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Israel bombs Tehran, Beirut as US vows 'surge' in Iran strikes

of US Central Command, described the carrier as "roughly the size of a World War II aircraft carrier." "As we speak, it's on fire," Cooper told reporters. Earlier in the week, an American submarine sank an Iranian frigate off the coast of Sri Lanka as it was returning from an exercise hosted by the Indian navy that the US also joined. Sri Lanka's navy rescued 32 crew members and recovered 87 bodies.

Under cover of darkness on Friday morning, B-2 stealth bombers dropped dozens of 2,000-pound "penetrator" bombs on deeply buried ballistic missile launchers inside Iran, Cooper said.

Qatar said early Friday it intercepted a drone attack targeting Al Udeid Air Base, which hosts the forward headquarters of the US Central Command.

Saudi Arabia intercepted and destroyed three ballistic missiles fired early Friday toward Prince Sultan Air Base south of Riyadh, which also hosts US forces, said a spokesperson for Saudi Arabia's Defense Ministry.

Air raid sirens sounded in Bahrain, where the Interior Ministry said Iranian strikes targeted two hotels and a residential building. It said there were no casualties. In Kuwait, where the six US soldiers were killed Sunday, the army said air defenses were activated when missile and drone attacks breached its airspace. The United Arab Emirates said three drones had struck its territory, without elaborating.

The British ambassador to Bahrain said Friday that the United Kingdom would help defend the country with its fighter jets. Ambassador Alastair Long's announcement came the day after British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said he was sending four more Royal Air Force Typhoon fighters to Qatar following requests from allies for further help.

In Israel, the sound of explosions could be heard in Tel Aviv early Friday morning after a warning about missiles incoming from Iran, as air defense systems worked to intercept the barrage.

Trump again urges Iranians to 'take back' their country. In brief remarks at the White House, US President Donald Trump again urged the Iranian people to "help take back your country." This time he promised the US would grant them "immunity" amid the war and ongoing dangers under the current Iranian regime.

"So, you'll be perfectly safe with total immunity," Trump said, without giving any details about what that meant.

"Or you'll face absolutely guaranteed death." Cooper and Hegseth cautioned Iranians not to take to the streets while the conflict is still raging, however.

In an interview with the news website Axios, Trump said he should be involved in choosing Iran's new supreme leader to replace Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in the opening strikes of the war.

Trump spoke dismissively of Khamenei's son, Mojtaba Khamenei, being a front-runner to replace his father, calling him "a lightweight."

"We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran," Trump said.

Iranian state television reported Friday that a leadership council had started discussing how to convene the country's Assembly of Experts, which will select the new supreme leader.

Buildings associated with the Assembly of Experts, a 88-member clerical panel, have been attacked during the Israeli-US airstrike campaign, and Israel has said it would target the next supreme leader if he poses a threat.

Israel carried out at least 11 airstrikes late Thursday and early Friday, targeting the southern suburbs of Beirut. Fires broke out near a gas station. Two hospitals evacuated patients and staff. No casualties were immediately reported.

Türk, the UN human rights chief, said he was "extremely concerned" about the situation, particularly what he described as "blanket, massive displacement orders" by Israel to civilians in Lebanon.

The Lebanese health ministry said the death toll has risen to 123 since the resurgence of hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah, which struck Israel in the opening days of the war.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Nawaf Salam slammed both Israel and Hezbollah, saying the Lebanese state and people "did not choose this war."

No country today holds overall global hegemony: Jaishankar

He highlighted how India's actions during the pandemic underscored the tangible nature of the Global South.

"When Covid happened, the fact that a country like India, which was still undergoing its vaccination, was willing to send out vaccines to countries of the global south. Means global south is for real because it meant something for us. So, there is an emotion, and I would argue to some degree a culture, where the global West is concerned. So the global south emanates from shared historical experiences," Jaishankar said.

Easing regulatory environment to attract investment: CM

regulatory burdens and fostering a more business-friendly, citizen-centric environment across Jammu and Kashmir.

He reiterated that easing the regulatory environment remains central to J&K's objective of attracting investment and ensuring that the progress under Phase 2 delivers tangible benefit to citizens, entrepreneurs and investors.

"We should endeavour to make life easy not just for industry, but for the common population as well," he said while emphasising this core governance philosophy.

