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Modi to lead discussion on inclusive growth, policy implementation

industry and experts so that the policy vision outlined in the budget can be effectively translated into concrete initiatives.

"The objective is to generate practical recommendations and implementation roadmaps so that the initiatives announced in the Budget can be executed efficiently and deliver tangible benefits to citizens," an official said.

"Since assuming office, the Modi government has increasingly used post-budget consultations as a mechanism to narrow the gap between policy formulation and on-ground implementation. By bringing together sector specialists, entrepreneurs and policymakers, the government hopes to refine strategies, address potential challenges early and accelerate the delivery of development programmes.

"Officials said the ideas and recommendations emerging from the discussions will help guide the next steps for ministries and departments responsible for implementing the budget proposals. The broader aim, they added, is to ensure that economic growth is accompanied by wider access to opportunities and improved public services.

"The theme 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas,' which has been a central pillar of the Modi government's development philosophy, reflects the emphasis on inclusive growth and equitable opportunities for all sections of society. With the Union Budget setting the policy direction for the coming financial year, the webinar is expected to play a key role in aligning government initiatives with industry participation and expert insights, helping turn policy aspirations into measurable outcomes on the ground.

Must cultivate work culture that eliminates delays in delivering justice: LG

life and a corruption-free Union Territory". "Today, J&K stands at a pivotal juncture. Over the past 5-6 years, we have ushered in transformative changes, rendering the system transparent and dedicating it to public service. Entire machinery now operates not for the benefit of a select few, but for every individual across the Union Territory," the LG said.

"Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, we have established a faceless mechanism to eradicate corruption from government processes, eliminate delays, and deliver all services directly to ordinary citizens," he added.

"The speed of project execution has accelerated significantly over the past few years. Revolutionary progress in industry, infrastructure, agriculture, self-employment, health, power, and rural development across nearly every sector has stemmed from a transparent and accountable governance model," he said.

"Your efforts should thrive on maximum collaboration. In today's interconnected world, corruption knows no borders, and data scatters across various networks. Information held by one agency might form the crucial final piece in another's probe, so genuine and timely cooperation is essential wherever needed," he said.

The LG also called for speedy investigation and said, "Delayed justice does not merely deny society its due but it also actively undermines outcomes in corruption cases."

"We must recognise that corruption is no abstract offense committed solely against the public exchequer but a direct assault on the lives of living human beings. The ill effects of corruption extend far beyond economic damage; it scars the lives of multiple generations. We must work together to build a corruption-free J&K," he said.

"The newly established APKS branch at Awantipora will cater to the ACB police station, Anantnag, which has jurisdiction over all districts of South Kashmir. The facility is expected to enhance operational efficiency, improve accessibility, and facilitate timely handling of complaints and investigations in the region," he added.

ACB director Shakti Kumar Pathak briefed about the functioning of the bureau and the salient features of the newly constructed buildings. "The enhanced infrastructure will provide a conducive working environment and strengthen field-level vigilance operations," he said.

Chief secretary Atal Dulloo, ADGP (headquarters) M K Sinha, LG's principal secretary Mandeep K Bhandari, GAD commissioner M Raju, divisional commissioner Ramesh Kumar, IGP Bhim Sen Tuti, deputy commissioner Rakesh Minhas and senior officials attended the inaugural ceremony.

Committed to ensure women's safety: Omar

He greeted women on International Women's Day, and lauded their strength, resilience and contribution to society.

"On the occasion of International Women's Day, the chief minister has extended his warm greetings and heartfelt appreciation to women for their strength, resilience, and invaluable contributions in shaping families, communities, and society," the CM's office said in a post on X.

Omar reaffirmed the government's unwavering commitment to ensuring their empowerment, safety, dignity, and equal opportunities across all spheres of life, the post added.

Schools to reopen in Kashmir

the reopening schedule after the winter vacation. The director extended a warm welcome to students from classes 1 to 8, who would be attending school tomorrow on the first day after the winter break.

Emphasising the importance of a positive start to the academic session, he directed all Heads of Institutions (HOIs) and teaching staff to receive students warmly and ensure that the reopening day was conducted in accordance with the previously issued guidelines and instructions.

The school education department reaffirmed its commitment to providing a supportive and welcoming environment for students as they return to their schools after the winter vacation.

Man booked for sharing 'provocative' videos on social media

legedly aimed at provoking youth and the general public, thereby posing a potential threat to public order, officials said.

Police urged citizens to refrain from sharing unverified or provocative content on social media and to cooperate with authorities in maintaining peace, order, and harmony in the district.

