

# Power demand at an all-time high as heat waves continue

**Jayashree Nandi**

letters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** India's peak power demand hit a new all-time high of 270.82 gigawatts (GW) at 3:45pm on Thursday, the fourth consecutive day of broken records, as punishing heat waves across the north and centre of the country drove peak power demand to an all time high of 270 GW, with more than a month of summer still remaining.

The grid is coping is of now, but some reports of power cuts — potentially due to localised faults — are emerging. Daytime generation, buoyed by surging solar capacity, has so far met demand. Thursday's 270.82 GW surpassed Wednesday's record of 265.44 GW.

The records being set are during afternoon solar hours, when generation capacity is at its fullest. At noon on Thursday, solar alone was contributing nearly 80 GW — roughly a third of India's total generation at that hour.

"While thermal power remains the balancing backbone of the system, solar, along with other renewables, is doing significant heavy lifting during daytime hours," said Trishant Dev, deputy programme manager for climate change and green economy at the Centre for Science and Environment.

By evening, that contribution tapers to near zero, leaving thermal plants already running at close to full capacity to carry the entire load.

The result is a system under two distinct kinds of pressure. "Record heat and surging electricity demand continue to test the power system," said Disha Aggarwal, senior programme

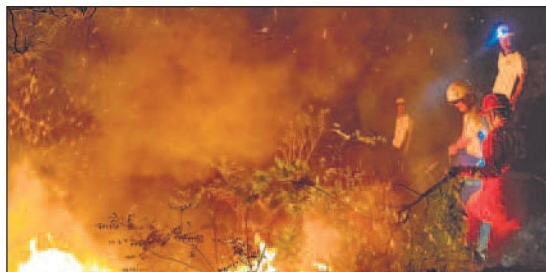
lead at the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW). "A 256 GW peak demand in the week of April 20 already highlighted how thin the margins are becoming — surplus solar during the day, with nearly 190 GW of installed coal capacity running at full capacity during nights," she added.

At an all-India level, the energy deficit stood at 0.2% and the peak deficit at 0.1% in April, data from ICRA showed, according to Reuters. Localised power outages were reported at night in some regions, according to grid operator Grid-India — adequate overall supply during the day masking emerging stress in parts of the system once solar generation drops off.

In Gurugram, for instance, underground feeder cables supplying power to at least 5,000 families across housing societies in Sectors 99 to 102 along the Dwarka Expressway caught fire from overheating late Wednesday night.

Officials of Dakshin Haryana Biji Vitran Nigam Limited said the feeders failed between 11:20pm and 11:30pm at their origin outside the Sector 9 substation; residents said outages lasted up to 10 hours.

In Lucknow, prolonged power cuts through the intervening night of Wednesday and Thursday drove residents onto the streets. Road blockades were reported across multiple localities — Rajajipuram, Basant Kunj Yojana, Dubagga Colony, Budheshwar, and Gonti Nagar Extension among them — with a two-to-three kilometre traffic jam near the Dubagga Power House. The cause of the Lucknow outages has not been established.



**SDRF and forest officials trying to control spread of fire.**

## 2 killed in forest fire incidents in Garhwal distt of U'khand

**MUSOORIE:** Two people died in separate forest fire-related incidents in Uttarakhand's Garhwal region amid rising temperatures and increasing wildfire incidents, officials said on Thursday.

In Tehri Garhwal district, a 50-year-old woman died after a fire broke out near her agricultural field in Pipola Saij village under Kirtinagar tehsil. Divisional Forest Officer (DFO) Diganth Nayak said Anju Devi had gone to cut grass when the fire broke out. "It is suspected that she inhaled toxic smoke, lost

consciousness and collapsed into the flames," he said. Her family later found her burnt body during a search operation on Wednesday night.

In Chamoli district, the body of Rajendra Singh Negi, 42, a departmental fire watcher, was recovered from a 70-metre-deep gorge near Bedubagad on Thursday morning after an overnight search operation.

DFO Sarvesh Dubey said Negi went missing while helping douse a forest fire near the Badrinath Highway. "He likely slipped from the rocky cliff," he said. **HTC**

The IMD has warned that heat wave to severe heat wave conditions will persist across the plains of northwest and central India through the week, with a red category warning — indicating very high likelihood of heat illness and heat stroke — in force for Uttar Pradesh and adjoining Madhya Pradesh until May 23.

Peak demand could rise further if heat waves "continue to

remain severe across major parts of the country," said Ankit Jain, vice-president at ICRA, Reuters reported.

Thursday's record has already exceeded the government's own projections, and with temperatures forecast to remain markedly above normal across large parts of the country, the system's post-sunset margins will face the same test again each night.