



### Govt Says Air India Plane Crash Probe Report Will Be Out "Very Soon"

P-7

### Meenakshi Chaudhary Opens Up On Bhagam Bhag 2: 'It Felt Like Pure Laughter'

P-10



### NEET UG application deadline extended

The National Testing Agency has extended the last date for submission of application forms for the upcoming National Eligibility cum Entrance Test - Undergraduate 2026 (NEET-UG exams) up to 9 pm of March 11. The previous deadline was March 8.

An official release said the last date for submission of fees for the exam would be until 11.50 pm of the same day. Updates can be obtained from

Cont. on P9 >

### Soldier goes missing during training

An Army jawan went missing during a river crossing training in Sunderbani sub-sector of Rajouri district of Jammu today.

The missing soldier was identified as Sepoy Akshit Sharma.

"During a river crossing training exercise conducted in the general area of Sunderbani, Sepoy Akshit Sharma was reported missing at around 12 noon

Cont. on P9 >

### Police HC held in graft case

The ACB today trapped and arrested a Head Constable posted at Talwara police post in Reasi district for allegedly demanding and accepting a bribe of Rs 5,000 from the complainant.

According to officials, ACB booked Head Constable Parvaiz Ahmed Bhati of Mandhar, Haveli, in Poonch district, under section 07 of Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988.

The accused was alleged to have demanded the bribe from the complainant for dropping certain sections of law in the case registered against him at Talwara PP.

Cont. on P9 >

### No immediate hike in petrol, diesel prices

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: Petrol and diesel prices will not be increased for now despite international crude oil rates crossing USD 100 per barrel, government sources said on Monday, even as authorities stepped up efforts to maintain uninterrupted fuel supply lines across the country.

As the conflict in West Asia entered the tenth day, world markets plummeted, and Brent crude oil, the international standard, surged to nearly USD 120 a barrel, about 65 per cent higher than when the war started, before retreating.

Cont. on P9 >

### LPG booking period increased

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: To prevent hoarding and black marketing, the booking period for LPG gas cylinders has been increased from 21 to 25 days.

"There were instances that people who were earlier booking LPG cylinders in 55 days have started booking cylinders in 15 days," official sources said.

The government has ordered refineries to boost LPG output and also ordered to prioritise domestic LPG over commercial connections.

"Domestic consumers will always be a priority,"

Cont. on P9 >

## West Asia crisis

# India's response focused on peace, de-escalation: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: *Stating that the ongoing crisis, which erupted on February 28, had already escalated into one of the most dangerous confrontations the region had seen in decades, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar today told Parliament that 'India favours a return to dialogue & diplomacy to restore stability in West Asia and its response to the escalating conflict is guided by three core principles - peace, de-escalation, and safeguarding national interests.*

"However, the well-being and security of the Indian community in the region remains the government's overriding priority," he said.

The US and Israel launched a major military attack on Iran on February 28, and killed its 86-year-old Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The



war has so far killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, 397 in Lebanon and 11 in Israel, according to officials.

Making a suo-motu statement in Parliament, Jaishankar said New Delhi stood for maintaining the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states in the region. He defended allowing the Iranian ship to dock at an Indian port as the right decision taken on humanitarian grounds.

He said the Indian government has been constantly monitoring the evolving situation in the region at the highest level

and has already brought back 67,000 stranded Indians from the conflict zone.

Jaishankar said the safety of Indian nationals and national interests, such as energy security and trade, remain the topmost priority for the government.

"India is in favour of peace and urges a return to dialogue and diplomacy. We advocate de-escalation, restraint, and ensuring the safety of civilians," he said in identical statements in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

"The well-being and security of the Indian community in the region is our priority. And our national interests, including energy security and trade, will always be paramount," he said.

In both houses, the Opposition staged vociferous protests as Jaishankar rose to make his suo-motu statement, demanding that a full-fledged discussion should precede his statement on the situation in West Asia. While the Opposition staged a walkout in the Rajya Sabha, they forced the Lok Sabha to be adjourned amid noisy scenes.

The minister said the government had issued a statement on February 28, expressing its deep concern and urging all sides to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians.

"We believed and continue to believe that dialogue and diplomacy should be pursued to de-

Cont. on P9 >

## Fulfilling people's aspirations core objective of Union Budget: Modi

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: Prime Minister Narendra Modi today said that fulfilling aspirations of people was not merely a topic of discussion but a fundamental objective of the Union Budget.

He said health, education, skill development, tourism, sports, and culture were some of the sectors that act as a medium to fulfil these aspirations. He sought suggestions for strengthening them.

"India has taken leaps in providing holistic healthcare," Modi said and underlined how initiatives such as telemedicine had made care accessible in remote areas.