Cong slams Centre on rising pollution

tional Clean Air Programme (NCAP) itself needs a laser-like focus on PM2.5.

"PM2.5 that is, particulate matter with a diameter of less than 2.5 micrometers or lower measured in micrograms per cubic meter of air as emerged as the cause for a severe environment-public health crisis across the country," the former environment minister said on X.

A study published in The Lancet Planetary Health in December 2024, based on data from 655 districts over 2009-2019, found that every 10 microgram per cubic metre increase in PM2.5 concentration leads to an 8.6% increase in mortality, Ramesh pointed out.

The 2025 Lancet Countdown estimates that about 17.2 lakh Indians die every year from exposure to PM2.5, a 38% increase since 2010, he said.

The Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has repeatedly told Parliament in 2024, 2025 and again in 2026 that deaths on account of air pollution "cannot be conclusively established", he pointed out.

Meanwhile, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), the Health Ministry's own research body, has endorsed the Lancet findings, attributing 12.4 lakh deaths in 2017 to air pollution, that is 12.5% of all deaths that year, Ramesh said.

Now, the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) has done a detailed analysis of the data generated by the continuous ambient air quality monitoring stations operated by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), he said, adding that the data covers the period October 1, 2025 to February 2026 for 238 cities.

The conclusions are very disturbing and should be yet another wake-up call to all those who are in denial mode, he said.

Citing the analysis, Ramesh said none of the 238 cities complied with the WHO safe guidelines for PM2.5.

"In 204 of the 238 cities PM2.5 concentrations were above the levels set by the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) that were promulgated way back in November 2009. Subsequently, the WHO announced its updated safe guideline in September 2021," Ramesh said.

The Indian standard for the annual average concentration of PM2.5 is now 8 times weaker than the WHO guideline, he said.

"The National Ambient Air Quality Standards, 2009 need urgent review and upgradation. They also must be enforced and monitored more effectively everywhere. In addition, the NCAP itself needs a laser-like focus on PM2.5," the Congress leader asserted.

Ranji triumph has energised J&K youth: Jitendra

tion of opportunities that had led to a renewed sense of aspiration and self-confidence among them in the region.

"Our boys have won Ranji Trophy. This proves there was never a shortage of talent, ability or potential among our children. When they are given the right opportunity at the right time, they display confidence, focus and a strong spirit of hard work," he said while speaking to media after hosting the winning team at his residence here.

The minister felicitated the players, coaching staff and officials for their remarkable campaign in India's premier domestic cricket tournament and congratulated them for bringing laurels to J&K.

J&K bagged its maiden Ranji Trophy title, holding eight-time champions Karnataka to a draw in which the former gained a 291-run first innings lead at Hubballi on February 28.

Dr Singh described the victory as a proud moment and said the achievement proved that there was never any shortage of talent or potential among the youngsters of Jammu and Kashmir.

Sharing the felicitations moments on X, the minister wrote, "Their remarkable achievement has not only energised the entire youth community of this region but also vindicated the belief that democratisation of opportunities and a level playing field, provided under the dispensation headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has led to an aspirational surge and renewed self-confidence among the youth."

No-trust resolution against Birla, West Asia crisis to dominate

all Parliamentarians along and was committed to the principles of the Constitution and Parliamentary democracy.

Apart from the no-trust notice, the US-Israel strikes on Iran and growing tensions in West Asia that have led to disruption in crude oil supplies and escalation in prices are also likely to come up during the session. The opposition is expected to question the government's policy on the matter.

TMC MPs are set to raise the heat on the SIR matter in the House, while the BJP may rake-up the issue of President Droupadi Murmu's "protocol breach" during her visit to West Bengal on Saturday.

The government is also expected to pilot the Electricity Amendment Bill in the remainder of the budget session, besides taking up other pending legislative business from the first half of the session.

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

Women key to nation's progress: Prez

opment. She was addressing the concluding session of a two-day national conference of women thinkers titled 'Bharti - Naari Se Narayani' at Vigyan Bhawan here.

The conference, held on March 7 & 8, brought together around 1,500 women thinkers and professionals from across the country to deliberate on issues such as women's empowerment, education, leadership, self-reliance and their role in nation-building.

The event was organised by Rashtra Sevika Samiti, the women's wing of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, along with Bhartiya Vidvat Parishad, which promotes research and studies in Indian shastras, and Sharanya Organisation, an affiliate of the Samiti working to promote education, skills, self-reliance and leadership among women from disadvantaged communities.

Highlighting the role of women in shaping Indian society and national progress, the President said women are equal to, and in many aspects even surpass, men in qualities such as service, dedication, nationalism, courage, patience and talent.

