40 coun-

tries have begun military planning in London. "The movement of the carrier strike group is separate from the military operations initiated in the region and complements the security posture," the defence ministry said.

Its presence near the Gulf will allow "an early assessment of the regional

operational environment ahead of the possible launch of the initiative" and "offer additional crisis-exit options to strengthen the security of the region", the ministry added. The aircraft carrier houses around twenty Rafale fighter jets and is escorted by several frigates.

U-TURN WITH UK

The Question Beneath the Knife



P. UNNIKRISHNAN

His knife was right against my throat.

For a brief second, he paused, looked at me through the mirror, and asked: "Do you trust AI?"

I stayed still while the sharp blade carefully trimmed the thin line of beard near my neck. Then I smiled and replied: "How can I sit here without trust? You could cut my throat in a fraction of a second if you wanted to."

Before I could continue, he laughed softly and said:

"But you trust me because you know me. AI is something people don't really know closely. So how can they trust it?"

That question opened up one of the most unexpected conversations I've had in recent times.

I told him, "Have you ever met the engineer who designed the building we are sitting in? Or the contractor who built it?"

Still, we sit and work inside without fear because we trust them. When we board a flight, most of us don't know the pilot personally either. Yet we trust him with our lives."

Trust, in many ways, is blind. Humanity has survived and grown largely because people believed in one another.

I was sitting in a small salon near Salmaniya. The young barber from Kerala had somehow become my favourite hairstylist over the past year. What made him interesting was not just his skill, but his endless curiosity. He never allowed silence to settle in the room. Every haircut turned into a discussion about life, society, technology, or politics.

Recently, he had been hearing a lot about AI being used in wars and military systems.

"You know," he said, "there's a big debate happening in America about whether AI should be allowed to access dangerous military knowledge."

He had clearly been following the subject closely.

And honestly, it is a serious debate.

Some people argue that overly restricting AI could weaken technological leadership and slow innovation. Others fear that advanced AI could help create biological weapons, make cyberattacks easier, or even power autonomous weapons capable of killing without direct human control.

Then he suddenly looked at me and asked the real question:

"Are we progressing... or slowly moving toward self-destruction?"

I paused for a moment.

There are already reports of intelligent missile systems capable of identifying human movement and striking targets with terrifying precision. Technology is advancing at a pace that can sometimes feel difficult to comprehend.

"So in the future," he asked, "will wars become AI versus AI?"

"Possibly," I admitted, with my limited understanding of the subject.

Then came another question.

"Do you think people will reach a stage where most humans may not even need to work for survival?"

That thought reminded me of my interview with A. Sivathanu Pillai, one of the minds behind the BrahMos missile project. Technological change is happening so rapidly that many professions may eventually transform beyond recognition.

The barber slowly removed the cloth around my neck while continuing the conversation.

"So how do we survive in such a future?" he asked.

I told him honestly:

"It's going to be challenging — not just for us, but for the entire world."

Then I added something that made him stop for a second.

"I think we may even be heading toward a future where humans could choose how long they want to live."

He looked shocked.

"Serious?"

I nodded.

"Today, we can already replace many body parts — kidneys, hearts, liver, artificial hands and legs. Computers are becoming more intelligent in many ways. The biggest remaining challenge is not intelligence but memory and emotions. The day technology learns how to preserve or replicate human memory and emotions perfectly, humanity itself may change forever."

For a moment, he became silent.

Then he switched on the hair dryer, carefully adjusted my hairstyle, and gave the finishing touches with complete concentration.

"You know what world leaders and decision-makers should seriously do?" I told him. "They should trim and shape technological growth the same way you shape a haircut. Remove the dangerous excess, control the unwanted growth, and carefully guide it into something better. Technology itself is not the enemy — the lack of direction is."

He smiled while continuing his work.

As I asked him to make a few final adjustments, he suddenly looked at me through the mirror again and asked:

"But do you think AI can replace my job too?"

I smiled back.

"Maybe. But even if a robot cuts hair perfectly, I still may not choose it if I have someone like you — someone who can speak from the heart."

He burst into laughter.

"So," he said, "I may still have the option to remain your hairstylist forever."

"Only if I choose to live forever," I replied.

And both of us laughed together.

(P. Unnikrishnan is the Chairperson and Managing Director of The Daily Tribune)

Deal or face bombs

Trump warns of 'higher-level' strikes if agreement collapses

US news outlet Axios reported that Washington and Tehran were close to agreeing on a one-page memorandum of understanding to end the war and set a framework for more detailed nuclear negotiations.



An F/A-18E Super Hornet landing aboard Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS George H.W. Bush (CVN 77) at sea

US warplane disables ship that tried to break Iran port blockade: US military

AFP | Washington, United States

A US Navy warplane fired on and disabled the rudder of an oil tanker that

tried to break Washington's blockade of Iranian ports, the US military said yesterday.

US forces warned the

Iranian-flagged ship that it was in violation of the blockade but its crew "failed to comply," so a US F/A-18 Super Hornet "dis-

abled the tanker's rudder by firing several rounds from (its) 20mm cannon gun," Central Command said in a post on X.

China says will play 'greater role' in ending Mideast fighting

AFP | Beijing, China

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Beijing would play a "greater role" in ending hostilities in the Middle East during talks with his Iranian counterpart on Wednesday, a week before US President Donald Trump is due to meet Xi Jinping.

China "will work hard to ease tensions and end the fighting, continue to support the launch of peace talks, and play a greater role in restoring peace and tranquility to the Middle East", Wang told Iran's Abbas Araghchi in Beijing.

"China considers that a complete cessation of

fighting must be achieved without delay, that it is even more unacceptable to restart hostilities, and that continuing to negotiate remains essential," Wang said, according to a statement from his ministry after the talks. "On the nuclear issue, China welcomes Iran's commitment not to

develop nuclear weapons, while considering that Iran has the legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy," Wang said. The US leader is expected to meet Chinese President Xi in Beijing on a visit the White House said will take place May 14-15.