"The health sector has been strengthened. Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Argya Mandirs have led to greater penetration of health services in rural areas. We need to focus on the care economy as well. As the senior citizen population increases, the demand for caregivers will also rise. Therefore, new training models will need to be developed," he said at a webinar on post-budget



discussions which was attended by stakeholders from different government ministries, departments and experts from private sectors.

He called for accelerating the process of linking the country's education sector to the real-world economy, while sharpening focus on subjects like artificial intelligence and automation.

"We will need to accelerate the process of connecting our education system to the real-world economy even further. On topics like AI and automation, the digital economy, and design-driven manufacturing, we will need to increase our focus even more," he said.

The prime minister said another important sector is STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics.

"It is heartening to see that the daughters of our country have a great interest in STEM. Today, when we talk about futuristic technologies, it is important that no daughter is held back due to a lack of opportunities. We must create a research ecosystem where young researchers get ample opportunities to work on new ideas," he said.

He said the health sector has been strengthened, the Ayushman Bharat Yojana and Argya Mandirs have led to greater penetration of health services in rural areas.

Referring to the 'care economy', through which trained caregivers help senior citizens, Modi said as the senior citizen population increases, the demand for caregivers will also rise.

"I request that new training models should be developed," he said.

The prime minister said India is working on a vision of preventive and holistic health today and in the past few years, the country's

Cont. on P9 >

## House adjourned amid Oppn protests

# LS fails to take up resolution on Birla's removal

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: The Lok Sabha today could not take up a notice seeking to move a resolution to remove Speaker Om Birla from office amid disruptions as opposition members demanded a debate on the West Asia situation.

The opposition's resolution is now likely to be taken up on Tuesday, at noon, soon after the Question Hour.

While the Constitution gives the Speaker the right to defend himself or herself in the House, it is learnt that Union Home

Minister Amit Shah would respond to the debate on the resolution against Birla.

The opposition has alleged that Birla acted in a "blatantly partisan" manner while conducting the proceedings of the House.

The government, meanwhile, is unlikely to accede to the opposition's demand for a discussion in Parliament on the present crisis in West Asia as External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has already briefed both the Houses on Monday.

In the Lok Sabha, the

government and the Chair accused the opposition of holding the House proceedings "hostage" to its demands.

The House was adjourned for the day shortly after it reassembled at 3 pm, following an earlier adjournment due to relentless protests by opposition members.

As proceedings resumed, opposition MPs continued raising slogans. Jagadamba Pal, who was chairing the proceedings, urged them to maintain decorum and allow the

Cont. on P9 >

## ECI set to announce poll schedule for 4 states

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: The Election Commission of India (ECI) is likely to announce the schedule for the upcoming elections in four states and one Union Territory (UT) later this week.

According to sources in the poll panel, the election schedule was likely to be declared soon after the commission returns from West Bengal Wednesday.

The delegation, led by Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, is currently assessing the readiness of the election machinery in West Bengal

Cont. on P9 >

## Azad supports 'One Nation, One Election'; terms move in country's interest

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: Ex-J&K chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today strongly supported the proposal of simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies and said such a move would be in the interest of the country, will save time, improve governance and expedite development.

Appearing before the Joint Committee of Parliament examining the bills seeking to introduce simultaneous polls to the Lok Sabha and state assemblies, he also said that he had been a supporter of simultaneous polls since



1983, when the Indira Gandhi government was in power.

"I have been a supporter of the one nation, one election for a long time. In 1983, when the Indira Gandhi government was in power, the Election Com-

mission had suggested that the issue of simultaneous elections could be considered. I had supported that idea," he told reporters after appearing on the panel, which is headed by BJP member P P Chaudhary.

Azad said the number of elections had increased manifold since then and as the general secretary in-charge of many states of the Congress, he had to get involved with the series of elections in the states.

"It often had happened that when one election came to an end, another

Cont. on P9 >

## SC allows govt to extend term of tribunal members; new Bill likely

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: The Supreme Court today allowed the central government to extend the term of Chairpersons and Members of various Tribunals due to retire soon-till September 8, 2026.

A Bench led by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant passed the order after Attorney General R Venkaramani submitted that a new Tribunal Bill, in terms of directions issued in last year's judgment in the Madras Bar Association case, was likely to be introduced in Parliament either in the ongoing Budget Session or in

the Monsoon Session.

"The government is working on a proposal. A Bill is being contemplated. We don't want any interruption in the meantime. Everybody who was appointed under the Tribunal Reforms Act of 2021 will continue. By next September, either this Budget session or the Monsoon session, a new law is likely to be enacted," Venkaramani said, adding about 21 members were due to retire in the meantime.