"In most convocation ceremonies at higher education institutions, the number of female students receiving medals for outstanding performance is higher. This shows that, given the opportunity, girls can perform better," she said.

At the same time, Murmu said it was important to acknowledge the continuing challenges faced by women. "Even today, many women face social stereotypes, economic inequalities and psychological barriers," she noted.

She said organisations working at the grassroots could play a significant role in strengthening women's participation in national development and enabling them to realise their full potential.

Speaking at the closing ceremony, V Shanta Kumari said women should strengthen their capabilities while remaining rooted in Indian cultural values. She added that greater competence would naturally bring respect and help women emerge as role models in society.

Ruthless India hammer New Zealand by 96 runs

phatic fashion, hammering New Zealand by 96 runs in a one-sided final on Sunday.

India became the first team to win the men's T20 World Cup on home soil and the first to successfully defend the title. They also moved ahead of England (2010, 2022) and the West Indies (2012, 2016) to become the only side with three men's T20 World Cup crowns - in 2007, 2024 and 2026.

Suryakumar Yadav, a late bloomer who was handed over captaincy at 33, joined a league of legends - Kapil Dev, MS Dhoni, Rohit Sharma and Harmanpreet Kaur as the only captains to have won World Cups for India.

Backing an approach they have carefully cultivated in the dressing room over the last two years, India shattered the record books after being sent in to bat. They piled up a staggering 255, turning the grand arena into a festival of boundaries and sixes.

Sanju Samson, in the form of his life, was once again the star, smashing 89 off 46 balls and falling agonisingly short of a hundred for the third successive time in this tournament. Ruthless fifties from Ishan Kishan (54 off 25) and Abhishek Sharma (52 off 21), along with another masterful finishing act from Shivam Dube (26 not out off 8), powered

India to a 250-plus total for the second successive time.

Chasing a Himalayan target, New Zealand never quite recovered from the early damage. Unlike England in the semifinal, the BlackCaps lacked the spark of a defiant centurion like Jacob Bethell as they struggled to keep pace with the asking rate. Three wickets fell inside the powerplay and the chase was already slipping away. By the time New Zealand slumped to 72 for 5 in the ninth over, the result felt inevitable. It was a walk in the park for the rest of the chase for India as they completed the formalities before bursting into celebration.

New Zealand were bundled out for 159 in 19 overs as Jasprit Bumrah led a disciplined show of bowling, finishing with figures of 4 for 15.

For the BlackCaps, who had swept aside an unbeaten South Africa in the semifinal, the final step once again proved the hardest. They had come so close to the summit yet again - but only almost there.

Ahmedabad, despite its grandeur, had long been haunted by the echoing silence of November 19, 2023. For many, the Narendra Modi Stadium had become a reminder of heartbreak rather than triumph.

But on Sunday night, that narrative finally changed. The ghosts were chased away by a fearless Indian side that turned the giant arena into a fortress once again. In front of packed stands, India gave the crowd exactly what it had come for - dominance, drama and celebration.

India batted first then as well. But they were timid, shackled by the fear of failure. On Sunday, however, Suryakumar Yadav's men batted as if they knew no fear, striking the ball as though they were in the nets, smashing net bowlers into the stands.

There has often been a critique of the Ahmedabad crowd: that the energy fades the moment India finds itself in trouble. On November 19, when Pat Cummins promised to silence the sea of blue, that silence arrived with chilling efficiency. This time, however, there was never a chance for the noise to fade.

Indian batters ensured the fans were entertained from start to finish. A largely Gen Z core, fearless, expressive and unapologetically aggressive, delivered a performance that kept the crowd roaring through the night. Boundaries flowed, wickets fell, and the atmosphere never dipped, turning what was once a painful venue into a fortress of celebration.

Here is a telling stat. Before Suryakumar Yadav and Gautam Gambhir came together, India had crossed the 250-run mark only once in T20Is. Since July 2024, they have gone past 250 six times. In this T20 World Cup alone? Three times.

Wang Yi calls for India-China unity amid West Asia conflict

Wang Yi emphasised that the use of military power "will never resolve" the deep-seated crisis in the region. He warned that the reliance on force undermines the established international order, stating, "A strong fist does not mean strong reason. The world cannot return to the law of the jungle."

Al Jazeera reported that the Foreign Minister expressed China's firm opposition to any efforts aimed at destabilising the Iranian government. Wang noted that he believes there is no popular support for regime change in Iran, suggesting that such objectives would only serve to further inflame regional tensions.