Under phase 1 of the programme, the government had defined 23 priority reform areas and successfully achieved all set targets. Phase 2 builds on this foundation, expanding the scope across 23 new critical and priority areas covering healthcare, education, tourism, and industry besides other sectors.

ICC delegation interacts with director employment on enterprise mentorship apprenticeship

HIMALAYAN MAIL NEWS JAMMU, MAR 06

A delegation of the Indian Chamber of Commerce (ICC), Jammu Chapter, headed by its Chairman Rahul Sahai, along with Anil Sharma, Ashish Jain, and Zeeshan Azad, interacted with Sh. Harvinder Singh, IAS, who has recently taken charge as Director Employment J&K and Director Mission YUVA, to discuss avenues for strengthening enterprise mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities for youth in Jammu & Kashmir.

During the interaction, Harvinder Singh emphasized that the department wants prestigious trade and industry bodies to come forward and support youth



who approach Mission YUVA by providing 10-day enterprise mentorship programmes. He highlighted that established enterprises, particularly in sectors such as food, kirana, apparel and retail, can play a significant role in guiding aspiring young entrepreneurs. Through such collaboration, a strong student-enterprise connect can be established,

Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Kumar Choudhary, ministers - Sakeena Itoo, Javed Ahmed Rana, Javid Ahmad Dar and Satish Sharma - and CM's advisor Nasir Aslam Wani also participated in the deliberations.

Among others, the meeting was attended by chief secretary Atal Dulloo, additional chief secretary for the CM's office Dheeraj Gupta, PDD's financial Commissioner & additional chief secretary Ashwani Kumar and tourism department's financial commissioner & additional chief secretary Ashish Chandra Verma.

During the meeting, the chief secretary presented the current status of the ongoing reforms, highlighting the objective to substantially reduce the permissions required to start and run a business.

Omar conducted an in-depth review of each intervention area, seeking specific timelines from the departments concerned. He underscored that the purpose of regulations is to organise systems efficiently, not to create unnecessary procedural hurdles for the public. The Chief Minister emphasised the need for simpler, more direct processes across sectors and called for a visible reduction in red tape in the government's dealings with citizens and businesses.

At the systemic level, the meeting discussed measures to strengthen digital governance infrastructure. These included establishing an auto-appeal mechanism under the Public Services Guarantee Act (PSGA) to ensure time-bound delivery of citizen services and creating a centralised digital repository of all state acts, rules, regulations and Government Orders, along with a concurrent review to assess the relevance of various regulations from time to time. Reducing end-to-end turnaround times on the Single Window System was also highlighted as a priority area.

Concluding the meeting, Omar directed all departments to furnish measurable timelines for each reform intervention under discussion.

Pension bill likely to double in 10 yrs

and could pose significant risks to financial stability.

As per official data of the government, Rs 5,829 crore were paid as pension to retired employees in 2020-21 and the figure is set to go up to Rs 11,798 crore in 2030-31. This is as per a government reply to a cut motion in the Jammu and Kashmir assembly recently.

The year-wise pension outgo over the last five years has shown a steady rise - Rs 6,668 crore in 2021-22, Rs 7,463 crore in 2022-23, Rs 8,364 crore in 2023-24, Rs 9,350 crore in 2024-25 and Rs 9,127 crore in 2025-26.

Based on the number of employees retiring, the pension outgo is projected to increase further in the coming years. It is estimated to be Rs 11,798 crore in 2030-31.

Officials said that the expansion in pension commitments may continue till the early 2040s, after which the burden is expected to stabilise as employees covered under OPS substantially retire.

They said that the introduction of the New Pension Scheme (NPS) in 2010 provides a sustainable pension framework with effective fund management, unlike OPS which does not have a dedicated pension fund.

They further maintained that while fulfilling its commitment to eligible pensioners under OPS, the government ensures that developmental allocations and activities are not adversely affected. Once the pension outgo stabilises around 2040, proportionately more funds are expected to be available for the development sector, it added.

Need to make agri products export-oriented, globally-competitive: Modi

competitive sector," Modi said. The prime minister said that today the world is becoming more conscious about health, with a strong focus on holistic healthcare and organic food.

"We must place greater emphasis on chemical-free and natural farming. Natural farming creates a highway to reach markets across the world," he said.

Stressing that agriculture is also a strategic pillar of India's long-term development journey, he said that the government has continuously strengthened the agriculture sector.