In November 2025, the top court had struck down the provisions of the Tri-

bunals Reforms Act, 2021, on appointment and tenure of tribunal members for going against its earlier judgments on the issue.

CJI Kant highlighted the lack of accountability of tribunals and said they should be responsible to some authority.

"They are not accountable to the government and they are not accountable to us. Who is going to evaluate their integrity and performance? Instead of granting extension alone by a sweeping order, we have to consider their account

Cont. on P9 >

## 3 elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha

RAIPUR, MAR 09: One BJP and two Congress candidates were today elected unopposed to Rajya Sabha from Chhattisgarh and Himachal Pradesh.

BJP's Laxmi Verma and Congress's Phulo Devi Neta were officially declared elected unopposed to the biennial Rajya Sabha elections from Chhattisgarh.

Returning Officer Manish Sharma presented the election certificates to both leaders following their victory. No other candidates filed nominations for the two vacant seats, the election process concluded without a contest, leading

Cont. on P9 >

## Iran names Khamenei's son as Supreme Leader; oil prices surge

DUBAI, MAR 09: Iran named Mojtaba Khamenei, a son of the country's late supreme leader, the Islamic Republic's next ruler on Monday, putting a hardline cleric in charge as the war spreading across the Middle East sent oil prices skyrocketing with Iran launching new attacks on regional energy infrastructure.

With Iran's theocracy under assault by the United States and Israel for more than a week, the country's Assembly of Experts chose the secretive, 56-year-old cleric with close ties to the

country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard as the new supreme leader. The Guard has been firing missiles and drones at Israel and Gulf Arab states since the younger Khamenei's father, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, was killed February 28 during the war's opening salvo.

Iran's stronghold on the Strait of Hormuz has also all but stopped tankers from using the shipping lane between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman through which a fifth of the world's oil is carried. Brent crude oil, the international

standard, surged to nearly USD 120 a barrel on Monday, about 65 per cent higher than when the war started, before retreating slightly.

"Short-term oil prices, which will drop rapidly when the destruction of the Iran nuclear threat is over, are a very small price to pay for the USA, and world safety and Peace," Trump wrote on social media.

Iran has targeted Israel and American bases in the region since the start of the war, and has also been launching missiles and

Cont. on P9 >

## G7 'not there yet' on release of oil reserves amid Mideast War: French Fin Min

PARIS, MAR 09: France's finance minister said on Monday the G7 was "not there yet" in terms of any release of strategic oil reserves as the world's leading industrialised nations held crisis talks on the economic fallout of the Middle East war.

Earlier Monday, French President Emmanuel Macron, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the Group of Seven advanced economies, said the G7 would this week discuss a possible release of strategic oil reserves.

A possible meeting of G7 leaders on the energy issue could take place this week, Macron told journalists on his way to Cyprus.

However, speaking to reporters after chairing a video meeting of G7 finance ministers, French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said the group was "not there yet".

Asked if they had agreed on releasing stockpiles to lower prices, Lescure said from Brussels: "What we've agreed upon is to use any necessary tools, if need be, to stabilise the market, including the potential re-

lease of necessary stockpiles."

Such a measure can only be effective if it is implemented in a "coordinated" manner, Lescure added.

The war triggered by US-Israeli strikes on Iran is fuelling fears for the global economy, with global stock markets sinking and oil rocketing above \$100 a barrel for the first time since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

The finance ministers of the G7, which also includes Canada, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United King

Cont. on P9 >

## India becomes world's 2nd largest arms importer

NEW DELHI, MAR 09: India was the world's second largest importer of arms and military hardware from 2021 to 2025 and the largest chunk of the imports came from Russia, Swedish think tank SIPRI said in a new report on Monday.

Ukraine which received 9.7 per cent of all arms transfers in 2021-25 was the world's largest arms importer in that period, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) said.

China dropped out of the top 10 arms importers for the first time since 1991-

Cont. on P9 >

## Ladakh admin accords warm farewell to Kavinder

LEH, MAR 09: The UT administration of Ladakh today accorded warm farewell to outgoing LG Kavinder Gupta, who would be assuming charge as the governor of Himachal Pradesh.

Gupta had assumed the office of the Ladakh LG on July 18, 2025.

Speaking on the occasion, he expressed heartfelt gratitude to the people and officials of Ladakh for the affection, cooperation and support extended to him during his tenure.

He said Ladakh would always remain close to his



heart and that he would carry back fond memories of the region. He thanked the officers and officials of the UT administration for their dedication and teamwork, adding that he would

always remain available to assist Ladakh in whatever capacity possible.

Reflecting on his tenure, Gupta said that his interactions with officers and offi

Cont. on P9 >