This call for restraint from Beijing comes as the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) announced that the Israeli Air Force (IAF) conducted targeted strikes against multiple Iranian military assets in the capital city. In a post on X, the military official account stated, "STRUCK: Several Fuel Storage Complexes Belonging to the IRGC in Tehran."

The operation, which was "guided by IDF intelligence", targeted specific locations that the military identified as hubs for the distribution of resources to various armed units. The IDF noted that the "IAF struck these complexes, where the Iranian terrorist regime would distribute fuel to multiple military entities in Iran."

Despite the collapse of Iranian military capacity, US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff, who was also present on Air Force One, told the media that a diplomatic deal remains possible, though it remains up to the President.

Referring to previous failures, Witkoff noted, "But they didn't seem to be very amenable in that first set of negotiations. You heard what I said. They said we have the inalienable right to enrich. They bragged about having 60 per cent enriched fuel enough for 11 bombs. And they told me and Jared, 'we're not going to give you diplomatically what you couldn't take militarily.' So you know I think they're going to need a change of attitude."

The current situation is the culmination of a joint US-Israel military strike on February 28 on Iranian territory, which resulted in the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and other senior figures, prompting a fierce response from Tehran.

In response, Iran retaliated by launching ballistic missiles and drones at US assets and allies across the region, including Israel, Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan, further widening the conflict in West Asia and heightening risks for civilians and expatriates alike.

EAM to speak in LS on West Asia conflict

rael launched joint strikes on Iran on February 28, killing the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and plunging the Middle East into its most deadly conflict in years. Hundreds of people have lost their lives so far with no end in sight for the conflict.

The government has so far tread a fine line. It asked all countries to respect "territorial integrity", an oblique reference to the attack on Iran. Once, Tehran launched reciprocal strikes against Gulf countries, the government called those heads of states to show support.

Five days after Khamenei was killed, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri had reached Tehran's India embassy in New Delhi and offered condolences.

Hundreds of Indians live and work in the Gulf and the government is reportedly working on a multi-pronged plan to safeguard its human and commercial interests.

The session will begin with obituary references to several parliamentarians who lost their lives including Ricky Andrew J Syngkon, Kumari Sushila Triyari, Devi Bux Singh, Purnmasi Ram and KP Unnikrishnan

As part of the proceedings, several ministers will lay certain papers on the table, including Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, MoS Home Affairs Nityanand Rai and Petroleum and Natural Gas MoS Suresh Gopi.

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will then rise to give a statement.

This will be followed by the Opposition's motion against the Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla.

India taps alternative crude supplies as Iran conflict drags on

sanctioned Russian oil that has already been loaded on vessels to India has opened up another avenue.

The waiver permits the sale, delivery or discharge of crude oil and petroleum products of Russian origin that were loaded onto vessels on or before March 5, including ships subject to certain sanctions. The exemption remains valid until April 5, allowing cargoes already in transit to be completed without violating sanctions restrictions.

There were 120 million barrels of Russian crude on the water. Of this, as many as 15 million barrels of Russia-origin crude are sitting on tankers close to India - in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal - while another 7 million Russian crude barrels are idling near Singapore.

Industry sources said Indian refiners have started buying Russian oil.

Reliance Industries, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd and HPCL-Mittal Energy Ltd, which had halted purchases of Russian crude following US sanctions imposed last year on Moscow's leading producers Rosneft and

Lukoil, have returned to the market to secure Russian cargoes, they said.

Before the United States imposed sanctions on Russia's leading oil producers Rosneft and Lukoil in October 2025, Reliance Industries was the largest buyer of Russian crude, importing more than 500,000 barrels per day under a long-term supply agreement with Rosneft.

The Oil Ministry official said India never stopped buying Russian oil - it imported some 1.04 million barrels per day of Russian crude in February, down from 1.6-1.8 million bpd levels seen in 2023-2025.

"We are in a very comfortable position as far as crude and finished products are concerned," he said, adding the combined inventory can meet the country's demand for 50 days.

The country currently holds approximately 144 million barrels of crude in onshore storage, equivalent to around 30 days of coverage at 2025 import levels.

Importantly, the supplies are being constantly replenished, he said.

India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves have the capacity to cover about 9.5 days of net oil imports. In addition, state-run oil companies have storage for crude and petroleum products equivalent to 64.5 days of net imports, taking the country's total storage capacity to roughly 74 days of net imports, according to petroleum ministry data.

India's exposure to crude flows through the Strait of Hormuz was lower at about 41 per cent in 2025, but has increased in recent months as refiners curtailed purchases of Russian crude. Imports from Russia averaged around 1.15 million barrels per day in the first two months of 2026, compared with about 1.7 million bpd in 2025.