"Nearly 10 crore farmers have received more than Rs 4 lakh crore through the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi. This year's Union Budget gives a strong push to agriculture and rural transformation," Modi added.

Will use all policy tools to help exporters: Piyush

ministerial group to look into the issues on a daily basis. "And the government will use every policy tool and the export promotion mission to support our exporters... We will be formalising some ways to give comfort to our exporters," Goyal told reporters here on the sidelines of IIFT's vice chancellors' conclave.

He was responding to the demands of exporters seeking government intervention to help them tide over the problems following the disruptions in the movements of goods on account of the ongoing war between the US and Israel with Iran.

Exporters are facing issues with regard to the movement of consignments to West Asia as certain shipping lines are demanding high war-risk surcharges of up to USD 4,000 per 40 ft container, and some ships are stranded in international waters.

These developments have significantly pushed freight rates and insurance premiums.

West Asia is a key trading partner of India. In 2025, India imported USD 98.7 billion worth of goods from West Asia, making the region a crucial supplier for energy, fertilisers and industrial raw materials. Exports to the West Asian economies stood at USD 58.8 billion in 2024-25.

The commerce ministry, Goyal said, is in dialogue with the ministry of shipping and with shipping companies on the issues of exporters. "And I do hope we will find a resolution to this issue also," he said.

considering relaxing norms by abolishing the requirement of enterprise registration for participation in apprenticeship, thereby enabling more businesses to contribute.

Harvinder Singh noted that a large number of youth coming to the department express interest in starting ventures such as kirana shops, clothing showrooms, and food joints, and enterprises operating in these areas can greatly assist them through mentorship and real-time guidance. He also informed that Mission YUVA will soon collaborate with Mission Skilling, which will allow the manufacturing sector to actively participate in training and employing youth under various government schemes.

Asked about the issue of rising freight costs, he said the ministry is working with them to see how the burden on exporters can be mitigated.

They are urging the government to waive port-related charges, including storage and demurrage, in cases where cargo is rolled due to vessel cancellations or steep freight increases beyond exporters' control. Further, they have requested facilitation for cargo in transit to be returned, redirected or diverted, with support from customs authorities and the Reserve Bank of India for documentation and payment adjustments.

Rice exporters have sought an official advisory from the government recognising the disruption as a force majeure-type event, which they say would help prevent contractual penalties.

Anuj tops civil services exam

amination with medical science as his optional subject. He has done MBBS (Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) from the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), Jodhpur, Rajasthan.

Rajeshwari, who holds a Bachelor of Engineering (BE) degree in Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE) from Anna University, Chennai, achieved the second rank with Sociology as her optional subject. Akansh, a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom) graduate from University of Delhi, stood third in the rank with commerce & accountancy as his optional subject.

Among the finally qualified candidates, top five comprises one woman and four men.

Raghav Jhunjhunwala and Ishan Bhatnagar have got the fourth and fifth rank respectively.

Jhunjhunwala, who has a Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Economics from University of Delhi, secured fourth rank with Economics as his optional subject.

Bhatnagar, who holds BA LLB (Hons) from National Law University, Delhi, secured fifth rank with Sociology as his optional subject.

The top 25 candidates comprise 11 women and 14 men.

A total of 14,161 candidates qualified for appearance in the written (main) examination which was held in August, 2025. Of these, as many as 2,736 candidates had qualified for the personality test (interview) of the examination.

"The UPSC has declared the final results of the CSE 2025 today. Congrats to all successful candidates as you begin a career of service to the nation. For those who did not make it - the learning from this journey will guide you in the paths ahead," UPSC chairman Ajay Kumar said in a post on X.

Educational qualifications of top 25 successful candidates range from graduation in engineering, humanities, science, commerce, law, medical science and mass media from premier institutions of the country such as Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), National Law University (NLU), AIIMS, Delhi Technological University (DTU), Anna University, University of Delhi and University of Mumbai among others.

Top 25 successful candidates have opted for subjects like anthropology, commerce & accountancy, chemistry, economics, electrical engineering, history, mathematics, medical science, philosophy, political science & international relations, public administration and sociology as their optional choice in the written (main) examination.

The UPSC said the recommended candidates also include 42 Persons with Benchmark Disability - 10 orthopedically handicapped, 14 visually challenged, nine hearing impaired and nine with multiple disabilities.

As many as 258 other candidates have been put on a reserve list, it said.

Of the total qualified candidates, 317 belong to the General category, 104 from Economically Weaker Section (EWS), 306 from Other Backward Class (OBC), 158 from Scheduled Caste (SC) and 73 from Scheduled Tribe (ST) categories.

The result of two candidates has been kept withheld, the Commission said.

The Centre had reported 1,087 vacancies to be filled through the civil services examination.

The UPSC has a "facilitation counter" near the examination hall in its campus.

Candidates can obtain any information/clarification regarding their examinations/recruitments on the working days between 10 am to 5 pm in person or over telephone numbers 23385271/23381125/2309854.

"Marks will be available on the website within 15 days from the date of declaration of result," the statement said.

Banaras Hindu University's postgraduate Shakti Dubey and Haryana's Harshita Goyal have bagged the first and second rank, respectively, in the civil services examination 2024, with three women, including the topper, securing positions in the top four.

Zojila Pass remains open despite heavy snowfall

marking a significant milestone in maintaining winter connectivity.

In a post on social media, the BRO said the development reflects the "relentless commitment" of its personnel in ensuring that the critical road link between Ladakh and Kashmir remains open.

"History at the heights of Zojila! For the first time ever, Zojila Pass has remained open beyond February 28 and continues to stay operational despite very heavy snowfall - a testament to the relentless commitment of #BRO in keeping the lifeline between Ladakh and the Kashmir Valley open," the BRO said in a post on X.

A video shared by the BRO shows massive walls of snow lining the highway while snow-clearance machines and personnel work continuously to keep the road operational. The footage captures bulldozers and snow cutters carving a narrow passage through thick layers of snow as vehicles cautiously move along the cleared stretch, highlighting the extreme weather conditions and the scale of the operation.

Last winter, Zojila Pass remained closed for about 30 days. Officials said this year the pass has stayed open beyond February 28, setting a major record. Although comparatively less snowfall was recorded this winter in the higher reaches, including the Zojila Pass, officials said challenging weather conditions still prevailed.

2 pilots killed in Sukhoi-30 fighter jet crash

loss of Sqn Ldr Anuj and Flt Lt Purvesh Duragkar, who sustained fatal injuries in the Su-30 crash. All personnel of the IAF express sincere condolences and stand firmly with the bereaved family in this time of grief," the IAF said in a post on X. A defence spokesperson said in Guwahati that the debris of the aircraft was located early on Friday.

The IAF search and rescue team, assisted by civil and police administration and villagers, had trekked to the site and located the debris around 1 am, the official said.

RSP secures "two-thirds majority" in parliamentary polls

recorded a preliminary voter turnout of about 60 per cent. Observers view the outcome as a potential new dawn for Nepal.

"Maybe I think every foreign country is talking about Nepal's corruption. They're discussing; they're talking about Nepal's corruption, corruption, corruption. When we started our party, the RSP felt that we needed to work to reduce corruption almost to zero--that's our main agenda. Everyone needs to feel that we have a government for them, and they need to feel it from the heart. As we plan to provide development, delivery is the major agenda for now in this country, and we hope we will succeed," the RSP Vice President added.

KP Sharma Oli himself is trailing behind Balendra Shah, who currently leads by over 13,000 votes, while Oli trails with a margin of just over 3,000 votes.

Final results, covering 165 directly elected seats and 110

through proportional representation, are expected within the next week.

SC raps delayed appeals, warns disobedient litigants of contempt

ther effect of bringing down the authority and majesty of courts and the rule of law, interfering in the administration of justice. The same may well, in certain situations, border on criminal contempt."

The Supreme Court also urged high courts to take a strict view of such cases, especially when the litigants are state authorities or bodies covered under Article 12 of the Constitution.

High courts should deal with such "unscrupulous litigants, more so when they happen to be 'State', within the meaning of Article 12 of the Constitution, or like bodies, with an iron hand", the bench said, adding: "Unless HCs, so also this court, deal with these aspects firmly, we run the clear risk of erosion of the unflinching faith that the ordinary litigants of this country repose in the judiciary at all levels. It is the solemn duty of all of us manning courts across the hierarchy to ensure that the public faith never wavers."

The observations came while hearing a contempt petition against officials of the Government of Chhattisgarh for failing to comply with a court order regarding the regularisation of certain employees. The court granted them a final opportunity to implement the order within 15 days.