Iran picks next Supreme Leader after Khamenei's death

Mirbagheri, also confirmed that the clerical council had reached a consensus.

"A firm opinion reflecting the majority view has been reached," Mirbagheri said in a video carried by Iran's Fars news agency.

The Assembly of Experts is the body responsible for appointing Iran's supreme leader, the country's highest authority who holds ultimate control over the military, judiciary and key state institutions.

The decision comes after the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed in joint United States and Israeli air strikes, triggering a major escalation in tensions across the Middle East.

US President Donald Trump had announced Khamenei's death after the strikes, writing that "Khamenei, one of the most evil people in history, was dead," and calling the attack "justice for the people of Iran" and for Americans and others allegedly harmed by Tehran.

Iranian state television earlier reported that President Masoud Pezeshkian, judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei and another senior official would oversee the transitional period until a new supreme leader formally takes office.

Under Iran's constitution, the 88-member Assembly of Experts is responsible for selecting the supreme leader. The body is made up of Shia clerics who are elected by the public every eight years, although candidates must first be approved by the Guardian Council, Iran's constitutional oversight body.

Iranian law requires the Assembly of Experts to appoint a new supreme leader "as soon as possible" following the death of the incumbent.

Israel renews assault on Lebanon; Netanyahu promises 'many surprises'

Trump said he had ruled out having Kurds join the war, even though Kurdish fighters in the region were willing to assist in efforts to topple the Iranian government.

"The war is complicated enough without having... the Kurds involved," Trump told reporters.

Days ago, Kurdish officials said that Kurdish-Iranian dissident groups based in northern Iraq were preparing for a potential cross-border military operation in Iran and that the U.S. had asked Iraqi Kurds to support them.

The US and Israel have targeted Iran's military capabilities, leadership and nuclear program. The war's stated goals and timelines have repeatedly shifted as the US has at times suggested it seeks to topple Iran's government or elevate new leadership.

The fighting has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, more than 290 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials in those countries. Six U.S. troops have been killed.

Three Iraqi security officials said a missile landed on the helicopter landing pad in the US Embassy complex in Baghdad. They spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to comment publicly. An embassy spokesperson declined to comment. There were no reports of casualties.

It was the first reported strike to land in Baghdad's heavily fortified Green Zone since the Iran war began. Iran and allied Iraqi militias have launched dozens of attacks on US military bases and other facilities in Iraq since then. Iraq's caretaker Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani called the embassy attack a "terrorist act" carried out by "rogue groups."

Hours after Pezeshkian's apology, the United Arab Emirates said debris from an aerial interception fell onto a vehicle and killed a driver. Four people have now been killed in the UAE since the war began. Authorities have said all were foreign nationals.

Sirens sounded earlier Saturday in Bahrain as Iran targeted the island kingdom. Saudi Arabia said it destroyed drones headed toward its vast Shaybah oil field and shot down a ballistic missile launched toward Prince Sultan Air Base, which hosts US forces.

In Kuwait, authorities said a wave of drones targeted critical infrastructure, including fuel tanks at Kuwait International Airport and a government building in Kuwait City. At least two people were killed by strikes in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian appeared to apologize Saturday for attacks on "neighboring countries," even as his country's missiles and drones flew toward Gulf Arab states and hard-liners asserted that Tehran's war strategy would not change.

Iran's UN mission later suggested, without offering evidence, that strikes on nonmilitary sites "may have resulted from interception by US electronic defense systems."

Late Saturday, top Iranian security official Ali Larjani asserted in an address carried by state media that "our leaders are united on this issue and have no disagreements with one another."

Consider female lawyers of SC for judgeship: CJI to HC collegiums

Supreme Court and the high courts across the country consciously embedded fairness into their processes.

"We must all understand that reform of this nature is not an event; it is a continuous process. The cultivation of institutional fairness requires persistence beyond individual tenures and beyond individual personalities. It may not reach full fruition within my term of office, nor within that of my sister or brother judges. That, however, cannot and should not determine the depth of our commitment," he said.

CJI Kant added that when that happens, representation will no longer depend on personalities or moments of resolve - it will stand anchored in the structure of the institution itself, and that, ultimately, is how enduring change is made.

He said that an area of reform lies within the high court collegiums and they must recognise that the moment for measured action is not in the future, but it is now.

"The legal profession, over time, has unwittingly developed a working climate that imposes invisible costs disproportionately on women. From late-night briefings and inadequate facilities to unreported workplace bias and repeated questioning of authority. These are daily realities that, I am sure, all of you are all too familiar with.