India on verge of eliminating Maoists: Shah

pati in Nepal. Addressing a function marking the 57th Raising Day of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) at Mundali in Odisha's Cuttack district, he said the force acts as a catalyst for the country's economic growth by providing security to major establishments.

"Today, I want to assure the nation that the country will be Maoist-free by March 31. Our forces will defeat those who dream of building a red corridor from Tirupati to Pashupati," he said.

It will be a big achievement for the country's security forces under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to uproot Maoists from the country, Shah said.

"Our security forces have reached the expectations, and the country is now on the verge of eliminating the red rebels," he said.

He said that the vision of building a strong national economy and making India the world's largest economy cannot be realised without industrial development, and providing a secure environment for industrial growth requires a national-level industrial security force.

In his address, Shah said that after completing 56 years today, the CISF has risen from zero to the pinnacle in the field of industrial security, which is a saga of the force's dedication and valour.

Shah inaugurated two residential projects and laid foundation stones for three reserve battalions with a total cost of Rs 890 crore on virtual mode.

Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi, Assembly Speaker Surama Padhy, Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan and others were present at the programme.

Resolution seeking Birla's removal follows rules, debate must take place: Cong

"We had given specific instances of partisan behaviour (by the speaker), while false allegations were levelled against the opposition members. We have given the context, and a debate should take place," Ramesh said.

The Lok Sabha will witness a rare moment, most likely next Monday, when Birla will not chair the proceedings but will be seated among the members as the House takes up a notice seeking his removal from office.

According to the rules and laid down procedures, Birla will have the right to defend himself when the resolution is discussed by the Lower House.

He will also have the right to vote against the resolution, Constitution expert P D T Achary said.

The panel helps to run the House in the speaker's absence.

The resolution alleged that Speaker Birla acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner in conducting the business of the House and "abused" the constitutional office he occupies.

Three Lok Sabha speakers - G V Mavlankar (1954), Hukam Singh (1966) and Balram Jakhur (1987) - faced no-confidence motions in the past, which were all negated.

India gets 30-day waiver from US to buy Russian oil

not provide significant financial benefit to the Russian government, as it only authorises transactions involving oil already stranded at sea.

"India is an essential partner of the United States, and we fully anticipate that New Delhi will ramp up purchases of U.S. oil. This stop-gap measure will alleviate pressure caused by Iran's attempt to take global energy hostage," Bessent said in a post on X.

US President Donald Trump had imposed 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India for buying Russian oil, with the administration asserting that Delhi's purchases were helping fuel Russia's war against Ukraine.

Last month, the US and India announced they had reached a framework for an Interim Agreement on trade, and Trump issued an Executive Order removing the 25 per cent punitive tariffs on India, noting the commitment by New Delhi to stop importing energy from Moscow and increase purchasing American energy products.

The general license issued by the Treasury Department said it does not authorise any other transactions or activities prohibited by any other Executive order, including any transaction or activity involving Iran, the Government of Iran, or Iranian-origin goods or services that is prohibited by the Iranian Transactions and Sanctions Regulations.

Won't disclose data on crude export to India: Russia

Peskov was issued in response to US President Donald Trump's assertion that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi had purportedly agreed to cease buying Russian oil.

Peskov stated, "We, along with all other international energy experts, are well aware that Russia is not the only supplier of oil and petroleum products to India. India has always purchased these products from other countries. Therefore, we see nothing new here."

India has historically relied on diverse sources for its oil imports, which constitute approximately 88 pc of its total consumption. Following Western sanctions imposed on Russia after its invasion of Ukraine in 2022, India had increased its Russian crude imports significantly, reaching over two million barrels per day at certain points in 2025 due to discounted prices. This association between India and Russian oil has remained prominent since late 2022.

17 from J&K clear UPSC civil services exam

Akash (747), Koh-e-Safa (763), Yasaar (811), Abhishek (820), Pankaj (856), Mohammad Ajaz (869), Azhar (886), Sarfraz (936) and Irfan (957).

Among the finally qualified candidates, top five comprises one woman and four men.

A total of 958 candidates - 659 men and 299 women - have qualified the examination and are recommended for appointment to different central civil services, the commission said, adding that the candidature of 348 recommended candidates has been kept provisional.

The civil services examination (CSE) is conducted annually in three stages - preliminary, main and interview - by the UPSC to select officers of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), Indian Foreign Service (IFS) and Indian Police Service (IPS) among others.